

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. HJ0006

National prescribed fire strategy.

Sponsored by: Representative(s) Simons

A Bill

for

1 A JOINT RESOLUTION requesting the United States Forest
2 Service and all federal land-management agencies to
3 implement the Western Governors Association (WGA)
4 "Collaborative 10-Year Strategy for Reducing Wildland Fire
5 Risks to Communities and the Environment" and to prepare a
6 National Prescribed Fire Strategy that minimizes risks of
7 escape.

8

9 WHEREAS, catastrophic wildfires not only cause
10 environmental damage to forests and other lands but place
11 the lives of firefighters at risk and pose threats to human
12 health, personal property, sustainable ecosystems, wildlife
13 habitat, air and water quality;

14

15 WHEREAS, upon completion of the 2001 wildfire season,
16 eighty-one thousand six hundred eighty-one (81,681) fires

1 burned three million five hundred fifty-five thousand one
2 hundred thirty-eight (3,555,138) acres, which threatened
3 rural communities nationwide and killed fifteen (15)
4 firefighters. More than seven million four hundred thousand
5 (7,400,000) acres burned during the 2000 wildfire season -
6 equivalent to a three (3) mile wide swath from Washington,
7 D.C. to Los Angeles, California and back - destroying eight
8 hundred sixty-one (861) structures, killing sixteen (16)
9 firefighters and costing the federal government one billion
10 three hundred million dollars (\$1,300,000,000.00) in
11 suppression costs;

12

13 WHEREAS, an April 1999 General Accounting Office report to
14 the United States House of Representatives, entitle
15 "Western National Forests: A Cohesive Strategy is Needed to
16 Address Catastrophic Wildfire Threats" (GAO/RCED-99-65)
17 states that "[t]he most extensive and serious problem
18 related to the health of national forests in the interior
19 west is the over accumulation of vegetation, which has
20 caused an increasing number of large, intense,
21 uncontrollable and catastrophically destructive wildfires";

22

23 WHEREAS, an April 2000 United States Forest Service report,
24 entitled "Protecting People and Sustaining Resources in

1 Fire-Adapted Ecosystems: A Cohesive Strategy", in response
2 to the 1999 General Accounting Office report, confirms the
3 previous report's conclusion and further warns that
4 "[w]ithout increased restoration treatments . . . ,
5 wildfire suppression costs, natural resource losses,
6 private property losses, and environmental damage are
7 certain to escalate as fuels continue to accumulate and
8 more acres become high-risk";

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10 WHEREAS, the July 2001 General Accounting Office testimony
11 entitled "The National Fire Plan: Federal Agencies Are Not
12 Organized to Effectively and Efficiently Implement the
13 Plan" (GAO-01-1022T) before the United States House of
14 Representatives Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health
15 reported that "[t]he federal government's decades-old
16 policy of suppressing all wildland fires, including
17 naturally occurring ones, has resulted in dangerous
18 accumulations of hazardous fuels on federal lands. As a
19 result, conditions on two hundred eleven million
20 (211,000,000) acres, or almost one-third (1/3) of all
21 federal lands, continue to deteriorate" and "[t]he list of
22 at-risk communities ballooned to over twenty-two thousand
23 (22,000)";

24

1 WHEREAS, the escaped prescribed burn that created the Cerro
2 Grande Fire in May 2000 that consumed forty-eight thousand
3 (48,000) acres and destroyed four hundred (400) homes with
4 losses exceeding one billion dollars (\$1,000,000,000.00) in
5 Los Alamos, New Mexico, and the escaped prescribed burn
6 that created the Lowden Fire in 1999 that destroyed twenty-
7 three (23) homes in Lewiston, California, highlight the
8 unacceptable risks of using prescribed burning as the sole
9 fuels-reduction practice by federal land-management
10 agencies;

11

12 WHEREAS, similar catastrophic wildfire resolutions were
13 passed by the California Legislature (AJR 69) and Western
14 Legislative Forestry Task Force (R00-1) in 2000, followed
15 by Oregon (HJM 22), Idaho (SJM 104) and Montana (HJ 22) in
16 2001. The WGA "Collaborative 10-Year Strategy for Reducing
17 Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment"
18 also was signed in 2001; and

19

20 WHEREAS, the United States Congress in 2000 provided an
21 unprecedented two billion nine hundred million dollars
22 (\$2,900,000,000.00) in funding for the United States
23 Departments of Agriculture and Interior wildfire fire-
24 fighting agencies to both prepare for future fire-

1 suppression efforts and take proactive steps to reduce
2 wildfire risk on all federal lands.

3

4 *NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE*
5 *LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WYOMING:*

6

7 **Section 1.** That the Wyoming State Legislature, in the
8 interest of protecting the integrity and posterity of
9 United States forests and wildlands, wildlife habitats,
10 watersheds, air quality, human health and safety and
11 private property, requests that the United States Forest
12 Service and other federal land-management agencies:

13

14 (a) Fully implement the WGA "Collaborative 10-Year
15 Strategy for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities
16 and the Environment" to reduce the overabundance of forest
17 fuels that place these resources at high risk of
18 catastrophic wildfire;

19

20 (b) Utilize an appropriate mix of fire-prevention
21 activities and management practices including forest
22 restoration, thinning of at-risk forest stands, grazing,
23 selective tree removal and other measures to control

1 insects and pathogens, removal of excessive ground fuels,
2 and small-scale prescribed burns;

3

4 (c) Increase the role for private, local and state
5 contracts for fuel-reduction treatments on federal forest
6 lands and adjoining private properties; and

7

8 (d) Pursue more effective fire suppression on federal
9 forest lands through increased funding of mutual aid
10 agreements with professional state and local public fire-
11 fighting agencies.

12

13 **Section 2.** That the Wyoming State Legislature, in the
14 interest of forest protection and public safety, requests
15 that the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior
16 immediately prepare for public review a National Prescribed
17 Fire Strategy for public lands that creates a process for
18 evaluation of worst-case scenarios for risk of escape and
19 identifies alternatives that will achieve the land-
20 management objectives while minimizing the risk associated
21 with prescribed fire, which then will be incorporated into
22 any regulatory land-use planning programs that propose the
23 use of prescribed fire as a management practice.

24

1 **Section 3.** The Secretary of State of Wyoming is
2 directed to transmit copies of this resolution to the
3 President of the United States, to President of the Senate
4 and the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the
5 United States Congress, to the United States Secretary of
6 Interior and the United States Secretary of Agriculture,
7 the United States Forest Service, the United States Park
8 Service, the United States Bureau of Reclamation, the
9 United States Bureau of Land Management and to the Wyoming
10 Congressional Delegation.

11

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(END)