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5th District



TIFFANY MARTINEZ
CLERK OF THE
BOARD OF
SUPERVISORS

204 S. COURT STREET
ALTURAS, CALIFORNIA
96101

(530) 233-6201
FAX (530) 233-2434

September 8, 2020

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Member, United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: The Emergency Wildfire and Public Safety Act of 2020 – SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

Dear Senator Feinstein:

On behalf of the Modoc County Board of Supervisors, I am writing to offer our support with the detailed amendments for The Emergency Wildfire and Public Safety Act of 2020. The Modoc County Board of Supervisors has continually advocated for a commonsense approach toward reducing the effects and severity of wildfires that have plagued California and our county over the past decade.

Through close coordination with our Federal and State partners, our County leaders have advocated for multiple use solutions to the issue of improving best practices for addressing wildfire, and creating more resilient communities. Modoc County is comprised of over 70% of Federal lands, which has seen a decline in multiple use management activities such as timber management, grazing, and recreational activity due to challenges from the environmental advocates from outside our county who promote decommissioning roads and eliminating grazing on federal lands.

This year we have had the largest number of acres burned on the Modoc National Forest since 1910 at XXXXX acres. The W-5 Cold Springs fire made up the majority of overall acres burnt in Modoc County with 84,817 acres and is only 94% contained as of September 4, 2020. This fire provided evidence of the benefits of the multiple use approach to managing federal lands for reduced wildfire activity. In areas where active grazing was implemented and an adequate road infrastructure was in place, the W-5 Cold Springs fire saw a containment or reduction in acres burnt.

For these reasons, we suggest the removal of the following sections from the proposed bill:

- Sec.101. Forest Landscape Projects (3) Applicability (c) Management Activities (3) shall not establish permanent roads
- Sec.101. Forest Landscape Projects (5) Road Building (A) Permanent Roads. – A forest landscape project carried out under this section shall not include the construction of any new, permanent roads.
- Sec.101. Forest Landscape Projects (5) Road Building (C) Temporary Roads – The Secretary concerned shall decommission any temporary road constructed under a forest landscape project carried out under this section by not later than 3 years after the date on which the Secretary concerned determines the road is no longer needed.

The expansion and maintenance of existing road infrastructure provides fuel breaks and access points for fire fighters to combat deadly wildfires. The maintained road infrastructure also provides safe ingress and egress routes for fire fighters and the public who frequent federal lands on the Modoc National Forest or Bureau of Land Management (BLM) areas. Our public lands should have adequate access systems for the use and enjoyment by the public as well as the ability for our emergency personnel to safely fight wildfire and preserve our public lands for multiple uses. Therefore, we welcome additions to the bill to increase maintenance on existing roads and improvement of new road infrastructure on federal lands.

Historically, grazing and controlled burns were utilized as forest management activities on all federal lands and we are encouraged to see these within the proposed bill. We would support an increase in these management activities, as they assist in fuels reduction, fire prevention, and offer economic benefit to our county and residents. Throughout Modoc County, there are many allotments which could be reestablished or increased through AUM's (Animal Unit Months) to reduce the fuel load on federal lands and control invasive plants. Therefore we propose the following addition to the bill:

- Sec.101. Forest Landscape Projects (4) Management Activity (D) Grazing

Through this type of multiple use coordination, this legislation will help alleviate and offset some of the costs associated with forest management and aid California in reducing its carbon emissions by encouraging sustainable management practices such as grazing. The legislation will also ultimately serve to help California with its long-term fuels treatment goals, which is desperately needed to reduce the frequency and severity of catastrophic wildfires that have become a normal occurrence throughout the state.

The federal government once worked hand-in-hand with the private sector and local governments to improve and protect our public lands. The Modoc County Board of Supervisors supports this legislation and the proposed amendments to return our federal lands to partnerships we can be proud of for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Cavasso
Chair of the Board