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**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF TUOLUMNE**

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September 15, 2020

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

RE: Support of S. 4331—Emergency Wildfire and Public Safety Act

Dear Senator Feinstein

We are pleased to offer Tuolumne County's support for S. 4431, Emergency Wildfire and Public Safety Act. As you know, California has experienced devastating wildfires which have increased in size and intensity each year. As of September 8, over 2,500,000 acres have burned state-wide this year with over 3,700 structures destroyed and 14 lives lost. The pattern of destruction from these annual massive wildfires must be stopped. This year, Tuolumne County experienced the Moc Fire, which only burned 2,800 acres but was dangerously close to significantly damaging the water supply and infrastructure for the City and County of San Francisco as well as the community of Groveland.

Tuolumne County is comprised of approximately 75% federally managed lands. As such, the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors has taken a proactive role in assisting in the management of these lands for the protection of our residents and communities. Tuolumne County holds a Good Neighbor Authority Agreement with the Bureau of Land Management, and also holds a Master Stewardship Agreement with the Stanislaus National Forest and has the funding to conduct nearly 10,000 acres of forest health treatments. This Master Stewardship Agreement is held on behalf of the Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions Collaborative and the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors. The County, the USFS and the Collaborative work together to seek funding and implement projects that improve forest health and community protection.

The Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions Collaborative is diverse group of interests that works on consensus and has been successful multiple times at halting litigation on proposed forest actions. After the devastating 2013 Rim Fire the collaborative and the county successfully intervened on behalf of the USFS in both the timber salvage and reforestation NEPA analysis decision, and preferred alternative. Your background

argument citing “Montana and California experience the largest number of lawsuits against forest management projects, many of which are the product of a collaborative process” is on point and accurately articulates the experience we have had for decades in Tuolumne County, and on the Stanislaus National Forest. The opportunities of the Emergency Wildfire and Public Safety Act would be significant for our County. While this legislation calls for 3 priority wildfire mitigation projects across the west up to 75,000 acres in size each, we could make the argument on the Stanislaus National Forest for this size of project in each of the 3 major watersheds. The massive Tuolumne River Watershed is home to the City and County of San Francisco’s water system, plus two irrigation districts providing water for the California Central Valley region which helps feed the world. The massive Stanislaus River watershed, also in the Stanislaus National Forest is home to Calaveras County Water District as well as two additional irrigation districts that serve the San Joaquin region of the Central California bread basket. Further, the Mokelumne River watershed in the Stanislaus National Forest provides water to much of Alameda County and the city of Oakland as well as additional irrigation districts. All three of these watersheds would be outstanding candidates for this type of expedited activities to protect lives and property. A wildfire mitigation project of 75,000 acres could actually be the difference between communities in our County surviving a wildfire or not. Therefore, we respectfully ask for additional capacity in this provision of the legislation understanding that all 11 national forests in California’s Region 5 could make equally compelling arguments, as well as the other USFS regions in the western states. Limiting to only three such exemptions is simply inadequate to achieve the results you seek given the magnitude of the current situation on USFS system lands across the West.

Many of the provisions in this bill will provide the capacity to spur long term investments in much needed infrastructure. Those investments will only come to fruition with long term sustainable wood product market opportunities, as well as a long-term sustainable supply chain. Tuolumne County is fortunate to have wood products industries in our County when so many have permanently lost them. In California there is currently only one other mill south of Tuolumne County in Tulare County. Lifting the current export ban on unprocessed timber from federal lands in the West will be beneficial when wood markets need incentives to remove hazardous timber. Additionally, major investments in biomass infrastructure, including costs to offset transportation of dead and dying trees, would be an important factor in the equation when attempting to eliminate biomass with little or no value.

We are pleased to offer our support of this proactive legislation and we believe Tuolumne County has the ability to implement some of these investments, should this legislation be approved. Please reach out to me with any further questions or to discuss further opportunities.

Sincerely,



Sherri Brennan, Chair
Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors

cc: Congressman Tom McClintock
Natural Resources Committee Chair, Raúl M. Grijalva
Rural County Representatives of California
California State Association of Counties