

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 10, 2022

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

The Honorable Randy Moore
Chief
United States Forest Service
201 14th St., SW
Washington, D.C. 20227

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Chief Moore:

We are writing to request that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service distribute the full \$20 million identified in the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) to the Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI) in Fiscal Year 2022.

SWERI is a Congressionally-chartered entity established in 2004 under the Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act. SWERI works with USDA Forest Service to mobilize and monitor forest restoration and fuels reduction projects using science and stakeholder collaboration. Comprised of three applied research institutes – the Ecological Restoration Institute (ERI) at Northern Arizona University, the Colorado Forest Restoration Institute (CFRI) at Colorado State University, and the New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute (NMFWRI) at New Mexico Highlands University –SWERI provides essential technical services to federal, state, and tribal land management agencies and stakeholders working to protect our Nation’s forests and water.

Section 40803 of the IIJA appropriates \$20 million for SWERI to process data relating to the planning, coordination, and evaluation of hazardous fuel reduction and wildfire prevention treatments. Congress intended that SWERI receive this funding in FY22 as a one-time addition that would not impact annual appropriations for SWERI. The SWERI are currently initiating scoping and planning for the implementation of the project.

SWERI provides critical services that protect our public lands and at-risk communities from catastrophic wildfire while creating high quality jobs that build forest restoration capacity in the rural Southwest. In accordance with all existing agency rules, regulations, and ethical guidelines, we respectfully ask that you give this proposal full and fair consideration. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Kyrsten Sinema
U.S. Senator



Mark Kelly
U.S. Senator



Michael Bennet
U.S. Senator



John Hickenlooper
U.S. Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
U.S. Senator

(s/Heinrich)

Martin Heinrich
U.S. Senator



Tom O'Halleran
U.S. Representative



Greg Stanton
U.S. Representative



Ruben Gallego
U.S. Representative



Ann Kirkpatrick
U.S. Representative



Jason Crow
U.S. Representative



Raul Grijalva
U.S. Representative



Joe Neguse
U.S. Representative



Teresa Leger Fernandez
U.S. Representative