

June 30, 2016

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman, Senate Committee on
Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry
109 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Roberts:

Our organizations are writing to you today on behalf of our millions of members who are dedicated to enhancing fish and wildlife conservation on our nation's public and private forest lands and watersheds and to securing the future of our hunting and angling heritage. We support S. 3085, *the Emergency Wildfire and Forest Management Act of 2016*, which addresses wildfire suppression funding and forest management enhancements. Good proactive forest management coupled with a fire-fighting funding fix is our shared goal. We urge the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee to find a bipartisan path forward on this legislation to advance forest management enhancements and a permanent fix to wildfire suppression funding.

We support provisions in the bill that fix the problem of account transfers (out of important recreation, wildlife and forest project accounts) when wildfire suppression costs exceed the appropriated amounts for the Forest Service and BLM. We respectfully request that you consider adding a continuing ceiling set at last year's wildfire suppression 10-year average, and above which the agencies may access disaster funding, so that the Forest Service's and Department of the Interior's overall funding outlooks do not see any further shift in allocation of its budget towards wildfire suppression funding. The decline in staff resources and budget authority for other activities has contributed to the challenges of overstocked forests in all parts of the country, which is also reflected in certain types of wildlife habitat decline.

Specific to the bill, we find much favor with Sec. 603 Pilot Arbitration Program as a way to resolve disputes around forest management projects. Along with the Forest Service, we support the use of alternative dispute resolution such as arbitration on a pilot basis to reduce the threat of litigation and provide greater efficiencies and incentives for collaborative forest management activities. A pilot effort will allow appropriate evaluation and consideration of this alternative approach to expediting the delivery of on the ground forest conservation.

We likewise find much favor with the bill's provision on landscape scale restoration projects. Sec. 604. National Forest System Accelerated Landscape Restoration Pilot Program will promote large scale landscape forest management projects on federal land which are necessary to maintain healthy, resilient forests and improve wildlife habitat.

We have concerns with Section 502 "Management of Indian forest land authorized to include related National Forest system land and public land," which fails to recognize the authority of the state fish and wildlife agencies to manage fish and wildlife on Federal forest land designated as Tribal forest land. We are committed to working closely with your staff to resolve this so that the authorities of all three sovereign governments are appropriately acknowledged and respected.

Thank you for your continued leadership. We look forward to working with you and other Senate leaders on these issues to pass meaningful legislation that gets signed into law this year.

Sincerely,

American Fisheries Society
American Sportfishing Association
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Boone and Crockett Club
Catch A Dream Foundation
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Conservation Force
Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports
Delta Waterfowl Foundation
Houston Safari Club
Masters of Foxhounds Association
Mule Deer Foundation
National Association of Forest Service Retirees
National Wild Turkey Federation
Orion-The Hunter's Institute
Phycological Society of America
Public Lands Foundation
Quality Deer Management Association
Ruffed Grouse Society
The Wildlife Society
Tread Lightly!
Wild Sheep Foundation
Wildlife Forever
Wildlife Management Institute
Wildlife Mississippi