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Testimony for the Record

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To the House Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

**Regarding the Joint Fire Science Programs FY 2021 Budget for
the USDA Forest Service and Department of Interior**

March 3, 2020

The Ecological Society of America (ESA) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Fiscal Year 2021 appropriations for the interagency Joint Fire Science Program. ESA is the nation's largest society of professional ecologists, representing over 9,000 members across the country. **ESA requests full funding in FY 2021 of \$16 million for the interagency Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP): \$8 million in funding for the USDA Forest Service JFSP program and \$8 million for the Department of Interior JFSP program to ensure active participation from both agencies in prioritizing investment in fire research and decision support.** Recent years' funding for the JFSP has eroded a program with proven great success in supporting practical science that reduces fire risk and enhances economic, ecological, and social outcomes nationwide.

As you know, the frequency, severity, and size of fires have increased substantially in the continental US since the 1980s, and this trend is projected to continue and intensify in the future. The risk to communities, the cost of property loss, and the expense to cover the damage brought by these fires will consequently also grow. Scientific research is critical to understanding and properly responding to these wildfires in the most productive and cost effective manner possible.

The JFSP was created by Congress in 1998 as an interagency research, development, and applications partnership between the US Department of the Interior and the US Department of Agriculture. The program solicits proposals from scientists who compete for funding through a rigorous peer-review process to ensure the highest quality projects are funded. **Over 150 colleges and universities across the United States have collaborated or partnered with JFSP-sponsored research projects.** The JFSP also runs a model program in science communication, with very effective efforts to put science in the hands of managers and policymakers.

No other federal program except the JFSP provides the integration of science and management needed to face the challenges that lie ahead—we will be living in a world with more fire.

Research in fire science is crucial to anticipating how ecosystems and landscapes may change in the future, how fire should be managed in both wildlands and developed areas, and where

mitigation or adaptation strategies are most appropriate. Reductions in support for JFSP are inconsistent with high-priority national research needs.

We appreciate that the House and Senate Interior and Environment Appropriations Committees have made funding for policy-relevant wildfire science among your highest priorities. We hope you will continue to recognize the critical role the JFSP plays in these efforts and fund fully fund the program **in FY 2021 for \$16 million: \$8 million in funding for the USDA Forest Service JFSP program and \$8 million for the Department of Interior JFSP program.**