



PACIFIC FOREST TRUST

The Honorable Jared Huffman  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife  
House Natural Resources Committee  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020

**Re: Support for the “FUTURE Drought Resiliency Act”**

Dear Congressman Huffman:

Pacific Forest Trust (PFT) applauds your work on the “FUTURE Drought Resiliency Act” on its emphasis of forests and watersheds as natural water infrastructure. As a land trust and policy organization working to restore and conserve the Northwest’s forested watersheds, we were happy to see the draft bill language recognize the role of natural infrastructure in water security and includes many options for natural water storage funding. While improvements to our nation’s built water systems are needed, increasing storage through dams alone cannot solve the issue – we need investments in natural infrastructure on which the effectiveness of our built storage relies. **PFT specifically commends the following improvements regarding water storage in Reclamation states:**

- 1) **Eligibility and definitions of Federal and non-Federal storage projects:** sections 103(a)(3)(B), (a)(4)(B), and (a)(6)(B) of the legislation improve upon current definitions by broadening storage funding to include forest or watershed restoration projects. This expansion provides an immense opportunity for much-needed watershed restoration and conservation while also protecting water supplies, as well as giving non-profits access to Federal cost sharing for these activities.
- 2) **Natural water storage projects:** section 103(a)(5) adds another category and opportunity for watershed restoration (includes, but is not limited to, forest restoration).
- 3) **Multi-benefit watershed grant program:** section 304 provides an additional opportunity for projects that may not necessarily enhance water flow into a reservoir, but provide other environmental benefits.
- 4) **Selection of non-Federal and natural storage projects:** sections 103(d)(2)(B) and (e)(2)(B) state that non-Federal and natural water storage projects must be determined to provide net ecosystem benefits beyond State and Federal mitigation or compliance obligations, ensuring actual improvements to watershed health.
- 5) **Projects must comply with relevant State and Federal laws:** sections 103(c)(6), (d)(6), (e)(6), and (f)(6) state that projects must comply with all relevant environmental laws,

including all State environmental laws in Reclamation states that are more protective than Federal law, guaranteeing the highest standards of environmental protection are maintained.

The draft language recognizes the role of natural infrastructure in water security, and includes multiple funding options for natural infrastructure projects. The final bill should ensure fair allocation of funding for natural infrastructure projects alongside funding for built infrastructure. The greatest priority should be given to projects that meet the highest level of environmental benefits among all applicants. If subsequent guidelines include project ranking criteria, these systems should be consistent and comparable across all Federal and non-Federal storage projects to establish a fair chance of funding for all applicants.

We strongly encourage support of this legislation and will work with others to take this opportunity to improve our nation's water infrastructure, inclusive of forested watersheds that reliably supply clean and abundant water. These cost-effective investments will also improve wildlife habitat, mitigate the impacts of climate change, and boost regional rural economies that rely on natural and working lands.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Laurie A. Wayburn" with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Laurie A. Wayburn  
President