



September 14, 2020

Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works

Att: Senator Daines

410 Dirksen Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510

Re: Support of Emergency Wildfire and Public Safety Act of 2020

Dear Senator Daines:

Please accept this correspondence as the vigorous support of the Organizations noted above for the proposed 2020 Emergency Wildfire and Public Safety Act ("The Proposal") targeting enhanced management flexibility for land managers to address fire prevention and to more rapidly respond to the ongoing impacts to landscapes after a fire has been extinguished. Prior to addressing our basis for support of the Proposal, we believe a brief summary of each Organization is needed. The Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition ("COHVCO") is a grassroots advocacy organization of approximately 250,000 registered OHV users in Colorado seeking to represent, assist, educate, and empower all OHV recreationists in the protection and promotion of off-highway motorized recreation throughout Colorado. COHVCO is an environmental organization that advocates and promotes the responsible use and conservation of our public lands and natural resources to preserve their aesthetic and recreational qualities for future generations. The Trail Preservation Alliance ("TPA") is a 100 percent volunteer organization whose intention is to be a viable partner, working with the United States Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to preserve the sport of trail riding. The TPA acts as an advocate of the sport and takes the necessary action to ensure that the USFS and BLM allocate to trail riding a fair and equitable percentage of access to public lands. Colorado Snowmobile

Association ("CSA") was founded in 1970 to unite the more than 30,000 winter motorized recreationists across the state to enjoy their passion. CSA has also become the voice of organized snowmobiling seeking to advance, promote and preserve the sport of snowmobiling through work with Federal and state land management agencies and local, state and federal legislators telling the truth about our sport. The Idaho Recreation Council ("IRC") is a recognized, statewide, collaboration of Idaho recreation enthusiasts and others that will identify and work together on recreation issues in cooperation with land managers, legislators and the public to ensure a positive future for responsible outdoor recreation access for everyone, now and into the future. For purposes of this correspondence TPA, COHVCO, CSA, and IRC will be referred to as "The Organizations". While the primary mission of the Organizations most directly relates to motorized recreation, the overall scope of the Organizations efforts has a larger impact as motorized recreation and access can take many forms and involve many activities, including camping, hunting and fishing and other recreational activities where motorized access to public lands is critical but not the primary recreational activity sought. Under federal land management standards, when an area is open to motorized access it is rarely closed to any other activity.

The Organizations welcome the Proposals wildfire risk reduction efforts in and around roads, trails and transmissions lines as outlined in §103 of the Proposal. The Organizations are aware that the development of these resources around roadways can be highly effective in mitigating wildfire risks. There is another benefit from this management that we believe is equally important to the mitigation of fire risks, and that is the safety of the general public when using these resources is also improved. Stories about members of the public being threatened by falling dead trees while camping or pursuing other actions on public lands is becoming all too common. In 2012, a snowmobiler was killed in Wyoming when he was riding down a road and was struck by a falling tree that crossed the road.¹ §103 of the Proposal would help effectively mitigate these risks and this public safety benefit cannot be overlooked.

The Organizations vigorously support the streamlined process laid out in §104 of the Proposal. The long-term impacts of fire on recreational opportunities in the areas directly impacted by the fire is easily understood and poses a major challenge as these opportunities can take

¹ https://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/wyoming/snowmobiler-dies-after-being-hit-by-tree-in-snowy-range/article_6bf82b8c-37c9-11e1-92c7-001871e3ce6c.html

decades to restore. Immediate response to fire impacts can prevent impacts many miles outside of areas directly impacted by the fire, as evidenced by the following series of pictures of an improved drainage crossing on a trail several miles from the burn scar of a recent fire. While the structure had been in place for an extended period before the fire, the first major rain after the fire resulted in its immediate destruction as tons of sediment was deposited into the crossing area.





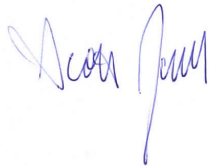
The streamlined process for restoration under §104 will generate immediate benefits for opportunities and resources in the burn scar, but the Organizations believe the benefits that will result outside the burn scar are equally important and weigh heavily in support of the Proposal.

There are several access related benefits in the Proposal, as we note above, but we believe there are additional benefits that could be obtained if a mandatory review of road decommissioning was required to ensure fire fighting access to areas of public lands before the route was decommissioned. We are becoming all too familiar with situations where wildfires are started in areas that were only recently made inaccessible after historic access roads were

decommissioned. We would ask that roads that are critical to access for fire prevention be made “administrative only” instead of being fully decommissioned in order to facilitate effective firefighting efforts in areas of public lands where fire fighting might become difficult or impossible if the route was decommissioned.

If you have questions please feel free to contact either Scott Jones, Esq. at 508 Ashford Drive, Longmont, CO 80504. His phone is (518)281-5810 and his email is scott.jones46@yahoo.com or Fred Wiley, ORBA's Executive Director at 1701 Westwind Drive #108, Bakersfield, CA. Mr. Wiley phone is 661-323-1464 and his email is fwiley@orba.biz .

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Scott Jones".

Scott Jones, Esq.
COHVCO Authorized Representative;
CSA President

Sandra Mitchell, Executive Director
Idaho Recreation Council

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Don Riggle".

D.E. Riggle
Director of Operations
Trails Preservation Alliance