

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 21, 2016

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
B-308 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum:

We write to you today requesting that the House Appropriations Committee (the Committee) take steps in the FY17 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies appropriations bill to address the ongoing decline in health of our National Forest System (NFS).

As you are aware, the NFS has been in a continuous state of declining health for more than two decades. We experienced our worst fire year ever in 2015, with more than 10.1 million acres of forest land burning across the country, destroying more than 4,500 homes and other structures. Not only are more wildfires burning federal lands, but they burn hotter, faster, and destroy more acres. These fires are a tremendous threat to watersheds and communities across the country.

In response to these catastrophic fires, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) borrowed more than \$700 million from land management and other important activities to fight fires in 2015. The USFS is left with fewer resources to conduct thinning, timber harvests, and controlled burns, which can reduce the severity of wildfires. This annual fire-borrowing cycle negatively impacts fiscal and forest health.

Last July, the House worked in a bipartisan manner to pass HR 2647, the Resilient Federal Forests Act. This legislation would end fire-borrowing in a fiscally responsible manner, and also make necessary changes to forest management practices by building on the 2014 Farm Bill's categorical exclusions, expediting the removal of dead trees after a wildfire, and timber harvesting in areas impacted by pine beetle infestation. Better management of our forests will help to reduce the severity of wildfires, improve environmental quality, and save taxpayers money in the long run.

While the House waits for Senate action on forest management, we ask that you shift funding toward those accounts that will allow the USFS to increase the scale and the pace of restoration work in the NFS. We appreciate the Committee's decision to increase wildfire suppression

funding in the FY 16 omnibus, but we believe that this one-year reprieve must be supplemented with a greater emphasis on hazardous fuels reduction and other forest thinning activities.

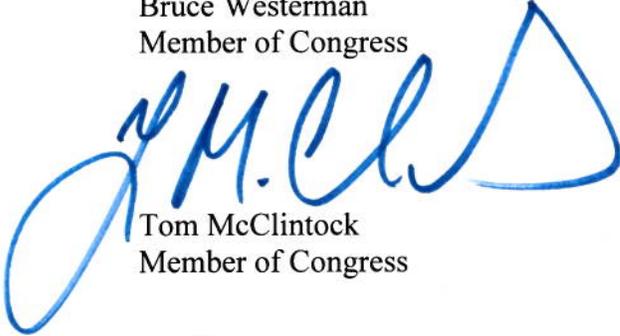
Sincerely,



Bruce Westerman
Member of Congress



Peter DeFazio
Member of Congress



Tom McClintock
Member of Congress



Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



Glenn Thompson
Member of Congress



Ann Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress



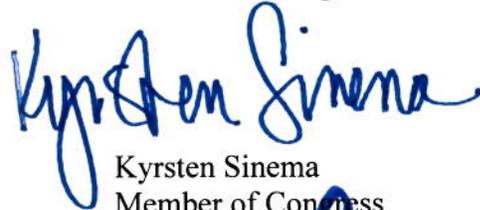
Cynthia Lummis
Member of Congress



Matt Cartwright
Member of Congress



Scott Tipton
Member of Congress



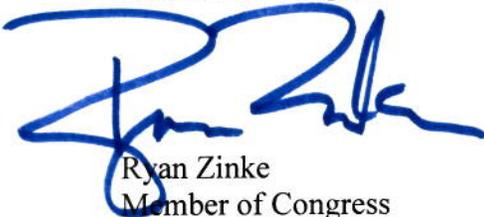
Kyrsten Sinema
Member of Congress



Charles Boustany, Jr., MD
Member of Congress



John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Ryan Zinke
Member of Congress



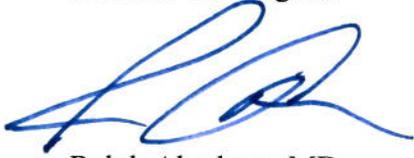
Jim Costa
Member of Congress



Brian Babin, DDS
Member of Congress



Doug LaMalfa
Member of Congress



Ralph Abraham, MD
Member of Congress



Paul A. Gosar, DDS
Member of Congress



Martha McSally
Member of Congress



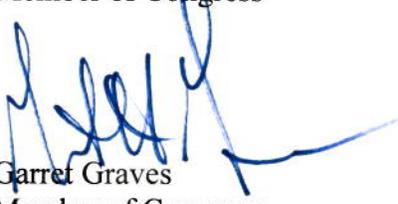
Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress



Rick Crawford
Member of Congress



John Fleming, MD
Member of Congress



Garret Graves
Member of Congress



Doug Lamborn
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Dan Benishek, MD
Member of Congress



Steve Pearce
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