

RESOLUTION NO. 14-154

**A RESOLUTION OF THE SISKIYOU COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
DECLARING A WILDFIRE EMERGENCY**

WHEREAS, catastrophic wildfires continue to threaten lives, property, and the natural resources of the state of California; and

WHEREAS, the Governor of California declared a drought emergency for the entire state, based on the occurrence of the driest year on record in California; and

WHEREAS, on March 11, 2014, the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors declared a state of emergency in Siskiyou County due to exceptional drought conditions, and said state of emergency remains in effect as of the date of this Resolution; and

WHEREAS, fire threat is no longer limited to a season, but ongoing throughout the year due to the multi-year drought, increasing suppression costs and wiping out of funds slated for fire prevention projects; and

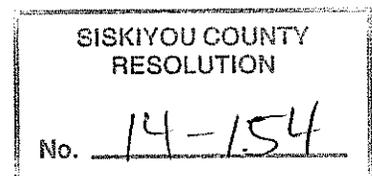
WHEREAS, the elected and appointed officials of both the state and the nation have an obligation to preserve public safety and protect the citizenry and their homes and businesses by ensuring that the landscape is as fire-resilient as possible and that firefighting efforts can be effective and as safe as possible for fire fighters; and

WHEREAS, California is approximately 50% publicly-owned land and many rural counties have substantially higher percentages of federally managed land; and

WHEREAS, Siskiyou County has more than 2.5 million acres of federally managed land which is 62% of the total land in the county; and

WHEREAS, the management of lands, particularly regarding fire protection and fuel reduction on National Forest System lands under the jurisdiction of the United States Forest Service is wholly inadequate, has long been ignored, and is significantly underfunded, placing Siskiyou County in significant peril and at great risk in the event that catastrophic wildfires occur, thereby threatening lives, and destroying public resources, private property, businesses, and the natural environment; and

WHEREAS, in only the month of August 2014, more than 150,000 acres of National Forest and private timberlands in Siskiyou County have been destroyed by catastrophic wildfire, on top of the millions of acres that have burned under the management prescriptions of the Northwest Forest Plan, destroying lives, property, businesses, and the environment; and



WHEREAS, many of the areas recently burned in Siskiyou County included proposed projects by the United States Forest Service that were blocked by "environmental" appeals and lawsuits; and

WHEREAS, California has more than 43 million acres of federal land, much of which has not been adequately managed to mitigate the risk of catastrophic wildfire; and

WHEREAS, 4 of the 5 largest wildfires in California in the past 100 years have been on federal land with the other having had a substantial federal component; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of thousands of acres of dead and decaying trees remain in the national forests within Siskiyou County due to lax forestry management practices on federal lands; and

WHEREAS, more than a billion dollars are spent each year fighting fires in our national forests; and

WHEREAS, the escalating costs of fighting fires on federal land over the last 10 years has significantly diminished the available resources for the critically needed prevention measures that can minimize these catastrophic fires; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Forest Service and Department of Interior have spent over \$1 billion on fire suppression every year since 2000 with suppression costs now consuming more than 50% of the total wildland fire budget, as compared to 13% of the total fire budget in 1991, leaving few resources for critically needed preventive maintenance of our national forests in the west and throughout the country; and

WHEREAS, the resources to manage the federal lands to reduce fire risk would be a small investment relative to the skyrocketing costs of fire suppression; and

WHEREAS, the increased risk of catastrophic wildfires in Siskiyou County will result in harmful secondary environmental effects, including diminished air and water quality, impacted watershed, increased air pollutant emissions, and threatened habitats of sensitive wildlife species; and

WHEREAS, approximately eighty percent of the State's developed surface water supply originates on watershed lands within our rural counties, and California's residents use a portion of this water for domestic, commercial, agricultural, industrial, recreational, and other beneficial uses and these rivers, lakes, and watershed lands also serve as habitat for hundreds of species of fish and wildlife; and

WHEREAS, the detrimental effects on these watersheds affect all of California, not just rural California; and

WHEREAS, with the State of California shackling its citizens and economy with the burden of the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32) and chasing anthropogenic factors in climate change, it makes no sense to allow unmanaged forests to erupt into catastrophic wildfire that offsets the greenhouse gas reductions for which Californians are paying so dearly; and

WHEREAS, chronic smoke from wildfires poses a risk to the health of our citizens and severely impacts recreational activities and agricultural yield; and

WHEREAS, the post-fire condition of the National Forests poses a fuel hazard to local communities, "resistance to control" by firefighters, and a significant source of erosion which must be immediately addressed; and

WHEREAS, there continues to be a widely recognized extremely high risk of catastrophic wildfires in Siskiyou County due to unnaturally heavy fuel loads and the early drying of wild land vegetation; and

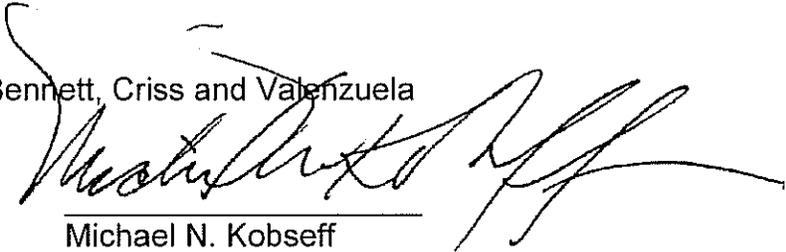
WHEREAS, the conditions of local National Forests constitute an ongoing public nuisance; and

WHEREAS, the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors calls for immediate measures to be taken to prevent imminent catastrophic wildfires;

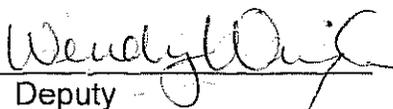
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors declares that there is an ongoing emergency due to the actual and perceived threat of wildfire in California, that the state and local governments have taken many steps to resolve this issue, and now urges the Governor to take an active role at the federal level to demand that the United States Forest Service take action in California's federal wild and forest lands to do the prevention and maintenance work required to mitigate the ongoing and increasing risk of catastrophic wildfires.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Siskiyou at a regular meeting of said Board, held the 2nd day of September, 2014, by the following vote of said Board:

AYES: Supervisors Kobseff, Armstrong, Bennett, Criss and Valenzuela
NOES: NONE
ABSENT: NONE
ABSTAIN: NONE


Michael N. Kobseff
Chair, Board of Supervisors

ATTEST:
COLLEEN SETZER, COUNTY CLERK

By: 
Deputy