The Honorable Dianne Feinstein Chairman Interior Appropriations Subcommittee 131 Dirksen Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510 The Honorable Lamar Alexander Ranking Member Interior Appropriations Subcommittee 124 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510

Re: FY2010 Interior Appropriations for Hazardous Fuels Reduction and the Forest Landscape Restoration Program

Dear Chairman Feinstein and Ranking Member Alexander:

The undersigned organizations wish to express support for FY 2010 funding of the USDA Forest Service hazardous fuels reduction and forest landscape restoration programs. Our organizations are actively engaged in collaborative projects that restore forest health, support wood-using businesses, and provide local jobs. We are pleased that the President's budget provides an overall funding increase for the Forest Service. However, we are disappointed that funding for hazardous fuels reduction is decreased and that no funding is provided for forest landscape restoration. We hope the Senate will make changes to provide funding for these important programs.

The escalating cost of wildfire suppression is one symptom of the poor health of the nation's forests. Suppression costs routinely exceed \$1 billion per year, leaving little funding for forest treatments that remove overgrown brush and trees. An increase in hazardous fuels reduction funding is an upfront investment in forest health that will save taxpayer expenditures on fire suppression in the long-run.

Recent project selection for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding demonstrated that Forest Service field units have many more fuels treatment projects ready to implement than can be funded. The field response is a strong indicator that the Forest Service will treat additional lands and prepare more NEPA analyses in FY 2010 if funds for hazardous fuels reduction are increased over FY 2009 enacted levels.

Paying for millions of acres of fuels treatment remains a fundamental challenge to addressing the nation's forest health and fire crisis. Economic utilization of woody material from fuels treatments is not viable in many parts of the nation under existing technology and markets. Yet communities need jobs, forests are overgrown, and expensive wildfires are draining \$1 billion per year from the Forest Service budget.

The Forest Landscape Restoration Act was recently authorized for \$40 million to be competitively awarded to large landscapes across the nation so they receive sustained

funding for fuels treatments that implement a collaboratively developed and science-based ecological restoration plan. The selected projects will create jobs and provide forest byproducts and fiber for local business use while reducing catastrophic wildfire risks in fire-prone ecosystems. We urge the Senate to provide sufficient funding to initiate a credible national program in FY 2010 that can be increased to the authorized level in subsequent years.

We appreciate the leadership of the U.S. Senate to advance proactive solutions to restore health to our nation's forests and mitigate the wildfire funding problem.

Sincerely,

American Forests

American Forest Resources Council

Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council, Oregon

Arizona Forest Restoration Products

Association for Fire Ecology Southeast

Buena Vista Biomass LLC, California

Calaveras Healthy Product Impact Solutions, California

California Ski Industry Association

Center for Biological Diversity

Central Florida Prescribed Fire Council

Coastal Bend Prescribed Burn Association, Texas

Coconino County Board of Supervisors, Arizona

Colorado Forest Restoration Institute

Conservation Northwest, Washington

Council of Western State Foresters

Defenders of Wildlife

Flathead Economic Policy Center, Montana

Florida Native Plant Society

Fire Safe Council of Nevada County, California

Forest Energy Corporation, Arizona and Colorado

Forest Futures, LLC, Arizona

Forest Guild, New Mexico

Four Corners Institute, New Mexico

Framing Our Community, Idaho

Friends and Volunteers of Refuges

Front Range Fuels Treatment Roundtable, Colorado

Grand Canyon Trust, Arizona

Janicki Energy, L.L.C., Washington

Janicki Logging & Construction, Washington

Lake County Resource Initiative, Oregon

Lassen County Fire Safe Council, Inc., California

Lemhi County Economic Development Association, Idaho

Malheur Lumber Company, Oregon

Mt. Adams Resource Stewards, Washington

National Association of Forest Service Retirees

National Coalition of Prescribed Fire Councils

National Ski Areas Association

The Nature Conservancy

New Mexico Forest Industry Association

Nokuse Plantation, Florida

North Carolina Coastal Land Trust

North Florida Prescribed Fire Council

Northwest Connections, Montana

Northwest Natural Resource Group

Northern Arizona Wood Products Association

Primus Forestry Management LLC, Florida

The Resource Innovation Group, Oregon

Salmon Valley Stewardship, Idaho

Satilla Riverkeeper, Georgia

SBS Wood Shavings, New Mexico

Sequoia Riverlands Trust, California

Sierra Business Council, California

Sierra Nevada Construction Company, California

Siuslaw Institute, Oregon

Society for Range Management

Society of American Foresters

South Central Oregon Economic Development District

South Florida Interagency Fire Management Council

Southeast Carbon Management, Florida

SouthWest Riverside County FireSafe Council, California

Sustainable Northwest

Swan Ecosystem Center, Montana

TSS Consultants, California

Wallowa Resources, Oregon

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Washington Forest Protection Association

Watershed Research and Training Center, California

Western Governors Association

CC: Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee