



## MONTANA FOREST OWNERS ASSOCIATION

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March 20, 2019

Honorable Jeffrey Welborn, Chairman  
Senate Natural Resources Committee  
Montana State Capitol  
1301 E 6<sup>th</sup> Ave  
Helena MT 59601

Regarding: Support for House Bill 441

Dear Chairman Welborn and Committee Members:

The Montana Forest Owners Association<sup>1</sup> (MFOA) supports House Bill 441. MFOA members manage their forests and wish the State Trust Lands to be similarly managed. Unmanaged lands, including those with conservation licenses, create risks to neighboring forest landowners. Forests are composed of living organisms ranging from trees to understory plants, and elk to earthworms. Conditions are constantly changing as forests go through the stages of birth/establishment, growth, decline and death. Healthy forests contain a mixture of species and age classes. They have the spacing to be resilient to fire and insects.

Past failures to manage forests have resulted in catastrophic mega fires that caused loss of property, valuable timber, and lives. Failure to manage forests also resulted in proliferation of beetles and budworms causing loss of timber and increased fire hazard. There is a groundswell in support of active forest management, including Governor Bullock's Forests in Focus initiative and the federal government's Good Neighbor Authority program.

Please keep our forests healthy to support the schools. Neither people nor trees flourish under crowded conditions. The Montana Forest Owners Association urges you to support HB441.

Sincerely,

Mike Christianson  
Volunteer President

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<sup>1</sup> The Montana Property Owners Association, has been a Montana non-profit corporation since 1995. The MFOA's sole purpose is to protect and serve the interests of non-industrial private forest landowners. There are more than 29,000 non-industrial private forest owners that individually own forested parcels of 10 acres or more and cumulatively own in excess of four million forested acres in Montana. For more information, google MFOA or go to [www.MontanaForestOwners.org](http://www.MontanaForestOwners.org).