



The Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition
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ruralvoicescoalition.org

Honorable Rodney P. Frelinghuysen
U.S. House of Representatives
2306 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-3011

Honorable Nita M. Lowey
U.S. House of Representatives
2365 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

July 17, 2017

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Lowey,

As Director of the Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition (RVCC), I am writing to express concern regarding Hazardous Fuel funding in the House Interior appropriations bill.

As proposed, the bill supports the transfer of the Hazardous Fuels program from Wildland Fire Management to the National Forest System (NFS). While this may seem like a minor administrative shift that promotes efficiency, it would instead have significant consequences for community-based and regional partners throughout the West.

The administration's FY18 proposed budget describes Hazardous Fuels treatments as occurring exclusively on NFS lands. However, that characterization is misleading and grossly oversimplifies the breadth of the program. Many community organizations in the West – including the Coalition I represent – work through cooperative agreements with State and Private Forestry to accomplish the goals of the Hazardous Fuels program across public and private lands, extending the capacity and effectiveness of the U.S. Forest Service.

The team administering Hazardous Fuels is adept at getting funding to the ground efficiently and effectively, and thinking creatively about partnerships that complement their traditional hazardous fuels treatment work. Shifting this program to NFS could greatly affect hard-earned partner relationships, as well as lead to substantial ecological and economic impacts in rural communities. This measure would diminish the effectiveness of community wildfire protection efforts across public and private lands in the west.

The Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition promotes healthy landscapes and vibrant rural communities throughout the American West. Our participants come from all western states and include diverse representatives from regional and national organizations; community-based natural resource advocates; conservationists; business owners; contractors; elected county officials; and landowners, among others.

Please ensure that the hazardous fuels program remains under Wildland Fire Management.

Additionally, please ensure that the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program and the Legacy Roads and Trails program is funded at the authorized funding level of \$40 million and \$50 million, respectively. These are important restoration programs that work with partners to improve forest health, and are often funds that are leveraged with non-federal dollars.

Sincerely,



Karen Hardigg
Director, RVCC

On Behalf of the RVCC Leadership Team

Blackfoot Challenge, MT
Ecosystem Workforce Program, OR
Forest Stewards Guild, NM
Mt Adams Resource Stewards, WA
Salmon Valley Stewardship, ID

Siuslaw Institute, OR
Sustainable Northwest, OR
Sustainable SE Partnership, AK
Wallowa Resources, OR
Watershed Research & Training Center, CA