

# SAVE OUR SEQUOIAS ACT

Led by Representatives Vince Fong (R-CA) and Scott Peters (D-CA), the bipartisan Save Our Sequoias (SOS) Act provides a comprehensive response to address imminent threats facing the iconic Giant Sequoias. The bill improves interagency coordination, utilizes robust scientific analysis to triage high priority Giant Sequoia groves, expedites forest restoration projects by streamlining emergency procedures, and provides substantial new resources to land managers.

## BACKGROUND ON THE GIANT SEQUOIA CRISIS

Giant Sequoias are the largest trees on Earth and solely found in roughly 70 groves across 37,000 acres in California. They are world-renowned for their size and ancient lifespan and provide significant ecological, scientific, and cultural benefits. Giant Sequoias are extremely fire-resilient and were once considered virtually indestructible.

However, over a century of fire suppression and mismanagement created a massive build-up of hazardous fuels around the Giant Sequoias, leading to unnaturally intense, high-severity wildfires. Since 2015, these fires have caused unprecedented destruction and in the last four years alone, have destroyed nearly one-fifth of all Giant Sequoias. This emergency facing Giant Sequoias is unprecedented – the last recorded evidence of mass Giant Sequoia mortality occurred in 1297 A.D., over seven centuries ago.

Without urgent action, wildfires could eliminate countless more iconic Giant Sequoias in the coming years. Despite this crisis, federal land managers have not been able to increase the pace and scale of treatments necessary to restore Giant Sequoia resiliency to wildfires. At its current pace, it would take the U.S. Forest Service approximately 52 years to treat just their 19 most at-risk Giant Sequoia groves. Accelerating science-based forest treatments will not only improve the resilience of Giant Sequoias but also enhance air and water quality, reduce carbon emissions, and protect critical habitat for important species like the Pacific Fisher.

## THE SOS ACT

The SOS Act will provide land managers with the emergency tools and resources needed to save the remaining Giant Sequoias. The bill would:

- Enhance coordination between Federal, State, Tribal, and local land managers through shared stewardship agreements and the codification of the Giant Sequoia Lands Coalition, a partnership between the current Giant Sequoia managers.
- Create a Giant Sequoia Health and Resiliency Assessment to prioritize and inform forest management projects, track project implementation, and study Giant Sequoia health and resiliency over time.
- Provide funding and establish a new grant program to support the implementation of hazardous fuels reduction treatments in and around Giant Sequoia groves.
- Declare an emergency to codify existing emergency procedures, expedite environmental reviews and consultations, and maintain robust scientific analysis.
- Provide authority to the National Park Foundation and National Forest Foundation to accept private donations to facilitate Giant Sequoia restoration and resiliency.
- Establish a comprehensive reforestation strategy to regenerate Giant Sequoias in groves destroyed by recent catastrophic wildfires.