

COUNTY OF NEVADA  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



Vice Chair Nathan Beason, 1<sup>st</sup> District  
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Chair Wm. "Hank" Weston, 4<sup>th</sup> District  
Richard Anderson, 5<sup>th</sup> District  
Donna Landi, Clerk of the Board

July 16, 2013

Mr. Tom Vilsack  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Sidney R. Yates Federal Building  
201 14th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20024

Ms. Ann Mills  
Acting Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Sidney R. Yates Federal Building  
201 14th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20024

Mr. Tom Tidwell, Chief  
Forest Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Sidney R. Yates Federal Building  
201 14th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Mr. Vilsack, Ms. Mills and Mr. Tidwell:

The Nevada County Board of Supervisors urgently requests your support in prioritizing fuels reduction as the primary method of addressing fire prevention and maintaining the health of our national forests.

As we are now in one of the driest and most dangerous fire seasons on record, the Nevada County Board of Supervisors is seriously concerned about the dangerous buildup of hazardous fire fuels on public lands in Nevada County. Despite the Forest Service's best efforts, fuels reduction projects on public lands remain underfunded and inadequate to reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfires.

Public lands occupy nearly 35% of the land in Nevada County, with a checkerboard pattern of discontinuous and isolated parcels of federal and state lands intermixed with private property through many areas. Nearly 30,000 acres (500 parcels) of public lands are directly adjacent to private property, and homeowners fear the increased risk for wildfires to destroy their property. Conversely, wildfire spreading from a developed private property with or without defensible space

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into public lands without effective fuels treatment has potential to cause significant environmental losses to timber crops, habitats, watershed, developed properties and infrastructure.

These public lands belong to all of us; they are the heart of our national pride and identity. Our citizens expect both federal and state governments to reasonably maintain these cherished public lands. Yet Federal lands are choked with unmanaged vegetation and constitute a fire threat to public safety.

We understand the USFS and the BLM two agencies are woefully short of the resources they need to reduce fire fuels on their lands. Even with some incremental increases in funding for fire prevention over the last few years, there has not been nearly enough allocated specifically to hazardous fuels reduction. Spending scarce federal dollars on “reaction” (fire suppression) only comes at the expense of prevention – fuels reduction. Fire suppression costs are unsustainable, while investment in fire prevention and fuel reduction will reduce suppression costs over time.

Private industry is ready to step in and help with forest thinning and biomass removal, and to work with Washington toward a solution to provide more funding for fuels reduction projects and provide incentives for biomass processing facilities.

The USFS could do its part to address poor forest health without waiting for increased funding by taking actions such as:

- Engage in policy discussions regarding user fees on haul roads - Road fees are prohibitive to timber companies that want to increase harvests on federal lands. Many of these haul roads were originally built by timber companies and later taken over by the USFS. Although we realize the fees are necessary to cover road maintenance, the fees also need to reflect the benefit provided by companies that are reducing hazardous fuels on public lands, protecting public safety and natural resources.
- In addition to relying on hiring contractors to accomplish fuels reduction projects, the USFS needs to encourage cutting of more merchantable timber, providing the incentive for private businesses to bid on timber sales and thus reducing the fuel hazard.
- Increase funding to enable the percentage of cut allowed based on forest growth to increase from the current level, of approximately 9-10% to 25-40%.
- Revise timber harvest regulations to expand tree thinning and allow greater removal of dense underbrush, and removal of diseased, unhealthy and overstocked trees, returning forested areas to a more healthy state.
- Include biomass plants in grant programs and reduce costs and other barriers to facilitate siting these plants within the forests, if appropriate, where they would operate. Biomass plants provide a means to utilize hazardous fuels, improve forest health, provide local energy resources, create jobs, and stimulate the local economy.
- Work with legislators to streamline the NEPA process to facilitate faster implementation of hazardous fuels reduction projects.

Therefore, the Board of Supervisors has adopted the attached Resolution requesting specific actions, including incentives for the private sector relaxing regulations and other policy changes to reduce hazardous fuels on public lands in Nevada County.

Sincerely,



Hank Weston  
Chairman, Board of Supervisors

Attachment: Resolution 13-340

Copied to:

Governor Jerry Brown  
Senator Barbara Boxer  
Senator Dianne Feinstein  
Congressman Doug LaMalfa  
Congressman Tom McClintock  
Sally Jewell, Secretary of the Interior  
Neil Kornze, Principal Deputy Director, Bureau of Land Management  
John Laird, California Secretary for Natural Resources  
Assembly Member Brian Dahle  
Senator Ted Gaines  
Senator Jim Nielsen  
Mr. Randy Moore, Regional Forester, USFS Pacific Southwest Region  
Tom Quinn, Forest Supervisor, Tahoe National Forest  
Matthew D. Chase, Executive Director, National Association of Counties  
Matt Cate, California State Association of Counties  
Greg Norton, President/CEO, Rural County Representatives of California  
Jim Holmes, Chair, County of Placer Board of Supervisors  
Andy Vasquez, Chair, County of Yuba Board of Supervisors  
Scott Schlefstein, Chair, County of Sierra Board of Supervisors



# RESOLUTION No. 13-340

## OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF NEVADA

### RESOLUTION AFFIRMING THE URGENCY OF, AND REQUESTING SPECIFIC ACTIONS FOR, REDUCING HAZARDOUS FUELS ON PUBLIC LANDS IN NEVADA COUNTY

WHEREAS, Nevada County citizens, businesses, and communities rely upon the national forests in the northern Sierra Nevada for our economic well-being; and for most of the Sierra, including Nevada County, recreation and tourism are the single largest industries; and

WHEREAS, most of the Sierra's jobs are provided by small businesses, and when polled Sierra Nevada business owners say that the rural quality of life in the Sierra Nevada is a primary reason for locating a business here. Many of these business owners explicitly identify access to wildlands like our national forests as part of that rural quality; and

WHEREAS, our citizens and community members value national forest lands within and nearby Nevada County for their recreational, educational, ecological, and spiritual values; and

WHEREAS, public lands occupy nearly 35% of the land in Nevada County, with a checkerboard pattern of discontinuous and isolated parcels of federal and state lands intermixed with private property through many areas, and nearly 30,000 acres (500 parcels) of public lands are directly adjacent to private property; and

WHEREAS, our communities rely upon the Forest Service to conduct fuels reduction in adjacent national forest lands that reduces fire danger without sacrificing the resources we seek to protect; and

WHEREAS, the Tahoe National Forest is the largest Federal landholder within Nevada County, with 186,181 acres of land within Nevada County; and

WHEREAS, the Tahoe National Forest desirable target is to treat approximately 20,000 acres annually on a ten to twenty year rotation but current treatment falls below this target, and

WHEREAS, obtaining and supporting increased funding for hazardous fuels reduction is one of the Board's top legislative priorities; and

WHEREAS, timber sale contracting is a key component of fuels reduction in the National Forests and many jobs in Nevada County and neighboring counties are directly tied to Tahoe National Forest management.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the Board of Supervisors of the County of Nevada, State of California requests the Federal Government:

- (1) Increase funding for hazardous fuels reduction on public lands
- (2) allow, encourage and incentivize the private sector to help with the solution through fee reductions, relaxing regulations and other policy changes.
- (3) utilize the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), which is a component of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act. The CWPP should identify both the federal and non-federal (private) properties with hazardous fuels conditions, develop priority areas needing fuels treatments and relay this information to the local federal land managers for appropriate funding.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Board will work within its capabilities to support these efforts, through such options as local zoning and permitting, collaboration, and legislative advocacy.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Nevada at a special meeting of said Board, held on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2013, by the following vote of said Board:

Ayes: Supervisors Nathan Beason, Edward Scofield, Terry Lamphier, Hank Weston, and Richard Anderson.

Noes: None.

Absent: None.

Abstain: None.

ATTEST:

DONNA LANDI  
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

By: *Jule Patterson-Hunter, Deputy*

*Hank Weston*  
Hank Weston, Chair

07/16/2013 cc: BOS\*