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July 28, 2020

The Honorable Matthew Lohr
Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W. Room 5105-A
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Chief Lohr,

We write to you today in support of Gila County, Arizona's request for support from USDA's National Resources Conservation Service's Emergency Watershed Protection Program in light of the recent catastrophic wildfires that have occurred in the County.

Gila County is located in the middle of the Tonto National Forest and the Forest Service owns approximately 56 percent of the land in the county. Over the last 2 years alone, the County has experienced several large fires that have burned thousands of acres of land, including the Bush Fire which burned almost 200,000 acres in June. The loss of vegetation and damage done to watersheds stemming from these fires has greatly enhanced the flood impact in the county.

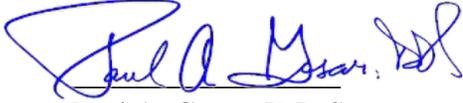
The Bush Fire burned in close proximity to several residential communities and these communities will now be at high risk of flooding. Arizona is in the midst of monsoon season, meaning that time is of the essence.

The County submitted two requests to USDA last year after the Woodbury Fire damaged several watersheds in the County, they waited 7 months for a response, which is completely unacceptable. The problems stemming from last year's Woodbury Fire are still there and with the added risk posed by damage from the Bush Fire, catastrophic flooding is likely.

Therefore, we ask that you carefully and quickly review Gila County's request for assistance to protect these communities from catastrophic flooding per all rules, regulations, and applicable law. For ease of future follow-up, please provide us with a contact person in your office. And finally, can you provide us with an update on the status of both Bush Fire and Woodbury Fire requests for Emergency Watershed Protection Program assistance to Gila County.

Thank you for your prompt attention for this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Paul A. Gosar in blue ink.

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

Handwritten signature of Tom O'Halleran in blue ink.

Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress

Handwritten signature of Martha McSally in blue ink.

Martha McSally
U.S. Senate

Handwritten signature of Kyrsten Sinema in blue ink.

Kyrsten Sinema
U.S. Senate