



# What To Do About Wildfires

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## 59 Members, One Voice

- NASF represents State and Territorial Forester interests by influencing forest policy and leading efforts to optimize social, economic, and environmental benefits of trees and forests.





# Fire in the United States

- 53,798 wildfires reported from January 1 through October 30, 2015
- 75,000+ communities at risk
- State wildfire control, prevention, protection and management costs totaled \$1.7 billion in FY14
- Since 2000 at least 10 states have had their largest fires on record



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# Fire in the United States

- Fire seasons are on average 78 days longer than in the 1970s
- Fire 6% of USFS budget in 1995, 52%+ now – resulting in a 39% reduction in non-fire personnel and less forest management to prevent/minimize fire



# Key Drivers of Fire and Costs

- Extended drought
- Insects and disease
- Constraints limiting preventative mgt. (timber harvesting, prescribed burning)
- Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) development!



# Transferring Costs

- When suppression funds are exceeded, budget shortfalls are covered by transferring funds
- Federal funds committed to states are de-obligated
- Hurts agency ability to deliver on mission
- Personnel reduced



## State Impact Examples

- Connecticut lost \$20K in Forest Legacy Administration funding for easement monitoring – ripple effect across the agency as full-time staff shifted to work that was to be performed with temporary help
- Declining USFS State & Private Forestry program funds to states that support public safety, fire prevention/suppression, and active forest management



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## USFS S&PF Programs

- USFS funding support to states is now only 5% of overall USFS budget (5% to support the 59% of U.S. forestland at risk to development and state/local first responders to wildfire)
- State Fire Assistance (SFA)/Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) trained 102,000 firefighters and assisted 11,900 communities (FY14)





## What Can We Do?

- Urge Congress to pass the bi-partisan Wildfire Disaster Funding Act (HR-167, 145 co-sponsors) or similar – treat fire like other natural disasters
- Support state and USFS budgets that support forest mgt., landowner assistance, and state/local wildfire activities – prevention & early response is key (pay now or more later)
- Promote Community Wildfire Prevention Plans and all community preparedness programs (Firewise, Ready Set Go!, etc.)
- Explore insurance, zoning, tax, outreach, and other incentives/education for homeowners in the WUI
- Enhance NASF/NCSL/NGA communication



# Thank You!

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