



May 6, 2025

The Honorable John Boozman  
Chairman  
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and  
Forestry  
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and  
Forestry  
U.S. Senate

Dear Chairman Boozman and Ranking Member Klobuchar,

In advance of your Committee's legislative hearing on Tuesday, May 6, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) would like to express our support for S. 1462, the Fix Our Forests Act. The House version of the legislation (H.R. 471) passed the House on a strong bipartisan vote of 279 – 141, a sign of the wide-spread support to combat the wildfire crisis we are facing, and we are thankful to see the Senate hold a hearing on the Senate version of this important bill.

As the Committee is aware, more than 117 million acres of our federal forests are fire-prone and need restoration through active management to mitigate severe wildfire risks. As wildfires increasingly degrade the forests, rangelands, and watersheds that America's sportsmen and women depend on for hunting and fishing access, the need to improve how our public lands are managed, in collaboration with other landowners, is paramount. To that end, the Fix Our Forests Act seeks to corner the wildfire crisis by establishing a more proactive management approach through reforms that facilitate increasing the pace of science-based forest restoration work at the landscape-level to improve forest health and resilience to protect communities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, and improve access for hunters and anglers.

S. 1462 prioritizes hazardous fuels management on landscapes at high-risk for wildfire identified in the U.S. Forest Service's January 2022 "Wildfire Crisis Strategy" and the top 20% of firesheds for wildfire exposure, designated as fireshed management areas. Fuel treatment projects, including mechanical thinning, prescribed fire, cultural burning, and timber harvests, will be conducted at scale through categorical exclusion (CE) acreage increases, including insects and disease, wildfire resilience, and fuel breaks, as well as reauthorizing the successful community-supported Lake Tahoe Restoration Act, to treat forest stands at high risk for wildfire. Increasing the acres of the CEs improves efficiency to enable more acres to be treated, and utilizing these CEs is critical because extended NEPA processes are significantly longer, measured in years. Land managers need expanded authorities to reduce fuel loads on more acres in less time to reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire.

Forest treatments in fireshed management areas will also take place through shared stewardship agreements with states and Indian Tribes. Additionally, S. 1462 expands several important

collaborative tools that are longstanding priorities for the sportsmen's community, including the Good Neighbor Authority and stewardship contracting, that will improve their effectiveness in reducing wildfire risk in collaboration with states, Indian tribes, and private partners. Supporting collaborative cross-boundary management is critical to address wildfire risk at scale.

The Fix Our Forests Act importantly addresses the 2015 *Cottonwood Environmental Law Center v. U.S. Forest Service* decision that has hindered forest management projects and threatens to require the U.S. Forest Service to revise forest plans for more than 120 National Forests which, as U.S. Forest Service testified in 2021, would cost millions of dollars and take years to complete. Shortly after the 2015 decision, the Obama administration supported a *Cottonwood* fix and stated in their 2016 petition for writ of certiorari to the U.S. Supreme Court that the decision "has the potential to cripple the Forest Service and BLM's land management functions and to impose substantial and unwarranted burdens on FWS and NMFS." S. 1462 would not obviate the need for Endangered Species Act consultation the project level, but it would allow projects to move forward without having to revise a U.S. Forest Service forest plan or Bureau of Land Management resource management plan. *Cottonwood's* duplicative analysis diverts limited agency resources and holds up wildfire risk reduction projects, which ironically, negatively impacts wildlife as habitat improvements projects that have been enjoined have subsequently had catastrophic wildfires occur in the same analysis area. We appreciate your past work to remedy *Cottonwood*, and we look forward to working with you to overcome the time-consuming hurdles, created by the decision, that delay forest restoration projects without any conservation benefit.

S. 1462 includes provisions to provide important guardrails for the litigation of forest management projects, which are challenged in court more than any other public lands management project case brought under NEPA. Litigants lose more than 75% of their cases, resulting in increased costs and delayed implementation of critical hazardous fuel reduction work. Without these changes, which do not remove public input, the U.S. Forest Service is unlikely to meet its forest restoration goals.

S. 1462 requires federal land management agencies to improve reporting on hazardous fuel reduction work, which is important to have accountability to track progress. Additionally, S. 1462 encourages the U.S. Forest Service to revise out of date forest plans and improve public access to information about forest plans and amendments. Last, the legislation advances efforts to restore white oak species, which are critical for wildlife, by supporting research and pilot programs to improve white regeneration.

In closing, CSF thanks the Committee for holding a hearing on the bipartisan Fix Our Forests Act, which is strongly supported by CSF and many of the nation's leading sporting-conservation organizations, and we look forward to working with the Committee and the bill sponsors to see the Fix Our Forests Act signed into law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JWC", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

John Culclasure  
Senior Director, Forest Policy