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Forest Fire Resources Compact Amendments

2025 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Derrin R. Owens

House Sponsor: Troy Shelley

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This bill enacts the Great Plains Interstate Fire Compact.

Highlighted Provisions:

This bill:

▸ empowers the governor to enter into the compact related to forest fires in the form provided in statute.

Money Appropriated in this Bill:

None

Other Special Clauses:

None

Utah Code Sections Affected:

ENACTS:

65A-8-216, Utah Code Annotated 1953

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

Section 1. Section **65A-8-216** is enacted to read:

65A-8-216 . Great Plains Interstate Fire Compact.

The governor may enter into a compact on behalf of the state with any other state or states legally joining therein in the form substantially as follows:

The purpose of this compact is to promote effective prevention and control of forest fires in the great plains region of the United States by the maintenance of adequate forest fire fighting services by the member states, and by providing for reciprocal aid in fighting forest fires among the compacting states of the region, including South Dakota, North Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado and any adjoining state of a current Article State.

This compact is operative immediately as to those states ratifying it if any two or more of

31 the member states have ratified it. ARTICLE III

32 In each state, the state forester or officer holding the equivalent position who is responsible
33 for forest fire control may act as a compact administrator for that state and may consult with
34 like officials of the other member states and may implement cooperation between the states in
35 forest fire prevention and control. The compact administrators of the member states may
36 organize to coordinate the services of the member states and provide administrative integration
37 in carrying out the purposes of this compact. Each member state may formulate and put in
38 effect a forest fire plan for that state. ARTICLE IV

39 If the state forest fire control agency of a member state requests aid from the state forest fire
40 control agency of any other member state in combating, controlling, or preventing forest fires,
41 the state forest fire control agency of that state may render all possible aid to the requesting
42 agency, consonant with the maintenance of public safety. ARTICLE V

43 If the forces of any member state are rendering outside aid pursuant to the request of
44 another member state under this compact, the employees of the state shall, under the direction
45 of the officers of the state to which they are rendering aid, have the same powers (except the
46 power of arrest), duties, rights, privileges, and immunities as comparable employees of the
47 state to which they are rendering aid.

48 No member state or its officers or employees rendering outside aid pursuant to this compact
49 is liable on account of any act or omission on the part of such forces while so engaged, or on
50 account of the maintenance or use of any equipment or supplies in connection with rendering
51 the outside aid.

52 All liability, except as otherwise provided in this compact, that may arise either under the
53 laws of the requesting state or under the laws of the aiding state or under the laws of a third
54 state on account of or in connection with a request for aid, shall be assumed and borne by the
55 requesting state.

56 Any member state rendering outside aid pursuant to this compact shall be reimbursed by
57 the member state receiving the aid for any loss or damage to, or expense incurred in the
58 operation of, any equipment used in answering a request for aid, and for the cost of all
59 materials, transportation, wages, salaries, and maintenance of employees and equipment
60 incurred in connection with such request. However, nothing in this compact prevents any
61 assisting member state from assuming such loss, damage, expense, or other cost, or from
62 loaning such equipment, or from donating the services to the receiving member state without
63 charge or cost.

64 Each member state shall assure that workers compensation benefits in conformity with the
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68 minimum legal requirements of the state are available to all employees and contract
 69 firefighters sent to a requesting state pursuant to this compact.

70 For the purposes of this compact, the term "employee" includes any volunteer or auxiliary
 71 legally included within the forest fire fighting forces of the aiding state under the laws of the
 72 aiding state.

73 The compact administrators may formulate procedures for claims and reimbursement under
 74 the provisions of this article, in accordance with the provisions of the member states.

75 Ratification of this compact does not affect any existing statute so as to authorize or permit
 76 curtailment or diminution of the forest fighting forces, equipment, services, or facilities of any
 77 member state.

78 Nothing in the compact authorizes or permits any member state to curtail or diminish its
 79 forest fire fighting forces, equipment, services, or facilities. Each member state shall maintain
 80 adequate forest fire fighting forces and equipment to meet demands for forest fire protection
 81 within its borders in the same manner and to the same extent as if this compact were not
 82 operative.

83 Nothing in this compact limits or restricts the powers of any state ratifying the compact to
 84 provide for the prevention, control, and extinguishment of forest fires, or to prohibit the
 85 enactment or enforcement of state laws, rules, or regulations intended to aid in the prevention,
 86 control, and extinguishment in the state.

87 Nothing in this compact affects any existing or future cooperative relationship or
 88 arrangement between the United States Forest Service and a member state or states.

89 Representatives of the United States Forest Service may attend meetings of the compact
 90 administrators.

ARTICLE VIII

91 The provisions of Articles IV and V of this compact that relate to reciprocal aid in
 92 combating, controlling, or preventing forest fires are operative as between any state party to
 93 this compact and any other state which is party to this compact and any other state that is party
 94 to a regional forest fire protection compact in another region if the Legislature of the other
 95 state has given its assent to the mutual aid provisions of this compact.

96 This compact shall continue in force and remain binding on each state ratifying it until the
 97 Legislature or the Governor of the state takes action to withdraw from the compact. Such
 98 action is not effective until six months after notice of the withdrawal has been sent by the chief
 99 executive of the state desiring to withdraw to the chief executives of all states then parties to
 100 the compact.

101 **Section 2. Effective date.**

106 This bill takes effect on May 7, 2025.