

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL NO. 1

BY RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

A JOINT MEMORIAL

TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED, TO THE CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION REPRESENTING THE STATE OF IDAHO IN THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES, TO THE SECRETARY OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND TO THE CHIEF OF THE UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE.

We, your Memorialists, the House of Representatives and the Senate of the State of Idaho assembled in the First Regular Session of the Sixty-second Idaho Legislature, do hereby respectfully represent that:

WHEREAS, the State of Idaho and the vast Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness and contiguous national forests have suffered numerous and frequent large destructive forest and range fires, most recently in 2012; and

WHEREAS, the fires have not only incrementally expanded the total burned acreage but have also reburned huge areas one or more times; and

WHEREAS, the cumulative effect of numerous large fires has resulted in tremendous damage and destruction to the watersheds, streams important to the recovery of anadromous fish, wildlife habitat, scenic values, recreational use, loss of native plant species, historic structures, public access and safety, air quality and public health, the trail network and other values and benefits for which the national forests and wilderness were established; and

WHEREAS, the cumulative and growing loss of wilderness values and attributes is also resulting in serious economic impact to surrounding communities, counties, the State of Idaho and the businesses dependent upon the natural resources inherent in wilderness and the national forests; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of miles of trails have been severely damaged, blocked, rendered unsafe for travel or simply wiped out by fire, and the continuing destructive aftermath of blowdown, washouts and landslides have not been opened, cleared, repaired or replaced. The backlog of critical restoration work is rapidly growing each year and far exceeds the work performed annually; and

WHEREAS, the cumulative impact of fires has resulted in the loss of soil and native vegetation and the replacement of native species with noxious and undesirable plants that will also prevent or retard reestablishment of desirable native plants; and

WHEREAS, the United States Forest Service has underestimated the huge cost of trail and resource restoration when making decisions on active fire strategies in the wilderness due to a decision bias toward minimizing suppression expenditures for wilderness fires at the expense of long-term restoration; and

WHEREAS, the United States Forest Service has not placed the necessary emphasis and priority on restoration of proper watershed and vegetative conditions within the wilderness, and has also not considered the negative ef-

1     fect of vegetative type conversion resulting from intense and/or repetitive  
2     burns; and

3         WHEREAS, the United States Forest Service has not placed emphasis and  
4     priority on training for forest supervisors, rangers and staff on the impor-  
5     tance of safe and effective saddle and pack stock use and management, and the  
6     field conditions necessary for reasonable and safe public and employee ac-  
7     cess to and within the wilderness; and

8         WHEREAS, the United States Forest Service has not placed emphasis and  
9     priority on eliminating barriers to effective and streamlined contracting  
10    procedures and effective use of volunteers in order to respond to the crisis  
11    in the wilderness and maximize fieldwork accomplishment; and

12        WHEREAS, the Secretary of Agriculture and the Chief of the United States  
13    Forest Service have not placed the necessary emphasis and priority of the re-  
14    quirement of Section 5(b) of the Central Idaho Wilderness Act to clear ob-  
15    structions from all trails within and adjacent to the wilderness on at least  
16    an annual basis; and

17        WHEREAS, the Chief of the United States Forest Service has not pro-  
18    grammed on a continuing basis even normal repair, replacement and mainte-  
19    nance of the trail system and trail structures such as bridges, trail tread,  
20    drainage, associated signing and other essential actions to enable safe  
21    public use, full and unimpeded public access by foot and horseback and the  
22    public services that are vital to public use and enjoyment of the wilder-  
23    ness, in order to prevent cumulative deterioration of the system under even  
24    non-fire conditions; and

25        WHEREAS, the Chief of the United States Forest Service has not placed  
26    emphasis on efficient and economical methods of trail restoration and main-  
27    tenance, and has in fact aggressively limited methods and tools by Forest  
28    Service crews, contractors and volunteers that would greatly increase ac-  
29    complishment and lower costs without adverse effect on wilderness values or  
30    visitors; and

31        WHEREAS, use of outfitter and guide permittees, contractors and volun-  
32    teers from various organizations to accomplish trail work is well below po-  
33    tential due to a lack of emphasis by the United States Forest Service on using  
34    innovative ways to offset permittee fees and streamline and simplify con-  
35    tracting procedures.

36        NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the members of the First Regular Ses-  
37    sion of the Sixty-second Idaho Legislature, the House of Representatives  
38    and the Senate concurring therein, that we urge the Secretary of the United  
39    States Department of Agriculture to declare the Frank Church-River of No Re-  
40    turn Wilderness and adjacent national forest lands to be a Natural Resources  
41    Disaster Area.

42        BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge the Secretary of Agriculture and  
43    the Chief of the United States Forest Service to recognize the dire condi-  
44    tions prevailing within and adjacent to the Frank Church-River of No Return  
45    Wilderness and adjacent national forests, and further urge that the neces-  
46    sary priorities and emphasis be placed on prompt and practical actions to  
47    prevent further cumulative loss of the unique values of the wilderness.

48        BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge compliance with the specific re-  
49    quirements of the Central Idaho Wilderness Act mandating annual clearing of  
50    obstructions from the trail system.

1       BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Chief Clerk of the House of Representa-  
2 tives be, and she is hereby authorized and directed to forward a copy of this  
3 Memorial to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Repre-  
4 sentatives of Congress, the congressional delegation representing the State  
5 of Idaho in the Congress of the United States, the Secretary of the United  
6 States Department of Agriculture and the Chief of the United States Forest  
7 Service.