

The Honorable Deb Haaland
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20250

January 30, 2023

Dear Secretary Haaland and Secretary Vilsack:

The Wildfire Resilience Coalition (WRC), made up of the undersigned organizations, seeks to help federal, Tribal, state, local, and private partners realize transformational change in how wildfire risk is managed in the United States. A critical component of this work will be to leverage the investments and authorities for wildfire resilience in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) to that end.

We are grateful that both USDA and DOI recognize that a bold paradigm shift is needed to change the trajectory of the wildland fire crisis the nation faces. Effectively building resilience to the inevitable wildfire will require close partnership with local communities, states, Tribal governments, and actors across both the public and private sectors to restore forests at a scale not previously contemplated. To achieve that needed scale, the WRC supports increasing the pace of scientifically informed management, including thinning and controlled burning, with corresponding investments in community preparedness.

Our members include key stakeholders, partners, and implementers who are critical to successful implementation across all lands and is intended to offer a focal point for engagement among diverse interests within the administration, Congress, and policy and opinion leaders.

The members of the WRC aim to both support the leaders of federal land and fire management agencies as they implement this surge in funding in a way that breaks from the status quo and offer a platform for shared accountability. Improving implementation of these investments requires better coordination with partners on shared outcomes, more transparency in prioritization of investments, and expedited implementation of science-based mitigation measures. Timely, but ultimately effective, implementation of key IIJA and IRA provisions are necessary to ensure continued Congressional and public support for the long-term investments required to protect communities, restore healthy forests and rangelands, maintain important source watershed functions, sustain abundant fish and wildlife populations, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from unnaturally large and severe wildfires.

We urge you to encourage key agency leaders to leverage our collective interest and experience for the successful implementation of these new and additional resources and use the Coalition as a barometer to gauge progress towards that needed paradigm shift. We look forward to working with you and your staff to achieve our mutual goal of landscape resilience.

Sincerely

American Forest Resource Council
American Forests
Federal Forest Resource Coalition
Forest Guild
Intertribal Timber Council
Megafire Action
National Association of Counties
National Association of Forest Service Retirees
National Association of State Foresters
Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition
The Nature Conservancy
The Watershed Research and Training Center
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Western Environmental Law Center

For more information regarding this letter or members of the Wildfire Resilience Coalition, please contact Tom Fry, wildfireresilience@gmail.com

cc:

Joan Mooney, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy Management and Budget, Department of the Interior
Homer Wilkes, Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, Department of Agriculture
Meryl Harrell, Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, Department of Agriculture
Randy Moore, Chief, USDA Forest Service
Brian Ferebee, Chief Executive of Intergovernmental Relations, USDA Forest Service
Jaelith Hall-Rivera, Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry, USDA Forest Service
Chris French, Deputy Chief for National Forest System, USDA Forest Service
Jeff Rupert, Director of the Office of Wildland Fire, Department of the Interior