

Testimony from Karen Ellis

Dear Sirs and Madams,

The loss that my family and I experienced on that fateful day at Star Mountain Ln. – Sept 8, 2020 – was sudden, devastating, and life-changing, to say the least. Over the course of 38 years, we cared for the forest, raised three sons, hosted many guests, produced many arts and crafts products, and grew much of our own food. More than that it was a way of life that was in harmony with the land and now that has been lost. My husband planned to do forest thinning as retirement income. That was all lost to the fire. I had a beautiful inspiring art studio there and it was a place to create as well as a base for my 20+ years as an art educator. That was lost to the fire. Our family's entire 200 acres was considered one of the hottest areas of the fire and the destruction was complete. Almost all the trees died and all structures (2 homes, 1 barn, 1 shop, 1 art studio and more) along with their contents were completely reduced to ashes. It was not just the homes, structures, and forest, but an entire way of life that vanished overnight.

I cannot imagine any monetary amount that could re-create the peaceful, creative, productive, wholistic life that my husband and I knew there. Our three sons, daughter-in-law, and two grandchildren will never be able to return to that pristine, verdant environment that they once called home. Of course, trees will be replanted but it will take multiple generations for the land to be forested once again. In addition, while each situation is individual, I know that many other fire survivor families in the surrounding community had similar experiences of loss and are also still struggling in the aftermath.

A potential lawsuit settlement offers a ray of hope of some support for rebuilding our lives, however, after working very hard to gain a settlement, the thought of paying income tax on all of it including the attorneys' fees seems daunting and inconsiderate of all we have gone through. If the wildfire survivors are to experience any concrete support at this time it would be most appreciated in the form of "Wildfire Settlement Tax Subtraction."

Please, please take a stand in support of HB3523.

Sincerely,  
Karen Ellis