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California Supports Fix to Federal Fire Funding

FY2018 Omnibus Spending Bill Provides Federal Partners with Funding to Address Wildfire Threats and Suppression Costs

Sacramento, CA – The California Natural Resources Agency released the following statements from Secretary John Laird and California Forestry and Fire Protection Director Ken Pimlott on the FY 2018 omnibus spending bill approved by Congress and signed by President Trump.

“The federal government’s wildfire funding fix is welcome news and a step in the right direction,” said California Secretary for Natural Resources John Laird. “California and other Western states have championed a federal wildfire funding solution because the routine practice of borrowing from funds intended for management of forests and public lands is not sustainable.”

“With an estimated 129 million dead and dying trees in the Sierra Nevada – over two-thirds of them on federal lands – the federal budget should reflect the reality of fire risk, the costs of fire suppression, and the unprecedented tree mortality across the landscape,” said Chief Ken Pimlott, CAL FIRE director and California’s state forester. “The intensity of catastrophic wildfire will continue to be a significant threat throughout California and the West for the foreseeable future. Our federal partners need resources to face this new normal.”

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue reported on September 14, 2017, that wildland fire suppression costs for the fiscal year exceeded \$2 billion, making it the most expensive year on record. He also noted that U.S. Forest Service (USFS) spending on fire suppression in recent years has gone from 15 percent of the budget to 55 percent, making it necessary for the USFS to keep borrowing from funds intended for forest management.

The practice of “fire borrowing” affects crucial fire-prevention work such as thinning forests and clearing underbrush to restore healthy and resilient forests. The practice not only disrupts the federal government’s ability to effectively manage its own lands, but also negatively impacts state budgets and the work of other land management partners, such as state forestry agencies

and private forests. The problem is magnified by the effects of drought and climate change. Ending the cycle of borrowing from non-fire programs to pay the suppression costs incurred by USFS and DOI is critical to the health of forests and public lands.

Information on California's efforts to address tree mortality and improve forest management can be found [here](#).

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