

**Public Comment #27**

County of El Dorado Clerk of the Board <edc.cob@edcgov.us>

BOS Rcvd. 4/4/2022

Action Item submitted by Supervisor Turnboo #22-0502 for 4/5 BOS Mtg

Susan Yewell <sby813@gmail.com>

Sun, Apr 3, 2022 at 11:08 AM

To: edc.cob@edcgov.us

Dear El Dorado County Supervisors,

My comments are regarding the action item on the April 5 BOS meeting agenda submitted by Supervisor Turnboo regarding a letter of support for HR 6903.

My concern is would this bill put undue pressure on the United States Forest Service (USFS) regarding their established fire management policies and procedures? My understanding is that some places are so difficult to get to that the only option is to let fires burn. Has Congressman McClintock conferred with the USFS on the development of this bill, or is this a bill developed with influence from outside sources other than the USFS?

Action Item #27. 22-0502 Supervisor Turnboo recommending the Board authorize the Chair to sign a letter of support for HR 6903, which is proposed in the House of Representatives by Congressman McClintock and Congressman LaMalfa. The proposed bill would direct the United States Forest Service to immediately suppress wildfires on national forest system lands and put an end to the policy of letting fires burn.

I would appreciate a response to my letter.

Sincerely,
Susan Yewell
Cool, CA
505.699.5127



County of El Dorado Clerk of the Board <edc.cob@edcgov.us>

Opposition to District II letter limiting federal management flexibility during wildfires.

Craig Thomas <craigthomas068@gmail.com>
To: edc.cob@edcgov.us, Lori Parlin <lori.parlin@edcgov.us>

Mon, Apr 4, 2022 at 9:50 AM

TO: El Dorado County BOS CLerk

Please share with EDCO Board of Supervisors, and place in the record, the attached letter opposing District II Supervisor letter limiting the Forest Service flexibility in managing wildfire events on the April 5th Agenda.

Sincerely,

Craig Thomas



Craig Thomas, Director
The Fire Restoration Group
www.firerestorationgroup.org
916-708-9409 (cell)

Our Product is Resilience---focus on what we re-establish, not what we take away.



Letter to EDCO Board of Supervisors--Oppose District II--(Turnboo) Letter Restricting Forest Service Flexibility to Manage Wildfires.pdf

104K



The Fire Restoration Group

Lori Parlin, Chair
El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
330 Fair Lane
Placerville, CA 95667

Dear Chair Parlin,

RE: April 5th Agenda Item (p. 17) Restricting the Forest Services' (and other federal partners) ability to manage wildfires for multiple resource benefits where appropriate on federal land.

Item 27. 22-0502

Supervisor Turnboo recommending the Board authorize the Chair to sign a letter of support for HR 6903, which is proposed in the House of Representatives by Congressman McClintock and Congressman LaMalfa. The proposed bill would direct the United States Forest Service to immediately suppress wildfires on national forest system lands and put an end to the policy of letting fires burn.

We express our strong opposition to this misguided piece of legislation (HR 6903) and oppose and request that you not join Supervisor Turnboo in authorizing the proposed letter of support for the following reasons:

1. Beneficial Fire is an integral part of the California landscape. Contrary to Mr. McClintock and LaMalfa, *Fire is our Friend* and learning about fire's important role in California is critical to restoring the resilience that fire can deliver. We need all the tools including prescribed fire, sound ecological thinning, and where appropriate, management of wildfires for multiple resource benefits. The Forest Service doesn't make these wildfire management decision lightly, but instead, applies much up front, pre-event planning, mapping and a rigorous Go-No Go strategy.

The 2009 Federal Wildfire Management Guidance removed constraints that limited the decision space of fire managers and agency administrators and gave them greater flexibility to do the right thing at the right place at the right time. In some places, fire will be suppressed at the smallest size possible; in others, fire will be managed to achieve land management objectives. And, in many places, fire management will include both capturing benefits to natural resources as well as focusing fire management efforts on protecting values (human-made or natural) that may be harmed by fire.

Do not support this effort to ham-string our federal agencies from using all the tools they need.

2. Instead we ask that you express support for the new *California Strategic Plan for Expanding the Use of Beneficial Fire*, including Prescribed Fire, Cultural Burning and Wildfire Management for Multiple Resource Benefits. <https://firerestorationgroup.org/strategic-plan> Created in collaborative partnership with the CA Natural Resources Agency, CAL FIRE, Forest Service and other agencies, fire scientists, fire practitioners and NGOs with fire policy experience. This document is a key fire restoration guidance document for California.

3. Continue to focus support for partnership and collaboration in El Dorado County with the Eldorado National Forest, the El Dorado and Georgetown RCD, CAL FIRE, the SoFAR Cohesive Strategy Collaborative active since 2014, the Georgetown Fire Safe Council (and others), BLM, CCCs, and private landowners in our collaborative efforts to reduce the fire hazard, create defensible space and harden homes via the El Dorado Co. Vegetation Management Ordinance and efforts like the recent Kelsey Fuels Reduction Project.

4. The Forest Service has no “let burn” policy on Forest Service lands. They are not required to risk the lives of their workforce to put a fire out and it is wrong for anyone to offer “armchair” opinions regarding how the fire professionals should respond to any given event.

The Guidelines for Implementation of Federal Wildfire Management Policy (2009) is located here: <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/2009-wfm-guidance-for-implementation.pdf>

We do have a major fire deficit across most of California, particularly in the Sierra Nevada, where the expanding WUI population in high and very high fire hazard areas presents a unique problem, especially when people don’t take the State required Defensible Space Ordinance seriously. See PRC § 4291. It is State Law in California where California (and its Mediterranean climate) is one of the most naturally fire-prone landscapes on Planet Earth. We are asking fire fighters to risk their lives defending our homes—not doing the required defensible space work is completely unacceptable and risks our communities and fire fighter lives. Help enforce this import requirement for living in the fire-prone WUI landscape.

<https://www.fire.ca.gov/programs/communications/defensible-space-prc-4291/>

5. The Hwy 50 corridor has had six large fires within the last 47 years which have spread throughout the watershed: the Pilliken Fire (1973), Wrights Fire (1981), the Cleveland Fire (1992), the Freds Fire (2004) and the King Fire (2014), and now the Caldor Fire (2021), all of which were human starts.

In recent research in Scientific Reports (2022) by OSU, Colorado State University and the Forest Service-Rocky Mountain Research Station: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-022-06002-3.pdf> looking at cross-boundary fire on 74 National Forests in the West points to the fact that 60% of those ignitions originate on private lands. This clearly suggests that we are focusing in the right areas—rural WUI areas in forested landscapes—where private land intersects with federal ownership. There are many reasons supporting sound ecological thinning around communities combined with the wise application of prescribed fire to maintain resilience. On steeper ground and in remote areas or restricted areas planned fire or the appropriate use of natural ignitions is our only choice – doing nothing is not a choice in these landscapes that are climate and drought-stressed and heavily fuel loaded due to a century of fire suppression and exclusion.

Sincerely,

Please Do Not Support the District II (Turnboo) Letter



Craig Thomas, Director
The Fire Restoration Group
craigthomas068@gmail.com
P.O. Box 244
Garden Valley, CA 95633



County of El Dorado Clerk of the Board <edc.cob@edcgov.us>

BOS 4/5/22 Agenda Item #27

BOS Four <bosfour@edcgov.us>

Mon, Apr 4, 2022 at 1:04 PM

To: County of El Dorado Clerk of the Board <edc.cob@edcgov.us>, Donald Ashton <don.ashton@edcgov.us>

Dear Clerk of the Board,

Please add the attached article to Legistar for file #22-0502. I have bcc'd the board members on this email to distribute the information to them directly.

*Sincerely,**Shelley Wiley*

Assistant to Supervisor Lori Parlin, District IV

Board of Supervisors, County of El Dorado

Phone: (530) 621-6513

 [Sign Up for District IV Email Updates](#) [Follow Us on Facebook](#)

CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE: This electronic communication with its contents may contain confidential and/or privileged information. It is solely for the use of the intended recipient(s), except as otherwise permitted. Unauthorized interception, review, use, or disclosure is prohibited and may violate applicable laws including the Electronic Communications Privacy Act. If you are not the intended recipient, or authorized to receive for the intended recipient, please contact the sender and destroy all copies of the communication. Thank you for your consideration.

**firehouse.com-Experts Feds New Wildfire Suppression Policy Dangerous.pdf**

1289K

Experts: Feds' New Wildfire Suppression Policy Dangerous

[firehouse.com/operations-training/wildland/news/21233566/experts-forest-services-new-wildfire-suppression-policy-dangerous](https://www.firehouse.com/operations-training/wildland/news/21233566/experts-forest-services-new-wildfire-suppression-policy-dangerous)

Nathaniel Levine/Sacramento Bee/TNS



A home burns on Highway 89 south of Greenville, CA, near Forgay Road during the Dixie Fire on Aug. 5, 2021.

Last week, the head of the U.S. Forest Service ordered federal firefighters to put out every wildfire across the nation as quickly as possible.

The seemingly commonsense move was praised by many residents of California's rural areas, where drought has created a dangerously dry landscape and fires are exploding. Several lawmakers, as well as Gov. Gavin Newsom, had been publicly pressing the Forest Service for a stronger commitment to safety.

Some fire experts, however, aren't so sure about the new mandate. They say the order appears to be more about crowd-pleasing politics than fire protection. Under the directive, the Forest Service is no longer allowing small fires to burn, nor lighting prescribed fires of its own, which both clear out thick, overgrown forests and reduce the intensity of future fires. They say this is the real danger.

"A blanket policy like this is a relatively poor idea," said Matthew Hurteau, professor of biology at the University of New Mexico, who specializes in fire ecology and has written about the value of controlled burning in western forests. "If we treat less of the forest with less fire, we're going to have higher fuel loads and increased risk of seeing the kind of fires we're seeing right now in California."

Hurteau and others acknowledge that controlled burns carry a risk of getting out of hand and, in a tinder-dry year like this one, swift fire suppression may well be the best tactic. But they worry that eliminating the option of burning altogether marks a dangerous slide into old Forest Service ways. For decades, federal firefighters pounced on every blaze they could, creating a buildup of vegetation that has helped make wildfires the menace they are today.

While the Forest Service says it will lift the burning moratorium once it's safe to do so, some worry that with climate change, things won't get any safer. The landscape will only get hotter and drier, and wildlands will continue to accumulate combustible trees and brush.

"When are we going to get out of these conditions?" said Craig Thomas, founder of the Fire Restoration Group, an organization that advocates for better forest management. "Maybe two weeks in December? Two weeks in January? Think about where we're headed."

In an interview with The Chronicle, U.S. Forest Service Chief Randy Moore recognized the benefits of controlled burning. But he said given the dozens of wildfires raging across the West this summer, with homes and communities going up in smoke, the agency's limited resources need to focus solely on fire suppression.

"When you have drought conditions like we have, you don't have time to have (other) conversation(s)," he said.

Benefits of proactive burning

Proactive burning of forests and grasslands is increasingly recognized as one of the most effective ways to stem the tide of catastrophic fire.

As a natural component of many ecosystems, fire not only helps wipe out excessive vegetation, it promotes the growth of healthier, more resilient landscapes. Both letting existing wildfires burn and intentionally lighting new fires, when it's safe to do so, offer benefits across vast areas. The tactics are generally more comprehensive and less costly than other management strategies, such as thinning forests with chain saws.

The Forest Service, after nearly a century of rushing to put out every fire, has committed in recent decades to doing more controlled burning. In California, the agency burned an average of 52,000 acres annually over the past three years, records show, nearly doubling what it averaged the first half of the previous decade.

Still, fire experts say there needs to be a lot more burning done to make the state's wildlands more impervious to the big, destructive fires seen in recent years. Some suggest controlled burns should cover at least 1 million acres of California annually. That's close to what wildfires in the state have burned each year, on average, over the past decade.

Last summer, the Forest Service and the state set a joint goal of igniting prescribed fires, or using other forest treatments like timber harvesting and tree thinning, across 1 million acres each year. They don't expect to achieve the goal for several years, though.

Cal Fire, the state's firefighting agency, generally does less burning because its jurisdiction is mostly private lands, where it has limited power. The Forest Service, by contrast, owns huge parcels where it can dictate what's done. Nearly 60% of California's forests are under federal jurisdiction.

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, who oversees the Forest Service, told The Chronicle last week that after this fire season, he hopes to boost forest management work in California and the rest of the country. New funding for burning and other forest treatments, he expects, will come from the federal infrastructure bill and other legislation supported by the Biden administration.

"They contain significant, I mean significant increases in resources that will allow us to not just do a year or two of good work but potentially a decade of good work," he said.

Controlled burning moratorium

The Forest Service's moratorium on controlled burning, announced Aug. 2, followed criticism of the agency for responding too slowly to fire this year.

A handful of Republican lawmakers, including Rep. Tom McClintock of Elk Grove (Sacramento County), questioned why firefighters hadn't moved more quickly to put out the Tamarack Fire, which ignited July 4 on federal land south of Lake Tahoe. The Forest Service didn't send crews to the blaze until six days after it started. During that time, strong winds carried the fire across more than 20,000 acres, threatening the Alpine County community of Markleeville.

"What legal authority authorized the U.S. Forest Service to allow this wildfire to burn?" McClintock wrote in a letter to the agency.

Forest Service officials said their response to the fire was delayed because several fires had erupted in the area and they had no choice but to prioritize some over others. The Tamarack Fire had begun as a single tree struck by lightning in a spot where there wasn't much vegetation. It was believed to be less of a threat than nearby conflagrations. Officials said their response had nothing to do with wanting to let the blaze burn.

It didn't help the agency's case that a month earlier, residents of Siskiyou County also charged the Forest Service with being too lax about putting out fire, in this case the Lava Fire on the flanks of Mount Shasta. Federal officials admitted they made an error in thinking this fire had been extinguished when it hadn't been. The fire went on to char more than 25,000 acres, including homes in the city of Weed.

Still, many accused the Forest Service of treating both the Lava Fire and Tamarack Fire as a controlled burns and suggested that such a "let it burn" policy was inappropriate. Gov. Newsom was among the critics.

"There's a culture that too often is 'wait and see,'" he told President Biden during a teleconference on wildfires last month. "We can't afford that any longer."

Despite the Forest Service's insistence that crews have been responding to fires as fast as they can — not letting them burn as Newsom and others have suggested — chief Moore issued a directive halting all controlled burning.

Moore told The Chronicle he did it to clarify the misconception.

"I thought it was just better to be clear about what we were doing," he said. "It's people's perception that we are watching fires for natural resource benefit. We're not."

Moore became head of the Forest Service just last month. He's already staring down a fire season that he's called a "national crisis." But having been plucked by the Biden administration from a post in California as regional forester for the Pacific Southwest Region, he's familiar with the issues surrounding wildfire.

Figuring out the right balance

As much as politicians and forest managers may want to keep fire off the landscape and still clear dangerous amounts of vegetation for the future, fire experts underscore that you can't do both.

"I wish there was an easy way we could get out of this dilemma we've gotten into," said Scott Stephens, professor of fire science at UC Berkeley.

Like other experts, Stephens says achieving the right balance between safety today and safety tomorrow comes only by continuing to burn proactively, when appropriate. Even before the ban, he noted that the Forest Service was very cautious about proceeding with controlled fire, making sure the burns were safe and didn't take resources away from fighting fires.

"It's not just willy-nilly," Stephens said. "You have to have a plan in place. You have to have a checklist. You have to go to your forest supervisor."

While in California controlled burns would probably not pass muster with the current drought conditions, experts say parts of the Southwest may be ripe for controlled fire. Monsoon rains have been drenching the landscape there.

Hurteau, at the University of New Mexico, worries that going too long without the ability to burn will only make conditions on the ground more dangerous.

"The political pressure that can come from that lack of understanding about fire has the potential to force us back to this full-suppression approach," he said. "We know that's a loser idea. We're experiencing the effects of that, magnified by climate change, right now."

(c)2021 the San Francisco Chronicle

Visit the San Francisco Chronicle at www.sfchronicle.com

Distributed by [Tribune Content Agency, LLC](#).

Sponsored Content

[Learn More](#)



Download: Firefighter PPE Cleaning & Inspection Guide

Do you know the requirements for PPE cleaning and inspection as set forth in NFPA 1851? We've put together a guide to help you understand how to clean and inspect your SCBA, helmets, hoods, turnouts, and boots. [Download here.](#)

Voice Your Opinion!

This site requires you to register or login to post a comment.

By submitting this form and personal information, you understand and agree that the information provided here will be processed, stored and used to provide you with the requested services in accordance with Endeavor Business Media's [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).

As part of our services, you agree to receive magazines, e-newsletters and other communication about related offerings from Endeavor Business Media, its brands, affiliates and/or third-party partners consistent with Endeavor's Privacy Policy. Contact us at emailsolutions@endeavorb2b.com or by mail to Endeavor Business Media, LLC, 331 54th Avenue N., Nashville, TN 37209.

You can unsubscribe from our communications at any time by emailing emailsolutions@endeavorb2b.com.

Latest Comments

Posted by rvfdSep 26th, 2021 1:06PM

Personally, I think stopping "Let It Burn" will be adding more fuel to the fire. You need to clean out the trash, deadfall, etc either by prescribed burns, grass/wild fires, or physically by hand. Not doing so, your asking for trouble.

Posted by rvfdSep 26th, 2021 1:06PM

Personally, I think stopping "Let It Burn" will be adding more fuel to the fire. You need to clean out the trash, deadfall, etc either by prescribed burns, grass/wild fires, or physically by hand. Not doing so, your asking for trouble.

Posted by MTRAug 11th, 2021 7:30AM

This concept of letting a fire burn deserves added attention and must be addressed head on. The USDA Forest Service refers to Managed Fires as natural ignitions [some refer to them as “unplanned”], which under suitable weather and soil moisture conditions are allowed to burn to meet desired ecological objectives in Wilderness Areas only where pre-planned and approved in Forest Plans. This allows fire to play a natural role in restoring the ecosystems by recycling nutrients into the soil and clearing the forest floor of excessive debris. The key is to identify the right kind of fire at the right time at the right place. However, relying on natural ignitions to instantly create an opportunity for a managed fire in a random location, without adequate planning and pre-positioning for resources is like playing a game of Russian Roulette. This is not to be confused with “Prescribed Fire” which is conducted under very specific conditions.

The reality is, with the clogged-up conditions of our forests; hard to predict weather events; and the extremely high level of expertise required to perfectly “herd” a wildfire, “managed fires” quickly become escaped fires. The notion of effectively directing a wildfire to help restore the forest has become largely an intellectual argument and puts others needlessly in harm’s way; causes deaths due to smoke inhalation; and, significantly increases fire suppression costs that continue to shift more funds away from badly needed traditional forest maintenance.

In 2021, with the risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, letting fires burn to theoretically help forest restoration is unconscionable. There is a strong connection between smoke inhalation and the more dire effects of Covid-19

On August 2, 2021, the newly appointed Forest Service Chief sent a letter to his leadership team regarding the use of managed fires. The key points of the letter: managing fires for resource benefit is a strategy we will not use. In addition, until further notice, ignited prescribed fire operations will be considered only in specific geographic areas and only with approval by the national office.

The letter was timely and the right thing to do. I am very happy the Forest Service Chief wrote this letter immediately after accepting his new position.

Please know, I am a fan of using fire as a conservation tool. Recently, I co-authored an essay entitled, Restoring Fire as a Landscape Conservation Tool: Nontraditional Thoughts for a Traditional Organization. The notion is, for the right kind of fire at the right place and time, it – restorative actions -- can work. But, NOT NOW. We cannot let an intellectual argument get in the way of reality. These are very different times. With the current land conditions; the impacts of a changing climate; and the expanding wildland-urban interface, the notion of allowing a fire to burn anywhere, for whatever reason, for the foreseeable future, is unacceptable and must be stopped now; no exceptions.

The document entitled, A National Crisis: Lack of Forest Maintenance Resulting In Destructive Wildfires [A Call to Action], details the concept of managed fire further