



February 16, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson and Leaders Jeffries, Schumer, and McConnell:

We are a coalition of nonprofit organizations writing to voice our strong support for Congressional action to improve wildland fire budgeting and funding. We commend the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission (the Commission) for including consensus recommendations on this topic as part of their [final report to Congress](#). As you and your colleagues review and work to implement the Commission's recommendations, we urge you to support and include budget-related recommendations, a list of which can be found in this letter.

The need for greater transparency and effectiveness of wildfire funding is urgent. In recent years, Congress has allocated historic levels of funding to help the nation address wildland fire: combined wildfire funding for The Department of the Interior and the U.S. Forest Service [doubled from fiscal year 2011 to 2020](#). And Congress has made generational investments in wildland fire risk reduction, suppression, and recovery, with at least \$7 billion of funding made available. However, insufficient tracking of this spending across agencies and programs, inconsistent agency budget structures, and a lack of comprehensive metrics for success make accountability and evaluation of these investments extremely challenging.

Our organizations' research and recommendations support the need for coordinated, bipartisan action so that Congress, federal, state, and local agencies, wildland firefighters, nonprofits, and the private sector understand where taxpayer funds are being spent and what interventions are achieving the intended results. The Pew Charitable Trusts' [research](#) highlighted the complexity of wildfire spending, the need to improve the available data, and the impact of wildfire spending on state fiscal policy. [Taxpayers for Common Sense](#), a nonpartisan budget watchdog that works to ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent responsibly, published a [report](#) that provides the history and an analysis of federal wildfire spending and makes recommendations for improved cost-effectiveness, budget transparency, and accountability. The [Federation of American Scientists](#) (in partnership with Resources for the Future) developed a [data visualization tool](#) to break down the current landscape of federal funding and has [written](#) about federal agency budget structures. All of these works were cited in the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission's report. [Megafire Action](#), a nonprofit organization advocating for policies to address catastrophic wildland fire, has been advocating for robust and predictable federal investment in hazardous fuels mitigation and new laws to better harness wildfire science and technology.

Through its consensus-based and expert-informed process, the Commission has set the groundwork for moving the needle on urgent, holistic changes to wildland fire policy. Please consider our organizations as a resource as you work to translate the Commission's recommendations into action. Below is a list of recommendations among the 148 presented by the Commission related to wildfire funding and budgeting that have our support and where our organizations can provide further information:

- R1 – Congress should establish a Community Wildfire Risk Reduction Program via an interagency coordinating partnership including the U.S. Forest Service, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the United States Fire Administration, the Office of Wildland Fire on behalf of the Department of the Interior’s land management agencies, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology as principal agencies, to proactively address wildfire risk reduction actions and increase ignition resistance of the built environment.
- R3 – Congress should explore, expand, and create incentives to encourage state, local, and Tribal governments to improve land use planning to reduce the risk of wildfires to homes and other community development.
- R120 – Congress should provide advanced appropriations for wildland fire mitigation and management on a multi-year, rather than annual, cycle.
- R122 – Congress should authorize the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior, within their respective Wildland Fire Management appropriations, to fund pre- and post-fire project work using the current “fire response” sub-activities in each department.
- R123 – Congress should fund budget offices to create “crosscuts” to better track all federal wildfire spending.
- R124 – Congress should ensure balanced, robust funding for pre-fire mitigation and post-fire restoration is included as part of the wildland fire budget.
- R130 – While funding levels in the Inflation Reduction Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act are historic contributions to wildfire risk reduction, investments at a similar and sustained scale in federal land management agencies and programs are needed to successfully and proactively reduce growing wildfire risk.
- R132 – Congress should ensure that agencies have sustained funding to maintain wildfire risk and resilience improvements.
- R134 – Congress should incentivize state, local, and Tribal government development of dedicated revenue streams to support wildfire mitigation and management. The Commission encourages more states and localities to provide approval of such local revenue streams to bring more dedicated resources into play in reducing the risk of wildfire.
- R142 – Increase accessibility of federal grants for community wildfire risk reduction and post-fire recovery efforts.
- R147 – Change the system of land management agency performance metrics beyond acres treated, timber volume output, or acres burned to measure success. Success should be measured by outcomes such as the number of protected assets, values, and resources, and the degree to which forests and rangeland are returned to and maintained in a more resilient state.

We commend the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission for their landmark report. As you and your colleagues review and work to implement the Commission’s recommendations, we urge you to support and include the above budget-focused recommendations. Please do not hesitate to reach out to our organizations as a resource as you work to translate these Commission recommendations into action.

Sincerely,

The Pew Charitable Trusts, The Federation of American Scientists, Megafire Action, Taxpayers for Common Sense.

cc: The Honorable Glenn Thompson, Chairman, House Committee on Agriculture
 The Honorable David Scott, Ranking Member, House Committee on Agriculture
 The Honorable Kay Granger, Chairman, House Committee on Appropriations
 The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations
 The Honorable Mike Rogers, Chairman, House Armed Services Committee
 The Honorable Adam Smith, Ranking Member, House Armed Services Committee
 The Honorable Jodey Arrington, Chairman, House Budget Committee

The Honorable Brendan Boyle, Ranking Member, House Budget Committee
The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers, Chairwoman, House Committee on Energy and Commerce
The Honorable Frank Pallone Jr., Ranking Member, House Committee on Energy and Commerce
The Honorable Patrick McHenry, Chairman, House Financial Services Committee
The Honorable Maxine Waters, Ranking Member, House Financial Services Committee
The Honorable Mark Green MD, Chairman, House Committee on Homeland Security
The Honorable Bennie Thompson, Ranking Member, House Committee on Homeland Security
The Honorable Bruce Westerman, Chairman, House Committee on Natural Resources
The Honorable Raúl Grijalva, Ranking Member, House Committee on Natural Resources
The Honorable James Comer, Chairman, House Committee on Oversight and Accountability
The Honorable Jamie Raskin, Ranking Member, House Committee on Oversight and Accountability
The Honorable Frank Lucas, Chairman, House Committee on Space, Science, and Technology
The Honorable Zoe Lofgren, Ranking Member, House Committee on Space, Science, and Technology
The Honorable Sam Graves, Chairman, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
The Honorable Rick Larsen, Ranking Member, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
The Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Chairwoman, Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
The Honorable John Boozman, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
The Honorable Patty Murray, Chairwoman, Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Susan Collins, Vice Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Jack Reed, Chairman, Senate Committee on Armed Services
The Honorable Roger Wicker, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Armed Services
The Honorable Sherrod Brown, Chairman, Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
The Honorable Tim Scott, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
The Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse, Chairman, Senate Committee on the Budget
The Honorable Chuck Grassley, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on the Budget
The Honorable Joe Manchin, Chairman, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
The Honorable John Barrasso, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
The Honorable Thomas Carper, Chairman, Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
The Honorable Ron Wyden, Chairman, Senate Committee on Finance
The Honorable Mike Crapo, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Finance
The Honorable Bernie Sanders, Chairman, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
The Honorable Bill Cassidy, MD, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
The Honorable Gary Peters, Chairman, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
The Honorable Rand Paul, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs