

# PARTNER CAUCUS on FIRE SUPPRESSION FUNDING SOLUTIONS

MARCH 20, 2009

Honorable Jeff Bingaman  
703 Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
U.S. Senate  
Washington DC 20510

Honorable Jon Tester  
204 Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
U.S. Senate  
Washington DC 20510

Honorable Barbara Boxer  
112 Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
U.S. Senate  
Washington DC 20510

Honorable John Thune  
793 Russell Senate Office Bldg.  
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Honorable Maria Cantwell  
511 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.  
U.S. Senate  
Washington DC 20510

Honorable Mark Udall  
B40E Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.  
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Honorable Orrin Hatch  
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Honorable Tom Udall  
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Honorable Tim Johnson  
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Honorable Ron Wyden  
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Washington DC 20510

Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
709 Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
U.S. Senate  
Washington DC 20510

Re: S. 561, the Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement (FLAME) Act

Dear Senators,

The undersigned organizations wish to thank you for your leadership in introducing S. 561, the Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement (FLAME) Act. The Partner Caucus on Fire Suppression Funding Solutions represents a highly diverse group of interests that have come together for the specific purpose of advocating a fix for this funding challenge. We believe that the establishment of the FLAME fund will help to move the USDA Forest Service (USFS) and the Department of the Interior (DOI) towards a sustainable suppression funding mechanism better suited to deal with the escalating costs of fighting emergency fires.

Wildfire suppression costs have grown tremendously in recent years and projections indicate that this trend will only increase as a result of hazardous fuels build-up, changes in climate conditions, and increasingly populated wildland-urban interface areas. These growing costs severely hamper the land management agencies' ability to fund other agency programs. Without resolution, suppression costs will continue to consume a larger percentage of agency

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budgets year after year, subsequently reducing funding for and crippling critical programs and projects.

The concept of “partitioning” the Forest Service budget offers a promising solution to the financial crisis facing the agency. Funding the fixed costs of fire suppression separately from emergency events would relieve the need for the Forest Service to devote close to 50% of its budget to fire suppression and then borrow funds from other programs to pay for suppression costs when the dedicated funds are not enough.

We greatly appreciate the leadership that you have demonstrated by introducing this legislation. The FLAME Act, in partnership with the Administration’s FY10 proposed funding levels for suppression and a contingency fund for emergency expenses, is an important step in addressing the escalating costs of wildland fire suppression. We look forward to providing any assistance that may be useful as you work to pass this important legislation in a bipartisan manner to address the long-term wildfire suppression funding situation.

Sincerely,

The Partner Caucus on Fire Suppression Funding Solutions

cc: Majority Leader Harry Reid, Minority Leader Mitch McConnell

Alliance of Forest Workers and Harvesters  
American Forest and Paper Association  
American Forest Foundation  
American Hiking Society  
American Lands Alliance  
American Rivers  
Appalachian Mountain Club  
Applegate Partnership & Watershed Council  
Association of Consulting Foresters  
Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies  
Black Hills Forest Resource Association  
Black Hills Regional Multiple Use Coalition  
California Ski Industry Association  
Choose Outdoors Coalition  
Colorado Timber Industry Association  
Colorado Wild  
Communities Committee  
Environmental Defense Fund  
Federated Women in Timber  
Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics, and Ecology  
Flathead Economic Policy Center  
Forest Guild

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Forest Landowners Association  
Framing Our Community  
Greater Yellowstone Coalition  
Idaho Conservation League  
Intermountain Forest Association  
Intermountain Forest Association (Rocky Mountain Division)  
International Code Council  
International Association of Fire Chiefs  
International Association of Firefighters  
Klamath Forest Alliance  
Lemhi County Economic Development Association  
Malheur Lumber Company  
National Association of Conservation Districts  
National Association of Counties  
National Association of Forest Service Retirees  
National Association of State Foresters  
National Cattlemen's Beef Association  
National Federation of Federal Employees  
National Forest Counties and Schools Coalition  
National Ski Areas Association  
National Volunteer Fire Council  
National Woodland Owners Association  
Natural Resource Defense Council  
New Mexico Forest Industry Association  
Northern Forest Alliance  
Olympic Forest Coalition  
Outdoor Alliance  
Outdoor Industry Association  
Public Lands Council  
Regional Council of Rural Counties  
Sierra Club  
Siuslaw Institute  
Society of American Foresters  
Sustainable Northwest  
The Appalachian Trail Conservancy  
The Nature Conservancy  
The Wilderness Society  
Vail Resorts  
Wallowa Resources  
Western Governors Association  
Wilderness Workshop  
Wildlands CPR  
WildLaw  
WildWest Institute  
Winter Wildlands Alliance