Conservation Dollars are Being Burned

The practice of fire borrowing means that the Forest Service and other land management agencies do not have the resources necessary to effectively manage existing forestry-management, wildlife conservation, and wildfire prevention programs.

Current spending levels for suppression activities are no longer sustainable, and land management agencies need a more stable budget strategy to effectively manage existing programs and resume congressionally mandated activities.

Shifting excess fire suppression costs away from the Forest Service budget would enable the agency to return to a state of budgetary stability.

These budgetary changes would restore appropriated dollars and congressional intent to programs vital to wildlife conservation and wildfire prevention.

Since 1985, the cost of wildfire suppression has increased at an average annual rate of 22.34%.

The length of fire seasons has increased by two and a half months since the 1970’s.

Wildland Fire Management Costs Account for More of the Forest Service Budget Every Year

1991

Wildland Fire Management (13%)
Non-Fire Forest Service Programs (87%)

2012

Wildland Fire Management (47%)
Non-Fire Forest Service Programs (53%)
Between 2004 and 2012, the cost of fire suppression required an average of $375.9 million above appropriated levels, forcing the Forest Service to borrow the remainder from other important programs.

- $1.2 billion in average annual appropriations between 2004-2012
- An average of $375.9 million was borrowed annually from other accounts between 2004-2012

1% of wildfires account for 30% of suppression costs

If suppression costs for the most extreme wildfires (1%) were paid for using federal emergency dollars, the Forest Service could return to a state of budgetary stability and have enough appropriated dollars to resume its other functions.

Wildfire Disaster Funding Act

H.R. 3992 and S. 1875 would put an end to the practice of fire borrowing and restore budgetary stability to the U.S. Forest Service without increasing federal spending.

This legislation would:

- Classify extreme wildfires as natural disasters, enabling the use of federal emergency dollars to fund excessive suppression costs
- Prevent disruptive funding transfers from essential non-fire programs, restoring functionality to vital forestry-management, fire prevention, and conservation programs under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Forest Service
- Introduce clear criteria on what suppression activities merit funding under the disaster cap

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