

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 21, 2022

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington  
DC, 20250

The Honorable Deb Haaland  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, Northwest  
Washington, DC, 20240

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Secretary Haaland:

We write to urge you to prioritize and coordinate investments in wildfire risk reduction efforts on Oregon's forests and grasslands as you allocate funding from annual appropriations, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).

In April 2022, the Service announced 10 priority landscapes for wildfire risk reduction. We applaud the Service's selection of the Central Oregon fireshed and the Department of Interior's list of priority landscapes, including in Oregon, and its continued commitment to extending those efforts into the future. We are concerned that the Service and the Department of Interior has identified two additional firesheds in Oregon, the Rogue River Basin and the east-side of the Mt. Hood National Forest, but has not committed funding to help those regions, which have some of the highest concentrations of populations exposed to high fire risk in the country. The complexity of ownership within these areas requires improved coordination across agencies. Both of these landscapes provide robust opportunity to leverage existing collaboratives, private sector infrastructure, traditional ecological knowledge, and the capacity of tribal forestry departments to reduce wildfire risk and improve forest health. We urge you to designate both of these areas as additional priority landscapes as part of the administration's Wildfire Crisis strategy.

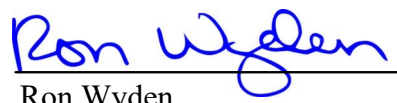
In addition, there are several other essential landscapes that should receive additional investment using the historic and unprecedented funding provided by Congress to address pressing forest and ecosystem health challenges. For example, the future of forest management in the Klamath Basin has taken on increased importance as the interaction between forests, in-stream flows, water quality, and lake levels has become better understood. A group of stakeholders, including the Klamath Tribes, has put forward a proposal to leverage BIL and IRA funding to improve the health of the forests that surround Upper Klamath Lake. Other Eastern Oregon forests, like the Malheur, Wallowa-Whitman, and Umatilla, are undertaking ambitious planning efforts that need targeted investments to ensure success. West of the Cascades, fire behavior is becoming more unpredictable and dangerous as well. We urge you to develop actions plans to address forest health needs of landscapes, like the Upper Klamath Basin and others throughout Eastern Oregon, to be implemented with infrastructure funding.

We thank you for consideration of this request and urge you to make significant investments in landscapes throughout Oregon.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator