

Dear Representative LaMalfa,

I am pleased to join in support for HR 1586, Forest Protection and Wildland Firefighter Safety Act of 2023. I appreciate your leadership on this critical issue and that the legislation has strong bi-partisan support.

The use of retardant is a vital tool that our firefighters need to have at their disposal. Providing a Clean Water Act exemption so that federal, state, local, and tribal firefighting agencies can continue to use fire retardant is necessary to keep this tool available. Our fire prone communities are at risk every year from the threat of wildfire. It is critical for the survival of our communities, forests, and safety of fire crew members to utilize retardant when deemed necessary. We have seen time and again, using retardant slows the spread of fire, protects homes, infrastructure, and communities by creating a boundary line of attack for fire crews.

In view of the inferior stewardship of USFS lands, it is imperative that we maintain our ability to fight wildfires effectively. Limiting firefighting agencies' ability to slow fires, will harm forest conservation, endangered species protection, historic sites preservation, and our mission to protect nearby residents.

Whether dropped from a plane, sprayed from a tanker truck, or hand applied by private homeowners, retardant is a tool that keeps our communities safe and our watersheds from being destroyed from damaging catastrophic wildfires. In the wildland - urban interface, we need this tool to protect critical infrastructure and human life.

We support your efforts to enact HR 1586.

Thank you.

- Arne Hultgren