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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0504

July 19, 2021

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
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NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND PUBLIC LANDS

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

Ms. Vicki Christiansen
Chief
U.S. Forest Service
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Chief Christiansen,

I am writing to request information about the Tamarack Fire on the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. Reports indicate that this fire was put in monitor status by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) upon discovery on July 4, 2021 and had no suppression action until sometime after July 10, 2021. This fire has now burned over 23,000 acres with no reported containment, threatening nearby communities and forcing evacuations.

I ask that you provide answers to the following questions:

1. When was the decision made to monitor this fire instead of immediately acting to suppress it?
2. Why was this decision made?
3. Who made this decision and which USFS officials were consulted and informed?
4. What legal authority authorized the USFS to allow this wildfire to burn in lieu of immediate full suppression?
5. Were air and ground firefighting resources available to provide initial and extended attack on this fire?
6. What role did the District Ranger, District Fire Management Officer, Forest Supervisor, and Forest Fire Management Officer have in the decision process to monitor this fire in lieu of full suppression?
7. When did the first fire suppression actions commence?
8. Where and with what firefighting resources, by day, were fire suppression actions taken from first attack to the time when the fire escaped and became a major wildfire? Please indicate what specific fire suppression actions were taken, by type, on each day.

Additionally, please provide the following documents:

1. Incident Status Summaries (ICS-209's) from July 4, 2021 to the date the fire escaped and became a major wildfire.

2. Fire Decision Support Documents (WFDSS) from the start of the fire to the present.
3. Letters of delegation and leader's intent in force at ignition to the present.
4. Incident Action Plans (IAP's) from ignition to the present.
5. Fire progression maps from ignition to the present.
6. The Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision related to allowing the fire to be monitored and not suppressed, including references in the Forest Plan.

Please do your best to answer these questions and provide the requested documents within 30 days.

Given the number of wildfires and their increasing size coupled with severe fire danger conditions throughout the West, I recommend that you immediately reevaluate current U.S. Forest Service direction that allows wildfires to burn and instruct all Regional Foresters that all wildfires be suppressed as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Tom McClintock

CC: Randy Moore, U.S. Forest Service