



WILDFIRERESILIENCECOALITION

February 12, 2024

The Honorable Joe Neguse
Co-Chair, Bipartisan Wildfire Caucus
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Curtis
Co-Chair, Bipartisan Wildfire Caucus
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Wildfire Caucus Members:

Wildland firefighters are the single most important resource we have to protect lives, communities, forests, and grasslands across the United States. They deliver safe, efficient fire suppression, as well as collaborative, science-based methods for mitigating damages and promoting resilience before, during, and after wildfires.

Today's wildland firefighters are highly skilled and certified through a rigorous qualification system. They travel around the country, spending long stretches away from their homes as part of incident response teams. Wildfire management is inherently a partnership effort between federal, state, Tribal, local, and volunteer partners. Nearly 20,000 federal wildland firefighters work for the Department of Interior and the Department of Agriculture and make up a significant part of the resources that respond to large wildfires nationally.

Now, Congress has an unprecedented opportunity to support the wildland fire workforce:

First, the undersigned organizations ask that you maintain pay increases for federal and Tribal wildland firefighters established through the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Wildland firefighters are required to complete extensive, ongoing training and work long hours in dangerous conditions. They deserve income security.

Second, we ask that you take action, as recommended by the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission, in support of the wildland fire workforce.

Through IIJA, Congress also established the non-partisan Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission. The Commission's 50-member expert panel was tasked with examining nearly every facet of the wildfire crisis, including mitigation, management, and post-fire rehabilitation and recovery. In September 2023, [the Commission published a report](#) detailing 148 consensus-based policy recommendations, all of which depend on a robust and highly trained wildland fire workforce.

Those recommendations that would directly apply to and benefit the wildfire workforce include:

- **Develop a resilience and restoration workforce** focused on land stewardship and community wildfire risk reduction (Commission Recommendation 89).
- **Invest in retention initiatives** to stem the loss of highly trained and experienced personnel from the system (Commission Recommendations 84, 86, & 102).

*The **Wildfire Resilience Coalition** represents non-governmental organizations seeking to help federal, Tribal, state, local, and private partners realize transformational change in wildfire risk management across the United States.*

- **Expand recruitment strategies and create efficient hiring pathways** that support the development of a larger, more diverse, and inclusive workforce (Commission Recommendations 85 & 88).
- **Create and fund interagency training and development opportunities** for fireline leadership roles and those requiring higher experience levels and qualifications. Wildfire management, including training, is inherently a partnership effort between federal, state, Tribal, local, and volunteer partners (Commission Recommendation 95).
- **Increase the provision of housing**, including permanent, temporary, and seasonal options for the wildfire and resilience workforce (Commission Recommendations 102 & 103).

Long-term wildfire resilience depends on the wildland fire workforce before, during, and after wildfires occur. We ask that Congress invest in these people to do the critically necessary mitigation work before a wildfire starts, the demanding work of suppressing and managing wildfires as they burn, and the recovery work essential to restoring our communities and treasured landscapes post-fire.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

American Forests
 Climate and Wildfire Institute
 Environmental Defense Fund
 Federation of American Scientists
 Forest Stewards Guild
 Grassroots Wildland Firefighters
 Intertribal Timber Council
 Mt. Adams Resource Stewards
 National Association of Counties
 National Association of Forest Service Retirees
 National Association of State Foresters

Outdoor Alliance
 Public Lands Foundation
 Roaring Fork Valley Wildfire Collaborative
 Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition
 Silvix Resources
 Society of American Foresters
 The Nature Conservancy
 The Watershed Research and Training Center
 Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
 Wild Montana

cc:

Deb Haaland, Secretary, Department of the Interior (DOI)
 Tom Vilsack, Secretary, Department of Agriculture (USDA)
 Joan Mooney, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy Management and Budget, DOI
 Homer Wilkes, Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, USDA
 Meryl Harrell, Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, USDA
 Lori Moore-Merrel, Fire Administrator, US Fire Administration
 Randy Moore, Chief, USDA Forest Service
 Brian Ferebee, Chief Executive of Intergovernmental Relations, USDA Forest Service
 John Crockett, Deputy Chief, State, Private and Tribal Forestry, USDA Forest Service
 Jeff Rupert, Director, Office of Wildland Fire, DOI