

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 12, 2020

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,  
and Related Agencies  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,  
and Related Agencies  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Udall:

As you work to develop future appropriations bills, we request that you include funding for the United States Forest Service (USFS) to rehabilitate and repair federal lands affected by wildfires.

The West continues to face one of its worst fire seasons ever, with the National Interagency Fire Center estimating that over 47,000 fires have consumed more than 8.5 million acres. Over two-thirds of the affected acreage is on federal land and almost 4 million, or 45 percent, is U.S. Forest Service land. Significant wildfires affected Forest Service land in Colorado, Oregon, Wyoming, and elsewhere.

As fire crews across the West work to contain the remaining fires, post-fire recovery is at the forefront of our constituents' minds. Our states face an uphill battle to restore land, water, infrastructure, and ecosystems. In the long-term, recovery will require the U.S. Forest Service to invest in rehabilitation on National Forest System lands, including reforestation, repairing trails and facilities, restoring habitat, and other measures. These long-term rehabilitation efforts are vital to our economy in the West and the U.S. Forest Service's partnership is crucial.

However, we are concerned that the U.S. Forest Service lacks sufficient funding for long-term rehabilitation and recovery. While both the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Forest Service have authority to fund short-term stabilization, the U.S. Forest Service lacks the authority to use suppression funds for long-term burned area rehabilitation and recovery. As a result, the Forest Service must either divert funding from other programs or leave important recovery projects undone. Therefore, we ask that you include funding, and any necessary direction, for the U.S. Forest Service to perform long-term wildfire recovery and rehabilitation.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and we look forward to working with you.

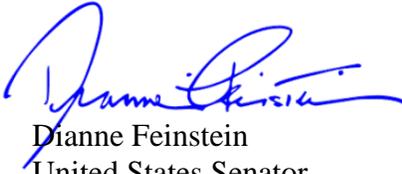
Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Cory Gardner  
United States Senator