

October 23, 2017

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

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

Re: Wildfire Prevention and Mitigation Act of 2017

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

Like many American's our thoughts are with the people and communities that have been struck by one of the nation's most catastrophic wildfire seasons. We appreciate Congress' interest in improving the health of our nation's forests and agree that addressing this issue is of critical importance. As entities responsible for delivering sustainable water supply and renewable hydropower for millions of citizens throughout the Western U.S., we are writing in support of the need to pass, this year, comprehensive legislation providing meaningful forest management and wildfire funding reforms.

National Forest lands are the largest single source of water in the U.S. and in some regions of the west contribute nearly 50% of the overall water supply that supports our farms and cities. The current, unhealthy state of these forests, which contain some of the nation's most valuable watersheds, increases the threat of catastrophic wildfires. These high intensity wildfires jeopardize the reliability, volume and quality of water for tens of millions of Americans, along with the wildlife, recreational, and multi-purpose value of these lands.

We support reforms that enable collaborative, active forest management, streamline the environmental review process, address the unsustainable practice of fire borrowing, and provide an alternative to the current unworkable litigation process. We believe it is critical that both forest management reforms and resolution of the fire borrowing issue are addressed in any legislation to ensure on-the-ground forest restoration activities can proceed at the pace and scale of the problem. We recognize and appreciate that these elements are addressed in the draft Wildfire Prevention and Mitigation Act of 2017. We support the need for the forest management and ecosystem restoration activities identified in this legislation and encourage the Committee to continue this laudable effort.

We appreciate your leadership on this important issue and urge prompt passage of comprehensive wildfire funding and management legislation to protect our nation's vital watersheds.

Sincerely,

National Water Resources Association

Agribusiness and Water Council of Arizona

Association of California Water Agencies

Colorado River Water Conservation District

Placer County Water Agency

Salt River Project

South Tahoe Public Utility District