

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 1, 2019

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
and Related Agencies
2007 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Joyce
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
1016 Longworth HOB
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman McCollum and Ranking Member Joyce:

As you begin crafting the fiscal year (FY) 2020 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we request that you include important initiatives that improve forest health, mitigate catastrophic wildfires and protect our communities. As you know, the FY 2018 omnibus included new provisions that provide better budgeting for suppression expenses and new on-the-ground management authorities, including: 20-year stewardship contracting authority on some forest system lands, a “Cottonwood Fix”, a new roads authority within the existing Good Neighbor Authority, streamlining authorities for vegetation management plans on right of ways and a categorical exclusion for wildfire resilience projects.

While the fiscal year 2018 bill took steps in the right direction, much work remains if we want to address the challenges facing our nation’s forests. 2017 was one of the worst wildfire seasons in history with 71,499 fires burning approximately 10 million acres. The Forest Service spent more than \$2.5 billion on suppression costs last fiscal year alone - a new record. 2018 was another terrible season, with 58,083 wildfires burning approximately 8.8 million acres. The Mendocino Complex Fire in Northern California was the largest fire in state history with 459,123 acres burned. The Carr Fire in Northern California claimed eight lives and destroyed more than 1,600 structures. These two fires destroyed 8,900 homes and 329 businesses costing more than \$840 million in insured losses. The Camp Fire was the costliest disaster in the world last year, costing more than \$12.5 billion in insured losses, claiming 88 lives and destroying nearly 19,000 structures, roughly 14,000 of which were homes.

Mismanagement by federal agencies has left our forests vulnerable to insects and disease and ripe for catastrophic wildfires. The system is broken. We need additional forest management authorities and we need them now. While improved from the pathetic numbers of the previous administration, the Forest Service only harvested 2.9 billion and 3.4 billion board feet in 2017 and 2018 compared to over 10 billion board feet in 1990. To make matters worse, litigation and other challenges have caused a significant reduction in active saw mills nationwide, from 1,311 in 1995 to around 200 today.

Catastrophic fires also cause significant damage to the environment. Robust data from NASA shows that one catastrophic wildfire can emit more carbon emissions in a few days than total vehicle emissions in an entire state over the course of a year. As a result of wildfires in 2017,

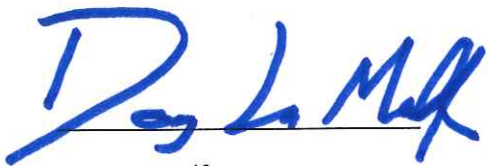
Seeley Lake, Montana set a record for the worst air quality ever recorded there - 18 times greater than EPA's safe particle limit. This is a treatable problem, and one which we understand the causes of very well.

Accordingly, we ask that the FY 2020 base bill include "Action/No Action", categorical exclusions to cut environmental red tape and increase the pace and scale of forest management projects, "Balance of Harms" provisions, litigation reforms and other important forest health initiatives.

Our requested language can be found in the submitted language file accompanying this request.

We thank you for your consideration of this request, and for your leadership on the committee.

Sincerely,



Doug LaMalfa
Member of Congress



Rob Bishop
Member of Congress



Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Member of Congress



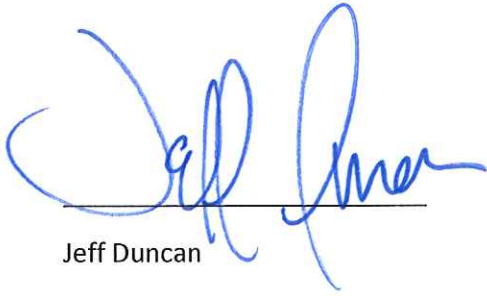
Tom McClintock
Member of Congress



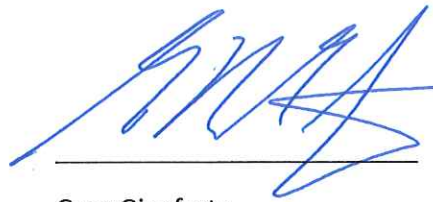
Andy Biggs
Member of Congress



Paul Cook
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