

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 15

INTRODUCED BY J. FIELDER

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A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM STUDY EVALUATING THE MANAGEMENT OF CERTAIN FEDERAL LANDS, ASSESSING RISKS, AND IDENTIFYING SOLUTIONS.

WHEREAS, Article II, section 3, of the Montana Constitution provides that all persons have a constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment; and

WHEREAS, Article IX, section 1, of the Montana Constitution mandates that the state maintain and improve a clean and healthful environment for present and future generations; and

WHEREAS, over 25%, or 25 million acres, of land within Montana is managed by the United States Forest Service and the federal Bureau of Land Management; and

WHEREAS, management of Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands in Montana has a significant and direct bearing on Montana's environment, education funding, economy, culture, wildlife, and the health, safety, and welfare of our citizens; and

WHEREAS, federal funding and the capacity for responsible management of Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands are in serious jeopardy while critical threats such as beetle kills, invasive species, watershed degradation, access restrictions, and catastrophic wildfires continue to escalate; and

WHEREAS, government officials have a vested interest and fundamental duty to ensure our abundant public lands and natural resources are managed responsibly and prudently.

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 committee or statutory committee, pursuant to section 5-5-217, MCA, or direct sufficient staff resources to:

- (1) identify measures that will help ensure that public lands within Montana are managed responsibly and prudently for present and future generations;
  - (2) evaluate public lands presently managed by the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management;
- and



- 1 (3) prepare a report and recommendations to the Legislature, including:
- 2 (a) an assessment to analyze available information pertaining to the Forest Service and Bureau of Land
- 3 Management lands within Montana and identify significant concerns or risks associated with these lands relative
- 4 to:
- 5 (i) environmental quality;
- 6 (ii) economic productivity and sustainability;
- 7 (iii) public health, safety, and welfare;
- 8 (iv) consistency with state and local objectives;
- 9 (v) ownership and jurisdictional responsibilities; and
- 10 (vi) other aspects as considered appropriate by the assigned interim committee;
- 11 (b) a survey of county commissions whose counties contain 15% or more land area under the
- 12 management of the Forest Service and/or Bureau of Land Management, incorporating their responses into the
- 13 report;
- 14 (c) identification of solutions and goals to improve concerns or risks identified by subsection (3)(a);
- 15 (d) investigation of all lawful mechanisms, including actions implemented in other states, that may aid
- 16 in achieving desired goals; and
- 17 (e) recommendations to agencies and the Legislature of necessary actions to achieve solutions and
- 18 goals.
- 19 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that if the study is assigned to staff, any findings or conclusions be
- 20 presented to and reviewed by an appropriate committee designated by the Legislative Council.
- 21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review
- 22 requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2014.
- 23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions,
- 24 comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 64th Legislature.
- 25 - END -