Editorial: McClintock complicating Rim Fire recovery

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Gateway communities to Yosemite National Park suffered a triple-whammy in 2013 – the Rim Fire, the 16-day government shutdown and another winter with little snow. How this national treasure recovers from the 257,000-acre fire that swept through the Stanislaus National Forest, Yosemite National Park and private timberland from Aug. 17 until the end of September matters a lot, not just for the Sierra but for other wildlands that might be hit by fire.

The U.S. Forest Service has done a good job of bringing people together and working collaboratively. Existing laws that require public comment have garnered useful information and will make the recovery better. Thousands of people have weighed in. Still, the Forest Service has an extremely difficult task reaching consensus among competing interests in a way that avoids litigation.

Unfortunately, Rep. Tom McClintock, the Elk Grove Republican who represents Yosemite and the area scorched by the fire, seems determined to drive a political wedge, rather than forge agreement. He has called for immediate salvage logging that would be exempt from federal environmental laws, public comment and court review on the entire 257,000-acre burn area, including in Yosemite National Park.

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