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A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE ENERGY, MINERALS AND NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT TO CREATE A WORKING GROUP TO DEVELOP AN ANALYSIS TO EXPAND THE PRACTICE OF PRESCRIBED FIRE IN NEW MEXICO.

WHEREAS, fire is an environmental driver and an essential component in most New Mexico ecosystems; and

WHEREAS, prescribed fire is the use of fire applied under specific conditions with appropriate planning; and

WHEREAS, prescribed fire allows the fire to be confined to a specific area to accomplish planned land management objectives; and

WHEREAS, healthy and resilient lands managed with prescribed fire lower severe fire risk and help avoid loss of life, property and infrastructure and support water sources, wildlife habitat, ecotourism, jobs, economic development in rural communities and hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities; and

WHEREAS, uncharacteristically large and severe wildfires are affecting large land jurisdictions and putting New Mexico's watersheds, forests and wildlife habitat at high risk; and

WHEREAS, wildfire knows no boundaries, and resilient federal, state and private watersheds and forests are essential for residents of New Mexico; and

1 WHEREAS, prescribed fire is known by land managers to be
2 effective at reducing fire behavior, as well as being cost-
3 effective; and

4 WHEREAS, many residents, scientists and stakeholders
5 agree that the current level of prescribed fire use in New
6 Mexico is insufficient to maintain or build upon restored
7 landscapes; and

8 WHEREAS, New Mexico needs to increase the use of
9 prescribed fire as a management tool to improve the health
10 and resilience of ecosystems, watersheds and agricultural
11 lands to reduce the negative effects of high-severity
12 wildfires; and

13 WHEREAS, inherent prescribed fire risks are mitigated
14 through training, practice, cross-boundary collaborations and
15 education; and

16 WHEREAS, knowledge and experience from diverse
17 stakeholders are needed to recommend actions and policy
18 changes that support the expanded use of prescribed fire
19 statewide;

20 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
21 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the energy,
22 minerals and natural resources department be requested to
23 convene a working group to study the expansion of prescribed
24 fire in New Mexico, including issues relating to training,
25 certification, permitting, negligence, smoke impacts and

1 liability, and perform a review of how other states have
2 addressed these issues in state law while increasing the use
3 of prescribed fire; and

4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group be
5 composed of representatives of the following: the forestry
6 division of the energy, minerals and natural resources
7 department, the state fire marshal, the department of game
8 and fish, the state land office, the department of
9 environment, the New Mexico department of agriculture, the
10 office of the state engineer, the office of superintendent of
11 insurance, the New Mexico prescribed fire council, the New
12 Mexico acequia association, agricultural and conservation
13 groups, New Mexico state university and the New Mexico forest
14 and watershed restoration institute; and

15 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group be
16 requested to report its findings and conclusions to the
17 appropriate interim legislative committee by July 1, 2020;
18 and

19 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
20 transmitted to the secretary of energy, minerals and natural
21 resources, the state fire marshal, the director of the
22 department of game and fish, the commissioner of public lands,
23 the secretary of environment, the director of the New Mexico
24 department of agriculture, the state engineer, the
25 superintendent of insurance, the chair of the New Mexico

1 prescribed fire council, the executive director of the New
2 Mexico acequia association, the president of New Mexico state
3 university and the director of the New Mexico forest and
4 watershed restoration institute. _____

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