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COMMITTEES
AGING
ARMED SERVICES
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

March 3, 2022

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Chairman
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Merkley and Ranking Member Murkowski:

Thank you for your continued leadership on the Senate Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee. As you continue work on the Fiscal Year 2022 Senate Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, I respectfully request that you direct the Forest Service to support long-term stewardship contracts as a tool to combat dangerous wildfires on Forest Service land in the western United States.

Throughout Arizona, dangerous wildfires on Forest Service land, often caused because of overgrowth encouraged by decades of excessive wildfire suppression on the part of the Forest Service, have threatened countless Arizona communities and caused millions in damages. To address this challenge, the Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI) includes more than 30 stakeholder groups and aims to restore approximately 2.4 million acres of ponderosa pine and mixed conifer forests on portions of the Apache-Sitgreaves, Coconino, Kaibab, and Tonto National Forests in Northern Arizona over the next two decades, through a 20-year stewardship contract as a part of the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program.

These efforts are critical to reducing Arizona's wildfire risks, and therefore I urge the committee to encourage the Forest Service enter into such agreements as a way to reduce wildfire risk, while reducing costs through innovative public-private partnerships, like 4FRI.

Thank you for your important work and leadership. I appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

