



RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES
OF CALIFORNIA

August 29, 2018

The Honorable Toni Atkins
Senate President pro Tempore
State Capitol, Room 205
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Anthony Rendon
Speaker of the Assembly
State Capitol, Room 219
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Senate Bill 901 (Dodd) – SUPPORT
As Amended August 28, 2018**

Dear President pro Tempore Atkins and Speaker Rendon:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), we offer our strong support for Senate Bill 901 (Dodd), as proposed in the Wildfire Preparedness and Response Legislative Conference Committee in the report of August 28, 2018. SB 901 includes important, robust actions to improve the health and resilience of California's forested and wildlands to help minimize and prevent future catastrophic wildfire events, and its passage is a very high priority for RCRC and its members. RCRC is an association of thirty-five rural California counties, and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from those member counties.

RCRC member counties contain much of California's forested lands, including more than 70 percent of the State's national forest lands. While rural communities have historically borne the majority of destruction caused by high severity wildfires, wildfire risk is becoming a wider public safety concern as the wildland urban interface spreads over larger areas of the State due to climate change and the lingering impacts of the recent five-year drought. Wildfires are also a significant source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and compromise the quality and quantity of much of the State's water supply. The health and resilience of our forests and wildlands impacts every Californian.

Against the backdrop of recent major wildfires in Colusa, Glenn, Lake, Mariposa, Mendocino, and Tuolumne Counties, and with several smaller fires in other areas of the State, the development of SB 901 has led to a robust suite of actions that will, in future years, help counteract the impacts of misguided forest management practices that have led to overly dense, unhealthy forests. Vital components of SB 901 include:

- A five-year investment of \$200 million annually from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund for forest health programs, totaling \$1 billion;

1215 K Street, Suite 1650, Sacramento, CA 95814 | www.rcrcnet.org | 916.447.4806 | Fax: 916.448.3154

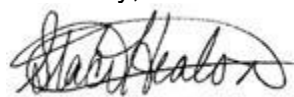
The Honorable Toni Atkins
The Honorable Anthony Rendon
Senate Bill 901
August 29, 2018
Page 2

- Five-year extensions of contracts for biomass facilities in specified air quality attainment areas to allow for expedited removal of dead and dying trees as well as agricultural biomass;
- Exemptions allowing commercial sale of small-diameter materials removed as part of a vegetation management or fuels reduction project funded by state grant dollars;
- An expansion of the Small Timberland Owner exemption allowing for more effective management of flammable materials from timberlands;
- Regulatory streamlining for prescribed fire, forest management and fuels treatment projects on federal lands undertaken by a State or local agency under federal Good Neighbor Authority, a federal stewardship agreement or where the State or local agency is providing funding or staffing for those projects;
- Significantly enhanced requirements for investor-owned utilities for fire hardening protocols and wildfire risk assessment around utility lines;
- Establishment of system for quantifying GHG emissions and decay from fuel reduction activities and a five-year reporting cycle to assess GHG emissions associated with wildfire and forest management activities beginning in 2020; and,
- Creation of a technical assistance program to aid nonindustrial timberland owners with wildfire resilience efforts, including help with navigating the permitting process.

These are just a handful of the vital components of SB 901 that are essential to begin the process of returning California's forests to a natural, more resilient, fire-resistant state. While we acknowledge that many years of work remain, the time to begin restoring the State's forest and wildlands in earnest is now.

As such, we are pleased to offer our support for the recently-amended SB 901. Please do not hesitate to contact me at sheaton@rcrcnet.org if you have any questions or would like to discuss further.

Sincerely,



STACI HEATON
Regulatory Affairs Advocate

cc: The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr., Governor, State of California
Members of the State Legislature
Members of the Wildfire Preparedness & Response Legislative Conference
Committee