



July 2, 2026

The Honorable Roger F. Wicker
Chairman, Senate Armed Services
Committee
United States Senate
228 Russell Senate Office Building

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member, Senate Armed Services
Committee
United States Senate
228 Russell Senate Office Building

RE: Support for the Inclusion of S. 1462 - Fix Our Forests Act in the FY27 NDAA

Dear Chairman Wicker and Ranking Member Reed,

America's wildfire crisis is a growing threat to military readiness, critical national security infrastructure, and the availability of National Guard and Reserve forces at home and abroad. **We, as organizations advocating to increase wildfire resilience, write in strong support of including S. 1462, the Fix Our Forests Act (FOFA), as an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2027 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).**

The connection between domestic wildfire and military affairs is not new. During World War II, Army paratroopers were stationed on the West Coast as firefighting auxiliaries in the event of enemy-set blazes,¹ and the War Advertising Council launched the Smokey Bear campaign as a wartime fire prevention measure.² Recent wargaming efforts have modeled the effects of catastrophic wildfires on military mobilization and domestic political will to intervene in crises abroad.³ As fire seasons lengthen into fire years and megafires become more frequent and severe,⁴ the strategic consequences of inaction compound with each passing season.

A substantial and growing share of U.S. military installations face high or very high wildfire hazard exposure, placing critical infrastructure, training ranges, and operational

¹Wildfire Today. (2021, February). Triple Nickles: Paratroopers who fought wildfires during World War II. <https://wildfiretoday.com/triple-nickles-paratroopers-who-fought-wildfires-during-world-war-ii/>

²Blakemore, E. (2019, August). How Fear of a WWII Invasion Gave Rise to Smokey Bear. History. <https://www.history.com/articles/smokey-bear-wwii-origins>

³RAND Corporation. (2026, May). Preparing the homeland for great-power conflict: West Rook. https://www.rand.org/pubs/corporate_pubs/CPA4890-1.html

⁴Cattau, M. E., Wessman, C., Mahood, A., & Balch, J. K. (2020). Anthropogenic and lightning-started fires are becoming larger and more frequent over a longer season length in the U.S.A. Global Ecology and Biogeography, 29(4), 668–681. <https://doi.org/10.1111/geb.13058>

continuity at dozens of facilities at direct risk.⁵ A 2019 Department of Defense analysis found that nearly half (36 of 79) of assessed Air Force, Army, and Navy mission assurance priority installations were vulnerable to wildfire.⁶ Documented incidents on or adjacent to military installation boundaries have forced training suspensions, diverted base operating budgets to emergency expenditures, and directly degraded force readiness.⁷ The threat is both direct—to personnel, equipment, and infrastructure—and indirect: wildfires in proximity to bases regularly tie up aircraft, personnel, and staging resources that would otherwise be committed to primary missions.

Wildfire activations also strain National Guard and Reserve capacity for other missions. Use of National Guard and Reserve units for wildland firefighting has become a near-annual occurrence, with activations across both Army and Air Force components in 23 of the last 25 years.⁸ Defense and security experts have raised concerns that these repeated activations leave units unavailable to support critical overseas missions, especially during periods of elevated geopolitical risk.⁹ If the structural conditions driving the megafire crisis are not addressed, these effects on availability and readiness will continue to grow.

Dual-use technology investments, which would be boosted and better coordinated under S. 1462, advance both defense and civilian wildfire readiness. Defense investments in emerging technologies have shown their clear dual-use potential for wildfire. DARPA's ALIAS autonomous aircraft program is being tested at Texas testbeds specifically for wildfire applications,¹⁰ and wildfire sensing platforms have already been deployed at installations including Kirtland Air Force Base.¹¹ Section 303 of the Fix Our Forests Act creates a multi-agency public-private wildfire technology testbed program modeled after the Defense Innovation Unit, designed to advance key emerging technologies through a competitive pilot structure. These investments carry the potential to simultaneously advance military readiness objectives and materially improve civilian wildfire detection and response capabilities.

S. 1462 tackles the challenges essential to scaling up effective wildfire resilience: landscape-scale planning, permitting reform to accelerate fuels reduction projects on federal lands, technology adoption for improved decision-making and early detection, and building community resilience. Taken together, these provisions will reduce the wildfire burden that

⁵Narayanan, A. (2021, September). An enterprise-wide look at Department of the Air Force installation exposure to natural hazards. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RBA523-1.html; National Conference of State Legislatures. (2025, March). Military installation resilience: Wildfire. <https://www.ncsl.org/military-and-veterans-affairs/military-installation-resilience-wildfire>

⁶U.S. Department of Defense. (2019, January). Report on effects of a changing climate to the Department of Defense. <https://media.defense.gov/2019/jan/29/2002084200/-1/-1/1/climate-change-report-2019.pdf>

⁷U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2014). GAO-14-446. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-14-446.pdf>

⁸National Interagency Fire Center. (n.d.). Military support. <https://www.nifc.gov/fire-information/military-support>

⁹Ellison, T. (2025, January). Devastating Los Angeles wildfires highlight national security risks too. <https://www.preventionweb.net/news/devastating-los-angeles-wildfires-highlight-national-security-risks-too>

¹⁰Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. (2024, November). Texas, DARPA to establish testbed to use autonomy to fight wildfires. <https://www.darpa.mil/news/2025/texas-darpa-alias-testbed>

¹¹Roza, D. (n.d.). Kirtland Air Force Base wildfire sensor. Air & Space Forces Magazine. <https://www.airandspaceforces.com/kirtland-air-force-base-wildfire-sensor/>

is increasingly driving the national security consequences. S. 1462 is well-suited for inclusion in the NDAA as a direct investment in addressing those conditions.

We respectfully urge the Committee to support inclusion of S. 1462, the Fix Our Forests Act, in the Fiscal Year 2027 National Defense Authorization Act.

cc: Members of the Senate Armed Services Committee

Sincerely,

Megafire Action

Western Fire Chiefs Association

Convective Capital

Federation of American Scientists

International Association of Fire Chiefs

Grassroots Wildland Firefighters

Pano AI

Rain Industries

Spatial Informatics Group - Natural Asset Laboratory

The Breakthrough Institute

Vibrant Planet

City of Flagstaff, AZ

Town of Tusayan

Edison Electric Institute

Inclusive Abundance Action

American Forests

Citizens Climate Lobby

Environmental Defense Fund

National Association of State Foresters

Property and Environment Research Center

National Wild Turkey Federation

Alliance for Wildfire Resilience

Association of Firetech Innovation

Earth Force

FireWERX

Muon Space

Prime Minute

Team Rubicon

Spatial Informatics Group, LLC

United Aerial Firefighters Association

Bipartisan Policy Center Action

U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Coconino County, Arizona

American Property Casualty Insurance Association

BuildStrong America

American Conservation Coalition Action

C3 Solutions Action

Climate and Wildfire Institute

Keep Tahoe Blue

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition

Tall Timbers Research Station

The Nature Conservancy