

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL NO. 1

BY RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

A JOINT MEMORIAL

1
2 TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES IN CONGRESS
3 ASSEMBLED, TO THE CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION REPRESENTING THE STATE OF
4 IDAHO IN THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES, TO THE SECRETARY OF THE
5 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND TO THE CHIEF OF THE UNITED
6 STATES FOREST SERVICE.

7 We, your Memorialists, the House of Representatives and the Senate of
8 the State of Idaho assembled in the First Regular Session of the Sixty-second
9 Idaho Legislature, do hereby respectfully represent that:

10 WHEREAS, the State of Idaho and the vast Frank Church-River of No Return
11 Wilderness and contiguous national forests have suffered numerous and fre-
12 quent large destructive forest and range fires, most recently in 2012; and

13 WHEREAS, the fires have not only incrementally expanded the total
14 burned acreage but have also reburned huge areas one or more times; and

15 WHEREAS, the cumulative effect of numerous large fires has resulted in
16 tremendous damage and destruction to the watersheds, streams important to
17 the recovery of anadromous fish, wildlife habitat, scenic values, recre-
18 ational use, loss of native plant species, historic structures, public
19 access and safety, air quality and public health, the trail network and other
20 values and benefits for which the national forests and wilderness were es-
21 tablished; and

22 WHEREAS, the cumulative and growing loss of wilderness values and at-
23 tributes is also resulting in serious economic impact to surrounding commu-
24 nities, counties, the State of Idaho and the businesses dependent upon the
25 natural resources inherent in wilderness and the national forests; and

26 WHEREAS, hundreds of miles of trails have been severely damaged,
27 blocked, rendered unsafe for travel or simply wiped out by fire, and the
28 continuing destructive aftermath of blowdown, washouts and landslides have
29 not been opened, cleared, repaired or replaced. The backlog of critical
30 restoration work is rapidly growing each year and far exceeds the work per-
31 formed annually; and

32 WHEREAS, the cumulative impact of fires has resulted in the loss of soil
33 and native vegetation and the replacement of native species with noxious and
34 undesirable plants that will also prevent or retard reestablishment of de-
35 sirable native plants; and

36 WHEREAS, the United States Forest Service has underestimated the huge
37 cost of trail and resource restoration when making decisions on active
38 fire strategies in the wilderness due to a decision bias toward minimizing
39 suppression expenditures for wilderness fires at the expense of long-term
40 restoration; and

41 WHEREAS, the United States Forest Service has not placed the necessary
42 emphasis and priority on restoration of proper watershed and vegetative con-
43 ditions within the wilderness, and has also not considered the negative ef-

1 fect of vegetative type conversion resulting from intense and/or repetitive
2 burns; and

3 WHEREAS, the United States Forest Service has not placed emphasis and
4 priority on training for forest supervisors, rangers and staff on the impor-
5 tance of safe and effective saddle and pack stock use and management, and the
6 field conditions necessary for reasonable and safe public and employee ac-
7 cess to and within the wilderness; and

8 WHEREAS, the United States Forest Service has not placed emphasis and
9 priority on eliminating barriers to effective and streamlined contracting
10 procedures and effective use of volunteers in order to respond to the crisis
11 in the wilderness and maximize fieldwork accomplishment; and

12 WHEREAS, the Secretary of Agriculture and the Chief of the United States
13 Forest Service have not placed the necessary emphasis and priority of the re-
14 quirement of Section 5(b) of the Central Idaho Wilderness Act to clear ob-
15 structions from all trails within and adjacent to the wilderness on at least
16 an annual basis; and

17 WHEREAS, the Chief of the United States Forest Service has not pro-
18 grammed on a continuing basis even normal repair, replacement and mainte-
19 nance of the trail system and trail structures such as bridges, trail tread,
20 drainage, associated signing and other essential actions to enable safe
21 public use, full and unimpeded public access by foot and horseback and the
22 public services that are vital to public use and enjoyment of the wilder-
23 ness, in order to prevent cumulative deterioration of the system under even
24 non-fire conditions; and

25 WHEREAS, the Chief of the United States Forest Service has not placed
26 emphasis on efficient and economical methods of trail restoration and main-
27 tenance, and has in fact aggressively limited methods and tools by Forest
28 Service crews, contractors and volunteers that would greatly increase ac-
29 complishment and lower costs without adverse effect on wilderness values or
30 visitors; and

31 WHEREAS, use of outfitter and guide permittees, contractors and volun-
32 teers from various organizations to accomplish trail work is well below po-
33 tential due to a lack of emphasis by the United States Forest Service on using
34 innovative ways to offset permittee fees and streamline and simplify con-
35 tracting procedures.

36 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the members of the First Regular Ses-
37 sion of the Sixty-second Idaho Legislature, the House of Representatives
38 and the Senate concurring therein, that we urge the Secretary of the United
39 States Department of Agriculture to declare the Frank Church-River of No Re-
40 turn Wilderness and adjacent national forest lands to be a Natural Resources
41 Disaster Area.

42 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge the Secretary of Agriculture and
43 the Chief of the United States Forest Service to recognize the dire condi-
44 tions prevailing within and adjacent to the Frank Church-River of No Return
45 Wilderness and adjacent national forests, and further urge that the neces-
46 sary priorities and emphasis be placed on prompt and practical actions to
47 prevent further cumulative loss of the unique values of the wilderness.

48 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge compliance with the specific re-
49 quirements of the Central Idaho Wilderness Act mandating annual clearing of
50 obstructions from the trail system.

1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Chief Clerk of the House of Representa-
2 tives be, and she is hereby authorized and directed to forward a copy of this
3 Memorial to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Repre-
4 sentatives of Congress, the congressional delegation representing the State
5 of Idaho in the Congress of the United States, the Secretary of the United
6 States Department of Agriculture and the Chief of the United States Forest
7 Service.