

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

2022 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Keven J. Stratton

Senate Sponsor: David P. Hinkins

LONG TITLE

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

Highlighted Provisions:

This resolution: recognizes certain challenges and concerns with current land and forest management practices and how those practices conflict with goals to slow and reverse climate change; and encourages improved land management practices, including coordination with all relevant parties, to reverse trends of carbon emissions with new and evolving technology, expand natural carbon sequestration, and improve health, safety, and forest and ecosystem vitality.

Special Clauses:

None

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

WHEREAS, in his January 27, 2021, Executive Order, President Biden stated that "the United States and the world face a profound climate crisis" and to deal with it he pledged "to implement a government-wide approach that reduces climate pollution in every sector of the H.C.R. 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, national and international policies, agreements and reports, including

specific mention in the Paris Accords, multiple reports by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the international "4 per 1,000 Initiative" and President Biden's proposed climate policy, among others, all recognize the importance of natural systems in removing and sequestering GHGs and call for these natural sinks to be protected and expanded where possible;

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

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 GHGs;

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, this research and practical experience have also shown that these same advanced and proven sequestration and management techniques also simultaneously produce a cascade of valuable and significant environmental and economic co-benefits, including greater overall ecosystem integrity and productivity, increased biodiversity, improved water quantity and quality, better fish and wildlife habitat, greater drought resilience, reduced flooding risk, H.C.R. 1 more and better forage for wildlife and livestock, sustainable timber, and enhanced recreation opportunities, among others;

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, protecting and enhancing natural carbon sinks is clearly a non-controversial win-win solution in the climate change debate because it addresses the

concerns about rising GHG levels while at the same time largely alleviating the concerns of those resistant to many of the other approaches being considered to achieve this goal;

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

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

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

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

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

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

of Utah, Native American tribes, and local governments.

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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor recognize that while increased funding and attention is being proposed, also challenge the Biden Administration and Congress to urgently initiate and fund emergency efforts to expand forest and rangeland fuel reduction and other fire pre-suppression activities to the maximum acreage H.C.R. 1 of federal land as quickly as possible to prevent the harm and damage now being caused on millions of acres annually.

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

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

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

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

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