



October 31, 2017

Dear Senator:

The undersigned groups are writing in support of advancing legislation in Congress to enhance energy grid reliability and worker safety, improve system resiliency, and reduce wildfire risks by providing an improved framework for vegetation management and other maintenance of electricity infrastructure that crosses federal lands.

Managing vegetation on electric transmission and distribution rights-of-way is a key part of electric company efforts to protect the security and reliability of the energy grid. Vegetation management helps to enhance the physical integrity of transmission and distribution infrastructure, as well as the safety of workers who build and maintain such facilities.

Challenges arise when rights-of-way cross federal lands. It can be especially difficult to obtain timely approvals from federal land management agencies to implement integrated vegetation management programs and conduct the operation and maintenance work that electric companies must perform to meet mandatory reliability standards, ensure a proper functioning of the energy grid, and reduce the potential risk of fire.

In June, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 1873, the “Electricity Reliability and Forest Protection Act,” by an impressive vote of 300-118. We applaud this bipartisan effort in the House to improve coordination between federal land management agencies and electric companies to assure timely and safe completion of such work. We believe H.R. 1873 can work to the benefit of the federal land management agencies, electric companies, workers, first responders, and communities to assure the timely and safe completion of work critical to maintaining a safe, reliable energy grid and improving federal land management in a manner that is efficient for all parties.

We also support the inclusion of vegetation management provisions in S. 1460, the Energy and Natural Resources Act of 2017, introduced in the Senate. As a next step, we urge the Senate to pass legislation that will establish a better framework to promote federal land management consistency, accountability, and timely decision-making as it relates to protecting power lines on federal lands and reducing the risk of wildfires. This can be done in a manner that respects the federal land management agencies’ role in appropriately managing lands and sensitive habitat within their respective jurisdictions. We look forward to working with you and other Senators to achieve this goal.

American Public Power Association
 Edison Electric Institute
 International Brotherhood of Boilermakers
 International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
 International Federation of Professional and
 Technical Engineers
 International Union of Operating Engineers
 Laborers’ International Union of North America

Large Public Power Council
 National Electrical Contractors Association
 National Rural Electric Cooperative Association
 North America’s Building Trades Unions
 Northwest Public Power Association
 United Association of Plumbers, Fitters, Welders
 and Service Techs
 United Brotherhood of Carpenters