

July 20, 2022

Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Rep. Joe Peters
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: HR 8168 Save Our Sequoias Act

Dear Leader McCarthy and Representative Peters,

The undersigned conservation organizations, representing millions of hunters, natural resource management professionals, and other outdoor recreationalists, write to express our support for the Save Our Sequoias Act. We thank you for your bipartisan leadership in crafting the legislation which will provide land managers with new tools and the resources to utilize existing authorities to address high-severity wildlife threats to giant sequoias (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*).

As you are aware, our federal forests are in poor ecological condition due to a lack of active management, climate change, a century of fire suppression, and decades of controversy about how to best manage forests. While policymakers have fought over federal forest management, forest health has suffered, including in California's groves of giant sequoias. Stand-replacing and other high-severity fires have degraded the giant sequoias stands, and action is needed to reforest these areas and increase their resiliency to fire. While reforms to forest management policy are needed throughout the National Forest System, the Save Our Sequoias Act addresses the immediate threats to this iconic species and provides a blueprint for future policy reforms.

The legislation would increase coordination among the Department of the Interior, the Department of Agriculture, the state of California, the Tule River Indian Tribe, and local government to improve forest health in stands of giant sequoias and on adjacent lands. Through the development of grove-specific hazardous fuels reduction plans, diverse-interest collaborative decision making, innovative grants, limited categorical exclusions, and expanded utilization of the Good Neighbor Authority and stewardship contracting, the Save Our Sequoias Act would enable land managers to improve forest resiliency to fire by reducing hazardous fuel loads and overstocking through thinning, targeted tree removal, and prescribed fire and addressing insects and disease. Additionally, the bill would facilitate the rehabilitation of lands negatively impacted by fire and the reforestation of giant sequoia stands to ensure the long-term viability of giant sequoias and the wildlife species that depend on these habitats.

While giant sequoias are a fire-adapted species, and in fact require fire to regenerate, drought, fire suppression, and poor forest management practices have resulted in overstocked stands and high fuel loads that contribute to high-severity fires, including, in some cases, crown and/or stand-replacing fires that are too hot for giant sequoias to withstand. Without the tools and

resources that this legislation would provide, degraded stands will take years to regenerate, and additional stands of giant sequoias are at risk of being decimated by wildfire.

Through the Save Our Sequoias Act, you are showing your commitment to working across the aisle for the betterment of one of America's true forestry crown jewels: the 70 Giant Sequoia groves in California. We wholeheartedly support the bill and applaud your efforts to set politics aside and do what is best for our forest resources. We hope that this example can finally be the much-needed breakthrough in forest policy and serve as a pathway to better federal forest management across the United States.

Thank you for considering our comments and thank you again for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Archery Trade Association
Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Boone and Crockett Club
Camp Fire Club of America
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Conservation Force
Dallas Safari Club
Delta Waterfowl
Ducks Unlimited
Houston Safari Club
Mule Deer Foundation
National Association of Forest Service Retirees
National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative
National Deer Association
National Shooting Sports Foundation
Orion: The Hunter's Institute
Pheasants Forever
Pope and Young Club
Public Lands Foundation
Quail Forever
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Safari Club International
Whitetails Unlimited
Wildlife Forever
Wildlife Mississippi
Wild Sheep Foundation