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President Bush asks Congress for Additional Funding to Fight Forest Fires

Washington, DC – President Bush has asked Congress to provide \$825 million in emergency funds to extinguish the fires that have devastated much of America. The President's request will pay for firefighting activities in 41 states and to replenish resources, such as forest land acquisition and Forest Legacy program funds that had been redirected to firefighting.

The 2002 fire season has quickly become one of the worst in recent history and may yet turn out to be the worst ever. The fires have taken the lives of 20 heroic firefighters and have damaged or destroyed more than 2,000 homes and other structures. In total, six million acres have already burned, more than twice the 10-year average.

This emergency funding is needed to cover the extraordinary damage caused by fires on Federal public lands this year. Specifically, the supplemental request would provide the Forest Service with additional \$636 million and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) activities with an additional \$189 million for wildland fire suppression and emergency rehabilitation activities.

The President has also made nearly \$50 million in FEMA disaster assistance funds available in Colorado and Arizona in response to the devastating fires that occurred in these states earlier this summer.

The Administration also urges the Congress to support the President's FY 2003 request for fire suppression, which is almost \$200 million above the FY 2002 base level.

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