



WESTERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

Gary R. Herbert
Governor of Utah
Chairman

John Hickenlooper
Governor of Colorado
Vice Chairman

Pam O. Inmann
Executive Director

Headquarters:
1600 Broadway
Suite 1700
Denver, CO 80202

303-623-9378
Fax 303-534-7309

Washington, D.C. Office:
400 N. Capitol Street, N.W.
Suite 388
Washington, D.C. 20001

202-624-5402
Fax 202-624-7707

www.westgov.org

July 11, 2012

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Reid and McConnell and Representatives Boehner and Pelosi:

We are writing on behalf of the Western Governors' Association to request Congress provide supplemental funding needed to aid federal, state, and local firefighters battling wildfires this season. The West has been unusually hot and dry this spring and early summer. Additional extreme wildfires are very likely to continue throughout the end of this year.

We specifically request that Congress provide adequate funding through FEMA for states and local jurisdictions through the Fire Management Assistance Grant program and urge FEMA to expedite reimbursements to the states under this program. Supplemental funding will also be needed to replenish federal agency firefighting budgets. If supplemental funding is not provided, agencies will be forced to redirect resources from other program budgets such as proactive fire risk reduction work.

Early response to wildfires posing a threat to communities is essential to ensuring public safety, keeping costs down, and reducing natural resource damage. Collaborative wildfire planning and response is effective and necessary given the interdependence of the entities with these responsibilities.

We also suggest Congress be prepared to provide supplemental funding for post fire recovery necessary to protect public health and safety and to restore critical wildlife habitat. One of the most urgent needs will be soil stabilization and erosion control in watersheds that provide municipal water supplies.

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We recognize our request comes at a time when there is a broad bipartisan consensus that we must reduce the federal deficit. However, response and recovery from natural disasters should not require offsets elsewhere in the budget or come at the expense of ongoing forest restoration and wildfire prevention efforts.

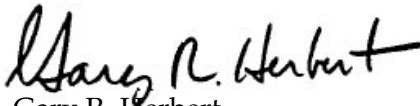
To ensure we improve the health of our forests over the longer term and reduce the threat of extreme wildfires, Western Governors urge Congress to also act this year to:

- Fully fund the Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement Act's 'Flame Funds' to ensure emergency suppression costs do not impact federal non-fire budgets and programs;
- Ensure completion and implementation of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy;
- Take action necessary to address deficiencies in the nation's aerial firefighting resources. The National Interagency Aviation Council, U.S. Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters have all developed recommendations to modernize the aerial firefighting strategy and resources.
- Reform federal land management policies so they encourage and expedite active forest and land management to improve forest function and landscape resiliency;
- Provide funding and direction to federal agencies to coordinate with state agencies on required reviews under environmental laws to ensure timely review and approval of salvage and restoration work necessary to sustain both the built and natural environments; and

There are several legislative vehicles already introduced in this Congress that, if enacted, would improve the health of our forests, reduce the number and severity of wildfires, and build capacity of our firefighting resources. We urge Congress to act on these important issues.

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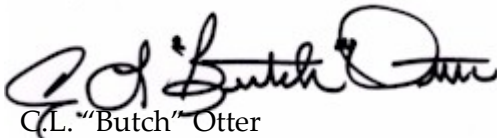
Sincerely,



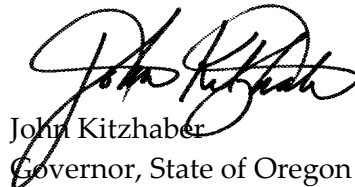
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C.L. "Butch" Otter
Governor, State of Idaho
Lead Governor, Forest Health



John Kitzhaber
Governor, State of Oregon
Lead Governor, Forest Health

cc: The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary, USDA
The Honorable Ken Salazar, Secretary USDO
The Honorable Janet Napolitano, Secretary, USDHS