

January 21, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson and Minority Leader Jeffries,

As organizations representing millions of sportsmen and women, conservationists, and natural resource professionals, we write in support of Chairman Westerman and Representative Peters' bipartisan "Fix Our Forests Act" (FOFA). While the devastating wildfires in southern California renewed national discussions surrounding the crisis facing our forests, as organizations directly invested in the health of our forests and the wildlife that depend on them, we know firsthand this crisis is not new and that meaningful solutions have eluded Congress due to partisan gridlock. For this reason, we are encouraged by the U.S. House of Representative's strong, bipartisan passage of FOFA last Congress and prioritization of FOFA this Congress.

Healthy forests are essential to supporting sustainable wildlife populations. However, decades of wildfire suppression coupled with a passive, often hands off approach to management has created dense, overgrown forests that impair habitat function, compromise water availability and quality, and elevate the risk of uncharacteristically catastrophic wildfire. While our public land agencies have the knowledge and expertise to restore the health of our forests, they face insurmountable challenges in the form of frivolous litigation, lengthy and bureaucratic processes, and a culture of complacency.

FOFA provides land managers with tools desperately needed to streamline forest management projects while maintaining the integrity of the environmental review process. The bill strengthens the role of states, tribes, local government, collaborative groups, and other partners in forest management to leverage expertise, optimize investments, and maximize outcomes. It addresses restoration of key habitat and forest types including white oak and upland oak ecosystems. Essential to enacting meaningful change, the bill includes key provisions designed to deter obstructionists from abusing the judicial system to delay time-sensitive projects. Additionally, FOFA includes a provision supported by the past three Administrations that clarifies a procedural requirement erroneously established in *Cottonwood Law Center v. U.S. Forest Service* (9th Cir. 2015) and that has confused, delayed and, prevented critical forest management for nearly a decade.

As Congress delays addressing the crisis in our forests, wildfire conditions only worsen. We urge swift passage of FOFA and proactive dialogue with your counterparts in the U.S. Senate to ensure its timely enactment. We stand ready to partner with you in moving this legislation forward and effecting meaningful change in our forested landscapes.

Sincerely,

American Sportfishing Association
American Woodcock Society
Archery Trade Association
Boone and Crockett Club
Camp Fire Club of America
Catch A Dream Foundation
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Conservation Force
Dallas Safari Club
Delta Waterfowl
Houston Safari Club
Masters of Foxhounds Association
Mule Deer Foundation
National Association of Forest Service
Retirees
National Deer Association
National Shooting Sports Foundation
National Wild Turkey Federation
North American Falconers Association
North American Grouse Partnership

Orion: The Hunter's Institute
Pheasants Forever
Pope and Young Club
Professional Outfitters and Guides of
America
Public Lands Foundation
Quail Forever
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Ruffed Grouse Society
Safari Club International
Sportsmen's Alliance
The Wildlife Society
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation
Partnership
White Oak Initiative
Whitetails Unlimited
Wild Sheep Foundation
Wildlife Forever
Wildlife Management Institute
Wildlife Mississippi