

March 20, 2023

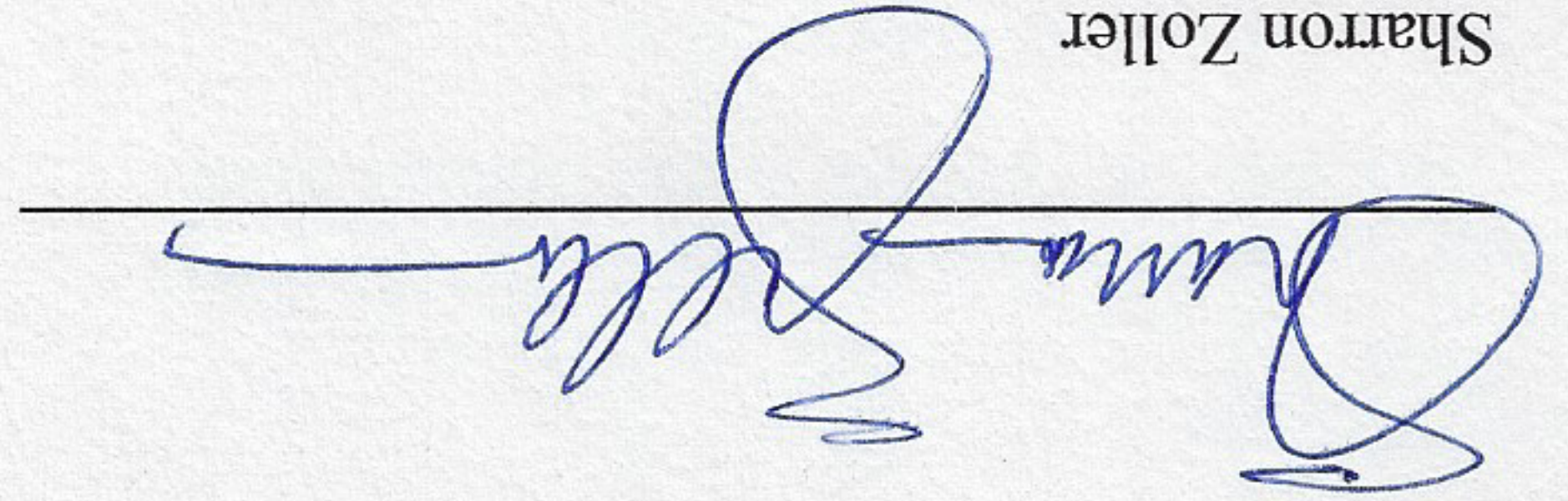
The Honorable Doug LaMalfa
United States House of Representatives
408 Cannon H.O.B.
Washington, D.C. 20515

California Women for Agriculture supports passage the bipartisan bill, H.R. 1586 - the [Forest Protection and Wildland Firefighter Safety Act of 2023](#).

H.R. 1586 creates a Clean Water Act exemption for federal, state, local, and tribal firefighting agencies to use fire retardants to fight wildfires. Fire retardant is essential to contain or slow the spread of wildfires. However, currently, the Forest Service and other agencies are operating under the assumption that a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit is not required for the use of fire retardant because the regulations specifically state that fire control is a "non-point source silvicultural activity" and communications from EPA dating back to 1993 indicated a permit is not required.

Wildland fires have been devastating to California destroying forests, towns, and croplands. People have died in our state because of these fires. If not for the aerial use of fire retardants, these fires would have even more deadly and destructive. This bill is needed because an environmentalist group is [suing](#) the Forest Service under the Clean Water Act to require an NPDES permit to use fire retardant. They have requested an injunction on using fire retardant until the Forest Service receives this permit, which could take years. If the injunction is granted and fire retardant is unavailable in the 2023 fire year, firefighters and individuals living in forested communities would be in greater danger, with millions of acres of forested land and billions of dollars of infrastructure would be at risk.

We must be able to fight wildfires with everything we have. Limiting firefighting agencies' ability to do so flies in the face of forest conservation and our mission to protect residents.


Sharon Zoller
President

California Women for Agriculture

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