

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

Abigail R. Kimbell, Chief
USDA Forest Service
1400 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20250

Jody Noiron, Forest Supervisor
Angeles National Forest Supervisor's Office
701 N. Santa Anita Ave.
Arcadia, CA 91006

Dear Chief Kimbell and Supervisor Noiron,

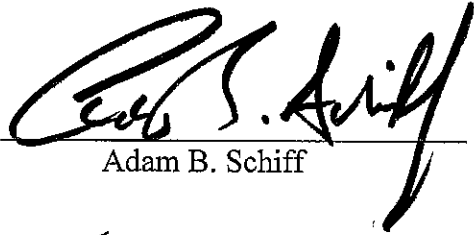
As you know, California has been unusually hot and dry this summer, and heightened fire danger will likely continue throughout the rest of the season. According the Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region Fuels and Fire Behavior Advisory of May 23rd, "All of California is experiencing prolonged, record breaking drought and critical, explosively dry fuel conditions....Expect extreme fire behavior, rapid rates of fire spread, and high ignition probability." With large and difficult fires more likely, and more and more homes and businesses on the forest edge, it is exceptionally important that the National Forest system maintain enough trained, experienced fire crews to keep the forests and surrounding communities safe.

We have heard reports that many experienced firefighters in the Angeles National Forest are leaving the federal payroll, some to work for the State of California or local departments, and others to retire or leave the profession entirely. Recently it has been reported that only 60-70% of the engines on the Angeles National Forest are regularly staffed due to a severe shortage of qualified supervisors. Though hiring has sped up recently, and some retired firefighters have returned temporarily, current and former firefighters on the Angeles have indicated that pay and management issues are the primary reason for the wave of resignations, and without addressing those issues, any solution will be temporary at best.

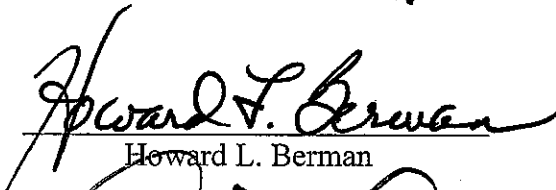
The Angeles National Forest lies close enough to the Los Angeles metropolitan area that the cost of living for firefighters is much higher than for most National Forests. In addition, wages for CAL FIRE firefighters have risen considerably in comparison to the Forest Service, enticing many experienced firefighters to leave. There also seems to be a feeling among the firefighters that the management of the Angeles and at higher levels has not been responsive to the concerns and needs of firefighting professionals. These men and women are risking their lives to protect our communities, and they must receive the recognition and support they need to continue doing their jobs.

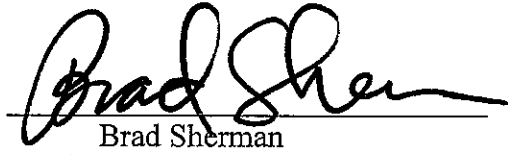
As Representatives of the residents in and around the Angeles National Forest, please tell us what measures the Forest Service and the local Forest management are taking to address the shortage of qualified Forest Service firefighters for this fire season and for the future.

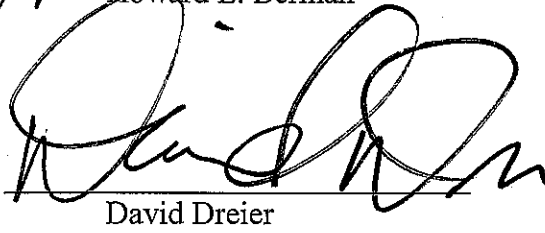
Sincerely,

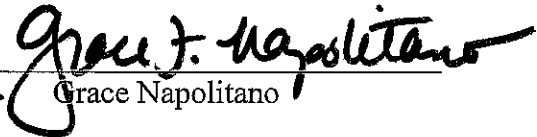

Adam B. Schiff


Howard P. McKeon


Howard L. Berman


Brad Sherman


David Dreier


Grace Napolitano