

National Wildland Fire Risk Reduction Program Act

Senators Luján and Padilla

New Mexico Stakeholder Testimonials

“The University of New Mexico is very supportive of this legislative proposal by Senator Luján and Senator Padilla to better coordinate federal resources in response to deteriorating wildland fire conditions that are occurring across the arid West,” **said Garnett S. Stokes, President of the University of New Mexico.** “UNM recognizes the need for wildfire research coordination across federal agencies to better prepare our communities and ecosystems for worsening wildfire conditions in New Mexico and throughout the West. In this role, UNM intends to be a trusted and reliable resource in educating the public and policymakers on the connection between climate change and wildland fire susceptibility, and we are uniquely prepared to assist government agencies with science-based approaches to forecasting wildland fire risk, mitigating human and natural resource impacts and improving ecosystem resilience.”

“This legislation is timely as we see wildfires burning across the region,” **said New Mexico State University Chancellor Dan Arvizu.** “NMSU is a land-grant university and we stand ready to help, not only by advancing research to better understand and recover from these wildfires, but to also engage in the extension and outreach needed to help the individual communities who have been impacted the most.”

“The recent wildfires very near the New Mexico Highlands University campus have only highlighted the importance of reducing wildland fires and the terrible losses they cause. We simply must do more to preserve the forests we have, improve them based on data-driven practices, and restore those that we can, again using the best science available. The proposed legislation will support those goals and we endorse it completely and without reservation,” **said Dr. Sam Minner, New Mexico Highlands University President.**

“As we enter an era of climate change, mega-droughts, and year-round catastrophic wildfires, so many of our forests and communities now face the same unfortunate challenge: adapt or perish. The Department of Forestry at New Mexico Highlands University enthusiastically supports U.S. Senator Ben Ray Lujan's proposed legislation that would pave the way for this much-needed adaptation by providing a roadmap and resources aimed at reducing wildland fire risks and improving forest health nationwide through research, education, collaboration, and more sustainable management of our nation's forest resources. As one of New Mexico's leaders in forestry and wildland fire research and education, we look forward to working with U.S. Senator Lujan to make this happen,” **said Dr. Josh Sloan, New Mexico Highlands University Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs: Forestry and Reforestation Center.**

“We commend Senator Luján for introducing this bill, which would muster numerous federal agencies' combined scientific and administrative expertise to answer the threat

of extreme wildfire events,” said **Terry Sullivan, State Director, The Nature Conservancy in New Mexico**. “The nature of New Mexico’s landscape has changed and demands a whole-of-government approach to wildfire preparedness. Senator Luján’s bill would enable land managers to better understand and predict the threat of wildfire – a threat exacerbated by drought and climate change – to communities in New Mexico and across the country. The Nature Conservancy stands with its partners and the stewards of the land to use all resources at our disposal to reduce risk and restore ecosystem health and resilience.”

“Megafires in the West, like the ones currently burning outside my office here in New Mexico, are incredibly difficult to predict or control because of extreme drought conditions exacerbated by climate change. *The National Wildland Fire Risk Reduction Program Act* will help develop the models, tools, and comprehensive research we need to support decisions being made on the ground to keep our communities and watersheds safe,” said **Dr. Zander Evans, Executive Director, Forest Stewards Guild**.

National Stakeholder Testimonials

"The University of California appreciates California Senator Alex Padilla and New Mexico Senator Ben Ray Luján's leadership in introducing the *National Wildland Fire Risk Reduction Program Act*. This legislation would make critical investments in our nation's fire research infrastructure and help ensure that our country is better equipped to understand, predict, and deter wildfires,” said **University of California President Michael V. Drake, MD**. “California has experienced seven of the largest wildfires in the state's history over the last four years, and we’ve seen firsthand how devastating they can be. The University applauds the senators for their efforts and stands ready to partner with others to strengthen our nation’s fire resiliency.”

"The *National Wildland Fire Risk Reduction Program Act* would be a significant step forward in tackling the increasingly devastating risks posed by wildfires and other natural hazards, improving coordination between federal agencies and the private sector and supporting the data and research necessary to guide model building codes. We have already seen the success of similar legislation such as the National Earthquake Hazard Reduction Program to protect American communities and look forward to working with Senators Lujan and Padilla to move this forward,” said **Dennis Truax, Ph.D., PE, DEE, D.WRE, F.ASCE, President of the American Society of Civil Engineers**.

"Comprehensive measures, including the adoption and implementation of hazard-resistant codes and standards, are critical toward preventing and mitigating wildland-urban interface fires,” said **Code Council Chief Executive Officer Dominic Sims, CBO**. “The *National Wildland Fire Risk Reduction Program Act of 2022* is a national investment of federal resources that will help communities become safer and more resilient to the effects of wildland fire and all hazards. The Code Council commends Senator Luján for his leadership on these issues, and supports swift congressional action to advance this important legislation.”