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### **RCRC Applauds Senator Feinstein for Wildfire Funding Request**

#### *Leaders Urge for Forestry Reform in Energy Bill*

**SACRAMENTO, CA – October 11, 2016** – The Rural County Representatives of California and its members applaud Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) for tackling the practice of “fire borrowing,” the mechanism by which fuels management, forest health, watershed improvement, and post-fire mitigation project funds are swept into funding the response to the disaster rather than used towards prevention efforts and cleanup. Senator Feinstein was joined by Senator Steve Daines (R-MT) in a joint letter to the conference committee urging reforms be included in the final energy bill currently being negotiated.

Wildfires in California continue to put our communities, natural resources, air quality and lives at risk, and as they increase in both frequency and intensity, the funding structure to address them needs to be changed. More than 630,000 acres have burned in nearly 6,500 wildfires throughout California this year alone, destroying homes and other structures, and even leading to loss of life. California’s rural counties have been hit especially hard, crippling local resources and response efforts, and leaving the state’s most disadvantaged communities to pick-up the pieces.

“The federal government doesn’t pay for the response to any other natural disasters this way,” said John Viegas, RCRC Chair and Glenn County Supervisor. “Spending more on fire suppression and less on fire prevention efforts is exactly the wrong direction we should be going with forest management.”

The federal government needs to change the way forest management is funded. A system needs to be created in which wildfire disaster response is funded in a way similar to that of other natural disasters, such as hurricanes and floods. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funds the response to those types of disasters out of a fund that is separate and apart from the costs of any preventative actions, and separate from any post-disaster clean up or mitigation of future disasters. Wildfires, however, have never been funded in this two-part way, thus leading to the system of fire borrowing.

Senators Feinstein and Daines explain, “as cosponsors of the *Wildfire Disaster Funding Act*, we urge you to include reforms in the final energy bill to enable the Forest Service to pay for fighting extraordinary wildfires similarly to how other agencies pay for disaster responses –

through funding that is unconstrained by stringent spending caps. We believe this reform is critically needed and appropriate considering that natural conditions such as chronic drought unquestionably elevate the risk and severity of wildfires.”

RCRC applauds Senators Feinstein and Daines for their leadership on the issue of fire borrowing, echoes their request for strong reforms to improve the health of our forests, and urges Congress to address the chronic challenges that are impeding current forest restoration efforts.

**About Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC)**

*The Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) is a thirty-five member county strong service organization that champions policies on behalf of California’s rural counties. RCRC is dedicated to representing the collective unique interests of its membership, providing legislative and regulatory representation at the State and Federal levels, and providing responsible services for its members to enhance and protect the quality of life in rural California counties. To learn more about RCRC, visit [rcrcnet.org](http://rcrcnet.org) and follow [@RuralCounties](https://twitter.com/RuralCounties) on Twitter.*

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