



JACKSON COUNTY

Oregon

Office of County Counsel

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March 12, 2019

Chair Evans, Chair
House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

Submitted electronically to: hvet.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

RE: Support for HB 2373

Dear Chair Evans, Vice-Chair Lewis, Vice-Chair Meek, and Members of the House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness:

The Jackson County Board of County Commissioners supports in concept the provisions of HB 2373 which authorizes the State Forester to order the use of wildfire suppression personnel, equipment, and services on any federal land within the state of Oregon. In Southern Oregon, wildfires on federal lands and the related smoke has caused extensive harm over the past two summers to people's health, safety, and welfare. The vast majority of these wildfires are occurring on lands managed by federal agencies.

Additionally, Jackson County has spent a significant amount of time and resources looking at this very issue. Please find enclosed with this letter a copy of a proclamation of the Jackson County Board of County Commissioners outlining the work done as a County on this issue. Additionally, please find enclosed a copy of a Resolution approved by the National Association of Counties' Public Lands Committee addressing the need for federal land managers to work with local officials on the response to wildfires occurring on federal lands.

Thank you for your time considering this matter.

Sincerely,

Joel C. Benton
County Counsel

Enclosure(s): 2

cc: Representative Kim Wallan
Commissioner Bob Strosser
Commissioner Colleen Roberts
Commissioner Rick Dyer

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

STATE OF OREGON, COUNTY OF JACKSON

IN THE MATTER OF PROCLAIMING THE)
POSITION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY)
COMMISSIONERS FOR JACKSON COUNTY,)
OREGON, RELATED TO THE PREVENTION)
AND SUPPRESSION OF WILDFIRES IN)
JACKSON COUNTY)

ORDER NO. 17-19

WHEREAS, the People of Jackson County, Oregon, have suffered and continue to suffer from wildfires and related smoke occurring on lands within and around Jackson County; and

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners held a series of public meetings and a public hearing to gather input from the People of Jackson County as to the impacts that the wildfires and smoke and other by-products of those fires have had on the People's health, safety, and welfare, and to receive People's opinions on what efforts should be made to prevent and reduce the intensity of wildfires and related smoke; and

WHEREAS, the People of Jackson County identified that these wildfires pose significant threats to their real and personal property, health, safety, welfare, economic opportunities, and the very livability of Jackson County; and

WHEREAS, specifically, the threats to real and personal property posed by the wildfires and related smoke include damage and destruction of people's homes and businesses located in areas in proximity that are directly threatened by the burning of the wildfires and related smoke; and

WHEREAS, the threats to the health, safety, and welfare of the People of Jackson County include both the threat from the flames of the wildfires but, more so, the smoke and other by-products of the wildfires which impact People and the environment regardless of where they live in Jackson County; and

WHEREAS, the threats to the economic viability of Jackson County include not only the loss of timber and other resources destroyed by the wildfires, but also recreational, entertainment, and other activities which are affected negatively or cancelled throughout Jackson County due to the smoke and other by-products of the wildfires; and

WHEREAS, the threats to the livelihoods of the People of Jackson County include lost economic opportunities and jobs impacted by the wildfires and related smoke from the wildfires, and the loss of the desirability of Jackson County as a place to live, work, and recreate because of the constant threat and presence of unsuppressed and out of control wildfires and related smoke impacting our community; and

WHEREAS, the People of Jackson County identified numerous actions which all landowners, including Federal and State agencies, in and around Jackson County could take to lessen the threats of and intensity of wildfires including reducing fuels on lands susceptible to wildfires through prescribed burns and mechanical means, harvesting timber to reduce fuel loads, stewardship of the lands, and developing and maintaining roads for access to fight wildfires and as fuel breaks to lessen the spread of wildfires; and

WHEREAS, the United States Government, through its Federal agencies, owns and manages 53.09 percent of all land within Jackson County making these Federal agencies, by far, the owners of the largest portion of land within Jackson County; and

WHEREAS, being the largest landowner in Jackson County, the United States Government has the greatest impact on how public lands within the County are managed, through its Federal agencies' policies, to prevent and lessen the intensity of wildfires and related smoke and by how wildfires occurring in and impacting the County are fought; and

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners additionally met with numerous representatives of Federal and State agencies and private entities to learn the causes of, and solutions to, the out of control wildfires occurring in and impacting our community; and

WHEREAS, representatives of Federal agencies indicated that their agencies have adopted policies which permitted agency representatives the discretion to allow wildfires occurring on lands managed by those agencies to continue to burn regardless of the impacts of those wildfires and related smoke on the community; and

WHEREAS, representatives of Federal agencies indicated that those agencies also lacked the resources necessary to fully suppress all wildfires occurring on lands managed by those agencies and that those limited resources were deployed based on the regional or national needs assessments, leaving more rural communities like Jackson County at significant risk for not having sufficient resources to fight wildfires occurring in and impacting our community; and

WHEREAS, representatives of the State agency indicated that State law and policy required those agencies to work to fully suppress any wildfires occurring on lands managed by those agencies; and

WHEREAS, representatives of the State agency indicated that they, similar to the Federal agencies, lacked sufficient resources necessary to fully suppress all wildfires occurring on lands managed by those agencies and that more resources would permit those agencies to more fully work towards suppressing wildfires on such lands.

Now, therefore,

The Board of County Commissioners of Jackson County PROCLAIMS that:

1. The United States Forest Service and the United States Bureau of Land Management should adopt policies and practices providing for the full suppression of wildfires and related smoke occurring on lands managed by those respective agencies in a state during the official wildfire season declared by that state.
2. The United States Forest Service and the United States Bureau of Land Management should adopt policies and practices providing for the reduction of fuels and the creation and maintenance of fuel breaks on all lands managed by those respective agencies, including harvesting of timber, development and maintenance of roads, mechanical fuels reduction, prescriptive burns outside of declared wildfire seasons, and other proven methods for reducing the amount and intensity of wildfires and related smoke occurring on those lands.

3. Congress should annually appropriate sufficient funding for the United States Forest Service and the United States Bureau of Land Management to fully implement the aforementioned policies and practices of fully suppressing wildfire and related smoke, reducing fuels, and creating and maintaining fuel breaks, including access roads, on all lands managed by those respective agencies.

4. The Oregon Department of Forestry's policy of full suppression of wildfires on lands managed by that agency during wildfire season is appropriate and fully supported by the Jackson County Board of County Commissioners.

5. The Oregon Legislature should annually appropriate enough funding for the Oregon Department of Forestry to fully implement the policy and practice of full suppression of wildfires and related smoke occurring on lands managed by the Department of Forestry during the official wildfire season.

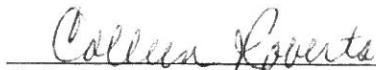
6. The Board of County Commissioners and Jackson County shall continue to take efforts to influence and coordinate with Federal and State agencies and governments to appropriately manage lands under their respective control for the prevention of, and lessening the intensity of, wildfires and related smoke, and to fully suppress wildfires on those lands which occur during the official State-declared wildfire season.

DATED this 30th day of January, 2019, at Medford, Oregon.

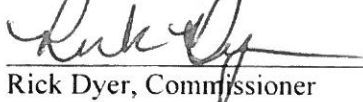
JACKSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



Bob Strosser, Chair



Colleen Roberts, Commissioner



Rick Dyer, Commissioner

1 **PUBLIC LANDS**

2
3 **Proposed Resolution Supporting the Utilization of Domestic Livestock Grazing as a Cost-Effective**
4 **and Viable Method for Hazardous Fuels Reduction Goals in Executive Order 13855, *Promoting***
5 ***Active Management of America's Forests, Rangelands and Other Federal Lands to Improve***
6 ***Conditions and Reduce Wildfire Risk***
7

8 **Issue:** Allowing grazing as an acceptable form of active forest and vegetation management to reduce
9 hazardous fuel loads.

10
11 **Proposed Policy:** To protect communities and critical infrastructure, the National Association of
12 Counties (NACo) urges the Trump Administration to instruct federal land management agencies to utilize
13 domestic livestock grazing as a cost-effective and viable method of hazardous fuels reduction on public
14 lands in the West. In accordance with Executive Order 13855, counties urge the administration to require
15 agencies to reactivate all suspended non-use Animal Unit Months (AUMs) when requested by permittees,
16 unless the agencies can produce peer-reviewed, irrefutable scientific evidence that doing so would be
17 detrimental to the range. Additionally, counties recommend that all grazing permits be treated as
18 outcome-based in order to grant federal agencies greater flexibility to respond to conditions on the
19 ground.

20
21 **March 2, 2019**

22 **Approved | Public Lands Steering Committee | Unanimous**

23
24 **Proposed Resolution on the Council of Environmental Quality’s Revisions to the National**
25 **Environmental Policy Act Implementing Regulations**
26

27 **Issue:** The Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) is in the process of updating its National
28 Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) implementing regulations.

29
30 **Proposed Policy:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports revising NEPA implementing
31 regulations to require federal agencies to regularly provide meaningful opportunities for states and
32 counties to be involved in the NEPA process for planning and projects on federal lands that may affect the
33 economy, society and culture of constituents. NACo asks that the CEQ work closely with state and local
34 governments to revise the NEPA regulations.

35
36 **March 2, 2019**

37 **Approved | Public Lands Steering Committee | Unanimous**

38
39 **Proposed Resolution Regarding Wildland Fire Regulations and Policies**
40

41 **Issue:** Federal regulations, policies and guidelines that allow lightning-caused fires to burn on federal
42 lands at all times and that permit the use of prescribed fires, regardless of ignition source, on federal lands
43 at all times.

44
45 **Proposed Policy:** NACo supports greater coordination between federal land management agencies and
46 local governments in implementing wildland fire suppression policies and strategies, with the understanding

1 that a blanket, one-size-fits-all policy is untenable on diverse landscapes. Federal agencies must work with
2 local governments to accomplish their land management goals, including wildfire suppression and risk
3 reduction, and ensure such efforts do not jeopardize the health, safety and welfare of local residents.
4

5 **March 2, 2019**

6 **Approved | Public Lands Steering Committee | Unanimous**