

July 13, 2012

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

CC: Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack
Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar
Acting Director, Bureau of Land Management, Mike Pool

Dear Mr. President:

I write today to express my deep concern regarding large fires burning in Oregon and to ask for your assistance. In a matter of days, these fires have burned over 600,000 acres and Oregon is now home to the largest fire in the nation, the Long Draw fire in southeastern Oregon. Alone, the Long Draw fire has burned over 500,000 acres. Several communities in my state are threatened, as well as numerous structures, livestock, sagebrush habitat and wild horses, by this and other fires sweeping across Oregon's Bureau of Land Management lands. I write to ask that you ensure that adequate resources are allocated to fight these fires. Additionally, I need your assistance to ensure help is provided so those affected get the assistance they need.

Most urgently at the moment, the fires burning in Oregon are in desperate need of Federal resources to help battle and contain these fires, which are exhibiting extreme wildfire behavior and are thus very dangerous and advancing swiftly. At the time that the fires broke out, many of Oregon's firefighting crews were dispatched around the nation fighting other fires. While efforts are underway to bring crews back to Oregon, I want to make sure you are aware of the urgency of the situation and the need for national resources to fight this fire. Community volunteers and local fire crews have battled these fires bravely, but I ask you to ensure that there are adequate Federal resources – including crews, air tankers, helicopters and engines. As the Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests, I have long pushed to ensure that there are sufficient resources available to fight fires each season. I have been assured repeatedly, through testimony, phone calls, and correspondence from agency leaders, that the Federal agencies have what we need to fight these fires. Unfortunately, when there are numerous large fires burning at once across the nation, and with threatening weather predicted, I am worried that resources are, in fact, strapped. I ask you to make certain that collectively there are enough critical Federal

resources available to fight multiple very large fires at once. I stand prepared to be of assistance in any way I can.

Resources are crucial to this fight; however, resources do not only include fire crews, engines and aviation assets. Cattle and wild horses are being forced off their grazing land with no pasture available for them. Ranchers have already reported losses to their herd from encroaching flames. Additionally, ranchers are in desperate need of assistance in finding alternate feed for their livestock, now that the public lands on which they had grazing permits are no longer available due to these devastating fires. It appears that the Bureau of Land Management has few alternate grazing lands available in the area, while hay is an unexpected cost at a time when budgets are tight. I hope you will work with me and Oregon's Governor on providing a disaster declaration for the affected counties, and help me find all potential avenues of assistance for the affected ranchers. My staff and I have already begun discussions with USDA personnel to explore possible options for assistance, including looking at opening up Conservation Reserve Program lands in Oregon and other assistance programs. I urge your help in ensuring that all possible avenues of assistance are on the table.

At a time when our nation is fighting multiple very large fires, resources are of the utmost importance. Crews, engines and aviation assets must be appropriately directed to help fight these fires. Now that Oregon has become the home of the largest fire in the nation, I request that these resources and attention be directed to Oregon. Additionally, ranchers and others affected need emergency and disaster assistance to help off-set some of the losses costs incurred, including those to livestock herds and their grazing lands. I am available to further discuss this matter with you either in person or over the phone. Thank you for your concern and assistance in addressing this important issue.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator