

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boozman
Chair, Senate Committee on
Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on
Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Boozman and Ranking Member Klobuchar:

Climate change is creating warmer and drier conditions across the United States, increasing the risk and severity of wildfires, especially in Western states. Vermont is not immune. Our farmers and foresters are currently struggling with severe drought and high fire risk across the state.

The Fix Our Forests Act (FOFA) aims to strengthen forest resilience by providing the U.S. Forest Service additional tools to prepare for and respond to wildfires. I'm encouraged by improvements that have been made to this latest version of FOFA, and I understand the urgent need to support communities facing wildfire devastation.

That said, I recognize some of Vermonters' concerns with the bill, particularly as it relates to reduced public input on federal forestry projects and the lack of staffing to carry out wildfire prevention work. In response, I've prepared an amendment to make changes to FOFA's Section 106 to limit expansion of categorical exclusions to areas west of the 100th meridian, where fires are typically larger. I've also prepared an amendment to improve staffing at the U.S. Forest Service to ensure effective project implementation. I would appreciate my colleagues' consideration of these amendments as FOFA advances through the Senate.

I also believe we must explore additional strategies to prevent wildfires. For example, agroforestry offers a sustainable alternative to diversifying farming systems by integrating trees and shrubs to act as natural fuel breaks, preventing the advancement of wildfires. This remains a priority of mine, but I will not be offering this amendment. While FOFA may not be the right vehicle for incentivizing agroforestry, the Farm Bill presents a valuable opportunity to advance this and other forestry priorities.

I look forward to working with Chairman Boozman, Ranking Member Klobuchar, and our FOFA leads to continue improving the bill before it reaches the Floor.

Sincerely,

