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February 4, 2019

--DRAFT--

Governor Gavin Newsom
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

The Nevada County Board of Supervisors would like to express our gratitude for your prompt focus on wildfire emergency preparedness, response, and recovery in the state of California. Fire prevention and preparedness has been an A Priority for our Board for the past several years. In Nevada County, 92 percent of our residents live within high to very high wildfire severity zones. Climate change and high fuel loads resulting from drought, tree mortality, and decades of fire suppression have made our communities extremely vulnerable to calamitous wildfire.

We recognize that wildfire does not heed jurisdictional lines, which is why we are mobilizing local, state, and federal partners within our county to unite against the threat of wildfire. We are especially interested in the fire prevention efforts spearheaded by our California State Parks partners in the Sierra District. We wholeheartedly support hazardous fuels reduction activities proposed in Nevada County at Empire Mine State Historic Park, Donner Memorial State Park and Malakoff Diggins State Park. These parks serve as rich cultural, historical, and recreational community assets. The Empire Mine park, however, is located in a highly-populated, fire-prone wildland urban interface located adjacent to the significant Gold Rush city of Grass Valley, as is the Donner park in relation to the city of Truckee and the Malakoff Diggins park in relation to the dispersed rural residential areas north of Nevada City. We respectfully request that Proposition 68 funding be allocated to provide for the speedy implementation of critical fire prevention and forest health activities on these public lands. In addition, we support the allocation of fire prevention funding to sustain ongoing maintenance efforts within these parks. We are aware that to be effective, treatments must continually be maintained.

Our Board would also like to bring to your attention an issue that, given what occurred in the town of Paradise, is of extreme concern to our community: evacuation routes. State Highways 20 and 49 are Principal Arterial roads within the County, and State Highways 89, 174 and 267 serve as Minor Arterial roads. It is imperative that swift action be taken to ensure these roadways are made as safe as possible for first responder ingress and community egress. These State Highways are in dire need of immediate hazardous fuels mitigation, and in many places these roads are only two lanes in width. Currently, even the most minor of traffic incidents result in significant congestion. We all have seen what happens when families are trapped on clogged roads engulfed in flames. In the event of a catastrophic wildfire necessitating a mass evacuation, these narrow, overgrown roadways would serve as perilous evacuation routes. We respectfully request your assistance with urgent vegetation removal along these State-maintained roadways and with widening these key evacuation routes.

We are grateful that you have made fire prevention and preparedness a top priority of your administration. We appreciate the partnership we have with our CALFIRE Nevada-Placer-Yuba Unit and we look forward to working alongside the agency in this next year as we update our vital fire prevention plans, increase community outreach and education, as well as expand our hazardous fuels treatments throughout Nevada County. Your bold commitment to protecting life-safety, property, and the environment for future generations is certainly appreciated, and we look forward to working with you to safeguard our Sierra Nevada communities.

Cordially yours,

Richard Anderson
Chairman, Board of Supervisors

Copies to: Senator Ted Gaines
 Assemblyman Brian Dahle
 Keely Martin Bosler, Director, California Department of Finance
 Wade Crowfoot, Secretary for California Natural Resources
 Lisa Mangat, Director, California State Parks
 Matt Green, Chief Ranger, California State Parks, Sierra District
 Laurie Berman, Director, CalTrans
 Thom Porter, Director, CalFire
 Karen Lange, Partner, Shaw/Yoder/Antwih, Inc.