



April 15, 2019

**Letter in support of the Institute for Natural Resources
Submitted to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education**

Co-chairs Frederick and McLain,

I write to you in support of the Institute for Natural Resources (INR). I am a Wildlife Biologist with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) in the Pacific Southwest Region. As the program leader for the region's carnivore monitoring I am tasked with assessing population changes for state and federally listed carnivore species in relation to both natural and human caused landscape changes. It is important for our work that INR, and its staff, services, and products continue to be supported by the State of Oregon.

For the past three years I have been formally partnering with scientists from INR due to their expertise in ecology and wildlife science to execute a number of projects of critical importance to the USFS.

- 1) INR and the USFS are collaborating to assess the response of the carnivore community in the Sierra Nevada to recent, widespread, and severe tree mortality resulting from a historic drought. The tree mortality event has heightened the already significant risk of high severity fire and is challenging land managers with balancing the need to remove hazardous fuels while allowing for the persistence of native wildlife species. INR scientists are critical collaborators with the USFS in designing and executing studies that provide urgently needed ecological information to inform these decisions.
- 2) Secondly, INR has been collaborating to help the USFS design a protocol to inform the use of Limited Operating Periods (LOPs) for the Pacific fisher, currently a candidate for federal listing under the Endangered Species Act. While LOPs are critical tools to conserve important denning areas during the breeding season, they also often conflict with the timing for prescribed fire treatments or other fuels reduction projects that in the long term are essential for providing a more fire resilient landscape. INR's work with the USFS is helping create a tools for land managers to refine implementation of LOP's to meet both wildlife conservation and fuels reduction goals.

A continued partnership with INR is vital for the USFS to continue to provide valuable information to land managers in the most efficient and timely manner possible to best inform management at a critical time in the high fire risk landscapes of western forests. I strongly support the work of the INR and its continued funding by the state of Oregon as a vital partner for public land management across the west.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Jody M. Tucker, Ph.D.
Wildlife Biologist
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