

Friday, June 29, 2012

Washington, D.C. – With the West experiencing an already historic forest fire season, Democrats on the House Natural Resources Committee are demanding that the Republican leadership of the committee hold an emergency hearing to address the issues of fire risk and suppression, especially on federally-owned and managed lands. The Democrats also ask that legislation be considered to address fire risk and speed up fire prevention measures, as offered in a bill introduced last week by the Democrats.

The requests were made earlier this week in [a letter](#) sent to Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (R-WA) and the Chairman of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands, Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT), by the Ranking Member of the Committee, Rep. Ed Markey (D-MA), along with his colleagues Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ.), Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM), Grace Napolitano (D-CA) and Jim Costa (D-CA).

“To date, neither the full Committee nor the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands have held a legislative hearing on forest policy addressing the threat of insect infestations, disease and the increased risk of wildfires on Forest Service lands,” write the Democrats. “This issue is critical to the West and our Committee should act in a swift, bipartisan manner to consider this legislation.”

[The legislation offered up by the Democrats](#) is H.R. 5960, the Depleting Risk from Insect infestation, Soil erosion and Catastrophic fire Act (DRISC Act). This bill would help to address the scourge of bark beetle infestations on western forests and help to speed up the contracting process to remove dying or dead trees, which serve as potential kindling for forest fires.

###