



TRINITY COUNTY

Board of Supervisors

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September 6, 2017

Committee on Natural Resources
United States House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Subject: Federal land management challenges in Trinity County, California

Chairman Bishop;

We are writing to you from Trinity County in northwestern California. Our county is large and 80% of this county is federal land, mostly National Forest. We are represented by Congressman Jared Huffman.

These lands are managed by the Shasta Trinity and Six Rivers National Forests, and the Bureau of Land Management. Over the past several years these land management agencies have had major reductions and realignment of staff and budgets that have eroded their management focus. The result has been management that is far below the baseline that is needed to address the problems on the federal land in Trinity County.

Increasing frequency and size of wildfires have now used more than ½ of the agencies' budgets to suppress these fires. There is little money left for fuel reduction treatments that would reduce wildfire risk. Moreover the practice of "fire borrowing" often strips ongoing projects of the funds needed to analyze and implement proposed projects.

The agencies' contracting process is painfully slow, which causes lengthy delays in implementing projects on the ground. Additionally, frequent rotation and detailing of staff to other jurisdictions outside of the area often causes long delays in the planning process. The disjointed culture of regulatory agencies has also been problematic and adds to the delays in project implementation. The US Fish and Wildlife, the National Marine Fishery Service and the Forest Service need to cooperatively plan projects early-on to avoid consultation delays in getting projects approved.

Five years ago the Trinity County Board of Supervisors formed a collaborative of residents

KEITH GROVES
DISTRICT 1

JUDY MORRIS
DISTRICT 2

BOBBI CHADWICK
DISTRICT 3

VACANT
DISTRICT 4

JOHN FENLEY
DISTRICT 5

Natural Resources Committee Chairman Bishop

September 6, 2017

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interested in public land management. The Trinity County Collaborative Group (TCCG) has met regularly to develop plans to improve recreational facilities and to thin the many acres of overgrown plantations that have resulted from past clear cutting and unmanaged reforestation. The Collaborative has partnered with the federal agencies to develop major fuels reduction projects. These projects were all supported by the TCCG members including business, timber, private citizens, and environmental leaders within Trinity County. After 5 years of meetings and work the Collaborative has become frustrated and fatigued over the slow process of moving projects from development to implementation due to the problems outlined above.

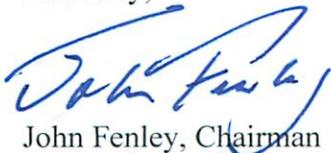
Our community now faces a new major problem of widespread marijuana growing on public lands. Most of the growing activities on federal lands are carried out by criminal gangs, including several foreign cartels. The environmental damage caused by these dangerous grows is seriously impacting the natural resources of local federal lands. Prolific chemical use, poisoning and shooting of wildlife, damming watercourses, and mixing chemicals in the ponds have become common additional impacts of the current situation. As an example of the scale of the problem, a recent "marijuana grow" raid uncovered 56,000 marijuana plants. Although this is a large number it is not uncommon to find sites of this size regularly and the total number of illegal grow sites in Trinity County is in the 1,000's. The Forest Service is so lacking in law enforcement officers that even with help from the State of CA and county enforcement personnel, only a small portion of these sites can be abated. Left behind are the toxic chemicals, which require HAZMAT crews for clean-up, along with tons of trash and miles of plastic water tubing.

The federal lands in Trinity County are under siege. The illegal drug growers and the unabated risk of wildfire due to the inability to develop and implement timely fuel hazard reduction projects have combined to make our public lands an environmental, social and economic disaster that will eventually have "point of no return" impacts to the County.

The, Trinity County Collaborative Group, with the support of the Board of Supervisors of Trinity County California, request your committee focus your budgetary, political, and social influence to provide our federal land management agencies a path forward in solving this disaster in our community.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,



John Fenley, Chairman
Trinity County Board of Supervisors