Western Governors' Association

Serving the Governors of 19 States and 3 US-Flag Pacific Islands

Forest Health & Wildfire

Resolutions

Future Assessment and Management of Western Forests

State Emergency Response and Aerial Support

Improving the Health of Western Forests and Rangelands

Restoring and Maintaining a Sustainable Road System on Federal Lands

Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act

Payment in Lieu of Taxes

Reports

Collaborative Conservation Strategies: Legislative Case Studies from Across the West

A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment: 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan

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Background

American forests directly and positively influence the social, economic and ecological conditions of the nation. The threats our forests face and the inadequacy of our current response to these threats have caused concern as to whether the nation's forests are sustainable.

The values at risk are not trivial – a clean and healthy environment for our communities, employment and economic opportunities for our citizens, and the energy self-sufficiency of our nation.

The West is home to the majority of the Nation's forests and public lands. Millions of acres of forest and rangeland ecosystems are in poor ecological health and at an unacceptable risk from large and devastating wildfires, insects, disease and invasive species. The increase in wildfires adds carbon emissions to our atmosphere, accelerating the buildup of greenhouse gases. By not properly addressing these issues, wildfires will continue to burn into communities and place life, property and valuable natural resources at unacceptable risk.

Wildfire - State Emergency Response

Western states are experiencing a devastating economic downturn and must work together to be prepared to respond to increased risks to life, natural resources, and property. Over the next two decades a general increase in fire occurrence, size and severity is expected. These wildland fires will be more complex and present higher risks to the public and firefighters. This increase is largely due to historic accumulations of fuel, apparent trends in climate and weather patterns and increasing human development in fire-prone areas. Increased development has already converged with weather patterns, resulting in many more fires in the wildland-urban interface.

Western Governors recognize increased coordination is vital to maintaining an effective response to critical needs and can result in reduced financial impact to the taxpaying public. Through improvements in coordination and communication with all emergency response organizations, additional resources can be made available for use to local communities and neighboring states.