



County of Monterey

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Monterey County Water Resources Agency

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February 10, 2025

The Honorable Jimmy Panetta
304 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
1401 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: H.R. 471, Fix Our Forests Act – SUPPORT

Dear Congressman Panetta and Congresswoman Lofgren:

On behalf of the County of Monterey Board of Supervisors and the Board of Supervisors of the Monterey County Water Resources Agency, we are writing to express our support for the Fix Our Forests Act (H.R. 471). We appreciate your leadership to provide agencies with critical tools to implement the most vital forest management projects immediately.

This comprehensive, bipartisan legislation 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.

While the bill focuses largely on federal lands, it would provide opportunities for expanded federal, state, and local collaboration, including sharing of tools and information, to improve fire-shed 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-shed 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.

As you know, a century of suppressing all natural fires, which led to excessive and unnatural growth, decades of mismanagement of federal lands due to outdated laws, and rising temperatures have created a perfect storm of federal lands susceptible to drought and wildfires. In California, the nine largest wildfires on record and three of the top five deadliest fires have occurred during the last decade. In 2020, California wildfires contributed more to climate change than the state's entire power sector. And, of course, the recent fires in Los Angeles have provided us with a shocking example of the devastation caused by wildfires. Moreover, catastrophic fire is the single largest source of particulate pollution in the United States, posing a significant threat to watersheds and ecosystems. The cost of further inaction is untenable. We are optimistic that this legislation can be a turning point to preventing additional tragedies caused by fires.



We appreciate your continued support for Monterey County, and we thank you for voting to pass H.R. 471, the Fix Our Forests Act, out of the House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

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Chris M. Lopez

Chair, County of Monterey Board of Supervisors

Chair, Board of Supervisors of the Monterey County Water Resources Agency