

May 29, 2009

The Honorable Norm Dicks
Chairman
Interior Appropriations Subcommittee
B-308 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Simpson
Ranking Member
Interior Appropriations Subcommittee
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: FY2010 Interior Appropriations for Hazardous Fuels Reduction and
the Forest Landscape Restoration Program

Dear Chairman Dicks and Ranking Member Simpson:

The undersigned organizations wish to express support for FY 2010 funding of the USDA Forest Service hazardous fuels reduction and forest landscape restoration programs. Our organizations are actively engaged in collaborative projects that restore forest health, support wood-using businesses, and provide local jobs. We are pleased that the President's budget provides an overall funding increase for the Forest Service. However, we are disappointed that funding for hazardous fuels reduction is decreased and that no funding is provided for forest landscape restoration. We hope the House will make changes to provide funding for these important programs.

The escalating cost of wildfire suppression is one symptom of the poor health of the nation's forests. Suppression costs routinely exceed \$1 billion per year, leaving little funding for forest treatments that remove overgrown brush and trees. An increase in hazardous fuels reduction funding is an upfront investment in forest health that will save taxpayer expenditures on fire suppression in the long-run.

Recent project selection for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding demonstrated that Forest Service field units have many more fuels treatment projects ready to implement than can be funded. The field response is a strong indicator that the Forest Service will treat additional lands and prepare more NEPA analyses in FY 2010 if funds for hazardous fuels reduction are increased over FY 2009 enacted levels.

Paying for millions of acres of fuels treatment remains a fundamental challenge to addressing the nation's forest health and fire crisis. Economic utilization of woody material from fuels treatments is not viable in many parts of the nation under existing technology and markets. Yet communities need jobs, forests are overgrown, and expensive wildfires are draining \$1 billion per year from the Forest Service budget.

The Forest Landscape Restoration Act was recently authorized for \$40 million to be competitively awarded to large landscapes across the nation so they receive sustained funding for fuels treatments that implement a collaboratively developed and science-based ecological restoration plan. The selected projects will create jobs and provide forest byproducts and fiber for local business use while reducing catastrophic wildfire risks in fire-prone ecosystems. We urge the House to provide sufficient funding to initiate a credible national program in FY 2010 that can be increased to the authorized level in subsequent years.

We appreciate the leadership of the U.S. House of Representatives to advance proactive solutions to restore health to our nation's forests and mitigate the wildfire funding problem.

Sincerely,

American Forests

American Forest Resources Council

Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council, Oregon

Arizona Forest Restoration Products

Association for Fire Ecology Southeast

California Ski Industry Association

Central Florida Prescribed Fire Council

Coastal Bend Prescribed Burn Association, Texas

Conservation Northwest, Washington

Flathead Economic Policy Center, Montana

Florida Native Plant Society

Forest Guild, New Mexico

Four Corners Institute, New Mexico

Framing Our Community, Idaho

Friends and Volunteers of Refuges

Front Range Fuels Treatment Roundtable, Colorado

Grand Canyon Trust, Arizona

Janicki Energy, L.L.C., Washington

Janicki Logging & Construction, Washington
Lake County Resource Initiative, Oregon
Lemhi County Economic Development Association, Idaho
Malheur Lumber Company, Oregon
Mt. Adams Resource Stewards, Washington
National Association of Forest Service Retirees
National Ski Areas Association
The Nature Conservancy
New Mexico Forest Industry Association
Nokuse Plantation, Florida
North Carolina Coastal Land Trust
North Florida Prescribed Fire Council
Northwest Connections, Montana
Northern Arizona Wood Products Association
Primus Forestry Management LLC, Florida
The Resource Innovation Group, Oregon
Salmon Valley Stewardship, Idaho
Satilla Riverkeeper, Georgia
SBS Wood Shavings, New Mexico
Sierra Business Council, California
Siuslaw Institute, Oregon
Society for Range Management
Society of American Foresters
South Central Oregon Economic Development District
South Florida Interagency Fire Management Council
Southeast Carbon Management, Florida
Sustainable Northwest
Swan Ecosystem Center, Montana
Wallowa Resources, Oregon
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Washington Forest Protection Association
Watershed Research and Training Center, California
Western Governors Association

CC: House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee