



Fix the Wildfire Funding Problem and Support Forest Management Reforms

Today's wildfire seasons last year-round. Wildfires burn hotter and longer, and cost more than ever to suppress and mitigate. All of the public benefits provided by America's trees and forests - including clean air and water, wildlife habitat, places to recreate, and jobs - are at risk as a result.

The nation's 59 state and territorial foresters urge Congress to pass legislation that fixes our broken system for funding wildfire suppression and reforms federal forest management.

The problem:

Over the last few decades, the portion of the USDA Forest Service's budget dedicated to fire has grown from under 20 percent to more than 50 percent of the agency's total budget. As wildfire eats up a significantly larger share of the agency's budget, critical funding that supports federal, state, and private forests continues to be reduced.

Paying for more expensive wildfire seasons has also forced the Forest Service to cut its other management programs. This means employees are dismissed early or critical positions are left unfilled, contracts for forest thinning activities and firefighter trainings are cancelled, and plans to enhance recreation on national forests are abandoned.

A legislative solution:



Ends late-season fire borrowing. "Fire borrowing," which occurs when the agency runs out of appropriated funding for wildfire suppression in a given year, robs money from critical non-wildfire programs and projects that support healthy trees and forests on all lands.



Stops the long-term erosion of funding for non-wildfire suppression programs. Because an increasing share of the Forest Service's budget goes to wildfire suppression, considerably less funding goes to all other forest management programs, including funding allocated to states to address insect and disease threats, provide firefighting assistance, advise private forestland owners, and protect America's urban forests.



Allows for significantly more active federal forest management. State foresters support rewarding public-private collaboration, streamlining the National Environmental Policy Act process, and expanding the use of categorical exclusions to manage wildfire risk, implement wildlife habitat projects, protect watershed health, and ensure timely post-fire salvage and reforestation.