Wildfire occurrences have increased by 160% since 1985, with an average of 7 million acres burning each year. With this increase in wildfires comes increased cost. In 1985, 15% of the Forest Service’s budget was spent on firefighting. Today, fighting wildfires consumes more than 50% of the Forest Service’s budget.

From FY 2012 to FY 2015 the U. S. Department of Agriculture’s U.S. Forest Service (USFS) was forced to transfer more than $1 billion from programs within the agency to pay for fighting wildfires. In the same three years, the Department of the Interior (DOI) similarly transferred nearly $60 million to cover the cost of fighting fires. This severely limited the abilities of critical forest conservation and management programs.

Strong Demand for Wood Helps Conserve Our Forests and All They Provide

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Cosponsor the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act of 2017 (H.R. 2862) and encourage similar legislation in the Senate. This legislation will create new opportunities and demand for wood products. Specifically it will:

- **Support research and development** to increase the use of wood in building construction, especially tall buildings between 7-15 stories;
- **Authorizes the Tall Wood Building Prize Competition** through the U.S. Department of Agriculture annually for the next five years to encourage the use of wood;
- **Expands the U.S. Forest Service’s Wood Innovation Grant program** to support education, outreach, research and development, including education and assistance for architects and builders to accelerate the use of wood in tall buildings;
- **H.R. 5628 also encourages the retrofitting of existing facilities** located in areas with high unemployment rates.

For more information, contact:
Tristan Daedalus, Policy Director | (202) 870-4656 | tdaedalus@forestfoundation.org
Rita Hite, Executive Vice President | (202) 765-3486 | rhite@forestfoundation.org
Wildfire is not just a Western public lands issue

Eastern states also experience catastrophic wild fires such as the Bugaboo Scrub / Sweat Farm Road Fire in Georgia and Florida and the Evans Road Fire in North Carolina. These fires burned 564,450 and 41,534 acres respectively.

Spending more to fight wildfires means cuts to key programs that help landowners across the country.

- The **Forest Stewardship Program** was cut back from $27.1M in FY13 to only $20M in FY17, meaning less boots-on-the-ground expertise for landowners.

- **Forest Health Protection** programs on Cooperative Lands was at a level of $45.6m in FY14 and 15 but is now struggling with only $39M for FY17 to reduce the increasing spread of disastrous forest pests like sudden oak death, western bark beetle, and mountain pine beetle.

- **Active management work in National Forests** has also been reduced, instead of increased to reduce future fire risk to public lands.

For more information contact:

Tristan Daedalus  
Policy Director  
tdaedalus@forestfoundation.org  
(202) 870-4656

Rita Hite  
Executive Vice President, Woodlands, Policy, and ATFS  
rhite@forestfoundation.org  
(202) 765-3486