

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 16, 2021

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary
United States Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250

Nada Wolff Culver
Acting Director, Bureau of Land
Management
United States Department of the Interior
760 Horizon Drive
Grand Junction, CO 81506

Vicki Christiansen
Chief, United States Forest Service
United States Department of Agriculture
201 14th Street SW
Washington, DC 20227

Dear Secretary Haaland, Secretary Vilsack, Acting Director Culver and Chief Christiansen:

We write concerning the State of Oregon's preparedness needs for the 2021 wildfire season, and the need for continued collaboration between states, local and tribal governments, and federal land managers.

As you are well aware, the 2020 Oregon wildfire season was one of the most destructive seasons on record; destroying thousands of homes, burning over one million acres, and straining communities already battling a historic pandemic. Though many Oregonians are still recovering and rebuilding after last season's wildfires, the 2021 fire season in Oregon has already begun. Drought intensity is projected to continue increasing in the state, elevating the risk that lightning strikes, as well as human caused ignitions, will spark significant fires.

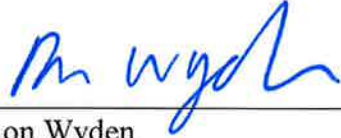
We appreciate the dedicated efforts of the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior to contain and respond to catastrophic wildfires. We urge persistent efforts by each department and agency in three particular areas; additional investments in aviation and other 21st century wildland firefighting technologies like drones and helicopters, coordination with state and local fire response, and a thorough assessment of firefighting capacity to align resource availability with resource needs.

In 2020 there was increased investment in planes to put out fires from above, and it is imperative to continue prioritization of the deployment of aviation and other technologies to keep firefighters safe. We recognize the importance of a strategic and integrated approach to tackle wildfire, and urge your continued partnerships and coordination with state and local firefighting response units. We also acknowledge the capacity challenge federal agencies face. As fire season lasts longer and longer and as fires become more severe, retaining qualified firefighting staff will

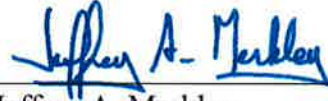
be challenging. We urge a thoughtful and intentional analysis of existing wildland firefighting capacity, so that resources are prioritized accordingly.

We stand ready to support wildfire prevention, response, and recovery for all Oregonians.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator