



National Association of Conservation Districts

September 9, 2015

The Honorable Hal Rogers, Chairman
House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Nita Lowey, Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Thad Cochran, Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski, Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Ken Calvert, Chairman
House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee

The Honorable Betty McCollum, Ranking Member
House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Chairman
Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee

The Honorable Tom Udall, Ranking Member
Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee

Dear Chairman Rogers, Chairman Cochran, Chairman Calvert, Chairman Murkowski, Ranking Member Lowey, Ranking Member Mikulski, Ranking Member McCollum and Ranking Member Udall:

The catastrophic wildfires engulfing western states this summer are further proof of the need for Congress to support the management of our nation's forestlands in a collaborative effort of federal agencies, industry and the local residents most directly affected by these fires.

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) represents the nation's 3,000 conservation districts and their governing boards. Established under state law, conservation districts are local units of government charged with carrying out natural resource management programs created or adjusted based on local needs. Conservation districts are directly connected to local populations and landowners.

Conservation districts work with federal, state, tribal and other local agencies to provide technical assistance to landowners and other partners to address natural resource issues. With respect to forests and grasslands, conservation districts are involved in a wide range of activities, including non-industrial private forest management, wildfire prevention and fuels reduction, biomass production and utilization, forest pest management, wildlife habitat management and urban forestry.

Recently, the Okanogan Conservation District proved to be an invaluable resource for assisting FEMA and state and federal land management agencies for rapid emergency response during the 2014 Carlton Complex Fire in Washington. The district assisted with the identification and evaluation of priority areas in need of immediate recovery, and provided conservation for both private and public lands. The 2015 fires far surpass the area burned in 2014 and conservation districts are already formulating plans to deal with the aftermath. The Emergency Watershed

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Protection Program (EWP) will be a crucial part of those plans and funding limitations must not stand in the way of program delivery.

It is critical that federal policies support the uninhibited flow of vital information between agencies and partners that will allow natural resource concerns to be addressed, private and public property protected and all life, especially human, fully cared for.

Along with dozens of other forestry and conservation organizations, NACD has offered its support of the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act (H.R. 167, S. 235, S. 1645), which aims to limit the impact wildfire spending can have on the funding of agency programs designed to improve forest health conditions. NACD fully supports increased funding for wildfire prevention, management and restoration of our public forests and rangelands; legislation that expedites analysis required by the National Environmental Policy Act; policies and budgets that allow conducting effective prescribed fire, pre-suppression activity and silvicultural treatments; and increased pre- and post-fire grazing on at-risk public lands.

We ask for passage and full funding of the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act in addition to increased funding for programs that can be used to reduce fuels such as the Chiefs Joint Landscape Restoration Partnership, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the EWP. These programs are critical to providing the necessary resources to bring about significant change on a landscape level.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lee D. McDaniel".

Lee McDaniel

President