

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell today voted to deliver critical resources to fight wildfires, protect America's national forests and invest in increasingly important climate change research as the House passed the Interior-Environment Appropriations bill by a 272 to 155 vote.

"Arizona's forests are one our state's most precious resources, and today's vote will improve our efforts to protect them," said Mitchell. "Congress has stepped up the federal government's commitment to protecting our natural lands by preventing and fighting wildfires."

Arizona's Fifth Congressional District includes more than 590,000 acres of the Tonto National Forest, the largest national forest in the state. [Source: [U.S. Forest Service](#) ]

In 2005, two fires in Mitchell's district burned thousands of national forest acres. The Cave Creek Complex Fire burned more than 243,000 acres and the Edge Complex Fore burned more than 71,000 acres. [Source: [U.S. Forest Service](#) ]

H.R. 2643 provides \$2 billion to the U.S. Forest Service for fighting forest fires, a \$151 million increase from FY 2007 appropriations. It provides \$675 million for fire preparedness and \$859 million for fire suppression operations. The bill provides \$1.5 billion for the National Forest System, which manages more than 11.2 million acres in Arizona – a \$54 million increase from the current levels.

The legislation also creates a new, two-year Commission on Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation and provides \$266 million for climate change research in various federal agencies – a 55 percent increase from FY 2007 funding.

"Climate change is a growing threat," said Mitchell. "Empowering our nation's top scientists to conduct this kinds of research will help us better meet this global challenge."

The Interior-Environment Appropriations bill also restores critical cuts to the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Water State Revolving Loan Funds ("SRF"), which help construct publicly owned wastewater treatment facilities

Congress and the Administration slashed Arizona's clean water revolving funds funding by 41 percent since 2004. In 2006 alone, Arizona's share was cut by \$1.2 million. This year, the President again proposed slashing funding.

The House-approved bill provides \$1.1 billion in SRF funds, \$437 million more than the President's request.

Mitchell has been working to boost Arizona's share of SRF funds. When he arrived in Congress, [he discovered](#) that while Arizona ranks 10th in the nation in wastewater infrastructure need and 20th in population, an outdated allocation formula based on the 1970s census places Arizona 38th in SRF funds received. Calculated on a per capita basis, Arizona ranks last, or 53rd, in the nation – behind even the U.S. territories – in SRF funds received.

## Mitchell Votes for Funds to Fight Wildfires, Protect Arizona's Natural Resources

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In March [Mitchell and the House approved H.R. 720](#) which lays the groundwork for a transition away from a formula that has cost Arizona millions of dollars.