

SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL xxxx

**State of Washington 61st Legislature 2010 Regular Session
By Senators Morton, Jacobsen, and xxx,xxx,xxx,**

Read first time XXXXX. Referred to Committee on Natural Resources.

TO THE HONORABLE BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, AND TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE AND THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, AND TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES, IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED, AND TO THE SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND THE CHIEF OF THE USDA FOREST SERVICE,

We, your Memorialists, the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Washington, in legislative session assembled, respectfully represent and petition as follows:

WHEREAS, Dry forests in western states, including Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Colorado, and Wyoming are suffering from high densities of dead and moisture-stressed trees that pose serious threats of catastrophic loss from wildfire, disease, and insect outbreaks; and

WHEREAS, Realization of such threats would lead to soaring costs for restoration, fire-control and management, atmospheric pollution from black carbon and green house gas emissions, loss of supply and values for wood, fiber, and renewable energy, and massive environmental degradation of water, soils, fish and wildlife habitat; and

WHEREAS, Climate change and increased fire risk are inextricably linked, and scientific projections indicate that a two degree Celsius rise in temperature will likely result in a 100-200% increase in forest areas burned by wildfire; and

WHEREAS, The USDA Forest Service has determined that wildfire in these forest types could severely affect water supplies, as for example, water supplies for 33 million people could be endangered if forests infected by mountain pine beetles in the Rocky Mountains area catch fire; and

WHEREAS, Forest wildfires could damage thousands of miles of electrical transmission lines and result in widespread disruption of regional power supplies; and

WHEREAS, Disease, insects, and wildfire problems will become increasingly worse unless active management is undertaken on a large scale to restore forest health and resiliency; and

WHEREAS, Restoration of the health of these forests is essential to provide important ecosystem services such as water, carbon sequestration, biodiversity, fish and wildlife habitat, erosion control, pollination, medicines, educational, cultural, and spiritual uses, to improve their ability to endure increased stress from climate change, and to promote stability in rural economies from recreation, tourism and the sustainable harvest of renewable wood, fiber and biomass; and

WHEREAS, Federal and state management objectives for forest restoration, biodiversity and fire-resistant landscapes on dry, mesic and moist forest ecosystems should be multi-resource, landscape-scale and not oriented toward single species or stand level prescriptions; and

WHEREAS, Different ownerships will require different treatment protocols (e.g. private lands will not have the same prescriptions as habitat-designated USFS land); and

WHEREAS, Collaborative efforts are the most effective way to ensure durable and successful actions on the ground in areas of inter-mixed or "checkerboard" ownership (as evidenced by efforts such as the TAPASH and the Northeast Forest Coalition in eastern Washington, the Lake County Resources Initiative in eastern Oregon, the Flathead Forestry Project in Montana and the Colorado Bark Beetle Cooperative), to effectively conduct forest health treatments; and

WHEREAS, On October 28-29, 2009, the University of Washington's Northwest Environmental Forum convened a forum on "Eastside Forest Health: Challenges and Solutions," at which an invited group of more than sixty (60) federal, state, tribal and private forestland managers, in conjunction with university, government and conservation representatives, considered the need to develop and implement an actionable strategy to restore and maintain the health of Washington's eastside dry forests; and

WHEREAS, Forum participants agreed that action is urgently needed to restore the health of Washington's dry eastside forests; and

WHEREAS, Restoration of ecosystem functions on Washington's eastside dry forests requires treatment areas of 50,000 acres or larger to mimic historic conditions of resilience and robustness, with a mosaic of even and uneven-aged stands with appropriate species mix; and

WHEREAS, Restoration and necessary treatments at the scale required can only be sustainably accomplished when the value of the extracted products can significantly defray costs of restoration; and

WHEREAS, Forest health conditions are deteriorating on millions of acres of federal forest lands where administrative constraints prevent the Forest Service from providing the reasonable assurances of supply that are necessary to encourage investments to create new capacity or improve existing infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, Stewardship Contracting is a proven and effective mechanism to achieve forest health objectives on federal forest lands; and

WHEREAS, Greater flexibility in both the scale and time frames for stewardship contracts will help create a positive business and investment environment to accomplish restoration goals across multiple ownerships; and

WHEREAS, Secretary of Agriculture Thomas Vilsack has announced a broad "all lands" vision for American forests in which all USDA agencies are directed to work together to sustain the entire matrix of federal, tribal state, municipal and private forests; and in this context, the Forest Service is committed to restoring the resilience of our forests to all types of disturbance and thereby improve watershed health, sustained water flow quality and quantity, shelter for wildlife, richness of biodiversity, community stability and rural prosperity; and

WHEREAS, Congressional direction to federal agencies and budget allocation through the Forest Landscape Restoration Act calls for "landscape-scale ecosystem restoration of priority forest landscapes," and the level of funding available within the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Fund will significantly affect the ability of all land managers dealing with this catastrophic situation; and

WHEREAS, The Washington Commissioner of Public Lands and the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) have been

designated as the lead Washington state agency to address forest health issues, and there are significant collaborative efforts with the USDA Forest Service and Indian tribes; and

WHEREAS, Public support for management treatments for forest restoration and catastrophic fire threat reduction at the scale and time frame required demands a sophisticated, multi-party public information and education and a high level of engagement with decision makers at the local, state and federal levels;

NOW, THEREFORE, Your Memorialists respectfully pray that the President and the United States Congress elevate the restoration of healthy, sustainable forests as a national priority and establish a framework that: (a) facilitates and encourages active forest management on all ownerships; (b) informs the public of the benefits provided by maintaining working forest landscapes; (c) integrates service delivery for the various programs and authorities for forest retention and ecosystem services administered by federal agencies; and (d) recognizes the values and contributions of forests in federal climate change, renewable energy, and water legislation and policies.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Your Memorialists respectfully request that the President and the United States respond to the urgent need for collaborative, community-supported Forest Restoration and Wildfire Threat Reduction actions that emphasize "anchor collaboratives" - managed landscape units of a significant scale with shared authority between state and federal agencies and tribal nations that accelerate multi-agency cooperation, stabilize output/supply scenarios and encourage infrastructure investments.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Your Memorialists respectfully request that the President and the United States Congress fully support and fund current TAPASH and Northeast Forest Coalition collaborative efforts, and help create a "meta-collaborative" network to provide the basis for similar business -based models for forest health and restoration on Eastern Washington's dry eastside forests.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Your Memorialists respectfully request that the President and the United States Congress support longer (10-20 years) Forest Service stewardship contracts on larger acreages, with adequate funding to complete required environmental review and documentation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this Memorial be immediately transmitted to the Honorable Barack Obama, President of the United States, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Chief of the USDA Forest Service, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and each member of Congress from the States of Washington, Oregon, Montana, Idaho, Colorado, and Wyoming.

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