

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 21, 2019

Ms. Victoria Christiansen  
Chief  
U.S. Forest Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

RE: Proposed Rule, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Compliance (84 Fed. Reg. 27,544, June 13, 2019)

Dear Chief Christiansen,

We write to express concern about the U.S. Forest Service's proposed National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) rule (84 Fed. Reg. 27,544, June 13, 2019) and ask that you extend the public comment period by an additional 46 days. Congress has already provided significant new authorities to streamline work getting done in National Forests, including in the 2014 and 2018 Farm Bills and the FY 2018 Consolidated Appropriations Act. A proposal that goes beyond these bipartisan agreements requires thorough input and review from those most impacted by this proposal, our wildland fire fighters and forest managers. The recent 14-day extension does not provide the additional time required to review this proposal; it creates a distraction from the work that desperately needs to be done in our forests to keep our lands and waters healthy, reduce wildfires and protect communities.

The proposed NEPA rule would impact management decisions on all 193 million acres of land in the National Forest System. It is critical the public be provided ample time to thoroughly review and comment on a rule that would not only alter how the Forest Service manages our National Forests, but significantly change one of our nation's bedrock environmental laws. We are also concerned the proposed rule will reduce public participation and hinder collaborative management strategies, both of which are central to NEPA and key to successful forest management.

Wildfires across the country have grown in size and become more severe. Climate change, mismanaged forest practices, and increased development in the wildland-urban interface have put more lives at risk. In light of these challenges, restoration of our National Forests is critically important. More than ever, management of our forests needs to be science-based if we hope to better protect communities and restore habitats. We are concerned the proposed rule could undermine the scientific processes that are considered in NEPA.

A proposal of this scale requires significant review, and we believe an additional 14 days is an insufficient amount of time to allow for full public participation. We ask that you extend the public comment period to a total of 120 days. The additional time gives the public— particularly those on the ground managing our forests and fighting wildfires, conducting field studies of species or managing recreation businesses on these treasured lands during the summer months—the time they need to review and provide comment on a rule that could considerably change current management practices.

Thank you for your consideration.

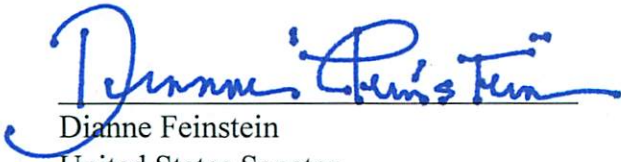
Sincerely,



Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper  
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



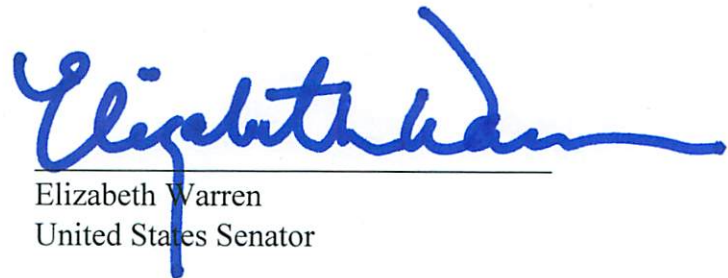
Patty Murray  
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Ron Wyden  
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Kamala D. Harris  
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Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



Tom Udall  
United States Senator



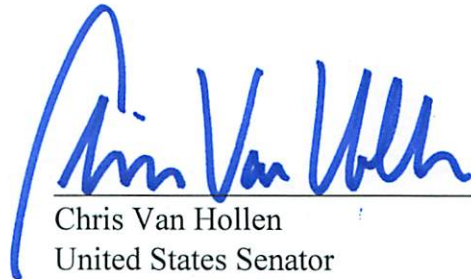
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Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator



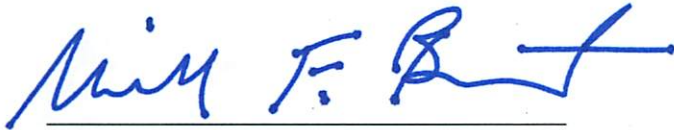
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