

15 September 2020

The Honorable Diane Feinstein  
331 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Steve Daines  
320 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Feinstein and Daines,

The undersigned conservation organizations representing hundreds of thousands of sportsmen and sportswomen are writing today to express strong support for your recently introduced Emergency Wildfire and Public Safety Act of 2020 (S. 4431). This bipartisan forestry bill addresses several factors hindering our nation's ability to mitigate the impacts of wildfire at a scale that will truly make a difference.

The organizations represented on this letter not only have a long history of advocating for management of our forests to improve forest health for wildlife and recreation, but many work directly with the federal land management agencies to implement projects on their behalf. Through this work, we know both the challenges with implementing forest management projects and the wide-ranging benefits that occur for both wildlife and Americans that live near and depend on our nation's forests.

The Emergency Wildfire and Public Safety Act is well thought-out legislation that addresses key challenges to federal forest management. We appreciate the recognition that additional markets, such as biomass, are needed to help sustain on-going forest restoration in areas where marketable products do not exist. The grant program for forest workforce development is an innovative idea that will help to address a shortfall in skilled workers to implement forest restoration projects. Other aspects of the bill will also help to protect those people and communities that live in and near our nation's forests from the devastating impacts of wildfire.

Our organizations are most interested in sections 101 and 105 of the legislation. Increasing the scale, pace, and efficiency in implementing forest management and restoration projects are the most critical challenge that we face. By designating landscape-level projects of up to 75,000 acres, we will approach working at a scale that is both cost effective, and will have widespread benefits for reducing wildfire and creating wildlife habitat. While three projects are a good start, the vast acreage that needs treatment across the West justifies doubling or even tripling this number. Applying streamlined environmental reviews and a higher level of critique to potential injunctions to these projects will ensure that they are implemented in a timely manner to have an impact now, when it is needed, not years down the road. We also believe that codifying "New Information" is critical. All projects that are implemented by the Forest Service undergo review and consultation at the project level where the potential impacts can be best evaluated. Court rulings requiring re-consultation at the forest plan level are duplicative and unnecessary and injunctions delay good projects from being implemented in a timely manner. We appreciate your bipartisan work to address this issue, and the proposed language certainly makes progress. To ensure that legislation fully addresses the situation, we encourage you to work closely with the Forest Service, who has been navigating this litigation for years, to advance language that allows forest restoration projects to proceed in a timely manner.

Thank you again for your introduction of this critical forestry and wildfire legislation. Our organizations look forward to working with you to improve upon this bipartisan legislation and stand ready to help move this through Congress and on to the President's desk.

Sincerely,

American Woodcock Society

Boone and Crockett Club

Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

Mule Deer Foundation

National Deer Alliance

National Wild Turkey Federation

Quality Deer Management Association

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Ruffed Grouse Society

Wildlife Management Institute

Wildlife Mississippi

Wild Sheep Foundation