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For Immediate Release

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## Federal Budget Includes Critical Wildfire Funding as Highlighted by Broad Partner Caucus

### *Federal Firefighting Money Runs Out; 97 Conservation, Recreation, Sportsmen, Timber, and Wildlife Groups Request Better Approach in 2013 Continuing Resolution*

September 24, 2012 (Arlington, Virginia) — The federal accounts that fund 2012 wildfire activities for the U.S. Forest Service ran dry this month, leaving the agencies to remove funding from other important programs to cover wildfire costs. (The Federal continuing resolution budget passed includes vitally needed funds for firefighting.)

The USDA Forest Service wildfire accounts were not sufficiently funded in the current FY 2012, including suppression and the reserve account established under the FLAME (Federal Land Assistance, Management, and Enhancement) Act of 2009.

In response an exceptionally broad representation of conservation, recreation, retired agency personnel, sportsmen, timber, and wildlife groups- calling themselves the **Fire Suppression Funding Solutions Partner Caucus**- submitted a coalition letter requesting \$400 million in emergency supplemental funding be directed to the US Forest Service FLAME account for 2012, or provide reimbursement options that recover transferred funds from non-fire programs. The Caucus further requested that 2013 appropriations are adjusted in the continuing resolution so that wildfire suppression is at the 10-year average.

“Important USDA Forest Service programs can be and are significantly impacted by fire transfers, including the Land and Water Conservation Fund, urban and community forestry, roads and trail maintenance, wildlife, recreation” said **George Leonard, Executive Director at the National Association of Forest Service Retirees**, “including the very programs that would reduce wildfire risk, like State Fire Assistance and restoration. We should not be funding wildfire at the expense of these programs.”

The Caucus is thankful to Chairman of the House Interior Committee **Mike Simpson (R-ID)** and Ranking Member **Jim Moran (D-VA)** for their leadership in advancing this request and to both chambers of Congress in maintaining provisions for suppression funding in H.J. Res. 117 the Continuing Appropriations Resolution for 2013 (CR), which passed on September 22, 2012. The CR reimburses the US Forest Service \$400 million for the wildfire transfers and funds wildfire suppression in FY13 at levels closer to the 10-year average for suppression.

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“We greatly appreciate the support from Congress to repay non-fire programs in FY12 and to add suppression funds in preparation for FY13,” stated **WV State Forester and NASF President, Randy Dye**. “We ask for continued commitment from Congress and the Administration to maintain a sufficient balance in the FLAME reserves that are *in addition* to funding suppression at the 10- year average so transfers from non-fire programs can be avoided as we enter a future with more frequent and severe wildfires.”

Many factors contribute to the increase in wildfire frequency and severity, including changes in climate, build-up of hazardous fuels, and increasing populations in the wildland urban interface. This past summer reflects a decade-long trend of increased acreage burned by wildfires in the United States. Between 1960 and 1999 only once did more than 7 million acres burn in a single year; since 2000 it has occurred eight times, including this year. The frequency and severity of these wildfires require significant levels of funding at a time when the U.S. Forest Service received significant reductions in the form of rescissions and insufficient funding.

“Wildfire must be appropriately funded and not at the expense of other agency programs. Of course, we cannot forget to support the heroic efforts of our brave firefighters who work hard to protect our communities, homes, and families”, said **Laura McCarthy of The Nature Conservancy**, “it’s only responsible to ensure that they have the resources necessary to make their work as safe as it possible.”

“In passing the FLAME Act, Congress intended to fully fund the USFS and DOI’s suppression accounts while eliminating the need to transfer monies from other agency programs to fund emergency wildfire suppression,” said **Michael Goergen, Executive Vice President and CEO of the Society of American Foresters**, “the practice of transferring funds from non-fire programs undermines the agencies’ abilities to help sustainably manage the nation’s forests that are essential in delivering many important services including clean air and water, wildlife habitat and many other important benefits that people highly value.”

“Besides the pleasure they give us, forests cover one-third of the United States,” said **Rebecca Turner of American Forests**. “They store and filter half the nation’s water supply; provide jobs to more than a million wood products workers; absorb nearly 20% of U.S. carbon emissions; offer 650 million acres of recreational lands that generate well over \$15 billion in economic activity annually; and provide habitat for thousands of species across the country.”

#### **Fire Suppression Funding Solutions Partner Caucus**

1. AMERICAN FOREST FOUNDATION
2. AMERICAN FOREST RESOURCE COUNCIL
3. AMERICAN FORESTS
4. APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN CLUB
5. APPLGATE PARTNERSHIP AND WATERSHED COUNCIL
6. ARIZONA WILDLIFE FEDERATION
7. ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES
8. ASSOCIATION OF NATIONAL GRASSLANDS
9. BLACK HILLS FOREST RESOURCE ASSOCIATION

10. BLUE KNIGHT GROUP
11. BLUE MOUNTAINS FOREST PARTNERS
12. CALIFORNIA FIRE SAFE COUNCIL
13. CALIFORNIA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION
14. CALIFORNIA SKI INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
15. CHOOSE OUTDOORS
16. CIBOLA COMMUNITIES ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION
17. COLORADO FORESTRY ASSOCIATION
18. COLORADO TIMBER INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
19. CONSERVATION NORTHWEST
20. CRILEY CONSULTING
21. DAHL ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICE, LLC
22. DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE
23. ECOSYSTEM WORKFORCE PROGRAM
24. FEDERAL FOREST RESOURCES COALITION
25. FLATHEAD ECONOMIC POLICY CENTER
26. FOOTHILL CONSERVANCY
27. FOREST BUSINESS NETWORK
28. FOREST ENERGY CORPORATION
29. FOREST GUILD
30. FRAMING OUR COMMUNITY
31. FRONT RANGE ROUNDTABLE
32. GIFFORD PINCHOT TASK FORCE
33. GRAND CANYON TRUST
34. GREAT LAKES PROFESSIONALS ASSOCIATION
35. HEISSENBUTTEL NATURAL RESOURCE CONSULTING
36. IDAHO CONSERVATION LEAGUE
37. IDAHO FOREST OWNERS ASSOCIATION
38. IDAHO FOREST RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP
39. INDIANA FORESTRY & WOODLAND OWNERS ASSOCIATION
40. INSTITUTE FOR CULTURE AND ECOLOGY
41. INTERMOUNTAIN FOREST ASSOCIATION
42. INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS
43. INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WILDLAND FIRE
44. INTERNATIONAL CODE COUNCIL
45. INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF TROPICAL FORESTERS
46. LAKE COUNTY RESOURCES INITIATIVE
47. MALHEUR LUMBER COMPANY
48. MICHIGAN FOREST ASSOCIATION
49. MID KLAMATH WATERSHED COUNCIL
50. MINNESOTA FOREST INDUSTRIES
51. MONTANA FOREST OWNERS ASSOCIATION
52. MONTANA LOGGING ASSOCIATION
53. MONTANA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION
54. MONTANA WOOD PRODUCTS ASSOCIATION
55. MT. ADAMS RESOURCE STEWARDS

56. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS
57. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FOREST SERVICE RETIREES
58. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE FORESTERS
59. NATIONAL MUSEUM FOREST SERVICE HISTORY
60. NATIONAL VOLUNTEER FIRE COUNCIL
61. NATIONAL WILD TURKEY FEDERATION
62. NATIONAL WILDFIRE INSTITUTE
63. NATIONAL WOODLAND OWNERS ASSOCIATION
64. NEW MEXICO COUNCIL TROUT UNLIMITED
65. NEW MEXICO FOREST INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
66. NORTHEAST WASHINGTON FORESTRY COALITION
67. NORTHWEST CONNECTIONS
68. OZARK WOODLAND OWNERS ASSOCIATION
69. PELLET FUELS INSTITUTE
70. RI FOREST CONSERVATOR'S ORGANIZATION, INC.
71. ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELK FOUNDATION
72. ROCKY MOUNTAIN TREE-RING RESEARCH
73. RUFFED GROUSE SOCIETY
74. SALMON VALLEY STEWARDSHIP
75. SAN BERNARDINO NATIONAL FOREST ASSOCIATION
76. SD STOCKGROWERS ASSN
77. SENECA TRAIL RC&D COUNCIL, INC
78. SIERRA CLUB
79. SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FORESTERS
80. SOUTHERN OREGON FOREST RESTORATION COLLABORATIVE
81. SOUTHERN OREGON TIMBER INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION
82. SPATIAL INTEREST, LLC
83. STOCK GROWERS
84. SUSTAINABLE NORTHWEST
85. SWAN ECOSYSTEM CENTER
86. THE NATURE CONSERVANCY
87. THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY
88. THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY
89. TROUT UNLIMITED
90. UNCOMPAHGRE/COM, INC
91. UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH
92. VERMONT WOODLANDS ASSOCIATION
93. WATERSHED RESEARCH & TRAINING CENTER
94. WEST RANGE RECLAMATION
95. WESTERN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CENTER
96. WILDLANDS CPR
97. WOODY BIOMASS UTILIZATION PARTNERSHIP