
October 20, 2020

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Steve Daines
United States Senate
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein and Senator Daines:

Western Governors strongly support efforts to improve the management of western forests and rangelands, including efforts to create and expand fire-adapted communities in the West. By establishing new projects for forest restoration and community wildfire resilience, a number of provisions contained in S. 4431, the Emergency Wildfire and Public Safety Act of 2020, reflect Western Governors' priorities on these important issues.

Western Governors address forest, range, and wildfire management in Western Governors' Association (WGA) Policy Resolution 2017-10, *National Forest and Rangeland Management*, and the WGA National Forest and Rangeland Management Initiative Special Report. Certain provisions of the bill, consistent with Western Governors' priorities on forest and fire management, would:

- Require the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to conduct three "forest landscape projects" – collaborative wildfire risk reduction projects – in western states. Governors encourage the creation of a "pilot program to prioritize landscape-scale, streamlined environmental analysis for restoration projects envisioned over geographies greater than 100,000 acres ...in landscapes with demonstrated ecological and economic need and effective existing collaboration among diverse stakeholders." Western Governors' policies do not address modifications to judicial review and objection processes for such landscape-scale projects.
- Establish a grant program to facilitate the removal of biomass on USFS lands that are at high risk of wildfire, as well as expand wood product and forest restoration infrastructure. Western Governors encourage initiatives to support markets that can achieve restoration goals and foster near-term opportunities for economic development in rural communities, as well as expanded utilization of low-value woody biomass for thermal, electric, and liquid-fuel energy.
- Create a competitive grant program to provide funds to non-profits, educational institutions, and state agencies to assist in the development of activities relating to workforce development in the forestry sector. Among other things, the grants would support training, skills development, and education. Western Governors encourage federal agencies to explore the expanded use of youth, veterans, inmate crews and conservation corps to provide cost-effective capacity to support forest and rangeland restoration work across various land ownerships.
- Direct the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture to expedite the placement of wildfire detection equipment in areas at risk of wildfire and expand the use of satellite data to assist wildfire response. Western Governors support efforts to improve interagency

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communication, coordination, and fire response capability, including the sharing of firefighting resources.


- Establish a Prescribed Fire Center in the West to train individuals in prescribed fire methods and other activities relevant to the mitigation of wildfire risk. Western Governors support efforts of state and federal agencies to facilitate the expanded use of prescribed fire and build capacity of licensed burn managers.

Thank you for your efforts to address these critical issues in a bipartisan manner. Western states are eager to increase the pace and scale of restoration activities on western forests and rangelands, and to support fire adapted communities in the West. We look forward to working with you as S. 4431 moves through the legislative process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kate Brown", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kate Brown
Governor of Oregon
Chair, WGA

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brad Little", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Brad Little
Governor of Idaho
Vice Chair, WGA