



October 17, 2007

The Honorable William T. Sali
US House of Representatives
508 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: *Saving American Lives and Investing in Protecting Land and Nature Act*

Dear Congressman Sali:

Please accept this letter of support for the concepts outlined in your pending legislation to amend the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (HFRA). These remarks are made on behalf of the Society of American Foresters (SAF) and its more than 14,000 professional foresters and natural resource managers cross the United States.

The SAF endorses the principles by which your bill would expand the existing set of HFRA-related categorical exclusions to include one designed to facilitate the treatment of federal lands posing serious risks to adjacent non-federal lands. The ability to expeditiously treat federal lands before wildfire, insect infestations, or other undesirable conditions migrate to adjacent non-federal lands is certainly a challenge in both the “checkerboard” land ownerships found in the West, as well as among the more traditional ownership patterns found in the East. We would urge, however, that any decision to move forward with a categorical exclusion be coordinated with the appropriate federal land management agencies, and that the underlying analysis to support a lack of significant impacts, as defined by the NEPA, be likewise included.

We also commend you on the range of precautions you suggest: compliance with applicable federal resource management plans; compliance with any extraordinary condition exemptions to categorical exclusions developed by the agencies; prioritization of projects based on inclusion within a community wildfire plan; and limitations on the project’s distance from the non-federal land. All of these requirements point to a balanced approach to the typically contentious issue of expediting treatment of public forest health treatments, while at the same time safeguarding the important environmental and societal values provided by our public lands.

We additionally recognize and support the need to maintain local markets for public timber, both from a healthy forests perspective, but also as we begin to address the uncertainties of mitigating for global climate change. By encouraging local private land owners to participate in these forest management actions, we hope that another important effect will be to sustain local wood processing facilities.





We thank you for accepting these comments on behalf of the Society of American Foresters, and we look forward to your introduction of the bill and assisting with it where we are able.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John P. McMahon".

John P. McMahon
President

