



National Association of Conservation Districts

March 10, 2016

Senator Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC, 20510

Senator Tom Udall
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC, 20510

Dear Chairman and Ranking Member:

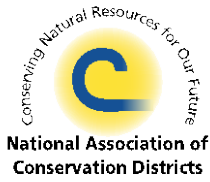
The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) represents America's 3,000 conservation districts and the 17,000 men and women who serve on their governing boards. Conservation districts are local units of government established under state law to carry out natural resource management programs at the local level. Districts work with millions of cooperating landowners and operators to help them manage and protect land and water resources on all private lands and many public lands in the United States.

NACD respectfully requests approval of the President's fiscal year 2017 budget of \$164.9 million in funding for the Environmental Protection Agency's 319 Nonpoint Source Grants and the requests authorization of adequate funding for the US Forest Service and the Department of Interior to conduct effective prescribed fires, pre-suppression activity, and silvicultural treatments without having to halt these essential programs in order to transfer funds, or "fire borrow," for emergency fire suppression. We also request re-approving the fiscal year 2016 level of funding for the Forest Service's State and Private Forestry programs at \$237 million in the fiscal year 2017 Interior Appropriations bill.

The EPA 319 Nonpoint Source Grants are critically important to stream bank stabilization, storm water management, low-impact development, and other projects by conservation districts to address water quality at the local level. Working lands are under increased pressure to produce food, feed, fuel, and fiber for the world's growing population. Because of this reality, it is more important than ever that we dedicate the resources necessary to ensuring local communities continue to have access to and realize the benefits of clean water.

The US Forest Service plays an integral role in promoting proper land management and post-fire emergency recovery efforts to safeguard our nation's forests and natural resources. The Forest Service's requested funding would begin to end the process of fire borrowing in which the agency faces intense pressure to halt critical programs to free up funds for emergency fire suppression. Often the programs that get suspended end up causing more devastating fires down the line as prevention measures take a backseat and fuels are allowed to buildup.

State and Private Forestry is one of the few US Forest Service programs providing technical and financial assistance to private landowners. Funding for these programs is critical to safeguarding this partnership which is of great benefit to our nation's landowners and forestlands. State and Private Forestry programs should be staffed and funded at a level that ensures strengthened partnerships, better stewardship, and increased flow of goods and services from private non-industrial forest lands. Successful conservation



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requires a strong public, private partnership; efforts begin at the local level with technical assistance and funding from federal, state, and local governments and the private sector.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. We look forward to working with you as we continue to serve the nation through natural resource conservation.

Sincerely,

Lee D. McDaniel
NACD President