

COUNTY OF EL DORADO

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

June 2, 2009

Re: Request for Declaration of Emergency for Fire Danger on National Forests of California

Dear Senator Feinstein:

The El Dorado County Board of Supervisors asks for your assistance to address the ever increasing risk of large wildfire on the National Forests (NFs) of California. As you know, the continued deteriorating conditions on California's NFs cause them to be a tinderbox waiting to explode.

Fully 7 million of the 9.8 million acres of productive forest land, not reserved, on California's NFs are at risk to large wildfire. The dramatic increase in large wildfires in California in recent years 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.

Coupled with the fire danger, as you know, 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. These facilities are vital to the ability of the NFs to effectively meet their fuels reduction objectives and certainly are vital to the economic vitality of these communities.

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 NFs. Details are provided in the attachment to this letter.

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 with us.

We request a meeting with you in your Washington, D.C. office at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,


Ray Nutting
El Dorado County Supervisor, District 2
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