

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/3/2018 12:00:00 AM

First name: Anonymous

Last name: Anonymous

Organization:

Title:

Comments: 2017 over 8.5 million acres have burned nationwide, costing \$2.5 billion to suppress. We must address the impacts of catastrophic wildfire to guarantee the constitutional right . NEPA must be reformed as well as review. fire protection regulations were primarily established with the issuance of Appendix R to 10 CFR part 50 in 1980 and the NFPA [National Fire Protection Association] 805 alternative regulations adopted in 2004. "Streamlining the process for projects with strong local support, collaborative support and support of local land management professionals should be categorically EXCLUDED FROM LITIGATION OF ENVIRONMENTALIST. We need to allow our professional land management agencies to get back to managing the land rather than managing litigation. the threat of wildfires in the West is a ticking time bomb that will negatively affect the economy and environment active forest management will reduce the threat of wildfire to our citizens and local communities in the West. By reducing the fuel loads on our national forests we can reestablish a healthy, thriving ecosystem that improves the economy and the environment. Healthy forests are essential to clean water supplies and clean air. Biodiversity increases when we manage our forests with practical, sound, and scientific practices. Local, state and national economies enjoy the benefits of both responsible resource use and recreation. Nobody loses when our forests are healthy and resilient. increasing commercial timber harvests from our national forests, reducing fuel loads through more mechanical thinning and controlled burns, reducing the red tape to get through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, and combating frivolous special interest lawsuits that serve only to delay much needed management of our National Forest System. landscape-scale catastrophic wildfires in the national forests in Montana and other Western states have had a disproportionately large impact on the ecological, social and economic life of the County and our neighbors. Fire seasons last an average of 78 days longer compared to 40 years ago. As the USFS wrote in its 2015 fire budget report, "The agency is at a tipping point." Every year, wildfire suppression eats up a greater share of the USFS budget. This, coupled with the approximately \$350 million a year the USFS spends complying with federal law, ultimately reduces funding for other forest management priorities. 1995, 16 percent of the USFS's annual budget went to fire suppression. Today, that number is well north of 50 percent, and by 2025 will likely amount to two-thirds of their annual budget. Nature and poor policy decisions have forced the agency to change its focus. In the past, the USFS spent the bulk of its dollars on forest management, such as commercial timber harvests and mechanical thinning, whereas today, suppression has become its major priority. Today, more staff is devoted to fighting fires than managing the forests. nightmare of red tape and regulation forces agencies to create long "bullet proof" NEPA analyses that can still be held up by frivolous litigation. Rather than managing resources, the agency is forced to manage paperwork and litigation. This contributes to the unsustainable growth in fuel loads, leading to the explosion in catastrophic fires over the past few decades. USFS has to pull money from management accounts to help combat catastrophic fires, a process known as fire borrowing. This further delays much needed timber harvests, mechanical thinning, and controlled burns, leaving the USFS with fewer resources to meet its management objectives. Solving the problem of fire borrowing must also be a component of any action taken by Congress to improve forest resiliency. Our once vibrant timber economy has been left in shambles, its infrastructure decimated and our scenic beauty scarred for decades to come. Our citizens live with severely diminished air quality for weeks or months at a time. Both our human and wildlife habitat have been, and will continue to be, negatively impacted unless Congress acts to address the problem. fire has devastated the landscapedestroying wildlife habitat, emitting smoke into the air, and jeopardizing the safety of residents. detrimental effect on local public health. Thick clouds of smoke billow into the air, and citizens breathe it in. This particularly impacts our children, sick people, and the elderly. Air quality is commonly in the "unhealthy" or "hazardous" Warm air in the daytime sometimes helps to lift smoke higher into the atmosphere, but when cooler weather sets in at night, the smoke descends back into our communities.