



The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
 Chairman, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
 U.S. Senate  
 Washington, D.C. 20515

April 3, 2020

Dear Senator Murkowski,

The nation’s state foresters thank you for recognizing the affects of the COVID-19 pandemic on wildland fire management and applaud your recent letter to Secretaries Sonny Perdue and David Bernhardt urging the adoption of an aggressive initial attack strategy for the 2020 wildfire season. We appreciate your bold leadership on issues related to our nation’s forests and look forward to continuing our work with you and your staff on these important issues.

NASF represents the directors of the state forestry agencies in all 50 states, eight U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia. State foresters deliver technical and financial assistance to more than 270,000 private landowners annually and directly manage nearly 76 million acres of state forestland to enhance forest health, resilience, and productivity nationwide. While the duties of state forestry agencies vary from state to state, all of NASF’s members share a common forest management and protection mission and most have statutory responsibilities to provide wildland fire protection on all lands, public and private.

**Nationwide, state forestry agencies are responsible for wildfire protection on more than 1.5 billion acres – 1.1 billion of which are state and privately owned. Within the cooperative structure of the Cohesive Strategy, states routinely contribute to fighting wildfires on federal lands. In 2018, 6,026 out of the 8,080 state personnel mobilized through the National Interagency Coordination Center were sent to respond to wildfires burning on federal lands.**

**State forestry agencies also provide local governments and volunteer fire departments with access to fire and emergency response resources, which in 2018, included 93,656 firefighters, 91,940 fire engines, 2,851 dozers, and 620 aircraft.**

Attacking wildfires when they are small is key to reducing fatalities, injuries, property losses, and wildfire-fighting costs – at the local, state, and federal levels. As we enter a wildfire season complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic, we agree that aerial firefighting will be an important part of aggressive initial attack strategy in support of our ground-based forces.

**Executive Director**  
 Jay Farrell

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We look forward to continuing conversations with your staff on how we can work together to ensure that all of our nation's firefighting resources are put to use safely and efficiently this wildfire season.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gregory J. Josten". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "G" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Gregory Josten  
NASF President  
South Dakota State Forester