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To: Honorable Greg Walden
Date: May 19, 2003
Subject: Support for H.R. 1904

Last year marked the worst fire year in the west and in Oregon in more than a generation. Whole communities were destroyed, lives were lost and the environment was ravaged. A century of suppressing fire coupled with near abandonment of work in our forests has resulted in catastrophic fires of record-setting proportions all across the country. Tree stands in some forests are 10 times what they should be. Fuel loads have grown up providing a ladder for fire to reach the canopy and burn with reckless abandon.

If passed, the Walden-McInnis bill will expedite the ability of forest managers to treat 20 million acres of land in the rural-urban interface of the American West that has been identified as particularly at risk to wildfires, insects and disease. The bill also proposes to streamline the federal appeals process so that projects can no longer be tied up by environmental groups in endless appeals.

That is good news for rural communities in Oregon and around the West who are facing the threat of catastrophic forests fires. Last summer more than seven million acres of forest burned, leaving behind damaged rivers, streams and lakes and releasing tons of dangerous pollutants into the air. Twenty-three firefighters - including a van load of young men and women from eastern Oregon - lost their lives in an attempt to suppress those fires.

We appreciate the efforts by those in Congress who are looking for solutions. The Oregon Farm Bureau fully supports the passage of H.R. 1904.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barry Bushue".

Barry Bushue, President