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March 19, 2024

The Honorable Marie Alvarado-Gil
 California State Senate
 State Capitol
 1020 N Street, Room 7240
 Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 945 (Alvarado-Gil) The Wildfire Smoke & Health Outcomes Data Act – SUPPORT

Senator Alvarado-Gil:

On behalf of the Mountain Counties Water Resources Association’s Board of Directors, I am writing to express our strong support for your Senate Bill 945, the Wildfire Smoke & Health Outcomes Data Act, which would help protect public health by actively monitoring air pollution, population exposure and health outcomes related to wildfire smoke. This proposal aligns with our recently-adopted [Forest Management Principles](#) which highlight the impact of toxic smoke resulting from wildfire.

Over 100 years of suppressing wildfires and changing climate have produced overgrown forests and catastrophic mega wildfires that are impacting communities, degrading California’s headwaters’ water quality, water infrastructure, and forest resources in Sierra Nevada watersheds, and creating a toxic smoke health hazard throughout the state. Severe mega wildfires release tons of greenhouse gases and eliminate the ability of forests to absorb and store atmospheric carbon. Climate change will continue to exacerbate the problem as a result of increasing droughts, temperatures, and wildfires.

California has experienced massive increases in climate change driven wildfires and these wildfires burn faster and hotter presenting significant risks to our environment and to public health of the communities within these regions. According to the California EPA’s Office of Environmental Health Hazard

Assessment (OEHHA), since 2010, potential population exposures to wildfire smoke has been increasing and peaked in 2020. In 2020, smoke plumes covered every county for at least 46 days. A record-high 4.2 million acres burned in 2020 and several large wildfires burned at once, leading to unprecedented air quality impacts.

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.

MCWRA supports SB 945. We believe that the measures specified in the legislative proposal will provide much needed public health information related to wildfire risk investments. We thank you for your continued support of MCWRA region infrastructure, communities, and people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Ratterman', written in a cursive style.

Scott Ratterman, President
Mountain Counties Water Resources Association