

September 16, 2013

The Honorable Harold Rogers  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Michael K. Simpson  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James P. Moran  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Lowey, Chairman Simpson, and Ranking Member Moran:

The undersigned organizations appreciate the support shown for our nation's forests and communities by the House Appropriations Committee in their proposed Continuing Resolution (CR) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2014. We strongly support the proposed reimbursement of \$636 million dollars to cover shortfalls in FY 2013 emergency wildfire suppression at the USDA Forest Service (USFS) and the Department of the Interior (DOI). We are also pleased that the Committee recognizes the importance of the Stewardship Contracting Program, a tool utilized by USFS and DOI to achieve multifaceted management objectives including reducing the future risks of catastrophic wildfire and fostering economic stability in rural economies.

We respectfully request that FY 2013 fire transfers repayments receive the emergency designation proposed in both the House and Senate FY 2014 Interior and Environment Appropriations subcommittee bills. We commend the House Appropriation Committee for recognizing the impacts of these unanticipated emergency expenditures, but we worry that transferring funds from the FY 2014 budget to repay FY 2013 expenses will only further erode the ability of the USFS and DOI to deliver needed forest restoration work and ultimately continue the cycle of budget deficits due to costly wildfire seasons.

The challenges our forests face demand attention now, but we must not lose sight of the future; a long-term solution is needed. Stewardship Contracting is one of many tools that helps the USFS and DOI to achieve short and long-term management objectives. The ability to utilize innovative contracting methods to provide certainty for contractors with multiyear agreements that generate new job opportunities makes reauthorization of Stewardship Contracting critical to promoting forest health and reducing wildfire risks. We respectfully request that the language extending stewardship contracting authorities are maintained in the FY 2014 CR.

As you continue to work with your fellow members in Congress on a CR and FY 2014 budget, please consider changing the current emergency wildfire funding structure. The USFS and DOI need a new

structure that utilizes emergency funds for large fires and that does not come at the expense of other agency programs. Additionally, please consider an extension Stewardship Contracting Authority for a term longer than that specified in the current CR. Forest managers and contractors need as much certainty as possible when making necessary investments to enter into five and ten-year Stewardship Contracting Agreements.

We appreciate your support and the recognition that these two issues are critical to achieving our collective goal of healthy and resilient forests. We look forward to continuing to work with you on these important issues.

Sincerely,

American Forest Foundation  
American Forests  
Federal Forest Resources Coalition  
National Association of Forest Service Retirees  
National Association of State Foresters  
National Ski Areas Association  
Ruffed Grouse Society  
Society of American Foresters  
Sustainable Northwest  
The Nature Conservancy