



MONTANA FOREST OWNERS ASSOCIATION

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February 20, 2019

Honorable Kerry White, Chairman
Natural Resources Committee
House of Representatives
Montana State **Capitol**
1301 E 6th Ave
Helena MT 59601

Regarding: Support for House Bill 441

Dear Representative White and Committee Members:

The Montana Forest Owners Association¹ supports House Bill 441. The members of the Montana Forest Owners Association 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, including:

1. the increased risk of mega-fires on State lands which have not been thinned, and those fires spreading to private lands.
2. the crowded and unhealthy trees not easily fighting pests, and those infestations spreading to private lands.

There are several reasons to actively manage State Trust Lands, including:

1. Thinning forests results in the remaining trees having more sunlight, water and nutrients, making them healthier and faster-growing, and able to produce more income later.
2. Thinning the forest provides jobs to the local community.
3. Downed timber which can be harvested will not be viable at a later date, but instead will contribute to the large amount of flammable woody debris.
4. The trees standing at the granting of any conservation license may burn by the end of the conservation period (and, thus, not available for future harvest).
5. Maintenance efforts would provide infrastructure for future access to the lands for fire-fighting, other required maintenance, and recreation. This infrastructure would not be available with a conservation license.

6. Whereas an adjoining landowner may wish a timber conservation license in lieu of sale, that landowner is not taking the burden of responding to negative events on the State Trust Lands during the conservation period.
7. State Trust Lands are not the private playgrounds for rich landowners in the vicinity. The lands are to be managed for everyone's benefit, including the schools.

The Montana Forest Owners Association urges you to support HB441.

Sincerely,



Mike Christianson
Volunteer President

ⁱ 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.