



October 24, 2017

The Honorable John Barrasso  
Chairman  
United States Senate Committee on Environment  
and Public Works  
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper  
Ranking Member  
United States Senate Committee on Environment  
and Public Works  
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

On behalf of the National Association of Counties (NACo) the only organization representing the nation's 3,069 counties, parishes, and boroughs, I write to express support for recent draft legislation to discourage litigation against land management projects, to promote the active management of our nation's federal lands and forests, reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire and ensure equitable sharing of forest revenues with county governments.

For the 62 percent of counties across the United States that are home to federal lands, the health of our national forests has a direct impact on the health and safety of county residents. Healthy forests are less prone to disease, insect infestation and wildfire. While the causes of catastrophic wildfire are complex, the *status quo* of inaction has exacerbated present forest conditions, which now present a great risk to both communities and the environment.

Counties believe that active management of federal lands and forests must be done in a sustainable, collaborative manner that ensures healthy landscape for generations to come. One way to help ensure a balanced approach to address natural resource management challenges is to authorize limited and reasonable categorical exclusions for collaborative projects and active management projects that improve forest health, such as the treatment of insect and disease infestation, salvage operations after a catastrophic event and the improvement of wildlife habitat. Counties support your efforts to ensure reasonable management projects can move forward through streamlined regulations and less red tape.

In addition to improving forest health and reducing wildfire risk for forest communities, increased active management will generate more revenue for the federal treasury and critical services provided by counties, and promote job creation and economic growth across the nation. The increase in stewardship contracting in recent years has shown that a market-driven approach to forest management projects can work to achieve both forest management goals and greater forest production.

Counties support and are active partners in stewardship contracting initiatives across the United States. NACo supports provisions of the draft legislation that authorize the equitable sharing of stewardship contracting revenues with counties consistent with historic practices. Forest revenue sharing payments support critical county services such as transportation, infrastructure and education. America's counties

look forward to working with Congress to further strengthen forest revenue sharing between counties and the federal government.

NACo stands ready to work with you to promote locally supported, consensus-driven solutions to address forest management challenges, reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire and increase economic activity on our federal lands. We appreciate your committee's efforts in support of legislation that promotes healthy landscapes and protects federal lands communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew D. Chase". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent loop at the beginning of the name.

Matthew D. Chase  
Executive Director  
National Association of Counties

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joel Bousman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent loop at the beginning of the name.

Joel Bousman  
President  
Western Interstate Region