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The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

The National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR) greatly appreciates the time you have given to considering our views regarding the USDA Forest Service and the challenges it faces in managing the nation's forest and rangeland resources. With this letter we want to express our viewpoint regarding the President's Executive Order (EO), entitled "*EO on Promoting Management of America's Forests, Rangelands, and other Federal Lands to Improve Conditions and Reduce Wildfire Risk.*"

We strongly support the objectives of the President's EO and have attached a Position Paper which recommends an aggressive program to fully execute it. We strongly suggest that to be successful, the capacity of the Forest Service must be increased through not only program efficiencies, legislative changes, and a focus on efficiencies. The simple fact is that in order to be successful, budgetary increases must occur.

As you will note in the attached paper, we believe, given time to "ramp up," the Forest Service can successfully execute a program with budgetary increases of as much as \$2 billion. However, we also recognize that in today's budgetary environment, a focused, and significantly lower budgetary increase is more likely to be the best expectation. Thus, we make the following recommendation:

We encourage you to support increased funding of \$600 to \$900 million for critical programs that directly affect EO accomplishment, including hazardous fuels reduction, increasing the production of traditional and innovative new forest products, restoring eroded lands/preventing future erosion, reducing the impacts of invasive species, reducing the backlog in critically needed reforestation, and improvement and increased maintenance of road and bridge infrastructure.

While there have been limited increases in two of these five programs since FY2017, the increases need to be even greater. Unfortunately, the President's proposed FY 2020 budget merely maintains a relative "status quo" level of funding, which is insufficient to accomplish the EO objectives. NAFSR makes the following recommendations:

- 1) Hazardous fuels reduction funding should be immediately increased. The Forest Service's capacity in this program already exists to fully function. An increased program of \$600-\$750 million is realistic and could be readily executed. (The FY2019 appropriated level is \$435 million.)
- 2) In addition to the immediate increase for hazardous fuels reduction, a two-year program of increases should occur in the following programs:
 - A) The Forest Products budget line item should be incrementally increased to approximately \$500-\$550 million from the current FY2019 appropriated level of \$368 million.
 - B) The Vegetation and Watershed budget line item should be incrementally increased to approximately \$300-\$326 from the current FY2019 level of \$180 million.
 - C) The Roads budget line item should be incrementally increased to approximately \$325-\$400 million from the current FY2019 level of \$218 million.
 - D) Forest Health Budget line items for federal lands and cooperative lands should be incrementally increased to a level of approximately \$150-\$173 million from the current FY2019 level of \$98 million.

We recognize that advocating for significant budgetary increases in this present very tight funding environment can be controversial. However, as our attached Position Paper states, implementing the President's EO will save lives and property in America, create jobs, and will reduce the ever-increasing costs of wildfire suppression.

NAFSR stands ready to assist further on implementing the President's EO. We greatly appreciate your time.

Sincerely,

/s/ James L. Caswell

James L. Caswell, Chair
National Association of Forest Service Retirees

cc: FS Chief
Doug Crandall
Jim Hubbard
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