

June 24, 2021

The Honorable Jeffrey A. Merkley
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
531 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Merkley and Ranking Member Murkowski:

As you work on the FY 2022 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we urge you to restore the historically fully funded Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP) to the fully authorized amount, divided evenly between the U.S. Department of the Interior Wildland Fire Management budget and the USDA Forest Service Wildland Fire Management budget.

In 2020, we saw yet another historic year of wildfires, with the largest and most deadly wildfires coming late in the season, causing mass evacuations, loss of life and property, and smoke blanketing urban areas with smoke for weeks. Unfortunately, this year was part of long term trend. Across western and southern states, the wildfire season is growing longer and wildfires are becoming more severe. Congress must ensure that fire and forest managers, emergency responders, and communities have cutting edge science to tackle this growing problem. The JFSP funds the best scientists in the nation to conduct critical research on the science, management, and policy of wildland fire. There is no other significant source of funding for applied fire-related research, making the JFSP uniquely valuable and the only one of its kind.

Based on direction from Congress, the JFSP is a partnership of six federal land management agencies that work together to identify and address the most pressing challenges of managing wildland fuels, fires, and fire-impacted ecosystems. JFSP allows the Forest Service and Department of the Interior to allocate competitive funding to researchers that use applied, timely research to tackle wildfire problems, and relay that information to fire and land managers and policy makers.

With a relatively limited budget, the Joint Fire Science Program gets a significant return on investment, and has improved efficacy and accountability of agency research and management by directing university and federal researchers to address topics of critical importance. However, in FY 2018, JFSP funding was cut in half, which eliminated funding for critical fire science research under the program.

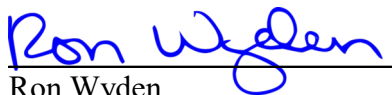
Past JFSP projects have helped fire fighters understand operational safety and efficacy, cost drivers, and fire behavior, and have helped communities understand fire and smoke impacts. The program supports regional Fire Science Consortia that disseminate science to management and practitioner communities, which has proven valuable in restoring fire-adapted landscapes and promoting fire-adapted communities. With reduced funding in recent years, the JFSP is only funding the Fire Science Consortia and has almost entirely stopped funding any new research.

We urge you to restore the funding for the scientific research that has historically been conducted under the JFSP and that supports the efforts of the Consortia. We look forward to working with the Subcommittee in the coming months to ensure that this vital program is fully funded for FY 2022 to

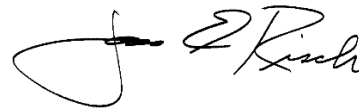
support our nation's urgent need to address the challenges of fire management and the threat it poses to our forests, grasslands, watersheds, and communities.

We are grateful for your leadership in this arena and for continuing to ensure science-driven, effective, and accountable land management.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



James E. Risch
United States Senator



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator

/s/ Mike Crapo

Mike Crapo
United States Senator

/s/ Kevin Cramer

Kevin Cramer
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator