

**From:** [BOS Public Comment](#)  
**To:** [All BOS Board Members](#)  
**Cc:** [Alison Lehman](#); [Caleb Dardick](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Agenda Item 20 SR 22-0350 Public Comment  
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**From:** Melinda Booth <Melinda@yubariver.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 11, 2022 6:23 PM  
**To:** BOS Public Comment <BOS.PublicComment@co.nevada.ca.us>  
**Cc:** Aaron Zettler-Mann <aaron@yubariver.org>; Kat Perlman <kat@yubariver.org>  
**Subject:** Agenda Item 20 SR 22-0350 Public Comment

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Good evening. I'm writing on behalf of SYRCL, the South Yuba River Citizens League. We saw on your agenda, item 20, for tomorrow that the Board of Supervisors has a request for submitting a letter of support for H.R. 6903 – Wildfire Suppression Bill. **I am writing today to request you oppose this bill, or at least not provide a letter of support.**

You may know, SYRCL is involved with several forest health initiatives within the Yuba watershed. One such effort is as part of the North Yuba Forest Partnership (NYFP). The NYFP is a diverse group of nine organizations passionate about forest health and the resilience of the North Yuba River watershed. Together, the partners are working on an unprecedented scale to collaboratively plan, analyze, finance, and implement forest restoration across 313,000 acres of the watershed.

Through ecologically-based thinning and prescribed fire, the partnership seeks to protect North Yuba communities from the threat of catastrophic wildfire and restore the watershed to a healthier, more resilient state. Restoration efforts are expected to take many years, if not decades to complete, with the most critical project areas targeted first, i.e. at-risk communities, emergency response, evacuation access routes, and treatments to areas that have the potential to stop a wildfire from spreading.

In fact, earlier today, United States Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and U.S. Forest Service Chief Randy Moore announced the North Yuba Landscape as one of the 10 initial landscapes funded for the U.S. Forest Service's 10-year [Wildfire Crisis Strategy](#) implementation.

Launched earlier this year, the strategy outlines the need to treat up to an additional 20 million acres on national forest lands and up to an additional 30 million acres of other federal, state, Tribal, private, and family lands over the next decade. The approximately 313,000-acre North Yuba landscape will receive significant federal investment beginning this year as part of the strategy.

It is with this background and project expertise that I'm reaching out and asking you to oppose

supporting this bill. SYRCL is all too aware of the negative impacts a catastrophic wildfire could have on our community. With a cursory read, this bill could sound reasonable. However, this bill as written could have deleterious impacts on the ability to move towards healthier and more resilient forests.

It is too vague and too broad. It has the serious risk of limiting management tools by singling out the Forest Service and holding them responsible for management for fire suppression in a system that clearly requires highly collaborative on-the-ground expert decision-making. Broad, wide-reaching and vague legislation can harm the ability of our land managers to effectively do their job and prevents the adaptive management and cross-agency coordination necessary to actually address the issues.

- Fire suppression policies, like this introduced bill, from the past century have led to the historically high tree densities that are present in our forests today and plaguing land managers with overwhelming fuel loads.
- To achieve the magnitude of restoration needed to protect our forests from catastrophic fire, land managers in all sectors need every tool available to them, *including* naturally ignited and prescribed fires.
- This bill would directly oppose state and nationally led efforts to increase wildfire resilience, including:
  - California’s Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan (January 2021),
  - California’s Strategic Plan for Expanding the Use of Beneficial Fire (March 2022),
  - and the nation-wide strategy, *Confronting the Wildfire Crisis: A Strategy for Protecting Communities and Improving Resilience in America’s Forests* (January 2022).
- Wildfires are a reality in our region. They have been for millennia, and our landscape in fact evolved to need fire.
- We need to be pouring resources into how to help people live with fire and minimize damage while also restoring our forests to be more resilient to wildfire when it comes, NOT reinstating the same type of suppression policies that got us into this mess in the first place.
- Limiting land managers wildfire response to suppression will only tie the hands of the very land managers working to protect our forests and communities to being lost to catastrophic fire.
- This bill would directly oppose a hefty body of current scientific research by leading academics and land managers alike and have cascading effects on the following elements, **to name only a few:**

- **Public health** (Prunicki M., R. Kelsey, J. Lee, X Zhou, E. Smith, F. Haddad, J. Wu, and K. Nadeau. 2019. The impact of prescribed fire versus wildfire on the immune and cardiovascular systems of children. Allergy 74: 1989-1991.),
- **Forest landscape resilience** (North, M.P., R.A. York, B.M. Collins, et al. 2021. Pyrosilviculture needed for landscape resilience of dry western United States forests. Journal of Forestry 119: 520-544.),
- **Water** (Boisramé G.F.S., S.E. Thompson, C. Tagu, and S.L. Stephens. 2019 Restoring a natural fire regime alters the water balance of a Sierra Nevada catchment. Water Resource Research 55:5751–69.)
- **Indigenous burn practices** (Long, J.W., F.K. Lake, R.W. Good. 2021. The importance of Indigenous cultural burning in forested regions of the Pacific West, USA Forest Ecology and Management 500: 119597.), and
- **Native plant and wildlife conservation** (Jones, G.M., H.A. Kramer, H. S.A. Whitmore, et al. 2020. Habitat selection by spotted owls after a megafire reflects their adaptation to historical frequent-fire regimes. Landscape Ecology 35: 1199–1213.)

Many thanks for your consideration.

Melinda

**Melinda Booth (she|her), Executive Director**

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**As one of the largest grassroots river organizations in the country**, SYRCL’s continued effectiveness as an advocate and change agent depends on a membership base that is thriving and engaged. Membership provides critical support to our research, restoration, and outreach programs, and also leverages our political power in Washington and our home district. **[Join SYRCL and build a brighter future.](#)**