

## Winter Wildlands Alliance Supports the FLAME Act

March 10, 2009

Today both the House and Senate took decisive, bi-partisan action to get a handle on the cost of suppressing catastrophic wildfires by introducing the FLAME Act (Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement Act), H.R. 1404. While at first glance it may seem odd that Winter Wildlands Alliance and our constituents would weigh in on fire-related legislation, backcountry skiers, Nordic skiers and snowshoers applaud this critical step in getting a handle on catastrophic wildfires.

Under the current system, about *one-half* of the U.S. Forest Service's annual budget is already set aside for dealing with forest fires. Money used for fire is *not* used for other vital land management projects including winter travel planning, maintaining winter trailheads, and marking wilderness boundaries. What's more is that when fires really get out of hand, federal agencies are forced to "steal from Peter to pay Paul" and pilfer non-fire budgets to pay for catastrophic fires.

The FLAME Act attempts to get some much needed control on how we pay for catastrophic fires by setting up a special account in the US Treasury to deal with the really big, really expensive wildfires. In addition to having the special account, the FLAME Act also would require the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture (which oversees the Forest Service) to develop a comprehensive wildland fire management strategy to improve fire prevention on our public lands.

Winter Wildland Alliance looks forward to working with Congress and the Obama Administration to pass the FLAME Act and get it signed into law.