

2003



## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 03-1020

**BY REPRESENTATIVES** Wiens, Brophy, Cadman, Crane, Decker, May M., Rhodes, Rippy, Smith, Spence, White, Clapp, Cloer, Fritz, Hall, Harvey, Hefley, Hoppe, King, Lundberg, McCluskey, Miller, Rose, Schultheis, Sinclair, Spradley, Stafford, and Young;

**also SENATORS** Evans, Anderson, Andrews, Arnold, Cairns, Chlouber, Entz, Isgar, Johnson S., Kester, Lamborn, May R., McElhany, Owen, Sandoval, Taylor, and Teck.

### CONCERNING SUPPORT FOR ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES THAT WOULD ENABLE INCREASED FOREST MANAGEMENT TO HELP REDUCE THE RISK OF CATASTROPHIC WILDFIRES.

WHEREAS, An April 1999 General Accounting Office report to the United States House of Representatives entitled "Western National Forests: A Cohesive Strategy is Needed to Address Catastrophic Wildfire Threats" cited that the most extensive and serious problem related to the health of national forests in the interior west is the over accumulation of vegetation, which has caused an increasing number of large, intense, uncontrollable, and catastrophically destructive wildfires; and

WHEREAS, An October 2000 United States Forest Service report, entitled "Protecting People and Sustaining Resources...", confirmed the conclusion of the 1999 General Accounting Office's report and further warned that without increased restoration treatments, wildfire suppression costs, natural resource losses, private property losses, and environmental damage are certain to escalate as fuels continue to accumulate and more acres become high risk; and

WHEREAS, A June 2002 United States Forest Service report stated that the agency was "so busy meeting procedural requirements...that it has trouble fulfilling its historic mission: to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations"; and

WHEREAS, The United States Forest Service's failure to promptly and efficiently implement forest management projects has contributed to unnatural wildfire risks and the spread of insect and disease epidemics across all of the national forests in Colorado; and

WHEREAS, The citizens of Colorado are concerned about the risk of catastrophic wildfire and the spread of insects and disease, and are disturbed by the gridlock in federal decision-making that prevents professional foresters, wildlife biologists, and other professionals from doing their jobs; and

WHEREAS, Decades of fire suppression and passive management have created overly dense, diseased, and fire-prone forests that are the result of conflicting, contradictory, time consuming, and overly burdensome federal land management procedures and processes; and

WHEREAS, In August 2002, President Bush established the Healthy Forests Initiative, directing the Department of Agriculture, the Department of the Interior, and the Council on Environmental Quality to improve regulatory processes to ensure more timely decisions, greater efficiency, and better results in reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfires by restoring forest health; and

WHEREAS, The citizens of Colorado would benefit immensely from an increased level of forest management that would help reduce the risks of insect and disease epidemics and catastrophic wildfire to all of the national forests in Colorado; now, therefore,

*Be It Resolved by the House of Representatives of the Sixty-fourth General Assembly of the State of Colorado, the Senate concurring herein:*

(1) That the General Assembly supports the administrative procedures proposed as part of the President's Healthy Forests Initiative, particularly those procedures that would expedite decision-making pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act and those that establish standing requirements requiring persons to provide specific written public comments during the preparation stage of a wildfire mitigation project in order to file an administrative appeal or lawsuit. Such changes are necessary to enable the land management agencies to make scientifically based, environmentally sound decisions on hazardous fuels reduction projects, while encouraging early and effective participation in the development of those projects by the interested public.

- (2) That the General Assembly applauds the President and his administration for its leadership in defining a new management strategy for our public lands and fully endorses the idea that restoring common sense and balance to federal land management can be done without sacrificing needed environmental protections and oversight;
- (3) That the General Assembly renews its support for full implementation and funding of the National Fire Plan and the Western Governor's Association's 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy and requests that Governor Owens and the Colorado Congressional Delegation actively support these collaborative efforts; and
- (4) That the General Assembly encourages the Colorado Congressional Delegation to support legislative measures in the 108th Congress that would further empower land managers with the statutory tools needed to expeditiously reduce the risk of large-scale wildfires near communities, watersheds, and in areas at high risk to disease and insect infestation, including lands presently infected, and on lands where catastrophic wildfire poses a threat to wildlife.

*Be It Further Resolved*, That copies of this Joint Resolution be sent to Colorado's Congressional Delegation.

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Lola Spradley  
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE  
OF REPRESENTATIVES

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John Andrews  
PRESIDENT OF  
THE SENATE

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Judith Rodrigue  
CHIEF CLERK OF THE HOUSE  
OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Mona Heustis  
SECRETARY OF  
THE SENATE