

I wanted to inform you that I recently introduced H.R. 2899, the California Catastrophic Wildfire Prevention and Community Protection Act, to expedite hazardous fuels reduction and forest thinning projects on the federal lands surrounding our forest communities. Since 2003, California has experienced three of its worst fire seasons in history. Last year's fire season tragically destroyed hundreds of homes and caused thousands to be evacuated. In addition, these fires affect our health through the thick smoke that clouds our air throughout the fire season each year.

The only true manner of prevention we have for these fires is to control the overstocked forests that fuel them. A significant decline in forest management has resulted in our Northern California forests being ten times as dense as they were at the turn of the century. While collaborative efforts have been made to address this issue they unfortunately have fallen victim to obstructionists who have used our unyielding and unbalanced environmental regulatory system to delay forest management through appeals and litigation. My legislation seeks to implement fuels reduction and thinning projects that have been cooperatively-developed and identified at the local level by utilizing and expanding on previous legislation, the Healthy Forests Restoration Act, which I supported in 2003, and also by establishing a process to further accelerate these projects should the county and state declare an emergency due to the threat of catastrophic wildfire. If passed into law, this legislation would allow for commonsense forest management to reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire that endangers our forest homes and communities.

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