

(Washington, D.C.) – Congressman Wally Herger (R-CA) today introduced legislation, the "California Catastrophic Wildfire Prevention and Community Protection Act," which is designed to address the ongoing threat of wildfire in national forests by reducing the red tape that has stymied effective forest management. It utilizes and expands on prior bipartisan legislation that was supported by Herger, and applies those streamlined procedures, as well as new emergency authority, to reduce the devastating wildfires that are only enhanced by the hazardous fuels. Congressman Herger's remarks follow:

"Today I introduced legislation in an attempt to move past the forest management deadlock that continues to threaten our communities with catastrophic wildfire. Since 2003, California has experienced three of its worst fire seasons in history. The 2008 fire season destroyed hundreds of homes and caused the evacuation of thousands. Many more were also affected by the thick smoke that clouded our air for most of the summer. Unfortunately, as California enters its third year of drought and forests that remain ten times as dense as they were at the turn of the century, this year's fire season could be worse.

"We have tried for years to bring collaboration and sound forest management to our landscape, only to be stymied by activists who don't understand the danger Northern California is faced with each fire season. These delays make the communities of Northern California less safe while leaving our national forests even riper for catastrophic wildfire. Previous efforts like the Quincy Library Group pilot project, a compromise solution to improve forest health, protect communities from wildfire, and bring stability to our rural timber economies, have been stalled by environmental extremists using legal loopholes to obstruct our efforts at commonsense forest management to reduce fuels. My legislation seeks to implement these projects under an expedited process and free from the delay tactics of frivolous appeals and lawsuits in the event that there is a declared emergency. It's too important to allow bureaucracy to stand in the way of commonsense solutions."

Background:

The bill would establish a process to avoid obstructionist legal tactics that endanger the safety of Northern California communities in the event of an emergency declaration. The bill represents a new effort to secure bipartisan support for addressing this ongoing and pressing problem in California.