



October 1, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer, Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Support for Forestry Title in Reconciliation

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell,

Colorado Springs Utilities is the largest community-owned, not-for-profit, four-service utility in the nation. We have provided water, wastewater, gas, and electric utility services to approximately 450,000 residents in the Pikes Peak Region for almost 100 years.

Colorado Springs Utilities greatly appreciates your work on the Reconciliation Bill and we want to express our strongest support for the funding levels allocated to investments in forestry programs. The \$40 billion investment in forestry programs – of which \$10 billion would go toward Hazardous Fuels Treatments (Within the Wildland Urban Interface) and \$1 billion would go toward CFLPR – will help combat forest fires and contribute to healthy, resilient forests.

Forests and watersheds are the natural infrastructure sustaining Colorado's economy. While climate change continues to drive catastrophic wildfires and prolonged drought, until now Congress has not directed necessary funding to address the problems. As a result, state and local governments have often been left to foot the bill for conservation, restoration, and wildfire mitigation. Upgrading our natural infrastructure is an opportunity to build climate resilience and create and sustain millions of good-paying jobs. The Reconciliation Bill provides important and needed federal dollars to support local collaborative efforts to restore forests and watersheds, reduce wildfire risk, clean up public lands, enhance wildlife habitat, remove invasive species, and expand outdoor access.

We want to express our particular support for the following language in Subtitle B – Forestry:

(c) LIMITATIONS. —None of the funds made available by this section may be used for any activity—

(5) inconsistent with the prohibitions of the rule of the Forest Service entitled “Special Areas; Roadless Area Conservation” (66 Fed. Reg. 3244 23 (January 12, 2001)), as modified by subparts C and D of part 294 of title 36, Code of Federal Regulations; or



Colorado Springs Utilities
It's how we're all connected

This important exclusion does not limit the use of funds within inventoried areas in Colorado's roadless areas. This exemption can allow our wildfire mitigation work and cover tree cutting activities authorized specifically in the CFR for Roadless Areas in Colorado (36 CFR 294.40 - 294.49). These activities are critical to ensuring healthy watersheds which enable us to continue to provide clean, healthy, and safe drinking water to our community.

Again, we thank you for your hard work and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Earl Wilkinson III
Chief Water, Compliance, and Innovation Officer

CC: Senator Bennett, Senator Hickenlooper

121 South Tejon Street
Mail Code 950
Colorado Springs, CO 80903

Phone 719.668.8005
<http://www.csu.org>