

COUNTY OF EL DORADO

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June 2, 2009

The Honorable Senator Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Request for Emergency Assistance due to Intensified Risk of Wildfires

Dear Senator Feinstein:

The El Dorado County Board of Supervisors asks for your assistance to address the ever increasing risk of wildfires on the California National Forests. California National Forests are growing at an uncontrolled rate. The lack of sufficient fuel reductions has created a dangerous fire condition. Currently, the California National Forest is like a tinderbox waiting to explode.

In 2008, 920,000 acres of California National Forest was consumed by wild fire. The Forest Service spent \$749 million to suppress these fires. In 2001, just 7 years ago 145,000 acres burned in California's National Forests and the suppression costs were \$118 million. The cost of suppression far exceeds the cost of an aggressive forest fuel reduction plan.

An aggressive forest fuel reduction plan is the best method to mitigate the risk of forest fires and is the most cost effective. The cost of forest fires are in the millions with no return on investment. An aggressive forest fuel reduction plan has at least a 3:1 return on investment and would act as an economic stimulus. The value of the commercial wood generally covers the cost of removing the surface and ladder fuels to achieve a fuels objective.

Three wood products facilities Quincy, Sonora, and Camino have announced closure. These facilities provided a total of 450 direct jobs and an additional 900 indirect and induced jobs in these rural communities. An aggressive fuel reduction would significantly help these timber facilities to get back into operation. These facilities are vital to the ability of the California national Forest to effectively meet fuel reduction objectives and certainly are vital to the economic vitality of these communities.

7 million of the 9.8 million acres of productive forest land, not reserved, on California's National Forest are at risk of wildfires. The recent dramatic increase of wildfires in California and continuing litigation of Forest Service mechanical thinning/fuels reduction projects has shown that

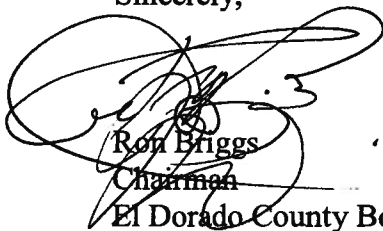
it is time to declare California's National Forests an emergency situation. We believe that the Forest Service has demonstrated that existing statutes and regulations simply do not provide them the needed legislative tools to address this existing emergency.

We ask for your assistance now. We believe legislative action, perhaps through the 2010 Interior Appropriations Bill, is needed to declare an emergency and provide the associated legislative direction giving the Forest Service the ability to effectively overcome the extraordinary and dangerous wildfire conditions. We also believe the California Region of the U.S. Forest Service needs annually an additional \$35 million, above their 2009 budget level, in their timber management budget line item to be able to respond. This level of funding would allow for full implementation of the Quincy Library Group and Northwest Forest Plan as well as increases in fuel reduction programs for several of the Sierra Nevada National Forest.

The El Dorado County Board of Supervisors are grateful for your continued leadership on the fuels reduction issues facing California's National Forests, the wood products and biomass industry infrastructure so essential to our hazardous fuels reduction efforts, and the economic vitality of our rural communities. We respectfully ask for your continued assistance on these important matters to our County and the other California rural Counties dependent on our National Forests. We are in the process of developing a coalition of rural counties throughout the Sierra Nevada and Klamath Mountains of Northern California to pursue this effort.

We sincerely request a meeting with you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ron Briggs', is written over the typed name and title.

Ron Briggs
Chairman

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors