

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 1018

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION, Expressing the sense of the South Dakota State Legislature about management of the Black Hills National Forest.

WHEREAS, catastrophic wildfires not only cause environmental damage to forests and other lands but place the lives of firefighters at risk and pose threats to human health, personal property, sustainable ecosystems, wildlife habitat, air quality, and water quality; and

WHEREAS, the seriousness of the fire risk in the national forests has been well documented by both the General Accounting Office and the United States Forest Service; and

WHEREAS, research and experience have shown that forest management, including thinning, forest restoration, grazing, measures to control insects and disease, and small-scale prescribed burning, can be an effective long-term strategy for reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfires and insect epidemics, especially in ponderosa pine forests, such as the Black Hills National Forest; and

WHEREAS, the mountain pine beetle epidemic now occurring in the Black Hills National Forest has already increased the risk of forest fires in the Black Hills, possibly endangering the lives and property of the citizens of South Dakota; and

WHEREAS, the national forests are the property of all the residents of the United States, but the residents who live the closest to the national forests are the ones who will be the most impacted by decisions about how to manage those national forests; and

WHEREAS, since the inception of the National Forest System, its supporters have recognized the importance of the support of local residents; and

WHEREAS, local governments and residents of South Dakota now find themselves extremely frustrated at the failure of the Forest Service to deal proactively with the mountain pine beetle epidemic in the Black Hills, and especially with the Forest Service's inclination to base decisions more on directives and policies from Washington, D.C., than on the management needs of the Black Hills National Forest or the concerns and issues of local communities and governments in South Dakota; and

WHEREAS, a measure of this frustration has been the overwhelming support for the concepts embodied in House Bill 1236, which was introduced during the 2002 Session of the South Dakota Legislature:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the House of Representatives of the Seventy-seventh Legislature of the State of South Dakota, the Senate concurring therein, that, in the interest of protecting the health and integrity of United States forests, wildlife habitats, watersheds, air quality, human health and safety, and private property, the United States should redefine its working relationship with state and local governments, communities, and residents of South Dakota to ensure that the people who will be the most affected by United States Forest Service decisions will receive the highest level of consideration in those decisions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the United States Forest Service should:

- (1) Fully implement the Western Governors Association "Collaborative 10-year Strategy for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment" to reduce overabundance of forest fuels that place these resources at high risk of catastrophic wildfire; and
- (2) Utilize an appropriate mix of fire-prevention activities and management practices including forest restoration, thinning of at-risk forest stands, grazing, selective tree removal and other measures to control insects and pathogens, removal of excessive ground fuels, and small-scale prescribed burns; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that South Dakota's Congressional Delegation is requested to help enact legislation that will allow the United States Forest Service to implement on-the-ground steps to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire in Beaver Park and other high risk areas in the Black Hills National Forest prior to the 2002 fire season; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Black Hills National Forest should be strongly considered for designation as a "Charter Forest," as presented in the President's FY 2003 Budget Request to Congress; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Secretary of State is hereby authorized and directed to forward a copy of this Resolution to the Honorable President of the United States, George W. Bush; the Secretary of Agriculture, Ann Venneman; the United States Forest Service Chief, Dale N. Bosworth; the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the United States Congress; and the Congressional Delegation representing the State of South Dakota in the Congress of the United States.

Adopted by the House of Representatives,
Concurred in by the Senate,

February 14, 2002
February 19, 2002

Scott Eccarius
Speaker of the House

Karen Gerdes
Chief Clerk of the House

Carole Hillard
President of the Senate

Patricia Adam
Secretary of the Senate