

### *Proposed Amendment to the FLAME Act Expected on House Floor This Week*

Washington, DC – Today, the House Committee on Rules accepted Rep. Ben Ray Luján’s amendment to the Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement (FLAME) Act, expected to be debated on the House floor this week. The amendment addresses wildland fire risk, specifically studying the risks associated with invasive species and using that information to limit fire risk. The amendment is cosponsored by Reps. Betsy Markey of Colorado and Gerry Connolly of Virginia. The FLAME Act establishes a permanent fund for fighting catastrophic wildland fires.

“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. “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 risks and ways to reduce fire hazards through the study of invasive species and the increased fire vulnerability they cause.”