



Wildfire Funding Fix: What it means for America's forests

State foresters are responsible for wildfire protection and suppression on nearly two-thirds of America's forested lands. What's more, they are the first to respond to about 80 percent of the wildfires that break out across the United States in any given year.

With more people living in fire-prone and -dependent landscapes close to wildlands, protecting state and private forests from wildfire has been increasingly difficult. Today, many of the nation's state foresters are charged with managing millions of acres of overstocked, drought- and pest-comprised forests prime for burning.

In 2017, the federal government spent nearly \$3 billion on fire suppression. State forestry agencies paid an additional \$1.4 billion to fight wildfires on and off state and private lands.

Over the last few decades, the portion of the USDA Forest Service's total budget dedicated to wildfire suppression had grown from under 20 percent to more than 50 percent. At the same time, the costs of fighting wildfires were burning through larger and larger shares of the agency's budget, including the critical funding that supports the health, resiliency, and productivity of state and private forests.

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 appropriations omnibus provided a wildfire funding fix and a stop to the raiding of the USDA Forest Service's State and Private Forestry programs. Starting in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020, \$2.25 billion for wildfire suppression will be available to USDA and the Department of the Interior. This budget authority will increase by \$100 million each year, ending at \$2.95 billion in FY 2027.

For the duration of the eight-year fix, the fire suppression account will be funded at the FY 2015 president's budget request of \$1.011 billion. If funding over the cap is used, the USDA secretary will be required to submit a report to Congress documenting the decision-making and cost drivers that led to the additional expenditures.

