

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 29, 2010

Chairman Jeff Bingaman
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
304 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Ranking Member Lisa Murkowski
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
304 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Bingaman and Ranking Member Murkowski,

Every year, for the last 10 years, the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources has conducted oversight on wildfire suppression preparedness in the spring prior to the start of the fire season. As western communities brace for the summer season of wildfires, it is imperative that federal land management agencies prepare for suppression and mitigation efforts. Many communities have already been impacted by wildfires this year as the 2010 fire season has already begun, with fires currently burning in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Louisiana, Montana, New Mexico, New Jersey, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

With above normal late season precipitation in the Rocky Mountain States, the fine, flashy fuels that normally carry wildfire are also above normal. Juxtaposed to the above normal temperatures in the southwestern U.S. and knowing that the Department of the Interior is focused on the incident in the Gulf of Mexico, it would seem that our first responders may be in short supply this fire season.

Another matter deserving of increased Committee oversight is that of restoration-based hazardous fuel reduction and thinning projects on federal lands. As you know, restoration efforts have proven highly effective in wildfire prevention and reducing suppression costs. Efforts are underway in a variety of places in the Southwest to establish market-driven landscape restoration projects which warrant Congressional attention.

We respectfully request that the Committee hold a hearing on wildfire preparedness and fuel reduction treatments at the earliest possible date.

Sincerely,





Michael B. Enji

Chris G. Hatch

John McCain

Chris J. Bennett

Jon Kyl

John Ensign

Mike Crapo
