

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
 Chair
 Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
 United States Senate
 328A Russell Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Joe Manchin
 Chair
 Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
 United States Senate
 304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

The John Boozman
 Ranking Member
 Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
 United States Senate
 328A Russell Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Barrasso
 Ranking Member
 Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
 United States Senate
 304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

May 27, 2021

Dear Chairman Stabenow, Ranking Member Boozman, Chairman Manchin, and Ranking Member Barrasso:

As entities that rely on healthy federal lands to deliver clean water and energy resources, protect our communities against wildfire, provide conservation, recreational activities, timber harvesting, and fish and wildlife protection, we urge you to use any forthcoming infrastructure package to make needed investments to restore the health and function of western forests and headwaters.

The protection of critical watersheds and restoration of federal lands is a core infrastructure issue. The intense wildland fires we are witnessing throughout the West don't just destroy trees and vegetation. They also severely affect water quality by causing soil erosion, increased flooding and debris flow. The events of the 2017 and 2018 wildfire seasons, including the Camp Fire, highlight the importance to revise wildfire mitigation plans to reduce both the potential wildfire risk from existing utility infrastructure and with equal importance, protect critical renewable energy infrastructure. In addition, the particulate matter from smoke released in high intensity wildfire events are up to 10 times more harmful to humans than particles released from other sources, creating a major public health risk.

Watershed health and catastrophic wildfires must be addressed to restore the ability of forests to function as natural infrastructure and protect existing traditional water and energy supply infrastructure. We appreciate the inclusion of forest restoration in the American Jobs Plan and urge Congress to take advantage of this once in a generation opportunity to protect our critical watersheds. To accomplish this goal, we request increased funding for forest restoration, support for landscape scale collaborations, acceleration of project review and implementation, and other steps to remove barriers to progress on-the-ground.

Last year, the Forest Service testified that it would need roughly \$30 billion over the next 10 years to address the current management backlog, and we encourage Congress to use that figure

as a baseline in its infrastructure package. At the same time, the planning and analysis timelines do not seem to reflect the urgency of the situation and other factors like prohibitive insurance costs for contractors due to wildfire liability policies are creating new barriers to progress. Addressing the funding shortfalls and finding a consensus path forward on the numerous constructive policy proposals aimed at speeding up progress on restoration will turn the tide on a worsening crisis in our nations forests, and reduce the harmful carbon emissions and air pollutants that have skyrocketed in recent years due to catastrophic wildfires.

As you draft and pass infrastructure legislation this Congress, please invest and facilitate forest restoration and in so doing improve the reliability, volume, and quality of water for tens of millions of Americans, along with the wildlife, recreational, and multi-purpose values of these lands.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact Ian Lyle, National Water Resources Association at 202-360-6429/ ilyle@nwra.org or David R. French, ENS Resources at [202.255.6524](tel:202.255.6524)/dfrench@ensresources.com.

Sincerely,

National Association of Counties	County of Placer (CA)
National Water Resources Association	County of Alpine (CA)
National Special Districts Coalition	County of Tulare (CA)
Family Farm Alliance	County of Modoc (CA)
Association of California Water Agencies	Central Utah Water Conservancy District
Idaho Water Users Association	Salt River Project (AZ)
Washington State Water Resources Association	County of Kittitas (WA)
South Tahoe Public Utility District (CA)	Incline Village GID (NV)
Placer County Water Agency (CA)	Colorado River Electric Districts Association
Tahoe City Public Utility District (CA)	Washington Fire Commissioners Association
Yuba Water Agency (CA)	Special Districts Association of Colorado
Modesto Irrigation District (CA)	Utah Association of Special Districts
City of Paradise (CA)	California Special Districts Association
Turlock Irrigation District (CA)	Florida Association of Special Districts
Kings River Conservation District	Special Districts Association of Oregon
Truckee-Carson Irrigation District (NV)	Oregon Water Resources Congress
Dolores Water Conservation District (CO)	Placer County Air Pollution Control District
City of Folsom (CA)	Cucamonga Valley Water District (CA)
County of Santa Barbara (CA)	Fresno Irrigation District (CA)
County of Butte (CA)	California Agricultural Commissioners and Sealers Association
County of Fresno (CA)	Southern Cascades CSD (CA)
County of Inyo (CA)	County of Yuba (CA)
County of Humboldt (CA)	North Tahoe Public Utility District (CA)
County of Ventura (CA)	Alpine Biomass Committee
County of Siskiyou (CA)	County of Mariposa (CA)
County of Glenn (CA)	

County of Yuba (CA)
Montecito Fire Department (CA)
Gold Mountain CSD (CA)
Lake Don Pedro CSD (CA)
County of Merced (CA)
County of Nevada (CA)
County of Mendocino (CA), Supervisor
District 3
Trinity County (CA), Supervisor District 1
Kittitas Reclamation District

Coalinga-Huron Recreation & Park District
(CA)
Frazier Park Public Utility District (CA)
San Juan Water District (CA)
Animas La Plata Water Conservancy District
(CO)
Agribusiness & Water Council of Arizona
Regional Water Authority (CA)
Sacramento Suburban Water District