



Nebraska Chapter of The Wildlife Society

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Jeff Fortenberry
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Dear Congressman Fortenberry,

The Nebraska Chapter of The Wildlife Society, a non-profit scientific and education association of professional biologists, would like to lend our support for H.R. 167, a bill introduced to provide emergency relief to the U.S. Forest Service following catastrophic wildfires and to restore budgetary stability to the U.S. Forest Service without increasing federal spending.

This legislation would treat wildfire disasters like other natural disasters under the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, which allows federal agencies tasked with managing natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, and tornadoes to access emergency funds. Over the past 10 years, an estimated 6.6 million acres have been burned by wildfires each year in the United States, and over 8 million acres have burned in 2015.

Currently, fire-fighting agencies are forced to borrow from their non-fire programs to cover any costs over the budgeted amount. These actions further reduce funding to conduct restoration and conservation projects, as well as maintaining a workforce to manage millions of acres across the U.S.

H.R. 167 would continue to fund 70 percent of the routine forest firefighting costs that is funded at the 10-year average costs of wildfires. Additionally, it would treat wildfire disasters like other natural disasters under the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, which allows federal agencies who respond to disasters like hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, and tornadoes to access emergency funds.

We strongly encourage a vote For H.R. 167. It is a workable solution for the strained federal agencies working to prevent and mitigate wildfire disasters.

Sincerely,

Jessica Jurzenski, PhD
President
Nebraska Chapter of The Wildlife Society