

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

September 16, 2019

Chief Vicki Christiansen  
United States Forest Service  
United States Department of Agriculture  
Sidney R. Yates Federal Building  
201 14<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, DC 20227

Dear Chief Christiansen:

We write with regard to the 2019 Large Air Tanker (LAT) Call When Needed (CWN) solicitation, which was originally issued in July, 2018 and closed in April, 2019. Despite the solicitation closing several months ago, no awards have been made.

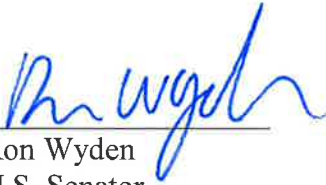
As you are aware, CWN awards allow the Forest Service to put approved aircraft into service when those aircraft are needed, and do not require the Forest Service to pay for those aircraft when they are not needed. We are particularly concerned that LAT companies have responded to this solicitation in good faith, but have been left in limbo now for several months due to inaction by the United States Forest Service.


The failure to award the CWN contracts has two immediate detrimental effects on the Forest Service:

- First, there are several next generation LATs, fully certified and qualified, potentially available to the US Forest Service that currently are not accessible to the agency;
- Second, we understand several of the next generation LATs have rates that are lower, in some cases significantly lower, than the current LAT aircraft being called on from the previous CWN solicitation. The failure to award new CWN contracts, particularly for LATs that are less expensive to operate, may be causing the Forest Service to overspend on this resource.

While the 2019 fire season has been less active than years previous, good fortunes can change overnight. We urge you to award the 2019 Call When Needed solicitation so that the Forest Service has access to all available tools in its wildfire suppression toolbox.

Sincerely,

  
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Ron Wyden  
U.S. Senator

  
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Jeffrey A. Merkley  
U.S. Senator

  
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Greg Walden  
U.S. Representative