



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE FORESTERS

444 North Capitol Street NW | Suite 387 | Washington, DC 20001 | www.stateforesters.org

August 10, 2021

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
US Department of Agriculture
Jamie L. Whitten Building 200-A
1400 Jefferson Dr, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

The National Association of State Foresters (NASF) appreciates your bold call for greater active forest management and enhanced wildland fire management capabilities across American landscapes. As you know, catastrophic wildfires anywhere in the U.S. are a national crisis. Strong leadership like yours is needed to protect our forests, our communities, and our carbon sinks from becoming carbon sources.

Given the growing wildfire emergency in America, we are requesting a meeting with you as soon as possible. We would like to take the opportunity to offer our support to the Biden administration's *Wildfire Resilience Interagency Working Group* and address any questions or concerns you have about coordinated wildfire response in the U.S. Wildfire management is inherently a partnership effort between federal, state, local, and volunteer agencies and departments. We are ready to stand with you—shoulder to shoulder—to work together to reach our shared objectives in making our forests and communities more resilient to wildfire.

State foresters are experienced leaders in managing partnerships that achieve shared results. State forestry agencies employ over 7,700 trained foresters who provide professional expertise and deliver consistent on-the-ground outcomes for America's forests. State forestry agencies also contribute significantly to national wildfire suppression efforts with resources, personnel, capacity, and funds. Collectively, states reported spending \$1.9 billion on fire suppression, prevention, and mitigation in 2018, with \$1.4 billion spent on suppression alone. The federal government spent an additional \$3.1 billion in 2018 for wildfire suppression.

In 2018, there were 8,080 state forestry agency personnel mobilized through the National Interagency Coordination Center. Of those state personnel, 6,026, or nearly 75%, were mobilized to respond to wildfires 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. In 2020, there were 58,950 wildfires that burned over 10 million acres. State and local agencies responded to the majority – 79% – of these wildfires across all jurisdictions.

State foresters work closely with conservation districts, NGOs, local and county governments, tribes, and federal partners across the U.S. to deliver forestry programs and wildfire protection

Executive Director
Jay Farrell

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on a national scale. NASF is a key partner in the development and implementation of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy, which provides a roadmap for interagency wildland fire managers across the country to work collaboratively – using the best available science – to achieve resilient landscapes, fire-adapted communities, and effective wildfire response.

NASF is also a key partner and member of the Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC), an interagency committee of federal, state, tribal, county, and municipal government representatives convened by the secretaries of Interior, Agriculture, Defense, and Homeland Security. WFLC is dedicated to the consistent implementation of wildland fire policies, goals, and management activities. It provides recommendations to help ensure coordination, accountability, and effective implementation of federal wildland fire management policy and related long-term strategies through collaboration.

State foresters are in a unique position to help guide the development of wildfire policies and programs from the national to the grassroots levels. We look forward to meeting with you to discuss how we can continue to work together to improve the health and resilience of America's forests and keep our cherished communities safe.

Please have your staff confirm availability and details with Jay Farrell at jfarrell@stateforesters.org. And again, thank you, for your support of the USDA Forest Service, state foresters, and this nation's great forest resource.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joe Fox". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

Joe Fox
NASF President
Arkansas State Forester

CC:

Meryl Harrell, Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment
Randy Moore, Chief of the USDA Forest Service