

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

The Honorable Vicki Christiansen  
Chief  
United States Forest Service  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

The Honorable Kevin Norton  
Acting Chief  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

October 23, 2020

Dear Chief Christiansen and Acting Chief Norton:

We write to reiterate the request that the United States Forest Service (USFS) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) work with the State of Colorado and local governments to address the threat posed by multiple fires to the region's watersheds and water supply.

Three of the five largest fires in Colorado history have occurred in 2020. The East Troublesome Fire is now the second-largest fire in state history, having grown by almost 150,000 acres in just 24 hours. In addition to structural damage and poor air quality, buildings, roads, bridges are all being threatened, as well as the Colorado river watershed and the Colorado-Big Thompson project. In the past several days, mandatory evacuation orders have been issued for multiple communities in Grand County and Larimer County, including Granby, Grand Lake and Estes Park. The Cameron Peak Fire continues to pose a threat to the water supply for the cities of Fort Collins and Greeley, in addition to other regional water suppliers. These fires threaten the water quality of the region, putting drinking and irrigation water supply at risk. There will be limited time to mitigate these risks before winter hits.

The United States Department of Agriculture is a valuable partner in helping our state respond to and recover from wildfires. We request that the Forest Service work quickly, and in coordination with local governments and water providers, to prioritize watershed repair in areas critical to the region's water supply. We also ask that the NRCS's Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program work with local governments to provide maximum flexibility and minimize local costs. The NRCS has the authority to utilize EWP funding on federal lands, and we urge you to do so, in coordination with the USFS, so that project sponsors can quickly undertake priority projects to protect the region's water infrastructure.

We are thankful for the ongoing work of the NRCS and USFS to support Colorado's wildfire response and recovery and look forward to working together to protect Colorado's water supply and infrastructure.

Sincerely,



Joe Neguse  
Member of Congress



Michael Bennet  
United States Senator



Cory Gardner  
United States Senator