

July 2, 2026

The Honorable Roger F. Wicker,
Chairman, Senate Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
228 Russell Senate Office Building

The Honorable Jack Reed,
Ranking Member, Senate Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
228 Russell Senate Office Building

RE: Support for the Inclusion of S. 1462 - Fix Our Forests Act in the FY27 NDAA

Dear Chairman Wicker and Ranking Member Reed,

America's wildfire crisis is a growing threat to military readiness, critical national security infrastructure, and the availability of National Guard and Reserve forces at home and abroad. **We, as organizations advocating to increase wildfire resilience, write in strong support of including S. 1462, the Fix Our Forests Act (FOFA), as an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2027 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).**

The connection between domestic wildfire and military affairs is not new. During World War II, Army paratroopers were stationed on the West Coast as firefighting auxiliaries in the event of enemy-set blazes,[1] and the War Advertising Council launched the Smokey Bear campaign as a wartime fire prevention measure.[2] Recent wargaming efforts have modeled the effects of catastrophic wildfires on military mobilization and domestic political will to intervene in crises abroad.[3] As fire seasons lengthen into fire years and megafires become more frequent and severe,[4] the strategic consequences of inaction compound with each passing season.

A substantial and growing share of U.S. military installations face high or very high wildfire hazard exposure, placing critical infrastructure, training ranges, and operational

[1]Wildfire Today. (2021, February). Triple Nickles: Paratroopers who fought wildfires during World War II. https://wildfiretoday.com/triple-nickles-paratroopers-who-fought-wildfires-during-world-war-ii/

[2]Blakemore, E. (2019, August). How Fear of a WWII Invasion Gave Rise to Smokey Bear. History. https://www.history.com/articles/smokey-bear-wwii-origins

[3]RAND Corporation. (2026, May). Preparing the homeland for great-power conflict: West Rook. https://www.rand.org/pubs/corporate_pubs/CPA4890-1.html

[4]Cattau, M. E., Wessman, C., Mahood, A., & Balch, J. K. (2020). Anthropogenic and lightning-started fires are becoming larger and more frequent over a longer season length in the U.S.A. Global Ecology and Biogeography, 29(4), 668–681. https://doi.org/10.1111/geb.13058

continuity at dozens of facilities at direct risk.[5] A 2019 Department of Defense analysis found that nearly half (36 of 79) of assessed Air Force, Army, and Navy mission assurance priority installations were vulnerable to wildfire.[6] Documented incidents on or adjacent to military installation boundaries have forced training suspensions, diverted base operating budgets to emergency expenditures, and directly degraded force readiness.[7] The threat is both direct—to personnel, equipment, and infrastructure—and indirect: wildfires in proximity to bases regularly tie up aircraft, personnel, and staging resources that would otherwise be committed to primary missions.

Wildfire activations also strain National Guard and Reserve capacity for other missions. Use of National Guard and Reserve units for wildland firefighting has become a near-annual occurrence, with activations across both Army and Air Force components in 23 of the last 25 years.[8] Defense and security experts have raised concerns that these repeated activations leave units unavailable to support critical overseas missions, especially during periods of elevated geopolitical risk.[9] If the structural conditions driving the megafire crisis are not addressed, these effects on availability and readiness will continue to grow.

Dual-use technology investments, which would be boosted and better coordinated under S. 1462, advance both defense and civilian wildfire readiness. Defense investments in emerging technologies have shown their clear dual-use potential for wildfire. DARPA's ALIAS autonomous aircraft program is being tested at Texas testbeds specifically for wildfire applications,[10] and wildfire sensing platforms have already been deployed at installations including Kirtland Air Force Base.[11] Section 303 of the Fix Our Forests Act creates a multi-agency public-private wildfire technology testbed program modeled after the Defense Innovation Unit, designed to advance key emerging technologies through a competitive pilot structure. These investments carry the potential to simultaneously advance military readiness objectives and materially improve civilian wildfire detection and response capabilities.

S. 1462 tackles the challenges essential to scaling up effective wildfire resilience: landscape-scale planning, permitting reform to accelerate fuels reduction projects on federal lands, technology adoption for improved decision-making and early detection, and building community resilience. Taken together, these provisions will reduce the wildfire burden that

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[5]Narayanan, A. (2021, September). An enterprise-wide look at Department of the Air Force installation exposure to natural hazards. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RBA523-1.html; National Conference of State Legislatures. (2025, March). Military installation resilience: Wildfire. https://www.ncsl.org/military-and-veterans-affairs/military-installation-resilience-wildfire

[6]U.S. Department of Defense. (2019, January). Report on effects of a changing climate to the Department of Defense. https://media.defense.gov/2019/jan/29/2002084200/-1/-1/1/climate-change-report-2019.pdf

[7]U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2014). GAO-14-446. https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-14-446.pdf

[8]National Interagency Fire Center. (n.d.). Military support. https://www.nifc.gov/fire-information/military-support

[9]Ellison, T. (2025, January). Devastating Los Angeles wildfires highlight national security risks too. https://www.preventionweb.net/news/devastating-los-angeles-wildfires-highlight-national-security-risks-too

[10]Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. (2024, November). Texas, DARPA to establish testbed to use autonomy to fight wildfires. https://www.darpa.mil/news/2025/texas-darpa-alias-testbed

[11]Roza, D. (n.d.). Kirtland Air Force Base wildfire sensor. Air & Space Forces Magazine. https://www.airandspaceforces.com/kirtland-air-force-base-wildfire-sensor/

is increasingly driving the national security consequences. S. 1462 is well-suited for inclusion in the NDAA as a direct investment in addressing those conditions.

We respectfully urge the Committee to support inclusion of S. 1462, the Fix Our Forests Act, in the Fiscal Year 2027 National Defense Authorization Act.

cc: Members of the Senate Armed Services Committee

Sincerely,

Alliance for Wildfire Resilience
American Conservation Coalition Action
American Forests
American Property Casualty Insurance Association
Association of Firetech Innovation
Bipartisan Policy Center Action
BuildStrong America
C3 Solutions Action
Citizens Climate Lobby
City of Flagstaff, AZ
Climate and Wildfire Institute
Coconino County, Arizona
Convective Capital
Earth Force
Edison Electric Institute
Environmental Defense Fund
Federation of American Scientists
FireWERX
Forterra
Grassroots Wildland Firefighters
Inclusive Abundance Action
International Association of Fire Chiefs
Keep Tahoe Blue
Megafire Action
Muon Space
National Association of State Foresters
National Wild Turkey Federation
Pano AI
Perimeter Solutions
Prime Minute
Property and Environment Research Center
Rain Industries
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition
Spatial Informatics Group - Natural Asset Laboratory
Spatial Informatics Group, LLC
Tall Timbers Research Station
Team Rubicon
The Breakthrough Institute
The Nature Conservancy
Town of Tusayan
United Aerial Firefighters Association
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
Vibrant Planet
Western Fire Chiefs Association