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**Your Assistance is Needed:**

As you know the cost of wildland firefighting for the federal land management agencies has been increasing as weather, fuel conditions, shortage of firefighting resources and other factors have increased fire size, resource damage, loss of homes and watershed losses in recent years.

When the cost of firefighting exceeds the agency's fires fighting budget the agencies have to use their operational budgets to cover the extra costs. This requirement has devastated agency programs such as forest health, recreation, wildlife habitat improvement, watershed protection, fire prevention and environmental research. It also seriously cut assistance to the states for forest and range management an fire protection and forest health programs on state and private lands.

A Fire Suppression Funding Coalition, comprised of major national and regional conservation organizations, has developed a statement of principles for solving this critical issue that will be shared with members of Congress as they work to resolve the funding problem. We would ask that you review the principles and encourage your members of Congress to consider these principles as they work to resolve the problem of funding firefighting for the federal agencies.

The cost of fighting wildland fires is high, but the values at risk in terms of threats to human life, natural resources, homes and businesses and the economy are much greater. For example, in the January 2009 Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition's Economic Stimulus Program paper, the economic value of water from the National Forests is listed as \$29 Billion per year, and the value of recreation from these lands is at least \$7.49 billion and adds \$98 billion to the Nation's GDP.

The National Association of Forest Service Retirees would appreciate your support of the principles presented in the attached paper through encouragement to your members of Congress to resolve this serious fire protection problem.

**John F. Marker, Northwest Director  
National Association of Forest Service Retirees**

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*NAFSR is a private, independent, non-partisan, non-profit association, whose members believe in the U.S. Forest Service and its Missions! Members dedicated their careers to protecting, developing and managing the nation's National Forest System lands and advising and cooperating here and around the world on such matters.*