

1 **CONCURRENT RESOLUTION TO WORK TOGETHER TO**
2 **ADDRESS THE CLIMATE, PUBLIC LANDS, AND CARBON**
3 **SEQUESTRATION**

4 2022 GENERAL SESSION

5 STATE OF UTAH

6 **Chief Sponsor: Keven J. Stratton**

7 Senate Sponsor: David P. Hinkins

9 **LONG TITLE**

10 **General Description:**

11 This resolution recognizes and encourages best management practices to reduce carbon
12 emissions while also preserving and expanding forests and other lands to improve
13 climate outcomes.

14 **Highlighted Provisions:**

15 This resolution:

16 ▶ recognizes certain challenges and concerns with current land and forest
17 management practices and how those practices conflict with goals to slow and
18 reverse climate change; and

19 ▶ encourages improved land management practices, including coordination with all
20 relevant parties, to reverse trends of carbon emissions with new and evolving
21 technology, expand natural carbon sequestration, and improve health, safety, and
22 forest and ecosystem vitality.

23 **Special Clauses:**

24 None

26 *Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah, the Governor concurring therein:*

27 WHEREAS, in his January 27, 2021, Executive Order, President Biden stated that "the
28 United States and the world face a profound climate crisis" and to deal with it he pledged "to
29 implement a government-wide approach that reduces climate pollution in every sector of the

30 economy, increases resilience to the impacts of climate change, protects public health, and
31 conserves our lands, waters, and biodiversity";

32 WHEREAS, at the recent United Nations COP 26 climate meeting in Glasgow,
33 Scotland, President Biden announced "a new plan to conserve global forests, halt forest loss,
34 restore critical carbon sinks, and improve land management," and committed the United States
35 to an international declaration to reverse global deforestation by protecting forests and
36 mitigating wildfire damage and restoring degraded land by 2030;

37 WHEREAS, many people are concerned that rising levels of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and
38 green house gases (GHGs) resulting from the continued use of fossil fuels are causing climate
39 changes that threaten human health and wellbeing through more frequent extreme weather
40 events, damage to critical ecosystems, threats to food supplies, and other harms;

41 WHEREAS, the primary approaches to slow or reduce the levels of CO₂ and other
42 GHGs being pursued by climate policy advocates would rapidly replace the current
43 "all-of-the-above" energy mix with an increasingly heavy reliance on renewable sources;

44 WHEREAS, there is wide concern over some of these proposed climate policies,
45 including that the policies would increase energy costs, damage the economic competitiveness
46 of the United States, and undermine national security;

47 WHEREAS, the national debate over climate change policy is becoming increasingly
48 heated and divisive;

49 WHEREAS, in contrast, the state of Utah has adopted an "all-of-the-above" energy
50 approach policy and goals as Utah's strategy to ensure that energy is affordable and reliable;

51 WHEREAS, in such a policy environment, the wisest course is to emphasize first
52 adopting the most efficacious elements of the various proposed responses to climate change on
53 which there is wide agreement;

54 WHEREAS, national and international policies, agreements and reports, including
55 specific mention in the Paris Accords, multiple reports by the United Nations
56 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the international "4 per 1,000 Initiative" and
57 President Biden's proposed climate policy, among others, all recognize the importance of

58 natural systems in removing and sequestering GHGs and call for these natural sinks to be
59 protected and expanded where possible;

60 WHEREAS, forests and rangelands, including those managed by the federal
61 government in Utah and nationally, can either be sinks for atmospheric carbon or emitters of
62 CO2 and other GHGs, largely depending on how they are managed;

63 WHEREAS, for a number of reasons, federally-managed land in Utah and nationally
64 that had been functioning as carbon sinks are increasingly becoming emitters of CO2 and other
65 GHGs;

66 WHEREAS, the same conditions that convert carbon sinks into GHG emitters, such as
67 wildland fire and soil erosion, also create a wide range of economic, health, social, and
68 environmental problems;

69 WHEREAS, a growing body of scientific research, practical application, and
70 demonstrated results on tens of millions of acres in the United States and around the world
71 prove that in many cases degraded natural systems can be restored as vitally important carbon
72 sinks and that the sequestration potential of existing sinks can be vastly increased by applying
73 proven land management practices;

74 WHEREAS, while the importance of natural systems functioning as sinks for GHGs is
75 widely accepted, their true potential is often not recognized;

76 WHEREAS, some scientists have calculated that globally applying these widely
77 demonstrated and proven best management practices to forests, rangelands, and agricultural
78 lands could sequester all of the CO2 produced by human activities from the beginning of the
79 Industrial Revolution and continue to sequester enough to achieve not just net zero emissions
80 but net negative emissions for decades to come;

81 WHEREAS, this research and practical experience have also shown that these same
82 advanced and proven sequestration and management techniques also simultaneously produce a
83 cascade of valuable and significant environmental and economic co-benefits, including greater
84 overall ecosystem integrity and productivity, increased biodiversity, improved water quantity
85 and quality, better fish and wildlife habitat, greater drought resilience, reduced flooding risk,

86 more and better forage for wildlife and livestock, sustainable timber, and enhanced recreation
87 opportunities, among others;

88 WHEREAS, these associated co-benefits are so valuable and cost effective in their own
89 right that tens of millions of acres in the United States and around the world are being managed
90 solely to generate them and not to achieve any climate-related goals;

91 WHEREAS, at a minimum, responsible land stewardship requires employing the best
92 possible practices to protect, and enhance where possible, the land and resources over which
93 the steward has responsibility;

94 WHEREAS, because some previous carbon sinks may not be repairable for decades or
95 even centuries, if at all, prudent stewardship dictates putting primary emphasis on protecting
96 them from degradation to the maximum possible extent;

97 WHEREAS, for a number of reasons, the federal government has not met this minimal
98 standard of stewardship in its management of much of the public lands and resources in Utah
99 and across the country;

100 WHEREAS, by failing in this stewardship responsibility, the federal government has
101 caused a wide range of environmental and economic harm while at the same time also
102 converting what had previously been effective carbon sinks into emitters of CO2 and other
103 GHGs;

104 WHEREAS, protecting and enhancing natural carbon sinks is clearly a
105 non-controversial win-win solution in the climate change debate because it addresses the
106 concerns about rising GHG levels while at the same time largely alleviating the concerns of
107 those resistant to many of the other approaches being considered to achieve this goal;

108 WHEREAS, in addition to helping control the rise in GHG emissions, the many
109 co-benefits generated by adopting this win-win approach increases resilience to projected
110 climate change and better allows for adaptation and mitigation;

111 WHEREAS, because of these many recognized co-benefits that carbon sinks generate,
112 fostering them should bring an important measure of unity among all parties in the climate
113 policy debate since all can agree on the value of this approach;

114 WHEREAS, research is revealing significant human health impacts from exposure to
115 wildfire smoke and small particulate matter, including respiratory and heart issues and an
116 increase in premature births, among others;

117 WHEREAS, the Salt Lake City metropolitan area has had a number of days in 2021
118 with the worst or close to the worst air quality of any metropolitan area in the world, and
119 studies have found that wildland fire smoke contributes close to half of the concentration of
120 these pollutant levels in western states; and

121 WHEREAS, efforts to protect and enhance natural carbon sinks are easily and rapidly
122 scalable in Utah and nationally and would provide numerous and immediate benefits:

123 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah, the
124 Governor concurring therein, challenges the Biden Administration and Congress to make
125 meeting the federal government's stewardship responsibility in managing the federal public
126 lands their highest priority in implementing any climate policy, thereby protecting and
127 enhancing natural carbon sinks and, further, that they undertake this effort while recognizing
128 Utah's state sovereignty and their statutory mandates under the Federal Land Policy and
129 Management Act and the National Forest Management Act to fully coordinate and integrate
130 these activities with the relevant land management and resource management plans of the state
131 of Utah, Native American tribes, and local governments.

132 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the Legislature and the Governor find that the standard
133 of responsible federal land and resources stewardship should be to achieve on
134 federally-managed public lands the highest level of soil and ecosystem health and productivity
135 that is being achieved on comparable land by tribal, state, local, and private managers or make
136 a public report on why the agency is unable to restore this level of ecosystem health and
137 productivity.

138 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor recognize that
139 while increased funding and attention is being proposed, also challenge the Biden
140 Administration and Congress to urgently initiate and fund emergency efforts to expand forest
141 and rangeland fuel reduction and other fire pre-suppression activities to the maximum acreage

142 of federal land as quickly as possible to prevent the harm and damage now being caused on
143 millions of acres annually.

144 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor declare that until
145 adequate funding is provided for such an emergency effort to protect and enhance natural sinks
146 on federally-managed land, no funding for such purposes should be provided for similar
147 activities in other countries unless the federal government first provides a detailed analysis
148 justifying spending those funds abroad instead of spending them to further improve the health
149 and fire resistance of forests and rangelands in this country.

150 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor find that the
151 federal government should apply a social benefits of carbon control cost-benefits funding test
152 to identify and compare the co-benefits of protecting, rehabilitating, and expanding carbon
153 sinks in natural systems on federally-managed land as a mechanism to control GHGs with the
154 co-benefits that might be generated with any other alternative approach and make those
155 calculations available to the public.

156 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor urge Congress to
157 request that the U.S. Government Accountability Office analyze the potential capabilities of
158 federal land management agencies to protect, enhance, and expand carbon sinks on
159 federally-managed land in response to a maximum effort directive and estimate the annual
160 costs of doing so, and, further, request, and provide funding if necessary, for several
161 appropriate professional organizations such as the National Association of State Foresters and
162 the Society for Range Management to undertake a similar analysis and include any
163 recommendations for changes in federal policy, adoption of new management techniques, and
164 any other suggestions that would improve the effectiveness and efficiency of such a maximum
165 effort.

166 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor urge all state
167 agencies with authority to manage state-managed public lands to continue to manage them in
168 ways that increase soil carbon sequestration and to the extent they can, to encourage greater
169 soil carbon sequestration on private lands.

170 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to the President of
171 the United States, the Majority Leader of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United
172 States House of Representatives, the United States Secretary of the Interior, the United States
173 Secretary of Agriculture, the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services, the United
174 States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, the United States Secretary of
175 Commerce, the United States Secretary of Energy, the United States Secretary of
176 Transportation, the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the leader of each
177 legislative house in each of the other states, and the members of Utah's congressional
178 delegation.