

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 26, 2024

The Honorable Deb Haaland,  
Secretary, United States Department of Interior  
Tracy Stone-Manning,  
Director, United States Bureau of Land Management  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland and Director Stone-Manning,

Last week, we wrote to the Department of the Interior (DOI) in support of Governor Kotek's request for emergency use authorizations for temporary, alternative grazing areas and flexibility in grazing schedules on BLM-administered lands. As the historically-challenging wildfire season we noted in that letter continues, we write to request additional long term management support to fully recover affected rangelands and maintain the health of these lands for all users.

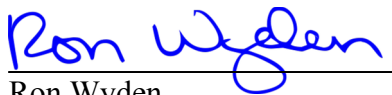
As these infernos are brought under control and the extent of losses and harm are more fully assessed, there is an opportunity for you to support recovery through your authority to provide ongoing, appropriate grazing flexibility and other management support to affected ranchers. In addition, we urge you to concentrate on timely reseeding and other recovery authorities on Department of Interior lands in eastern Oregon as soon as possible to use these fires as a stepping off point to improve ecological health across the landscape. These actions and resources will not only help communities recover, they will reduce the invasive grasses and noxious weeds across eastern Oregon that are degrading landscape health and contributing fuel to these fires.

These megafires have burned well over a million acres of public and private lands, including rural ranches, livestock and grazing allotments. Ranchers are still working to determine their losses, even as surviving, displaced livestock are concentrated in unburnt areas across hundreds of thousands of acres. In addition to our previous letter to the DOI, we have also written to Secretary Vilsack in support of Governor Tina Kotek's request for a Secretarial Disaster Designation. That declaration will make available the Department of Agriculture's disaster program, including authorization of emergency haying and grazing and other potential flexibilities.

Ranchers have been working closely with us for years on range restoration and improvements. Together, we are calling for the opportunity to work with the DOI during recovery on science-based efforts to reduce the impact of invasives with an eye toward more ecologically healthy and resilient landscapes, including but not limited to appropriate reseeding of native plants and flexible grazing practices. Their lives and livelihoods depend on a healthy and functioning range.

We know you have a deep understanding of the significance of these issues and importance of on-the-ground relationships between ranchers and federal land managers in regularly responding to fire and other threats, protecting rangelands and critical wildlife habitat. We appreciate the DOI's special attention to these issues and continue to urge you to respond swiftly and proactively, providing the assistance, assurances and appropriate flexibility needed to keep our ranch families in business and support them as important partners in fulfilling your mission.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator