

September 26, 2017

To: The Honorable John Barrasso  
Chairman  
Committee on Environment and Public Works  
United States Senate  
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper  
Ranking Member  
United States Senate  
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

*Re: S. 1731, "The Forest Management Improvement Act of 2017"*

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

We the undersigned urge you to oppose "The Forest Management Improvement Act of 2017" (S. 1731).

S. 1731 does not offer solutions for protecting communities from fire or ensuring that our public forests are ecologically healthy. Instead what S. 1731 proposes is a gutting of this Nation's environmental charter – the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), limiting public participation in agency decisions about logging on public lands and removing the judicial branch from its constitutionally established role as a check and balance on the legislative and executive branches of our government. All to get more logs to the mill.

S. 1731's main provisions would eliminate environmental analysis required by NEPA on major federal logging projects by mandating that expansive categories of these projects could be excluded from environmental analysis. Under NEPA, categorical exclusions were originally developed to cover projects, typically administrative in nature, such as putting up a sign, or refurbishing a picnic ground, which have no potential to significantly impact the environment. If this legislation were approved, the Senate would be authorizing extensive logging projects, covering areas as large as 10,000 acres each (i.e. entire watersheds)—including 10,000-acre clearcuts under the guise of early seral habitat creation—to proceed on our National Forests and other federal public lands as if they would not result in any adverse impacts to the environment. Such a legal construct has no basis in reality and would unnecessarily and irretrievably damage our public forests.

Forest ecosystems are dynamic and complex. The highest levels of native plant and animal diversity in forests are found in areas which have a mix of naturally created habitat types, including large mature and old growth forests, forests that have burned at low, moderate and high intensity in a wildland fire, areas which have large numbers of snags (standing dead trees) as a result of natural processes such as drought, competition and native beetle activity, and areas



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