



RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES
OF CALIFORNIA

June 20, 2022

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
United States House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Save Our Sequoias Act — SUPPORT

Dear Congressman McCarthy:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), we support the Save Our Sequoias (SOS) Act, which will provide a number of tools and emergency resources to land managers to help preserve California's remaining Giant Sequoias. RCRC is an association of thirty-nine rural California counties, and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from each of those member counties.

Over the past several years, California's wildfire seasons have grown both longer and more severe each year, as climate change has exacerbated the decades-overdue need for better vegetation management and fuels treatment strategies. One of the unfortunate casualties of the state's increased wildfire activity has been the loss of Giant Sequoias, which have suffered a 20 percent loss during the last two wildfire seasons alone. Many of California's Giant Sequoia groves are overgrown and ripe for catastrophic wildfire activity unless land managers are able to increase the pace and scale of necessary fuels treatments to salvage these ancient and significant stands of trees.

The SOS Act would provide myriad vital tools to land managers that would help increase the pace and scale of treatments around Giant Sequoias to help preserve the trees and reduce the risk of destructive wildfires in and around Giant Sequoia groves. These tools and provisions include:

- Enhanced coordination between Federal, State, Tribal, and local land managers through shared stewardship agreements and the codification of the Giant Sequoia Lands Coalition.
- Creation of a Giant Sequoia Health and Resiliency Assessment to prioritize and inform forest management projects, track project implementation, and study Giant Sequoia health and resiliency over time.

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- Funding and establishment of a new grant program to support the implementation of hazardous fuels reduction treatments in and around Giant Sequoia groves.
- Emergency declaration to codify existing emergency procedures, expedite environmental reviews and consultations, and maintain robust scientific analysis.
- Authority for the National Park Foundation and National Forest Foundation to accept private donations to facilitate Giant Sequoia restoration and resiliency.
- Development of a comprehensive reforestation strategy to regenerate Giant Sequoias in groves destroyed by recent catastrophic wildfires.

With the establishment and availability of these tools, RCRC believes the SOS Act will provide land managers with a greater ability to treat fuels in a timelier fashion so that resilience projects can be completed more expeditiously before catastrophic wildfires do greater damage to Giant Sequoia groves.

For the above reasons, RCRC is pleased to support the SOS Act. Please do not hesitate to contact me at sheaton@rcrcnet.org with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Staci Heaton", with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

STACI HEATON
Senior Policy Advocate

cc: Katie Wheeler Mathews, California Governor's Office, Washington D.C.
Randy Moore, Chief, USDA Forest Service
Wade Crowfoot, Secretary, California Natural Resources Agency
Office of Secretary Tom Vilsack, United States Department of Agriculture