

August 7, 2026

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Chairman
Senate Environment & Public
Works Committee

The Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse
Ranking Member
Senate Environment & Public
Works Committee

Dear Chairman Capito, Ranking Member Whitehouse, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the below listed organizations representing millions of hunters, anglers, wildlife professionals, and outdoor recreationists, we write to express our strong support for the Wildfire Emissions Prevention Act of 2026, which would amend the Clean Air Act to remove regulatory barriers that limit the use of prescribed fire for wildlife habitat and forest health. We commend the bipartisan sponsors for advancing a targeted, well-crafted legislative fix and respectfully urge the Committee to approve the bill at markup.

Our organizations know firsthand that fish and wildlife populations and the quality of hunting and fishing depend on healthy, resilient landscapes. Prescribed fire is one of the best tools land managers have for maintaining forests and grasslands. Periodic, well-planned burning thins overgrown timber stands, enables growth of native tree species, and sustains the habitat that numerous species of wildlife, including game animals, need to thrive. In addition to creating healthy ecosystems, prescribed fire reduces the buildup of hazardous fuels that can lead to catastrophic wildfire that can fill streams with sediment and displace wildlife.

Federal, State, Tribal, and private land managers have made expanded prescribed fire use core to their habitat and wildfire resilience plans, yet real obstacles keep that potential from being realized. Increasingly, land managers are facing narrow burn windows, a stretched fire workforce, and uncertainty under the Clean Air Act.

As it stands now, under Section 319(b) of the Clean Air Act, a state can seek to exclude certain emissions from regulatory significance by showing they qualify as an “exceptional event,” a category defined by emissions that are “not reasonably foreseeable,” “not reasonably controllable,” and “unlikely to recur.” Prescribed fire, by design, is none of those things. It is scheduled, managed, and repeated on a planned rotation. Fitting it into a framework built for genuinely unplanned events has meant an outsized burden of technical and legal documentation. In the decade since EPA opened this pathway in 2016, approved exceptional event demonstrations for prescribed fire have been rare, and our partners in the state and local air agencies consistently point to the cost, time, and unpredictability of the process as the reason why. We fear the practical effect is less prescribed fire activity, which has long-term impacts on both wildlife habitat and wildfire resilience.

The Wildfire Emissions Prevention Act addresses these problems. The bill offers a narrowly tailored, pragmatic fix that will make it easier for states, Tribes, and land managers to use prescribed fire safely

and effectively. By creating a dedicated pathway for prescribed fire under Section 319(b) and simplifying the demonstration process, the EPA and states can offer a more consistent process for land managers who want to use prescribed fire.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to working with you and the Committee to advance this important legislation.

Sincerely,

American Fisheries Society

American Fly Fishing Trade Association

American Forest Foundation

American Sportfishing Association

Angler Action Foundation

Archery Trade Association

California Waterfowl Association

Delta Waterfowl

Ducks Unlimited

Fly Fishers International

Izaak Walton League of America

Mule Deer Foundation

National Association of Forest Owners

National Bobwhite & Grassland Initiative Foundation

National Deer Association

National Wild Turkey Federation

National Wildlife Federation

North American Falconers Association

North American Grouse Partnership

PERC

Pheasants Forever

Pope and Young Club

Quail Forever

Tall Timbers

The Wildlife Society

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Trout Unlimited

Whitetails Unlimited

Wild Sheep Foundation

Wildlife Management Institute