



COUNTY OF ALPINE Board of Supervisors

The Honorable Congressman Tom McClintock,
2200A Douglas Blvd, Suite 240
Roseville, CA 95661

April 5, 2022

re: Proposed bill To require the Secretary of Agriculture to carry out activities to suppress wildfires, and for other purposes. SUPPORT.

Dear Congressman McClintock,

Alpine County is in support of your proposed bill to require the Secretary of Agriculture to carry out activities to suppress wildfires, and for other purposes. We have two main concerns with the U.S. Forest Service's practices with respect to wildfire. The first relates to their failure to take appropriate measures at the start of the Tamarack Fire in 2021, the Washington Fire in 2015, and the Acorn Fire in 1987, and the second is their practice of discouraging and/or forbidding local or state firefighters from working to extinguish fires on lands that they manage.

The 2021 Tamarack Fire was started by a lightning strike on or about July 4th. Despite the drought, dry vegetation, warm temperatures, and its location which would be an obvious threat to Markleeville if the fire got away, the U.S. Forest Service declined to do more than monitor the situation until the fire exploded on or about July 10th. There was a U.S. Forest Service helicopter available to take video footage of the fire while it was small and controllable (see <https://www.facebook.com/HumboldtToiyabeNF/videos/2955306648085725/>, but apparently no helicopter available to dump water on it. By Aug. 9th the Tamarack Fire had burned some 68,684 acres and destroyed a number of structures including three homes in Alpine County. The sad thing was that the fire was entirely predictable, and in fact about three years earlier, in a tabletop exercise with the U.S. Forest Service, CalFire, BLM, and our local fire department, this exact scenario was identified.

The local fire department offered assistance at the beginning of the 2015 Washington fire which was declined by the U.S. Forest Service. Subsequently the fire escaped and burned some 18,000 acres.

Alpine County had a similar experience with the 1987 Acorn Fire which burned 24 homes and damaged an additional 56 structures. Our local volunteer fire department responded and was in the process of controlling the fire when the U.S. Forest Service showed up and told them to leave. The U.S. Forest Service did not control the fire and it ended up burning 6,550 acres as well as the homes and structures.

We recognize that fire is a natural component of the environment, but during the height of fire season managed fire that could threaten a community if it escaped is not a sensible policy. It also makes no sense to turn away local and state firefighters when subsequent events show that the U.S. Forest Service was not capable of handling the situation.

Sincerely,

David Griffith
Chair, Board of Supervisors
Alpine County

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