



U.S. SENATOR MARK UDALL

Armed Services, Energy and Natural Resources, and Intelligence Committees

January 8, 2014

Udall Works to Safeguard Proactive, Cost-Saving Wildfire Prevention Efforts

Bipartisan Legislation Strengthens Colorado Communities' Abilities to Protect Lives, Homes

As part of his [longtime push](#) to ensure firefighters have the resources they need to protect Colorado communities from wildfire, Mark Udall joined a bipartisan effort today in the U.S. Senate to modernize the funding structure for fighting and preventing wildfires. The bipartisan, money-saving bill prevents federal agencies from draining funding from proactive and cost-saving wildfire prevention programs and allows access to emergency funding to support immediate fire response.

"The cost of fighting wildfire has increased fivefold in recent years, which forces the U.S. Forest Service to cut back on forest health efforts that help prevent fires before they start. It's robbing Peter to pay Paul — and if this cycle continues, it will only lead to more catastrophic mega-fires like the Waldo Canyon Fire, the High Park Fire and the Black Forest Fire," **Udall said**. "My common-sense plan ensures that Coloradans finally have the resources we need to save lives and homes in the event of another modern mega-fire without undermining valuable fire prevention programs like hazardous fuels reduction."

The bipartisan bill would give the U.S. Department of Interior and the U.S. Forest Service the ability to fund modern mega-fire response as natural disasters, separate from smaller wildfires. This approach would prevent the federal government from depleting its forest health and fire-mitigation efforts to pay for the costs of fighting large mega-fires, thereby keeping Coloradans more safe from devastating fires.

Udall, a senior member of the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, has been a leading voice for ensuring that Colorado and the West have adequate resources to prepare for and combat wildfire, including [pressing the U.S. Forest Service to quickly adopt the Government Accountability Office's recent recommendations on how to upgrade its air tanker fleet](#). Udall [sent a bipartisan letter last year pressing the White House Office of Management and Budget to make wildfire prevention and hazardous fuels treatments a priority](#). He also led the fight to ensure [the Forest Service was able to cut through red tape and secure seven next-generation air tankers](#). [One of the next-generation air tankers Udall fought to acquire](#) helped fight the Black Forest Fire.

Udall has been a strong supporter of using public-private partnerships to improve forest health, [including biomass projects like the one Xcel Energy is pursuing](#). Udall also has [heralded the efforts of private companies, like Montrose Forest Products](#), that are creating jobs by turning

beetle-killed trees and other forest products into commercial lumber. He recently [led a bipartisan push](#) to urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture to partner with the timber industry to reduce wildfire risks in fire-prone areas, create jobs and strengthen forest health.

Udall has also worked [to permanently reauthorize the job-creating Stewardship Contracting authority for the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management](#).

Please contact Mike Saccone at 202-224-4334.

###

Jill Ozarski

Senior Natural Resources Advisor

U.S. Senator Mark Udall

999 18th Street

North Tower, Suite 1525

Denver, CO 80202

Office: (303) 650-7820

Cell: (303) 829-2046

jill_ozarski@markudall.senate.gov

Follow Mark Udall on his [Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Twitter](#)

Sign up for Mark's [Newsletter](#)