

116TH CONGRESS }  
2d Session } HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES { REPORT  
116-448

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND  
RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS BILL, 2021

JULY 14, 2020.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of  
the Union and ordered to be printed

Ms. MCCOLLUM, from the Committee on Appropriations,  
submitted the following

R E P O R T

together with

MINORITY VIEWS

[To accompany H.R. 7612]

The Committee on Appropriations submits the following report in explanation of the accompanying bill making appropriations for the Department of the Interior, the Environmental Protection Agency, and Related Agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2021. The bill provides regular annual appropriations for the Department of the Interior (except the Bureau of Reclamation and the Central Utah Project), the Environmental Protection Agency, and for other related agencies, including the Forest Service, the Indian Health Service, the Smithsonian Institution, and the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities.

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design, construction, and retrofitting of fire resilient residential homes and commercial buildings. Collaborative efforts between private industry, university-based wildfire researchers, community-based organizations and local communities are making notable progress in developing construction techniques and identifying building materials and assemblies to actively mitigate fire risk in areas susceptible to catastrophic wildland fire, including the wildland urban interface. The Committee encourages efforts at the state and local level, particularly within high-risk fire areas, to support the use of American made materials or assemblies that, based on standardized testing, have demonstrated fire-resilient performance to support and promote fire hardened and resilient communities.

#### FIREFIGHTING AVIATION CONTRACTS

In past years, the Committee has included direction and resources to assist the Forest Service in modernizing the fleet of aircraft available for wildland fire suppression activities. It is important that the Forest Service and Department of the Interior analyze current contracting capabilities to determine whether changes to existing practices may better support the strategic plan for aerial firefighting assets. Recent initiatives that have been undertaken have increased firefighting effectiveness and/or reduced costs. The Committee has become aware that the limitation on the length of federal civilian contracts (no more than five years) may be, as it was with stewardship contracts for forest health restoration, a limitation on both effectiveness and cost efficiency for procuring modern, cost effective aviation assets for fire suppression. The existing aviation fleet is primarily comprised of contractor-owned and operated aircraft, many of which are small businesses. The certainty provided by longer-term contracts of up to ten years has the potential to ensure greater accountability, cost efficiency and a streamlined approach. The U.S. Forest Service Aviation Implementation Strategy (2018–2022) indicates that the size and intensity of wildfires is expected to rise; resulting in continued demand for aerial fighting aircraft. Particularly as COVID–19 causes additional limitations on the ground, a modern and safe air fleet will be an important asset for the upcoming firefighting season. Therefore, the Committee directs the Forest Service in partnership with the Department of the Interior, to prepare and submit a report to the Committee within 90 days of enactment of this Act outlining current statutory limitations that prohibit the use of 10-year contracts. Additionally, the report shall include current contract requirements that ensure a modern and safe aviation fleet and how a shift to 10-year contracting could impact those requirements. The report shall state how many aviation contracts the Forest Service and Department of the Interior have issued over the last 10 years, as well as any anticipated changes in either the number of contracts issued, the costs, or the type of contract vehicle used, due to a shift to 10-year contracting. Finally, the Forest Service shall provide input on how a potential pilot program for 10-year contracts could be implemented.