

May 5, 2025

The Honorable Bruce Westerman, Chairman
The Honorable Jared Huffman, Ranking Member
United States House Committee on
Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Westerman and Ranking Member Huffman:

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters, the 52 undersigned organizations respectfully urge the House Committee on Natural Resources to reject the sections of the Reconciliation legislation that will harm our forests and make our communities more susceptible to wildfire —Sections 80313, 80314, 80306 and 80151. Please vote no on this legislation.

Sections 80313 and 80314 command the US Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to arbitrarily log 125% percent of the amount of logging that was logged in FY24 on the public lands they manage. These extremely harmful sections are singularly about boosting logging to benefit the timber industry while harming other national forest values and national forest users. More logging will not protect communities from wildfire or improve forest conditions. In fact, with the only or primary metric being volume of wood, it will likely make wildfires worse – because the trees that the USFS and BLM will target are the biggest, oldest, and most fire resilient – and also contain the most timber volume. This leaves behind the small brush that increases wildfire risk.

To make these provisions even worse, it appears the language could allow the Forest Service to bypass the Roadless Area Conservation Rule that protects millions of acres of wildlife habitat, clean drinking water sources, and recreational opportunities for the benefit of all Americans. The Roadless Rule has saved taxpayers millions of dollars for almost 25 years. This is an underhanded way of undermining Roadless Rule protections for millions of acres of our forests and will harm hunters, fishers, recreationists, wildlife, Indigenous cultural resources, and hundreds of communities that depend on these areas for clean drinking water and flood protection.

Section 80306 rescinds funding investment in USFS science generation and deployment to determine where our biggest and oldest trees exist and how best to conserve them. These

mature and old growth trees are essential for climate regulation, wildfire resilience, and water source protection. Clawing back funding for information about the forests we all own harms present and future generations and the science-based stewardship of these forests.

Section 80151 creates a scheme for private industry to have outsized influence on public lands, without thoroughly addressing environmental harms and involving the public. This provision allows project sponsors to pay a fee that not only expedites reviews under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), but also completely waives all judicial or administrative accountability for failures to consider public health, environmental, or economic impacts. This brazen legislation would allow polluters to buy their way out of legal requirements that apply to others, undermining the management of our nation's public lands.

Cumulatively these four sections signal a return to the era of 19th Century robber barons, and our public forests could be decimated – harming drinking water sources, exacerbating climate change, threatening biodiversity, and putting communities at risk of wildfire, floods, and job losses. The only sensible vote is no.

Sincerely,

350 Seattle

Alaska Wilderness League

Athens County's Future Action Network (OH)

California Native Plant Society

CCAN Action Fund

Center for Biological Diversity

Chattooga Conservancy

Climate Communications Coalitions

Defenders of Wildlife

Earthjustice Action

Eco-Integrity Alliance

Environmental Law & Policy Center

Environmental Protection Information Center

Food and Water Watch

Forest Keeper

Forests Forever

Friends of Bell Smith Springs

Friends of the Bitterroot

Gallatin Wildlife Association

Gila Native Plant Society

Great Old Broads for Wilderness

Heart of the Gila

Heartwood

Indiana Forest Alliance

Indivisible HoCoMD

Interfaith EarthKeepers

Kucinich Institute for Human and Ecological Security

Los Padres ForestWatch

Massachusetts Forest Watch

Natural Resources Defense Council

New Mexico Wild

Old-Growth Forest Network

Olympic Climate Action

Oregon Wild

Partnership for Policy Integrity

RESTORE: The North Woods

Sierra Club

Silvix Resources

Soda Mountain Wilderness Council

South Umpqua Rural Community Partnership

Southeast Alaska Conservation Council

Southern Environmental Law Center

Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance

Standing Trees

Sunflower Alliance

The Rachel Carson Council

The Siskiyou Crest Coalition

The Wilderness Society

Wild Hope

Wild Nature Institute

Williams Community Forest Project

Women's Earth and Climate Action Network