



September 21, 2021

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**Note - A copy of the following letter, along with a copy of our position paper, was sent to all Western governors, county associations, and several other NGO's.**

Enclosed is the National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR) position paper, "America's Forest Management Crisis - A National Catastrophe".

We are an organization of natural resource professionals, field practitioners and scientists with decades of on-the-ground experience. Our membership resides in every state in the country. We are dedicated to sustaining healthy National Forests and Grasslands so they can provide our citizens with such attributes as clean water, quality recreation opportunities, outstanding wildlife and fisheries habitat, carbon sequestration, and become more resilient to catastrophic wildfire as our climate changes.

There is an opportunity for Congress and the public to actively engage in addressing the land management crisis before us. It will necessitate a hands-on approach by all of us on many fronts.

Last year was a historically destructive wildfire season and 2021 is on track to be even more damaging to forests, property, people, jobs, and the environment. The economic damage caused by the wildfires in 2020 is estimated at \$150 billion. In California more than 91 million metric tons of carbon dioxide was produced by wildfires and that figure is 25 percent more than the state's annual emissions from fossil fuels. Similar unprecedented carbon release occurred in many states.

While it is too early to assess the full impacts of this year's ongoing wildfire season, what is clear is that 2021 will set new records for every metric used to track such impacts. The loss of communities, loss of life, health impacts, and the loss of our nation's resources is at a crisis proportion and needs to be addressed like the disaster it has become.

The attached position paper presents data demonstrating that upfront landscape investments will mitigate this damage and needs to happen at a large enough scale across the country to make a difference. Annual investments of \$3 billion (National Forests) to \$5 billion (all forest lands) per year for the next 10 years are needed. When we compare this level of investment with the estimated \$150 billion of economic damage and the \$2 billion spent on wildfire suppression in just 2020, this level of funding is indeed well justified.

Our paper outlines costs and impacts to communities around the country as well as actions that can make a difference in protecting lives and communities. NAFSR believes now is the time to initiate essential action in wildfire mitigation and forest resilience. If implemented, these actions will sustain our forests, protect communities, and mitigate the uncountable billions of dollars spent on property, health, and environmental damage.

We thank you for your focus on these far-reaching issues and ask that you join us in promoting actions that will contribute to successfully addressing this problem. Please do not hesitate to reach out if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

*Steve Ellis*

Steve Ellis, Chair  
National Association of Forest Service Retirees

Enclosure