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April 21, 2023

The Honorable Luz Rivas  
Chair of the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources  
State Capitol  
1020 N Street, Room 164  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 1554 (Patterson, Joe): California Environmental Quality  
Act: Exemption: Wildfire Fuels Reduction Projects: SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Rivas:

On behalf of the Mountain Counties Water Resources Association's Board of Directors, I'm writing to lend our support to Assembly Bill 1554, which would exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) fuels reduction projects in areas with moderate, high, and very high hazard severity zones.

California experienced the deadliest and most destructive wildfires in its history in recent years. Fueled by drought, an unprecedented buildup of dry vegetation and extreme winds, the size and intensity of these wildfires caused the loss of life, destroyed thousands of homes and exposed millions of urban and rural Californians to unhealthy air.

Fuel reduction projects must be accelerated in the moderate, high and very high hazard severity zones in order to protect property, resources, public facilities, infrastructure and, most importantly protect human life.

MCWRA advocates for the water interests of its 58 members in 12 of the mountain counties within the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) of woodland and forested lands in the Sierra Nevada. These foothill and mountain areas contain the headwaters for 40% of the state's developed water supply, which also provides for hydropower production, irrigation, recreation, water recycling, tourism, and instream flows that fuel the engine of our State's economy.

California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan states "bolder action is required to address the key drivers of catastrophic fires, significantly increase the pace and scale of forest management, and improve the resilience of increasingly threatened communities." AB 1554 addresses this initiative – particularly in disadvantaged communities. Please feel free to reach out should you have any questions regarding our position.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Ratterman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Scott Ratterman, President  
Mountain Counties Water Resources Association