



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

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The Honorable Bob Wieckowski
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 4085
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Natural Resources Agency Budget Augmentation for Fire Suppression

Dear Senator Wieckowski:

On behalf of the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors, I am writing to express our strong support for Senator McGuire's budget augmentation of \$10 million to the Natural Resources Agency to fund tribal fire programs that support prescribed burning, forest management, fuels reduction, fire preparedness, invasive species treatment, and vegetation management projects. This particular budget proposal is important because it specifies that the funding process be developed as a shared stewardship agreement between California and the qualifying Tribe through a government to government negotiation.

Currently, Tribes struggle to work with California's grant making processes which often fails to fully respect Tribal sovereignty. Despite the progress, funding shortfalls, jurisdictional overlaps and a complex regulatory environment slows progress. Action is needed at the state and federal level to empower Tribes to apply traditional management practices in collaboration with modern day partners. In order to better work with Tribes to address wildfire risks, California needs to set aside funds explicitly for collaborative projects that are led by Tribes that have the capacity and the infrastructure to re-establish normative fire regimes to prevent catastrophic fire events and improve the health of our watersheds.

California is experiencing large scale catastrophic wildfires with ever increasing severity. These fires are a consequence of record droughts, more than a century of fire suppression policies and climate change. Historically, tribal nations from around the state used fire effectively as a tool to manage forest fuels, promote growth of food and fibers, and provide desperately needed habitat for deer, elk and other species. Currently, fire management funding is primarily focused on fire suppression. This approach fails to address fire prevention and makes it nearly impossible for rural communities to develop year-round fire management programs. California is home to over 100 federally recognized tribes, and more people of Native American heritage than any other state in the country. Each of these tribes represent independent governments, many of these tribal governments throughout the state host their own forestry and fire departments. It is imperative that the State of California treat these tribes as the true intendent nations that they are and establish a Tribal Fire & Healthy Forest Fund to keep forests healthy and communities safe.

In recent years, a diverse collaborative has been formed to address increased fire risk in rural California. Such efforts include the Western Klamath Restoration Partnership, which comprises Tribes, state and local agencies, and nonprofit organizations. By forming interagency public-private partnerships and a Tribal Fire & Healthy Forest Fund, a unified vision for land restoration and fire management can take shape around the state with Native American tribes leading the way on their sovereign lands.

For the reasons stated above, we support Senator McGuire's \$10 million augmentation for tribal fire suppression and preparedness budget augmentation which also respects tribal sovereignty.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Estelle Fennell, Chair
Humboldt County Board of Supervisors

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