

## Forest Service's Aviation Safety Program

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018, repurposes \$65 million provided in the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015 (Public Law 113–235) for the purchase of new aircraft to enhance firefighter mobility, effectiveness, efficiency, and the operational safety of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service's aviation program. The funds shall be used to modernize aviation, radio, and evacuation system infrastructure; and acquire sensory equipment, Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), and other platforms that detect and monitor fire. Projects may include replacement or upgrades of existing infrastructure at airtanker, helicopter, and smokejumper bases; replacement of equipment, including agency-owned aircraft; and improvements in training and night air operations, but no project shall be undertaken that increases recurring program costs. The Forest Service shall provide a complete list of anticipated projects to the Committees on Appropriations utilizing this entire amount. The Committees expect these funds to be obligated in fiscal years (FY) 2018 and 2019.

The Forest Service has identified five general project categories to address the direction provided by the Committee. Project amounts are approximate and are subject to implementation feasibility and operational priorities.

1. To support the shift to a fleet of next generation aviation assets, we plan to invest approximately \$35 million to modernize airtanker bases and helicopter pads.

| State        | Airtanker Base Modernization(\$1,000s) | Helicopter Pad Modernization(\$1,000s) | State Total (\$1,000s) |
|--------------|--|--|------------------------|
| MT           | \$2,000                                | \$1,500                                | \$3,500                |
| ID           | \$2,500                                | \$1,250                                | \$3,750                |
| OR           | \$2,250                                | \$1,500                                | \$3,750                |
| WA           | \$1,250                                | \$1,000                                | \$2,250                |
| AZ           | \$1,250                                | \$1,250                                | \$2,500                |
| NM           | \$500                                  | \$750                                  | \$1,250                |
| UT           | \$500                                  | \$750                                  | \$1,250                |
| CO           | \$1,750                                | \$400                                  | \$2,150                |
| SD           | \$250                                  | \$100                                  | \$350                  |
| WY           | \$250                                  | \$100                                  | \$350                  |
| CA           | \$7,000                                | \$6,500                                | \$13,500               |
| R8           | \$50                                   | \$70                                   | \$120                  |
| MN           | \$175                                  | \$0                                    | \$175                  |
| R9           | \$0                                    | \$200                                  | \$200                  |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>\$19,725</b>                        | <b>\$15,370</b>                        | <b>\$35,095</b>        |

2. To acquire additional aviation equipment, we plan to invest approximately \$12 million, including:
  - a. \$2 million to improve airport retardant operations (e.g., additional pit plumbing, crash rescue equipment, radios, etc.).
  - b. \$1.25 million to acquire five new portable retardant bases to increase our capacity to deploy from airports that do not have a permanent retardant loading infrastructure.
  - c. \$7.75 million for sensory equipment that will enhance our pilot's ability to assess fire activity.
  - d. \$1 million for UASs to support incident commanders in assessing fire activity and in protecting firefighters and the public. These funds will be transferred to the Department of the Interior for this program.
3. To replace outdated aviation radio infrastructure, \$10 million.
4. To research and develop smart retardant delivery systems that will improve the accuracy of retardant drops, \$3 million.
5. To improve our capability for using aviation assets for emergency evacuation of firefighters, \$5 million.

**Total: \$65,000,000 (project categories 1-5)**

USDA's Forest Service has identified a governing board and a team of individuals who will develop a plan to ensure appropriate management of these funds. The team will work closely with their Forest Service regional counterparts to solicit project priorities. When specific projects are determined, an updated report will be provided to the committee. The Forest Service will obligate these funds during FY 2018 and 2019.