

# NWOA Position Statement:

## Wildfire Fire Management

**Adopted 2018 by the Board of Directors,  
National Woodland Owners Association on the second reading.**

Wildfire knows no boundaries! Each year, fires that start in America's wildland devastate lives and livelihoods – destroying natural resources, impacting watersheds, producing greenhouse gases (GHSs), destroying homes and communities, as well as creating health hazards to millions of Americans. In 2017 alone, 71,499 wildfires burned 10,016,086 acres with fire suppression cost exceeding \$2.9 billion; the most expensive on record. Damage to natural resources and infrastructure as well as other economic impacts can be 2 to 30 times the cost of suppression.

Unnaturally large accumulations of vegetative fuel, sustained drought, insect infestations, and a changing climate are contributing to increased wildfire risk, intensity, spread, and resistance to control throughout many parts of the United States. The growth of communities adjacent to wildlands has placed homes closer to forest areas prone to burn, complicating fire control, after decades of fire suppression. Wildfires are now catastrophic, even generating their own weather, the "Firenado".

The significant increase in the average acres burned and higher fire severity, has brought increased loss of life, property and recreational/tourism income to rural communities; higher fire suppression cost; dramatic impacts on public health; damage and loss of our natural resources (both on the ground and in the atmosphere); and more communities threatened and impacted by wildfires every year. Strategic management of wildland vegetation is essential.

Congress in March 2018 approved a budget that hopefully will head off the practice of "fire borrowing". The suppression needs of the US Forest Service have risen from 13 percent of the agency's budget in fiscal year 1991 to over 50 percent in the recent years. This alone is not adequate to achieve strategic management of America's wildlands.

### **NWOA Objectives**

- Active management of America's forest and rangeland resources provides significant benefits while promoting development of healthy resilient landscapes, watersheds and communities. Fuels reduction via thinning, timber harvest, and post-harvest materials processing, prescribed fire, woody and herbaceous weed control thru chemicals and other means, grazing, and road maintenance have been used successfully to improve the health of forest and rangeland ecosystems.
- Science-based active forest management is essential to effective fire management. The only way to effectively control wildfires is to ensure that America's forests are healthy and resilient. Increased timber harvesting, including increased removal of hazardous fuels thru innovations in biomass utilization, is one key to restoring America's forestlands.

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- Full implementation and funding of the policies and programs provided in the 2014 Farm Bill will expedite forest and watershed restoration activities, which will improve the resiliency of America's forests and watersheds.
- The use of Good Neighbor Authority authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill will also help increase the pace and scale of essential restoration on federal lands.
- Finally, an aggressive market development program that encourages the use of renewable, sustainable wood products in our building and other industries will support and encourage sound resource utilization.