



County of Monterey

Item No.

Board Report

Board of Supervisors
Chambers
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

Legistar File Number: WRAG 25-029

February 18, 2025

Introduced: 2/12/2025

Current Status: Agenda Ready

Version: 1

Matter Type: WR General Agenda

Authorize the General Manager to initiate support for Bill HR471, the Fix Our Forests Act.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Monterey County Water Resources Agency Board of Directors:

Authorize the General Manager to initiate support for Bill HR471, the Fix Our Forests Act.

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION:

On January 16, 2025, a bipartisan group of representatives, including Congressman Panetta, reintroduced HR471, which passed the House during the 118th Congress but failed to garner Senate attention. The bill encourages more active management of federal forest lands, improves the regulatory process for forest health projects on federal lands, promotes federal, state, and local government collaboration, coordinates federal grant programs to better serve communities in high fire risk areas, and expands the use of technologies to address wildfire threats. The bill was again passed by the House on January 23, 2025, and is currently looking for a Senate sponsor.

While the bill focuses largely on federal lands, it provides opportunities for expanded federal, state, and local collaboration, including sharing of tools and information, to improve fire and watershed management, water source and “at risk community” protection, and potential grant funding to minimize the risks of wildfire exposure, including loss of life and structures. Fire and watershed management areas may include non-federal land and rangelands. The proposed Water Source Protection Program aims to protect and restore watershed health, water supply and quality, municipal or agricultural water supply systems, and water-related infrastructure. The bill also aims to establish a Community Wildfire Risk Reduction Program to, in part, support interagency coordination in reducing wildfire risk, advance research, including support for non-federal research partners, encourage public-private partnerships to perform fuel management activities, and provide technical and financial assistance. The bill also provides the potential for post-fire restoration support.

HR471 is a sweeping proposal. The Association of California Water Agencies Federal Affairs Committee is maintaining its “support” position. The Agency has an interest in the success of this bill to potentially support watershed management and protection efforts on our ~24,000 acres of wildfire prone rangeland around Nacimiento and San Antonio reservoirs.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

On February 10, 2025, the County of Monterey’s Legislative Committee adopted a “Support” position and authorized their Intergovernmental & Legislative Affairs Division to work the bill.

FINANCING:

None.

Prepared and Approved by: Ara Azhderian, General Manager, (831) 755-4860

Attachments:

1. ACWA FAC Memo RE: HR 471 Fix Our Forests Act
2. Bill HR471- Fix Our Forests Act - Westernman al. et.
3. Draft LTR WRA RE: HR471 Fix Our Forests Act - Support Padilla-Schiff
4. Draft LTR WRA RE: HR471 Fix Our Forests Act - Support Panetta-Lofgren
5. Board Order