

PARTNER CAUCUS on FIRE SUPPRESSION FUNDING SOLUTIONS

TALKING POINTS

SUPPORT THE WILDFIRE DISASTER FUNDING ACT

Specific Ask:

Support the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act which funds a portion of the USDA Forest Service (USFS) and Department of the Interior (DOI) wildfire suppression costs through a budget cap adjustment similar to that currently utilized by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for other natural disasters under the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1988.

What the Bill Does:

- For the first time, this bill would develop wildfire emergency funding processes for the USFS and DOI that are similar to those of other natural disaster emergencies.

Scope of the Problem:

- Impacts:
 - By depleting non-suppression programs within the USFS and DOI, fire transfers halt important land management activities that help reduce fire risk and suppression costs in the future.
 - The timing of these transfers, at the end of the fiscal year and in middle of the annual field season, magnify the impact of the transfers on the ability to accomplish resource objectives in a host of programs on national and private lands alike.
 - Increasing suppression costs continue to eat at agency programs at the front end when budgets are developed and at the back end when transfers take place.
 - **** “Personalize” to the work associated with you or your organization. ****
For example: *“I have seen the impacts of increasing fire costs reduce the Park Service’s ability to maintain campgrounds”.*
- In FY 1991, fire spending accounted for roughly 13% of the total USFS budget, while in FY13 fire spending ate up more than 40% of USFS annual budget.
- Recent transfers from non-suppression programs within the agencies to cover the cost of fire suppression
 - In FY12, the USFS transferred \$440 million and the DOI transferred \$23 million.
 - In FY13, the USFS transferred \$600 million and the DOI transferred \$36 million.
- **Background:** Fire transfers are not new to USFS. From FY 2002 to FY2013, the agency transferred \$3.4 billion from non-suppression accounts within USFS. However, only \$2.3 billion were repaid during that same time period, leaving \$457 million worth of agency accounts unfunded. And, DOI fire transfer levels continue to increase over the years.
- **Background:**
 - Other than the USFS and DOI, *no other entities* within the federal system are burdened with having to fund for disasters within their discretionary budgets.
 - This practice under the USFS and DOI is crippling the agency’s ability to meet its mission goals.