



SOS ACT: MYTH VS. FACT

Led by Representatives Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) and Scott Peters (D-CA), the *bipartisan Save Our Sequoias (SOS) Act is a comprehensive bill that immediately addresses the imminent threats facing one of the most iconic tree species on the planet* by improving interagency coordination, utilizing robust scientific analysis to triage high-priority areas, codifying and streamlining emergency procedures to expedite environmental reviews, and providing land managers with critical new tools and resources. *The bill has 25 bipartisan cosponsors and is supported by 90 organizations.*

MYTH: The SOS Act waives the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Endangered Species Act (ESA), and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).

FACT: This claim is patently false. *The SOS Act does not waive NEPA, ESA, NHPA, or any other environmental laws or reviews.* In fact, the bill sets up clear guidelines for how land managers should comply with each of these laws to ensure Giant Sequoias are being managed in a scientific, ecologically sound manner while reducing the risk of wildfires.

MYTH: “The fact that these trees are experiencing such high mortality is directly related to climate change and fire suppression, and there is already active management occurring on these lands.”

FACT: In the past 7 years, land managers at the Forest Service have treated less than 1,000 acres of Giant Sequoia groves. At its current pace, it would take the Forest Service approximately 52 years to just treat their 19 highest priority Giant Sequoia groves at high-risk of experiencing devastating wildfires. *Ironically, some of the groups making this claim are currently actively suing the National Park Service to stop the limited management work being done in Yosemite National Park to protect the Giant Sequoias.*

MYTH: The SOS Act removes the NEPA decision making process from land managers and delegates reviews to the Giant Sequoia Lands Coalition.

FACT: False. *The bill does not delegate any NEPA requirements* to the Giant Sequoia Lands Coalition (or anybody else). The Coalition, which is an existing group comprised of federal, state, tribal, and local land managers, would be tasked with creating a Giant Sequoia Health and Resiliency Assessment to help prioritize treatments in groves.

MYTH: “The Forest Service and National Park Service already have an extensive number of authorities and categorical exclusions to complete this type of work.”

FACT: This bill was developed over several months with Forest Service and National Park Service employees directly responsible for managing the



Giant Sequoias. The Forest Service provided extensive technical assistance detailing why current authorities are insufficient to address this crisis at the pace and scale required. *The authorities provided in the bill are a direct reflection of extensive collaboration with federal, state, tribal, and local stakeholders* who all requested these provisions to protect Giant Sequoias.

MYTH: The SOS Act would “expedite potentially harmful logging projects that undermine the ecological integrity of sequoia groves and will do nothing to protect these trees.” Further, “provisions in the bill could actually exacerbate the threat to the Giant Sequoias.”

FACT: False. The Forest Supervisor of the Sequoia National Forest, which contains many of the Giant Sequoia groves, recently stated that “we have to actively manage the groves to withstand the increasingly intense fires that we’re seeing now.” Save the Redwoods League also stated that “the alternative to more robust forest management ... is to risk the very extinction of the cherished species.” *There is robust scientific consensus that tools such as prescribed fires and restorative thinning are vital and essential to ensuring the long-term health of this iconic species.*

MYTH: The legislation waives environmental reviews under a “broad, so-called ‘emergency.’”

FACT: As mentioned above, there are no environmental review waivers in the SOS Act. Instead, *the bill codifies existing authorities that the agency already utilizes during times of emergency* (i.e. wildfires). This would not create any new authorities but would simply clarify and codify the fact that land managers can use these authorities to prevent fires *proactively*, not just respond *reactively*, after the damage has been done.

Further, *this baseless and inaccurate accusation ignores the true emergency facing our Giant Sequoias*. Since 2015, fires have caused unprecedented destruction and in the last two years alone, have destroyed nearly one-fifth of all Giant Sequoias. The emergency facing Giant Sequoias is unprecedented – the last recorded evidence of mass Giant Sequoia mortality occurred in 1297 A.D., over seven centuries ago.

MYTH: “This bill sets a bad precedent and could have far-reaching effects across the country.”

FACT: This vague and unsubstantiated claim ignores the fact that *this legislation is extremely narrow and targeted to just address the immediate crisis facing the Giant Sequoias*. The streamlining provisions in the bill can only be used in and around the Giant Sequoias, which grow across an extremely limited range of 37,000 acres in California, making claims of “far-reaching effects across the country” clearly false.

