



The Honorable Mitch McConnell
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul D. Ryan
1233 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
233 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

January 16, 2018

Dear Speaker Ryan, Minority Leader Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

I'd like to call your attention to two critical items which Congress has an opportunity to address: 1) funding for wildfire suppression, which is now subsuming most of the USDA Forest Service budget, and (2) the need for more active and effective management on America's wildfire, insect, and disease prone federal forests.

In 2017, 10 million acres burned nationwide and the federal government spent \$2.9 billion in suppression costs. Three decades ago, wildfire suppression was one-sixth of the agency budget. It is now over 50 percent and approaching two-thirds of the agency budget. If the wildfire funding challenge is not addressed, it is not only federal forests and the surrounding communities which will be devastated, but also state, community, and private forests (over 60 percent of the nation's forests), which rely on funding from and collaboration with the Forest Service. The nation's state foresters will see their federal assistance for addressing devastating insects, disease, wildfire, and other challenges that know no boundaries, all but disappear.

If federal forest reforms which promote more active management are not enacted, the deleterious impacts on state and private forests and surrounding communities will accelerate. Again, this is because wildfire, insects, and disease do not follow boundary lines, and significant forest health and wildfire challenges on federal forests migrate to state, community, and privately owned forests.

Some of the most effective measures which have been proposed to encourage more active management of federal forests have bipartisan support. Please use this opportunity, when the American people are focused and united in a desire to address these challenges, to pass legislation which current and future generations of Americans will so appreciate.

Sincerely,

George Geissler
NASF President
State Forester of Oklahoma

Executive Director
Jay Farrell

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