EXHIBIT 7
DATE 2/17/09
Study Resolution
Draft

**** Joint Resolution No. ****

Introduced By **********

By Request of the *********

A Joint Resolution of the Senate and the House of Representatives of the State of Montana requesting that an appropriate interim or statutory committee be designated to study wildland fire suppression.

WHEREAS, the Legislature created the Fire Suppression Committee during the September 2007 special legislative session, which was convened to appropriate the state's share of costs of the extreme 2007 wildland fire season; and

WHEREAS, the Fire Suppression Committee was charged with studying fire and land management policies and strategies with an eye toward examining ways to mitigate costs to state taxpayers; and

WHEREAS, the Fire Suppression Committee met at least monthly for a year to learn about the various aspects of wildland fire suppression; forest and grassland management; the wildland-urban interface; how fire costs are calculated; and how local, state, and federal agencies handle jurisdictional issues and policy differences; and

WHEREAS, after soliciting and receiving extensive public comment and traveling to seven communities around the state, the Fire Suppression Committee developed detailed predictions, conclusions, and recommendations for action aimed at private

citizens and local, state, and federal wildland fire agencies, all of which are provided in the committee's final report to the Legislature; and

WHEREAS, in spite of the fact that during the summer of 2008, the state did not experience numerous large-scale wildland fires or the extreme fire behavior of previous seasons, the Fire Suppression Committee agrees with those who have predicted that wildland fire seasons will only increase in duration, severity, and costs and its members believe that unless certain measures are taken, firefighters will be injured, communities will be destroyed, and hundreds of people will be killed; and

WHEREAS, members of the Fire Suppression Committee encourage the Legislature to authorize the committee's existence for another biennium to continue its important work and, most importantly, to track each of the recommendations it has made and gauge the progress of implementation of legislation and budget authority approved by the 61st Legislature.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

That the Legislative Council be requested to designate an appropriate interim or statutory committee, pursuant to section 5-5-217, MCA, or direct sufficient staff resources to:

(1) analyze whether and how each of the recommendations made by the fire suppression committee established by Chapter 1, Special Laws of September, 2007, in its 2008 report to the 61st legislature has been implemented and which of those

recommendations should be amended or reinforced;

(2) examine additional needs of local and state fire suppression entities;

(3) further investigate state and federal forest management policies, how those policies may contribute to an increased number of wildfires, greater safety risk to firefighters and the public, and compromised effectiveness of fire suppression efforts and avenues the legislature may pursue to affect changes in those policies;

(4) examine the impact of climate change on forest lands; and

(5) examine any other aspect of wildland fire suppression and land management that the interim committee determines to be appropriate.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that if the study is assigned to staff, any findings or conclusions be presented to and reviewed by an appropriate committee designated by the Legislative Council.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2010.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions, comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 62nd Legislature.

- END -

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