Congressman Jimmy Panetta  
228 Cannon House Office Building 
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Panetta,

On behalf of California’s conservation community, the undersigned organizations seek to alert you to the profound and far-reaching changes in H.R. 2936, the “Resilient Federal Forests Act.” H.R. 2936 places at risk California’s public lands by gutting environmental laws and shutting the public out of decisions that affect their public lands. **We urge you to please vote no on H.R. 2936.**

If enacted, H.R. 2936 places our federal public forests at risk by removing important protections provided by the Endangered Species Act, National Forest Management Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act. It further directs the Forest Service to eliminate many of the special circumstances that limit the use of categorical exclusions in popular recreation areas such as old-growth forests, roadless areas, and endangered species habitat.

Our public lands belong to all Americans so it is also essential that all of the effort and public engagement that went into the existing forest plans, and the requirements for best-science and public participation found in the Endangered Species Act, National Forest Management Act and National Environmental Policy Act be retained.

H.R. 2936 effectively locks the courthouse doors by moving judicial review from Article III courts to a binding adjudication for certain projects, removing fee recovery for successful public interest plaintiffs, and limits judicial discretion by prohibiting the application of a preliminary injunction or temporary restraining order against a “salvage” timber sale. Such restrictions run afoul of principles of a liberal democracy.

Public land managers have the tools that they need to protect the environment and responsibly manage our public lands. But they need the funding to accomplish those goals. The legislation would create only a temporary fix against “fire borrowing.” Title X of the bill would authorize federal disaster relief for wildfires subject to the condition that the amount of money appropriated for wildfire suppression during the current fiscal must be at least equal to the average costs of wildfire suppression over the previous ten years. While the bill would address the short-term fiscal problem of “fire-borrowing,” we need to remedy the far more serious problem that fire suppression costs are consuming an ever-growing share of the Forest Service’s overall budget.

More detailed analysis of H.R. 2936 provided is attached. If you have any questions or seek more information, please contact Tom Wheeler at (707) 822-7711 or tom@wildcalifornia.org.

Please help us keep California green and gold by opposing H.R. 2936.

Sincerely,
Tom Wheeler
Executive Director
Environmental Protection Information Center