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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0502

Protect Access to National Forests in California

July 26, 2011

Dear Colleague:

When the House considers H.R. 2584, the Department of the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, I urge you to oppose any potential amendment that would strip Section 446 from the underlying bill. **Removal of this section will hurt job creation in rural communities in California by substantially restricting access to California's national forests.**

By way of brief background, the Forest Service initiated the Travel Management Rule (TMR) in 2005 to map trails that had formed after decades of use and designate certain ones for multiple-use access. The TMR was intended to be a balanced approach that would protect our natural resources while preserving access for Americans to enjoy their federal lands. Unfortunately, however, the Forest Service's implementation of the TMR in California will restrict access to our national forests by as much as 90%, devastating the local economy.

Specifically, the USFS is classifying gravel roads as highways, which clashes with state law and county policies. Several of my Northern California constituents have expressed their deep concern with the implementation of this rule, but repeated efforts to reach a fair solution with the Forest Service have thus far been unsuccessful. I introduced legislation (H.R. 242) to deny funding for the implementation of the Travel Management Rule in California until the agency completes additional analysis to include more routes and consider Maintenance-Level 3 (gravel roads) as highways. **Section 446 of the Interior Appropriations bill is nearly identical to my legislation.**

Section 446 is a balanced and reasonable approach. It demands commonsense action and I believe it will save millions of taxpayer dollars by preventing costly litigation. At the same time, it does not eliminate the TMR and it only applies to California. In January, the Redding Record-Searchlight applauded the language's "sensible" approach. They said, "This legislation would tweak, not scrap, the Travel Management Rule, and it would do so in a way that would heed the people who live nearest and use the forests. Not coincidentally, it would remove the largest beef that is driving many Northern California counties toward expensive litigation with the Forest Service." See the full editorial on the back.

For these reasons, I ask you to vote **NO** on any amendment that would strip Section 446 from H.R. 2584. For further information or if you have any questions, please contact Josh Reiner in my office at josh.reiner@mail.house.gov or 5-3076.

Sincerely,

WALLY HERGER
Member of Congress