

M. Kuehn Open Forum 11/7/2023

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National Wildfire Institute letter to Congress

To MICHAEL KUEHN <mikellkuehn@comcast.net> • mtrains7@verizon.net <mtrains7@verizon.net>

My name is Michael Kuehn I have been a resident of Eldorado County since 1975. I have a BS in Forest Management and a MS in Watershed Management. I was the Forest Hydrologist and a member of the Planning Team for the Eldorado National Forest from 1975 to 1989.

I am here today because I was inspired by the Ken Burns Documentary, American Buffalo. Among other things, the story showed how divergent interest groups and mortal enemies were able to save the buffalo from extinction. Great things can happen when the forces of self interest and basic humanity recognize their commonalities and come together for the "common good".

On Sept 28, 2022 I wrote a letter to the editor titled "**A Glass Half Full or Broken**" in response to a meeting of Forest Service Retirees, where the Washington D.C. and California Regional offices expounded the same tired rhetoric. I challenged their business as usual "glass half full" optimism stating, half of the glasses are broken. I pointed out that earth scientists, foresters, wildland firefighters and others have been warning for decades that we are on an exponential path to an environmental catastrophe, as happened with the **Caldor Fire**.

We destroyed or killed most of the "old growth habitat" and the very "threatened and endangered species" the "environmental groups" were trying to save. In the steep and severely burned portion of the Caldor Fire area we have lost a thousand years of soil formation thus reducing site productivity and the ability of the forest to recover. It saddened me that there was not one response to my letter. It appears our public institutions and special interest groups go where the money is!

They spend billions of tax payer dollars "fighting fire" and trying to mitigate the damage, rather than reinstating enlightened local management that emulates natural, physical, biological and ecological processes. If we worked with these natural landscape processes, as the USFS was starting to do in the 1980s, we would be returning millions of dollars to the taxpayer.

I noticed that over a year ago El Dorado County was one of many local counties, cities, agencies and State Assemblymen and Senators that supported the "**put the damn fire out now**" bill. Therefore, I hope El Dorado County can again add its support to this latest effort to protect and manage what is left of our strategic forest and wildland resources, by adding your name to the National Wildfire Institute letter to Congress which is in your handout.

Respectfully;



Michael H. Kuehn
(530) 957-2058

To Whom It May Concern:

The attached letter, developed by the National Wildfire Institute [NWI], will soon be sent to selected Congressional Committees and Subcommittees whom address forestry issues – specifically forest maintenance and the impacts of unplanned wildfires. These Suggested Committees and Subcommittees include:

1. The House Agriculture Subcommittee on Forestry
2. The House Committee on Natural Resources
3. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
4. Senate Subcommittee on Conservation, Climate, Forestry, and Natural Resources
5. House Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies [Appropriations]
6. Senate Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies [Appropriations]

The letter is being supported by the NWI and others concerned about the resiliency of America's forested landscapes from unplanned wildfires. At this point we have 57 names supporting the letter to Congress; our goal is to obtain at least 100. Please join the NWI and others and ***add your name***.

The letter includes four [4] basic points being advanced to Congress. These are:

1. **We are faced with a National Emergency.** That is, horrific damages to property and lives lost due to catastrophic unplanned wildfires.
2. **Forest maintenance, especially on the National Forests, needs to be enhanced.** This is the primary cause of the destructive wildfires. Our forestlands are clogged up with vegetation.
3. **Unplanned wildfires must be put out as quickly as possible.** The concept of “backing off to the next best ridge” or “managed fire” or “beneficial fire” or “let it burn” must be stopped. In a recent note the NWI concluded: “... We urge you not to be fooled by the intellectual argument that unplanned wildfires are helpful to ecosystem health. They may be in the future, but clearly NOT NOW. The current landscape scale conditions, especially in the western part of America, will not allow the “managed fire” concept to work; it's too dangerous and damaging. For now, using fire to treat excess fuels is foolish.”
4. **Be aware of the foundational document known as *A Call to Action*.** This document, started almost three years ago, now has 69 contributors from professional in landscape scale conservation. Several have concluded that it is one of the most comprehensive documents about forests and fire that is available today.

We need your permission to place your names on the growing list of other names. Your support will be incredibly helpful to the success of forestland stewardship throughout our country.



NATIONAL WILDFIRE INSTITUTE

Supporting Healthy Forests That Resist Catastrophic Fire

Name of Committee or Subcommittee:

Today the Nation's forested landscapes, especially our National Forests, are being destroyed by unplanned wildfires. The dominant contributing factor has been decades of inadequate forest maintenance. The reasons for this lack of forest maintenance are low funding levels; a lack of properly skilled employees to carry out land stewardship actions; ambiguous direction; and a plethora of legal challenges by special interest groups.

The National Wildfire Institute and many others are pleased to endorse a document entitled, [A Call to Action](#) and the [continued passage](#) of [H.R. 934](#) legislation design to codify and augment the forces behind the *A Call to Action*. We strongly believe your review of this material will assist your committees and subcommittees in finding realistic solutions to this National Emergency of catastrophic unplanned wildfires due to the extreme lack of forest maintenance.

The "*America's Forests in the Balance, A National Emergency: A Call to Action* [known simply as, *A Call to Action*]", is hyperlinked to this [1-page summary](#). This document, crafted by sixty-nine [69], and counting, contributors is gaining momentum as a logical means to address the National Emergency we are facing. Conclusions by learned professionals suggest that the great American forests of the west may be brushfields by 2045 if nothing changes. The *A Call for Action* is about change. Just click on the links in the 1-page summary to see the full document and its summary. The latest revision [rev. 17.1] of *A Call to Action* calls for a National Emergency to be declared; adequate funding to be secured; forest maintenance to be greatly expanded; and, outdated tactics such as the concept of *beneficial* or [managed fire](#) to be stopped while land conditions remain so volatile for unplanned wildland fires.

Should you hold Hearings on this critical subject, we can provide knowledgeable witnesses and other related material that support the need for an even stronger Congressional role, especially for the [8 critical actions](#) listed in *A Call to Action*.

We fully acknowledge and appreciate your on-going attention helping to ensure that our Nation's forests, especially America's National Forests, are protected and maintained in a manner that ensures the continued delivery of valuable goods and services -- along a rural to urban land gradient -- to the American people, forever.

Very respectfully,

Michael T. Rains
National Wildfire Institute

National Wildfire Institute and Other Supporters:

#	Name	#	Name	#	Name
1	William A Derr Special Agent in Charge California Region USDA Forest Service [ret.]	2	Ted ("Stub") Stubblefield USDA Forest Supervisor [ret.]	3	Brett L'Esperance CEO Dauntless Air
4	Bob Zybach, PhD President, NW Maps Co.	5	F. Dale Robertson Chief USDA Forest Service [ret.]	6	Nick Smith Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities.
7	Phil Aune USDA Forest Service [ret.]	8	Roger Jaegel USDA Forest Service [ret.] Trinity County Supervisor [ret.]	9	Edward W. Few Deputy Director, Law Enforcement USDA Forest Service [ret.]
10	Court Boice State Representative Oregon District 1	11	Murry Taylor Smokejumper [ret.] and Author: <i>Too Steep and Too Rough</i>	12	Steve Arney USDA Forest Service [ret.]
13	James D. Petersen Founder and President Evergreen Foundation Author of <i>First Put Out the Fire</i>	14	James A. Marsh e-PEAK LLC "A Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business"	15	John Culbertson USDA Forest Service [ret.] Author: <i>Interviews with Smokejumpers that left the Program</i>
16	Frank Carroll PFMc Wildfire Pros	17	Lyle Laverty USDA Forest Service [ret.] USDOJ, Undersecretary [ret.]	18	Amos S. Eno President LandCAN.org
19	Charles N. Sheley Editor Smokejumper Magazine National Smokejumper Association	20	David Moore Associate Director Software Development @ SIG	21	Richard Williamson USDA Forest Service [ret.]
22	Bruce E. Van Zee USDA Forest Supervisor [ret.]	23	Quentin Rhoades Attorney Partner, Rhoades and Erickson, PLLC	24	Mack Moore USDA Forest Service [ret.]
25	Frank Packwood Special Agent USDA Forest Service [ret.]	26	Guy McMahan Curry Wildfire Prevention	27	Sharon R. Norrish Forestland Activist Placerville, California
28	National Woodland Owners Association	29	Larry Boggs USDA Forest Service [ret.]	30	Larry Alexander Executive Director Northern California Resource Center
31	Nadine Bailey Family Water Alliance, Inc.	32	Bill Connelly District 1 Supervisor Butte County, California	33	John D'Agostini, Sheriff El Dorado County, CA [ret.]
34	Robert Williams Pine Creek Forestry, NJ	35	John R. Hawkins Fire Chief, California [ret.]	36	Michael Frenn California Office of Emergency Services [ret.]
37	Ray A. Haupt National Wildfire Institute [NWI] Board, Science Chair Siskiyou County Supervisor, District 5 CA Registered Professional Forester: #2938 USDA Forest Service [ret.]	38	Curt Weidmer, MD, MPH County Health Officer, El Dorado County [EDC], CA [ret.] Member, Board of Directors, EDC, Fire Protection District, CA [ret.]	39	Jeff Lehman Co-Author of: <i>Running Out of Time - Wildfires and Our Imperiled Forests</i>
40	Annie Robinson USDA Forest Service [ret.]	41	Jack Lane USDA Forest Service [ret.]	42	Phoebe Simmington Educator
43	Joe Reddan RPF State of California [#3187]	44	Carl Pence USDA Forest Service [ret.]	45	Babs McDonald, Ph.D. USDA Forest Service [ret.]
46	Matthew Spradlin Write and Co-Producer: <i>American Forest Fires: The Untold Story</i>	47	Michael H. Kuehn Regional Hydrologist, Alaska Region USDA Forest Service [ret.]	48	Wayne Knauf, President K2 Consulting [Resource and Recycle]
49	Rachel Lee Hall Forest Under Stress (FUS)	50	Nathaniel Parks Fellow, Truman National Security	51	Grant Ingram CALFIRE [ret.]

#	Name	#	Name	#	Name
52	David L. Auchterlonie, Chairman Crowbar Research Insights, LLC ® Co-Author of: <i>Running Out of Time - Wildfires and Our Imperiled Forests</i>	53	Brian K. Veerkamp <i>Past</i> El Dorado County Board of Supervisor; Fire Chief [ret.] <i>Current</i> Board President El Dorado Irrigation District	54	Kevin Murphy Agency Principal Gallo and Murphy Allstate
55	Hal Barker, Sheriff El Dorado County, CA [ret.]	56	Jack Sweeney El Dorado County, CA Board of Supervisors [ret.]	57	Allan J. West Deputy Chief USDA Forest Service [ret.]
58	Royal Burnett, Peace Officer California Department of Forestry [ret.]	59	Dave Rosgen <i>Wildland Hydrology</i>	60	Dale A. Dunshie USDA Forest Service [ret.]
61	Steve Cannon, Director, Amador RC&D RPF, State of California [#2316] USDA Forest Service [ret.]	62	Pat Monahan Assistant Fire Chief [ret.] Vice President, Firefighters Union [ret.]	63	
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