



Wyoming County Commissioners Association

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October 27, 2017

The Honorable John Barrasso, MD
Chairman
Senate Committee on the Environment
and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on the Environment
and Public Works
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper,

The Wyoming County Commissioners Association (WCCA), an organization representing all 23 of Wyoming's counties, supports the goals behind the staff draft, *The Wildfire Prevention and Mitigation Act of 2017*. We appreciate the careful deliberation of your committee on this staff draft, and urge your committee to expeditiously review and advance this legislation.

Like every fire season in recent memory, the 2017 fire season was extremely destructive, and in some cases, catastrophic. Wyoming's fire season was relatively quiet this year - a welcome respite to be sure - but we stand shoulder to shoulder with our neighbors in the West that annually suffer the ramifications of destroyed forests, ruined livelihoods, and lives lost. We know that because we face the same challenges as our neighbors, it is only a matter of time until Wyoming's forests burn at the rate we witnessed this year in Montana and elsewhere. Counties in Wyoming expend an enormous amount of time, effort and resources working with our Forest Service partners to combat wildfires when they occur. While we cannot control some events that lead to the outbreak of wildfires, nor can we control precisely where they will start, it is imperative that we do everything that is in our control to expedite work to improve our forest health and reduce the risk of widespread, catastrophic wildfires.

That is why we support the staff draft. The Wildfire Prevention and Mitigation Act of 2017 represents an all-hands-on-deck approach that combines concrete fuels reductions efforts in Title II, with enhanced forest health projects already proven to work like Good Neighbor Authority in Title III, with streamlined regulatory procedures to allow for emergency work when the work is needed. As important, the bill draft clears away judicial hurdles to forest health projects that severely delay these human and wildlife health projects. Tackling and solving the ongoing scourge of repeated litigation in the public lands management policy arena is of utmost importance as the most robust and lasting federal management decisions occur in the open forum of public engagement, not in the private confines of the courtroom.

We sincerely hope that a final version of this staff draft will pass your committee, and the whole Senate with bipartisan support. Do not hesitate to reach out to us with questions:

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob Hendry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "H".

Rob Hendry
President
Wyoming County Commissioners Association