January 31, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Completion of Emergency Projects to Protect Wildfire-Vulnerable Communities - SUPPORT

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), I write to express our appreciation for your leadership on the swift completion of the thirty-five projects designed to protect wildfire-vulnerable communities, pursuant to your Emergency Proclamation issued in March 2019. RCRC is an association of thirty-seven rural California counties, and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from those member counties.

As you know, California has encountered unprecedented wildfire activity over the past decade, culminating in the most destructive wildfires the State has endured over the past two years. RCRC member counties, which contain more than 70 percent of the State’s forested lands, have suffered the vast majority of these fires. RCRC has been a strong supporter of major forest resilience and wildfire prevention policy such as 2018’s Senate Bill 901 (Dodd) and has worked tirelessly with your Administration through the Governor’s Forest Management Task Force and other avenues to help facilitate the type of collaborative efforts we are now achieving on community-wide fire protection efforts.

The importance of the thirty-five projects and their potential for safeguarding communities from catastrophic wildfire damage cannot be overstated, as we have already seen in the case of the Cave Fire in Santa Barbara County. For RCRC member counties, who often struggle with the ability to allocate resources to such projects without robust funding and staffing assistance from outside sources, the completed projects could mean preventing another fire like the 2018 Carr Fire, which destroyed more than 1,000 homes and killed 8 people in Shasta County. The completed projects are of paramount importance to our members as nineteen of the thirty-five emergency projects are located in RCRC member counties. It is doubtful that any of these projects would have been
initiated and completed in under a year without your strong leadership and willingness to make public safety and community fire protection a top priority.

RCRC looks forward to continuing our strong working relationship with your Administration on forest resilience and community wildfire prevention strategies.

Sincerely,

PAUL A. SMITH
Senior Vice President Governmental Affairs

c: Wade Crowfoot, Secretary, California Secretary for Natural Resources
Chief Thom Porter, Director, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
Jennifer Montgomery, Director, Governor’s Forest Management Task Force