

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 9, 2014

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chair
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Reed and Ranking Member Murkowski:

In Colorado, the health of our forests is a core quality of life issue. From providing clean water and air to supporting jobs and outdoor recreation, Colorado's forests and the agencies that administer them are key drivers of our economy. As such, I want to express my support for robust funding of priority programs that promote forest health, reduce hazardous fuels, and protect communities and water supplies threatened by wildfire.

The U.S. Forest Service has stated its intent to increase the pace and scale of forest restoration. The timber management program and hazardous fuels reduction programs are critical tools that support rural jobs in the forest management industry while achieving real, on-the-ground improvements in forest health. I support robust funding of the hazardous fuels reduction program, as well as an increase in proposed timber harvest levels. Nationally, the President has proposed an increase in the timber sale program from 2.7 Billion Board Feet (BBF) to 3.1 BBF. While I appreciate this increased goal, an even more aggressive goal is appropriate in light of the dire need for restoration across the National Forest System. I also look forward to seeing the result of efforts to streamline forest management through the use of current and new authorities, such as the expansion of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act in the 2014 Farm Bill.

I also support robust funding of the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP), and am proud of the two CFLRP projects in my state: the Colorado Front Range and the Uncompagne Plateau on the western slope. These projects bring all interests to the table to carry out landscape-scale forest management in a manner that leverages federal investments, reduces the risk of catastrophic wildfire, and improves forest and watershed health.

Finally, I encourage your continued strong support for robust funding of wildfire preparedness and suppression, including ground and aerial wildland firefighting support and State Fire Assistance. These resources are essential to support early detection and initial attack that keep fires small and maintain the safety of our firefighters, communities, and water resources. We are

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in an era of modern mega-fires, and my home state has repeatedly broken records in recent years for the largest and most devastating fires in our history.

I was especially pleased to see that the President's budget included a wildfire funding cap adjustment to protect critical wildfire prevention programs, such as those mentioned above, from destructive "fire borrowing" by treating wildfire fighting efforts as the extraordinary measures they are, separate from ongoing prevention efforts. That approach is modeled after the bipartisan and bicameral Wildfire Disaster Funding Act of 2013 (S.1875). I strongly support the proposed wildfire funding cap adjustment because federal firefighting agencies have too often been forced to "fire borrow" by raiding funding from proactive and cost-effective programs that could have otherwise helped prevent future mega-fires. This destructive cycle leaves Coloradans exposed to wildfires and only invites future catastrophic mega-fires like Waldo Canyon, High Park-and the West Fork Complex Fire. I will continue to fight in Congress to enact this common-sense legislation into law.

I appreciate your consideration of this request. Thank you for your long-standing support of these programs that protect America's irreplaceable forests and public lands.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark Udall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Senator Mark Udall