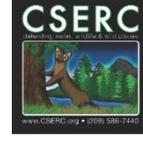




November 10, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker, United States House of Representatives  
1236 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Majority Leader, United States Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510



Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Schumer:



**As conservation organizations with extensive experience working on forest restoration projects in California, we are writing to share our strong support for the Forestry title of the Build Back Better reconciliation package pending before Congress.** This funding is essential to boost the capacity of the U.S. Forest Service and other agencies to restore wildfire resilience to our public lands, and to prepare for and prevent worsening fire events.

Forests throughout California and much of the western U.S. are in a state of ecological crisis. A century of past forest management actions – including the suppression of beneficial wildfires – have resulted in forest conditions that are often unnaturally dense, overstocked with trees, and choked with surface and ladder fuels. These conditions make forests susceptible to larger, more destructive wildfires than they would have experienced historically. Over recent years, catastrophic high-severity wildfires have threatened and devastated communities, and have frequently degraded the valuable ecosystem services – carbon storage, biodiversity, recreation, water filtration – that forests provide.

There is broad consensus among fire scientists, land managers, firefighters, and others that increasing the pace and scale of ecologically based forest management -- such as thinning overly dense forest stands and applying prescribed fire to reduce surface and ladder fuels -- is critical to returning Western forests to a resilient condition. This needed increase in the pace and scale of forest treatments is not possible without a significant funding boost for federal land management agencies. Because of capacity and budget constraints, land managers have only been able to treat a small fraction of what is needed for ecological and community resilience each year. Additionally, effective forest treatments require ongoing maintenance over decades, underscoring the need for long term resources and funding.

Community and home hardening are critical for human safety, but those actions are only part of the solution. It is also critical to promote forest resilience and fuel reduction to restore the health of national forest lands. We support investment in science-based forest restoration (such as significant funding increases for vegetation management programs) as long as there are adequate prioritization sideboards and sufficient agency capacity to assure responsible planning and implementation of forest projects. Our groups collectively support implementing important forest treatment strategies such as reducing surface and ladder fuels from appropriate areas, science-based thinning of smaller trees (especially in close proximity to rural forest communities and infrastructure), and a greatly expanded use of prescribed fire to reduce a century of accumulated fuels and to restore ecological health.

**With this letter, our groups support the funding and prioritization of forest restoration programs and activities proposed in the Build Back Better reconciliation package. Removing these provisions would continue to leave federal land management agencies without the resources needed to change the trajectory of wildfire behavior on our forests and would ensure that increasingly severe and destructive wildfire seasons remain a reality for millions of Americans each year.**

America's national forests are a legacy to be sustained in a healthy, vibrant condition for future generations. We urge Congress to give the Forest Services the resources needed to take the strategic actions needed to achieve that vision.

Sincerely,

Jamie Ervin  
Sierra Forest Legacy

Paul Mason  
Pacific Forest Trust

John Buckley  
Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center

Melinda Booth  
South Yuba River Citizens League

Steve Frisch  
Sierra Business Council

Isabella Langone  
California Native Plant Society

Linda Castro  
California Wilderness Coalition

Cecilia Clavet  
The Nature Conservancy

Pamela Flick  
Defenders of Wildlife

Carrie Monohan  
The Sierra Fund

Patrick Koepele  
Tuolumne River Trust

Jenny Hatch  
Sierra Nevada Alliance

Craig Thomas  
Fire Restoration Group

CC:

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Chairwoman  
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Scott, Chairman  
Committee on Agriculture  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20510