

COUNTY OF EL DORADO

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KIM DAWSON
Clerk of the Board



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May 16, 2023

The Honorable Tom McClintock
United States House of Representatives
2256 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative McClintock,

Thank you for your continued efforts in support of wildfire preparation and recovery in El Dorado County. Despite our recent wet weather pattern, we know all too well that critical wildfire conditions will return as we warm into the Summer and Fall months.

In response to the legislation (HR 934) proposed by you and Congressman LaMalfa, the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors fully supports the Chief of the Forest Service using all available resources to carry out wildfire suppression on National Forest System lands. The information provided by Supervisor Parlin in her April 19, 2022 letter (attached) in response to HR 6903 also applies to the language in this new bill, especially as it relates to the value of fire as a forest management and fire suppression tool.

The Forest Service currently possess all of the statutory authorities and policies to necessary to carry out the fire suppression strategies and tactics identified in HR 934. The use of critical firefighting tools and techniques, including backfiring, should be left up to the professional judgement of trained and experienced firefighters. Unfortunately, there are instances where these tools are not being applied in a safe and effective manner and this requires strong leadership at all levels of the organization to ensure firefighters and line supervisors are being held accountable.

We are fortunate in El Dorado County to have a strong partnership with the Eldorado National Forest, CAL FIRE and our local fire districts. Through our Wildfire Preparedness and Resilience Coordination Group, we continue to have productive dialogue and address issues, including those identified in HR 934.

Thank you again for your leadership and support on wildfire prevention and suppression issues.

Sincerely,

Wendy Thomas
Chair, Board of Supervisors

Attachment

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District V

April 19, 2022

The Honorable Tom McClintock
United States House of Representatives
2312 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Representative McClintock,

First, we would like to thank you for all you have done to assist in the recovery from the Caldor Fire. As you know, the Caldor Fire devastated many hard-working families, communities and natural resources in El Dorado County, and the assistance from your office is greatly appreciated.

In response to the legislation (HR 6903) proposed by you and Congressman LaMalfa, the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors fully supports the need for changes in how the United States manages its forest lands. In addition, we fully support the need to use all available resources to carry out wildfire suppression as well as not inhibiting the suppression efforts of State or local firefighting agencies that are authorized to respond to wildfire on National Forest System lands.

However, upon listening to our local fire professionals and constituents, we feel a more holistic approach should be taken relative to overall forest management and fire suppression activities. Examples include legislative and policy changes relative to overall forest management, forest thinning projects on both public and private land, investing in long-term agreements for timber that foster investments in new and sustainable lumber and biomass facilities, increasing work on defensible space and community resiliency projects, and utilizing both prescribed and natural fire where safe and appropriate.

Lastly, we want to ensure that any proposed legislation allows our firefighting professionals the ability to use all tools available to them and the flexibility to make the most prudent decisions as possible depending on the nature and risks of each fire, while holding them accountable for doing it safely. Due to the high fuel loads and extreme weather conditions, our firefighter professionals

must have the flexibility to adjust to the specific circumstances of each fire, recognizing there may be circumstances when it is not in the best interest to extinguish a fire within 24 hours.

The Board of Supervisors is taking this challenge seriously, as evidenced by a recent update to the County Strategic Plan, specifically the addition of a theme of leading and facilitating the creation and maintenance of fire-adapted communities through the development of a countywide wildfire protection strategy. We have commissioned a Wildfire Resiliency and Vegetation Management Working Group and a Biomass Working Group to engage in this effort and established an Office of Wildfire Resiliency to bring stakeholders together, coordinate efforts and address policy issues.

Thank you again for your leadership in these efforts. The El Dorado County Board of Supervisors stands ready to work with your office on collaborative efforts for the betterment of everyone in El Dorado County.

Sincerely,



Lori Parlin
Chair, Board of Supervisors