

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 5, 2014

**Don't Let Wildfires Burn up Our Budget**

Dear Colleague:

We invite you to cosponsor the **Wildfire Disaster Funding Act of 2014**. This bill will end the destructive cycle of fire borrowing to fund wildfire suppression activities and would provide land management agencies with the tools to improve forest health and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire on our public lands.

As members who represent districts where wildfires occur every summer, we have seen the impact of catastrophic wildfires firsthand. We have also seen where preventative measures like removing hazardous fuels dramatically decrease the cost of a fire season, both in terms of taxpayer dollars and lives and property lost.

Unfortunately, providing adequate funding for hazardous fuels removal cannot reduce the risk of catastrophic fire if that money never makes it to the ground. When fire costs exceed the agency's fire budget, that agency is forced to borrow from hazardous fuels reduction and other accounts to pay for fire suppression. Robbing these accounts means that the Forest Service has fewer resources available for forest management, so fires get worse and suppression costs end up devouring the agency's budget.

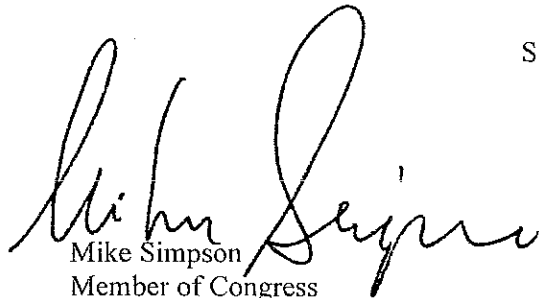
It makes more sense to prevent wildfires before they start than to fight them once they are out of control. Unfortunately, the way we currently budget for fire has created a devastating cycle of fire borrowing that is costing taxpayers and destroying our forests. Federal fire suppression spending has increased substantially over the past 20 years—in the mid 1980's, 70% of the Forest Service's budget was dedicated to actually managing the national forests. Today, that number is a dismal 30%.


**The Wildfire Disaster Funding Act aims to end the destructive cycle of fire borrowing by treating catastrophic wildfires like similar major natural disasters such as floods and hurricanes.** Under the bill, routine wildland firefighting costs, which make up about 70% of the cost of wildfire suppression, would be funded through the normal budgeting and appropriations process. The true emergency fire events, which represent about 1% of wildland fires but make up 30% of costs, would be treated like similar major natural disasters and funded under disaster programs.

We need to make a change to the way we budget for fires. This bill will allow us to continue to fight fires without crippling our ability to prevent future ones from burning out of control.

To cosponsor or for more information, please contact Malisah Small (Simpson's office, [malisah.small@mail.house.gov](mailto:malisah.small@mail.house.gov)) or Chris Huckleberry (Schrader's office, [chris.huckleberry@mail.house.gov](mailto:chris.huckleberry@mail.house.gov)).

Sincerely,

  
Mike Simpson  
Member of Congress

  
Kurt Schrader  
Member of Congress