

GREG WALDEN
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ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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House of Representatives

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July 31, 2018

Senator Pat Roberts
109 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-1605

Senator Debbie Stabenow
133 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-1605

Farm Bill Conferees,

The West is burning. Lives have been tragically lost. Homes and other property have been destroyed. Smoke is choking our skies, leaving residents of southern Oregon and elsewhere with the worst air quality in the nation. It does not have to be this way. As you finalize the Farm Bill in 2018, I urge you to include the important forest management tools included in the House bill to make needed steps toward preventing these fires into the future.

Years of poor management have left our federal forests overgrown and at risk of these unnaturally catastrophic fires. John Bailey, a professor at Oregon State University, testified last fall before the Energy and Commerce committee that in some parts of eastern Oregon we have nearly 1,000 trees per acre on land that historically had 20 trees per acre. Across the West, these overstocked tree stands fuel the catastrophic fires we see each summer. Active management that thins out these forest stands and removes this fuel reduces the threat of fire, smoke, and other emissions. A recent study in California by The Nature Conservancy, Forest Service, and others found that fuels projects can reduce the size and intensity of fire up to 70 percent. These projects also reduce carbon emissions from the fire by up to 85 percent.

Unfortunately, red tape and litigation from outside special interest groups hampers land managers' ability to implement these needed forest management projects. The forestry title in the House passed Farm Bill builds on the forestry provisions we passed into law earlier this year and provides needed tools to reduce this red tape and streamline forest management projects to get more work done in the woods. When fire does strike, we ensure that the Forest Service and BLM can remove the burned, dead trees while they still have value and replant to restore our forests for the next generation. Just like what happens on private lands across Oregon.

Communities across the West should not have to face the increasing threat of wildfire and choke on smoke each summer because of mismanagement of our public lands. We can do better. The forestry provisions in the House passed Farm Bill would help improve management and prevent fire in Oregon and across the West. I strongly urge you to include them in the final 2018 Farm Bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Greg Walden". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Greg" and last name "Walden" clearly legible.

Representative Greg Walden

cc:

Representative Mike Conaway
2430 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Collin Peterson
2204 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515