

## Written Public Testimony from Members of the Fire Suppression Funding Solutions Partner Caucus

- Alliance for Community Trees - Amador Fire Safe Council - Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group -
  - American Forests - American Forest Foundation - American Forest Resource Council -
- American Hiking Society - Appalachian Mountain Club - Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council -
  - Association of Consulting Foresters - Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies -
  - Black Hills Forest Resource Association - Black Hills Regional Multiple Use Coalition -
  - Blackfoot Challenge - Blue Mountain Forest Partners - California Fire Safe Council -
    - California Forestry Association - California Ski Industry Association -
- Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council - Choose Outdoors - Clearwater Resource Council -
- Colorado Forestry Association - Colorado Timber Industry Association - Conservation Northwest -
  - Criley Consulting - Dahl Environmental Services, LLC - Entrepreneurship Northwest -
  - Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics and Ecology (FUSEE) - Foothill Conservancy -
- Forest Business Network - Forest Energy Corp - Forest Guild – Framing Our Community -
- Gifford Pinchot Task Force - Grand Canyon Trust - Great Old Broads for Wilderness -
  - Greenpeace - Idaho Conservation League - Idaho Forest Restoration Partnership -
  - Indiana Forestry & Woodland Owners Association - Institute for Culture and Ecology -
    - Intermountain Forest Association - International Association of Fire Chiefs -
  - International Association of Wildland Fire - International Code Council - Large Tree Farm -
    - Mainland Planning, Inc. - Malheur Lumber Company - Mid Klamath Watershed Council -
- Montana Wilderness Association - Mt. Adams Resource Stewards - Mt. Taylor Machine, LLC -
- National Association of Conservation Districts - National Association of Forest Service Retirees -
  - National Association of State Foresters - National Alliance of Forest Owners -
    - National Association of University Forest Resources Programs -
  - National Cattlemen’s Beef Association – National Network of Forest Practitioners -
- National Ski Areas Association - National Volunteer Fire Council - National Wildfire Institute -
  - National Wild Turkey Federation - National Woodland Owners Association -
  - New Mexico Council of Trout Unlimited - New Mexico Forest Industry Association -
- Northwest Forest Worker Center - Outdoor Alliance - Ozark Woodlands Owners Association -
  - Pinchot Institute - Public Lands Council - Quail & Upland Wildlife Federation -
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation - Ruffed Grouse Society - Salmon Valley Stewardship - Sierra Club -
- Siuslaw Institute - Society of American Foresters - Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative -
- Southern Oregon Timber Industries Association - Southwestern Idaho Woody Utilization Partnership -
  - Spatial Interest, LLC - Sustainable Northwest - Swan Ecosystem Center - The Wilderness Society -
  - The Wildlife Society - Trout Unlimited - University of the South - Vermont Woodlands Association -
  - Watershed Research & Training Center - Western Environmental Law Center - Wildlands CPR -
    - Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association Inc. - Woody Biomass Utilization Partnership -

**Submitted to the Senate Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies**

**May 6, 2013**

As the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee considers the FY2014 budget for the USDA Forest Service (USFS) and the Department of the Interior (DOI), we the undersigned representing the Fire Suppression Funding Solutions Partner Caucus request your support to:

- Fully fund the FLAME accounts created for the USFS and DOI as intended in the *Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement Act* (FLAME Act) separately from and above the ten-year average used to fund annual wildfire suppression;

- Ensure that any remaining balance in the FLAME accounts at the end of FY 2013 carry over into FY 2014, and;
- Fully fund annual suppression using the ten-year average along with more predictive modeling based on current weather conditions, fuel loads and other data that contribute to wildfire risk.

The Partner Caucus is a diverse coalition of organizations brought together in January, 2009 to find a solution to the impacts of increasing suppression costs on USFS programs. Our coalition includes national and local environmental organizations, state forestry, conservationists, outdoor and recreation industry, hunter/ angler, timber industry, local governments and many other groups interested in federal lands. Since annual wildfire suppression did not provide enough funding to avoid transferring funds from other agency programs, the solution developed in the 111th Congress was intended to change the funding mechanism for wildfire suppression by establishing two emergency wildfire accounts funded above annual suppression. In October of 2009, the FLAME Act was signed into law with overwhelming bipartisan support from the House and Senate and should have represented an important change in the funding mechanism for wildfire suppression.

One of the cornerstones of the FLAME Act was the establishment of two FLAME accounts, one each for USFS and DOI. In passing the FLAME Act, Congress intended to fully fund the USFS and DOI's suppression needs, while avoiding the need to transfer monies from other agency programs to fund emergency wildfire suppression expenses. Annual suppression was to be calculated using an improved predictive modeling that included the ten-year average and other indicators. The FLAME accounts were to be funded at levels beyond annual suppression and not at the expense of other agency programs. Additionally, any balances remaining in the FLAME accounts were to carry-over into future years.

### **FY 2012**

Unfortunately, several factors led to the Administration transferring funds from agency non-suppression programs to fund emergency wildfire suppression in FY 2012. Carry-over levels in the FLAME accounts were rescinded in FY2012, suppression was funded below the ten-year average, and the fire season was very costly, particularly at the end of the fiscal year.

These factors led to the transfer of \$440 million from USFS programs and \$23 million from DOI programs at the end of FY 2012. These transfers were restored in the first FY2013 Continuing Resolution. However, the transfers have had long lasting effects on the USFS' and DOI's implementation of impacted programs that continue to this day.

### **FY 2013**

In the latest administration's FLAME Forecast Report<sup>1</sup>, predictions indicate another costly fire season in FY 2013, with median forecasts for suppression costs at levels of \$985 million for USFS and \$281 million for DOI. The FY 2013 funding estimates for suppression and FLAME combined amount to \$852 million for USFS and \$369 million for DOI (not including sequester cuts). These findings, particularly for the USFS, strongly indicate another year of transferring funds from and disrupting agency programs; including the forest management programs that would help to reduce wildfire suppression costs.

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement (FLAME) Act Suppression Expenditures for Interior and Agriculture Agencies: March 2013 Forecasts for Fiscal Year 2013. February 7, 2013

## FY 2014

The President's FY 2014 budget proposes the full ten-year average, adjusted for inflation, at levels of \$996 million<sup>2</sup> for USFS and \$378 million<sup>3</sup> for DOI, which is then split between suppression and FLAME. The USFS budget proposes \$681 million for suppression and \$315 million for the USFS FLAME account. The DOI budget proposes \$286 million for suppression and \$92 million for the DOI FLAME account. These levels are adjusted for inflation.

	FY 2014	
	USFS	DOI
	<i>(in millions)*</i>	
Suppression	\$681	\$286
FLAME	\$315	\$92

*\* Suppression and FLAME combined amount to the inflation adjusted 10-year average level*

We recommend the USFS and DOI FLAME accounts be funded separately from the ten-year suppression levels in order to avoid transfers in FY 2014. Additionally, any remaining balance in the FLAME accounts at the end of FY 2013 is carried over into FY 2014. Finally, annual suppression levels should be funded using the ten-year average, along with any added factors that may improve predictive modeling, including current weather conditions, fuel loads and other data that contribute to wildland fire risk.

Congress undertook crafting the FLAME Act as a result of a critical examination of wildfire suppression funding and the importance of addressing impacts to agency programs. We request that you reaffirm the commitment to address this important problem and look forward to working with you to ensure wildfire suppression and FLAME accounts are funded in a way that reduces impacts to the agency programs that our organizations support.

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<sup>2</sup> FY 2014 USDA Forest Service Budget Justification

<sup>3</sup> FY 2014 Interior Budget in Brief – Department-wide Programs