

Wildfire Fighting Fund, Luján's Amendment Will Help Prevent Wildfires in New Mexico

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Washington, DC – Today, the House of Representatives passed the Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement (FLAME) Act with Rep. Luján's amendment that aims to reduce wildfire risks associated with invasive species. The FLAME Act establishes a permanent fund for fighting catastrophic wildland fires and establishes a cohesive wildland fire management strategy. The legislation passed the House 412 to 3.

"Wildfires are a growing hazard in most regions of the United States, especially in the West, posing a threat to life and property, particularly where woodland ecosystems meet developed areas," said Rep. Luján. "At a time when drought and climate change threaten land across the country, the FLAME Act will provide valuable and steady funding to prevent and fight wildfires on public land."

Rep. Luján's amendment calls for studying the risks associated with invasive species and using that information to limit fire risk as part of a cohesive wildland fire management strategy established in the FLAME Act. The amendment was cosponsored by Reps. Betsy Markey of Colorado and Gerry Connolly of Virginia.

"In recent decades, invasive species have increased the wildfire threat to woodland ecosystems throughout the southwest and other regions of the country. This amendment will help to limit fire risk resulting from invasive species' negative impact on woodland areas."

"In my district, invasive species have become a problem - increasing the threat of fire in woodland areas. Several years of drought combined with high tree densities allowed pine bark beetle populations to reach outbreak levels between 2002 and 2004, killing millions of piñon and ponderosa pine trees in New Mexico and Arizona. Aerial survey data found that 3.4 million acres in the region were affected during this period."

“These dead trees have amplified the threat of fire in woodland ecosystems by increasing the amount of ‘dead and down’ organic material—material that is just waiting for a spark. This amendment will help decrease the threat of wildfires by identifying ways to reduce fire hazards through the study of invasive species and the increased fire vulnerability they cause.”

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