

Congress of the United States
Washington, D.C. 20510

September 1, 2020

The Honorable Bill Northey
Under Secretary
Farm Production and Conservation
Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Undersecretary Northey,

We write to request the expedient approval of Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) funding for projects in Colorado. As you know, communities in Colorado are looking to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) EWP program to mitigate damage from the significant wildfires this summer. The approval of an initial tranche of funding will help to quickly implement critical EWP projects that protect private property and critical infrastructure.

The USDA's EWP program has been a vital resource to help our state recover from wildfires. This year, we have experienced multiple catastrophic fires, including the Grizzly Creek fire that closed I-70 for two weeks, and the Pine Gulch Fire, our largest in state history. The resulting damage could threaten watersheds, private property, and infrastructure for years to come. Mesa, Garfield, Larimer, and Grand County are already in need of EWP assistance. The quick approval of EWP funds to mitigate post-fire flooding and damage in these areas now will pay dividends.

We also encourage you to fully and fairly consider matching requirement waiver requests from local project sponsors in the days ahead. The COVID-19 pandemic is placing a significant strain on state and local budgets, but wildfire recovery cannot wait. We hope that the USDA will work closely with EWP project sponsors to provide maximum flexibility, where appropriate, to meet matching requirements and quickly implement projects.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Cory Gardner
United States Senator



Joe Neguse
United States Representative



Scott R. Tipton
United States Representative