



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE FORESTERS

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

September 24, 2021

The Honorable Joe Biden
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

On behalf of the nation's state foresters, I would like to thank you for your recent visit to the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) in Boise, Idaho, and for your engagement with George Geissler, state forester of Washington and chair of the National Association of State Forester's (NASF) Wildland Fire Committee.

Your historic visit to NIFC, the first by any president since it was established 50 years ago, clearly shows that your administration understands the true nature of wildland fire management. As you said, "wildfire knows no boundaries," and no one agency – federal, state, local, or volunteer – anywhere in the U.S. has the resources needed to respond to the growing threat of wildfires alone. Only together, in collaboration and cooperation, can we achieve effective wildfire response in this country.

NASF represents the directors of the state forestry agencies in all 50 states, eight U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia. State forestry agencies contribute a significant portion of the overall wildland fire suppression effort nationally in terms of resources, personnel, capacity, and funds, including providing wildfire protection on over 1.59 billion acres nationwide.

Collectively, states spent \$1.9 billion on wildfire suppression, prevention, and mitigation in 2018, the bulk of which – \$1.4 billion – was spent on suppression operations alone. Federal agencies spent an additional \$3.1 billion on wildfire suppression in 2018. More than 8,000 state personnel (including overhead and crews) mobilized through the National Interagency Coordination Center in 2018 to fight wildfires across the U.S. Of those state personnel, 6,026 (nearly 75%), were mobilized to federal wildfires.¹ 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, 58,950

¹ Statistics gathered from the Interagency Fire and Aviation Management Web Applications (FAMWEB) system include data from the Situation Report and Incident Status Summary (ICS-209) programs. These statistics cited above are intended to provide a national perspective of annual fire activity.

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Jay Farrell

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wildland fires burned over 10.1 million acres. State and local agencies responded to the majority – 76% – of these wildfires across all jurisdictions.²

NASF stands ready to work with you in providing the forestry and wildfire management leadership our country needs as we tackle climate change, economic uncertainty, and America's wildfire emergency.

I wanted to follow up on the conversation you had with Mr. Geissler during your visit to NIFC. Specifically, I wish to offer some insight regarding your questions about infrastructure funding and the Civilian Climate Corps.

The bipartisan "Infrastructure and Investment Jobs Act" recognizes forests as integral natural infrastructure in need of significant investments. Restoring America's forests, watersheds, and rangelands – quite literally upgrading our natural infrastructure – can mitigate the effects of climate change, enhance wildfire resilience, and create and sustain millions of good-paying jobs.

The reconciliation package currently working through Congress includes critical funding for a Civilian Climate Corps (CCC). State forestry agencies can use this funding to put state Forest Action Plan implementation into overdrive, achieving accelerated forest management and wildland fire outcomes on all lands nationwide. Several states currently manage state conservation corps programs. These states are uniquely positioned to leverage CCC funding and are more than capable of rapidly training the next generation of American conservationists.

The CCC funding provided to the USDA Forest Service's State and Private Forestry programs in the reconciliation package would give state forestry agencies the resources they need to partner with local communities and non-governmental organizations to help create thousands of jobs, restore millions of acres of forest, reduce wildfire risk, and rebuild vital infrastructure critical to economic recovery. This funding would also allow state forestry agencies and partners to deliver assistance to urban areas, benefiting diverse and often underserved communities through the federal Urban and Community Forestry Program.

It is critical that the \$40 billion slated for forest restoration and wildfire resilience in the reconciliation package is maintained. The scale and severity of wildfires – and their impact on communities – far outpace current efforts to prevent human-caused wildfires and mitigate wildfire damages. Without an unprecedented and sustained investment in coordinated wildland fire and forest management, wildfires will continue to plague the nation's forests, destroy our cherished communities, and irrevocably alter American landscapes.

If the bipartisan "Infrastructure and Investment Jobs Act" (HR 3684) and the "Build Back Better" reconciliation package (S. Con. Res. 14) are passed, your administration's Wildfire Resilience Interagency Working Group will play a key role in guiding their implementation. State foresters

² National Interagency Fire Center, Historical Wildland Fire Summaries. Last accessed September 24, 2021 at: https://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov/intelligence/2020_statsum/intro_summary20.pdf

are in a unique position to assist in the working group's development of wildfire management policies and programs that work at all levels: from the grassroots to Washington, D.C. We stand ready with you – shoulder to shoulder – to reach our shared objectives in making our forests and communities more resilient to wildfire.

Please do not hesitate to call on us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Christopher R. Martin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Christopher Martin
NASF President
Connecticut State Forester

CC:

White House Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Julie Rodriguez
Associate Director of White House Public Engagement, Will McIntee
United States Secretary of Agriculture, Thomas J. Vilsack
USDA Deputy Under Secretary of Natural Resources and Environment, Meryl Harrell
USDA Forest Service Chief, Randy Moore