

1 **CONCURRENT RESOLUTION TO WORK TOGETHER TO**
2 **ADDRESS THE CLIMATE, PUBLIC LANDS, AND CARBON**
3 **SEQUESTRATION**

4 2022 GENERAL SESSION

5 STATE OF UTAH

6 **Chief Sponsor: Keven J. Stratton**

7 Senate Sponsor: David P. Hinkins

9 **LONG TITLE**

10 **Committee Note:**

11 The Federalism Commission recommended this bill.

12 Legislative Vote: 8 voting for 1 voting against 0 absent

13 **General Description:**

14 This resolution recognizes and encourages best management practices to reduce carbon
15 emissions while also preserving and expanding forests and other lands to improve
16 climate outcomes.

17 **Highlighted Provisions:**

18 This resolution:

19 ▶ recognizes certain challenges and concerns with current land and forest
20 management practices and how those practices conflict with goals to slow and
21 reverse climate change; and

22 ▶ encourages improved land management practices, including coordination with all
23 relevant parties, to reverse trends of carbon emissions with new and evolving
24 technology, expand natural carbon sequestration, and improve health, safety, and
25 forest and ecosystem vitality.

26 **Special Clauses:**

27 None



28

29 *Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah, the Governor concurring therein:*

30 WHEREAS, in his January 27, 2021, Executive Order, President Biden stated that "the
31 United States and the world face a profound climate crisis" and to deal with it he pledged "to
32 implement a government-wide approach that reduces climate pollution in every sector of the
33 economy, increases resilience to the impacts of climate change, protects public health, and
34 conserves our lands, waters, and biodiversity";

35 WHEREAS, at the recent United Nations COP 26 climate meeting in Glasgow,
36 Scotland, President Biden announced "a new plan to conserve global forests, halt forest loss,
37 restore critical carbon sinks, and improve land management," and committed the United States
38 to an international declaration to reverse global deforestation by protecting forests and
39 mitigating wildfire damage and restoring degraded land by 2030;

40 WHEREAS, the primary approaches to slow or reduce the levels of carbon dioxide
41 (CO₂) and other green house gases (GHGs) being pursued by the Biden Administration would
42 rapidly replace the current "all-of-the-above" energy mix with an increasingly heavy reliance
43 on renewable sources;

44 WHEREAS, it is well documented that where such a rapid conversion has been
45 attempted in other places, such as Germany, the United Kingdom, and California, it has created
46 a range of problems, including much more expensive and less reliable energy availability
47 leading to higher prices for consumers and businesses and to other economic dislocations;

48 WHEREAS, for these and other reasons there is wide concern over some of the climate
49 policies being advocated by the Biden Administration and others, including increasing energy
50 costs, damaging the economic competitiveness of the United States, and undermining national
51 security;

52 WHEREAS, as a consequence, the national debate over climate change policy is
53 becoming increasingly heated, apocalyptic, and divisive;

54 WHEREAS, in contrast, the state of Utah has adopted policies and goals to ensure that
55 energy is affordable and reliable by pursuing an "all-of-the-above" energy approach;

56 WHEREAS, in such a policy environment, the wisest course is to emphasize first
57 adopting the most efficacious elements of the various proposed responses to climate change on
58 which there is wide agreement;

59 WHEREAS, national and international policies, agreements and reports, including
60 specific mention in the Paris Accords, multiple reports by the United Nations
61 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the international "4 per 1,000 Initiative" and
62 President Biden's proposed climate policy, among others, all recognize the importance of
63 natural systems in removing and sequestering GHGs and call for these natural sinks to be
64 protected and expanded where possible;

65 WHEREAS, forests and rangelands, including those managed by the federal
66 government in Utah and nationally, can either be sinks for atmospheric carbon or emitters of
67 CO2 and other GHGs, largely depending on how they are managed;

68 WHEREAS, for a number of reasons, federally managed land in Utah and nationally
69 that had been functioning as carbon sinks are increasingly becoming emitters of CO2 and other
70 GHGs;

71 WHEREAS, the same conditions that convert carbon sinks into GHG emitters, such as
72 wildland fire and soil erosion, also create a wide range of economic, health, social, and
73 environmental problems;

74 WHEREAS, a growing body of scientific research, practical application, and
75 demonstrated results on tens of millions of acres in the United States and around the world
76 prove that in many cases degraded natural systems can be restored as vitally important carbon
77 sinks and that the sequestration potential of existing sinks can be vastly increased by applying
78 proven land management practices;

79 WHEREAS, while the importance of natural systems functioning as sinks for GHGs is
80 widely accepted, their true potential is often not recognized;

81 WHEREAS, some scientists have calculated that globally applying these widely
82 demonstrated and proven best management practices to forests, rangelands, and agricultural
83 lands could sequester all of the CO2 produced by human activities from the beginning of the
84 Industrial Revolution and continue to sequester enough to achieve not just net zero emissions
85 but net negative emissions for decades to come;

86 WHEREAS, this research and practical experience have also shown that these same
87 advanced and proven sequestration and management techniques also simultaneously produce a
88 cascade of valuable and significant environmental and economic co-benefits, including greater
89 overall ecosystem integrity and productivity, increased biodiversity, improved water quantity

90 and quality, better fish and wildlife habitat, greater drought resilience, reduced flooding risk,
91 more and better forage for wildlife and livestock, sustainable timber, and enhanced recreation
92 opportunities, among others;

93 WHEREAS, these associated co-benefits are so valuable and cost effective in their own
94 right that tens of millions of acres in the United States and around the world are being managed
95 solely to generate them and not to achieve any climate-related goals;

96 WHEREAS, at a minimum, responsible land stewardship requires employing the best
97 possible practices to protect, and enhance where possible, the land and resources over which
98 the steward has responsibility;

99 WHEREAS, because some previous carbon sinks may not be repairable for decades or
100 even centuries, if at all, prudent stewardship dictates putting primary emphasis on protecting
101 them from degradation to the maximum possible extent;

102 WHEREAS, for a number of reasons, the federal government is not meeting this
103 minimal standard of stewardship in its management of much of the public lands and resources
104 in Utah and across the country;

105 WHEREAS, by failing in this stewardship responsibility, the federal government is
106 causing a wide range of environmental and economic harm while at the same time also
107 converting what had previously been effective carbon sinks into emitters of CO2 and other
108 GHGs;

109 WHEREAS, protecting and enhancing natural carbon sinks is clearly a
110 non-controversial win-win solution in the climate change debate because it addresses the
111 concerns about rising GHG levels while at the same time largely alleviating the concerns of
112 those resistant to many of the other approaches being considered to achieve this goal;

113 WHEREAS, in addition to helping control the rise in GHG emissions, the many
114 co-benefits generated by adopting this win-win approach increases resilience to projected
115 climate change and better allows for adaptation and mitigation;

116 WHEREAS, research is revealing significant human health impacts from exposure to
117 wildfire smoke and small particulate matter, including respiratory and heart issues and an
118 increase in premature births, among others;

119 WHEREAS, the Salt Lake City metropolitan area has had a number of days in 2021
120 with the worst or close to the worst air quality of any metropolitan area in the world, and

121 studies have found that wildland fire smoke contributes close to half of the concentration of
122 these pollutant levels in western states; and

123 WHEREAS, efforts to protect and enhance natural carbon sinks are easily and rapidly
124 scalable in Utah and nationally and would provide numerous and immediate benefits:

125 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah, the
126 Governor concurring therein, challenges the Biden Administration and Congress to make
127 meeting the federal government's stewardship responsibility in managing the federal public
128 lands their highest priority in implementing any climate policy, thereby protecting and
129 enhancing natural carbon sinks and, further, that they undertake this effort while recognizing
130 Utah's state sovereignty and meet their statutory mandates under the Federal Land Policy and
131 Management Act and the National Forest Management Act to fully coordinate and integrate
132 these activities with the relevant land management and resource management plans of the state
133 of Utah, Native American tribes, and local governments.

134 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Legislature and the Governor find that the standard
135 of responsible federal land and resources stewardship should be to achieve on
136 federally-managed public lands the highest level of soil and ecosystem health and productivity
137 that is being achieved on comparable land by tribal, state, local, and private managers or make
138 a public report on why the agency is unable to restore this level of ecosystem health and
139 productivity.

140 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor recognize that
141 while increased funding and attention is being proposed, also challenge the Biden
142 Administration and Congress to explain to the American people immediately and in detail why
143 it is not urgently initiating and funding an emergency effort to expand forest and rangeland fuel
144 reduction and other fire pre-suppression activities to the maximum acreage of federal land as
145 quickly as possible to prevent the harm and damage now being caused on millions of acres
146 annually.

147 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor declare that until
148 adequate funding is provided for such an emergency effort to protect and enhance natural sinks
149 on federally managed land, no funding for such purposes should be provided for similar
150 activities in other countries.

151 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Legislature and the Governor find that the federal

152 government apply a social benefits of carbon control cost-benefits funding test to identify and
153 compare the co-benefits of protecting, rehabilitating, and expanding carbon sinks in natural
154 systems on federally managed land as a mechanism to control GHGs with the co-benefits that
155 might be generated with any other alternative approach and make those calculations available
156 to the public.

157 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor urge all state
158 agencies with authority to manage state managed public lands to continue to manage them in
159 ways that increase soil carbon sequestration and to the extent they can, to encourage greater
160 soil carbon sequestration on private lands.

161 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to the President of
162 the United States, the Majority Leader of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United
163 States House of Representatives, the United States Secretary of the Interior, the United States
164 Secretary of Agriculture, the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services, the United
165 States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, the United States Secretary of
166 Commerce, the United States Secretary of Energy, the United States Secretary of
167 Transportation, the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the leader of each
168 legislative house in each of the other states, and the members of Utah's congressional
169 delegation.