

**TESTIMONY
OF
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ON**

**“CONFRONTING AMERICA’S OUT-OF-CONTROL WILDFIRE AND FOREST HEALTH CRISIS”
BEFORE THE
HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES REPUBLICAN FORUM
JULY 21, 2022**

Good morning Ranking Member Westerman and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to address this group on the critical issues of wildfire and forest health.

I currently serve as the Managing Director of Caylym Technologies, a California-based company that has developed an aerial delivery system to fight the ever-increasing destruction of wildfires globally. Prior to joining the civilian business community, I served as an Officer of Marines specializing in aviation and particularly the close air support and air defense missions.

For nearly a decade, our team at Caylym Technologies has worked closely with a committed bipartisan group of leaders and legislators to overcome bureaucratic challenges at the U.S. Forest Service. Our solution for combatting and preventing wildfires has been adopted across the globe but, because of the U.S. Forest Service’s refusal to complete necessary testing, it is not currently available in the United States.

Caylym Technologies’ “Guardian” is capable of dropping a series of large containers of water or retardant that open mid-air to fight wildfires or can be used to pre-treat areas at high risk of wildfire. This Containerized Aerial Fire Fight Systems (CAFFS) is a capability that went through and passed a 2-year evaluation by the Air National Guard. Allowing agencies to utilize CAFFS through the standardized Containerized Delivery System (CDS) would drastically increase the number of planes available to combat safely and effectively, or prevent, wildfires.

Technologies such as CAFFS can provide ground crews with dependable cover from the air, providing a rapid surge of retardant over a live fire which helps to put the fire out quicker by attacking it from more than one point of contact.

Our team has found that countries such as Romania, Peru, Greece and recently Israel are committed to a 24/7 rapid response or surge in aerial firefighting capabilities and have adopted CAFFS because of that commitment. If available for domestic use, these additional resources would provide our ground crews and the Incident Commanders with more resources and tools to protect communities and put out fires more swiftly.

In 2021, the EU and Mediterranean basin experienced the 2nd worst fire season since 2000 with 2.7 million acres burned across 39 countries, 25% of which were agricultural lands. I raise this aspect of the global nature of what we are dealing with regarding wildfires as the problem is not unique to the United States. Europe’s view is that almost any major wildfire could have been prevented with a bucket of water if you were there fast enough.

It’s well known that California has a history with destructive wildfires, which is why the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, as well as the U.S. Forest Service have some of the most advanced firefighting operations in the nation. And yet, they are still having to make the tragic decision as to which homes or communities to save and which are left to the ravages of the fire.

While their dedication to this vital mission is unmatched, their available resources have been stretched so thin that fire officials are still being forced to make this choice. Regrettably, more and more often the urgent calls from ground crews for aerial support are unable to be filled due to lack of air resources.

The circumstance in California is only getting worse as all but 3 of the top 20 worst wildfires have occurred since 2000. According to new federal data, two of California's largest wildfires in 2021 cost fire agencies more than \$500 million each to suppress, and a third of these fires cost more than a quarter-million dollars each to fight. This doesn't include the costs in personal losses, the cost to rebuild or the long-term costs to our environment.

I believe that more specific commitments and actions must be taken at the state and federal level, such as increasing the federal disaster cost share for any federal disaster declaration along with pursuing the latest advanced firefighting technologies.

The silver lining of this issue is that solutions do exist, they will require a focused yet open mind, as well as the courage and creativity to marshal all the available capabilities and alternatives, but they exist.

Lastly, I applaud this group for highlighting such an important issue in our country - in terms of the devastating loss of life, the tragic loss of homes and businesses, and the profound and awful destruction and contamination of our environment.

Ranking Member Westerman, and Members of the Committee thank you again for the invitation to appear today. I look forward to your questions and the continued partnership to address the out-of-control wildfires.