

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

November 13, 2018

Ms. Victoria Christiansen  
Chief  
United States Forest Service  
1400 Independence Ave, SW  
Washington, DC 20250-1111

Dear Chief Christiansen:

We wish to congratulate you on your official appointment as Chief of the U.S. Forest Service. We know that we share a strong commitment to “shared stewardship” and we look forward to working with you to increase public access, provide timber and mining jobs and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire on our National Forests. Towards that end, we urge the Service to promptly issue the solicitation for the “Next Generation 3.0” contracts without any further delay.

Dry conditions, a buildup of hazardous fuels and many other factors resulted in over 50,000 fires nationwide this year. These fires burned over 8 million acres which represents over 2 million more acres than the average from previous years. While 2018 may not have been a historic fire year in Montana, several large fires still resulted in evacuations, structures lost, smoky air, road closures and other disruptions to the lives of Montanans. According to the Forest Service, the size and intensity of wildfires are expected to continue to rise. As a result, the agency’s 2018 Aviation Implementation Strategy concluded there will be an “ongoing demand for aerial firefighting aircraft.”

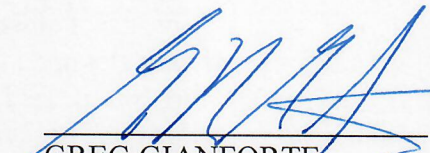
The Forest Service is the primary Federal agency responsible for providing large airtankers to the wildland fire community. To accomplish this, the agency contracts with private industry for a fleet of “Exclusive Use” and “Call When Needed” airtankers. In order to ensure the Forest Service and the broader wildland fire community will have sufficient airtankers available in the future, we strongly urge the agency to issue the solicitation for the “Next Generation 3.0” contracts without any further delay. Further, we request the Forest Service keep regular communication with private industry regarding the agency’s plans for contracting for airtanker services.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



STEVE DAINES  
United States Senator



GREG GIANFORTE  
Member of Congress