

Senators Caspersen, Green, Jones, Kowall, Brandenburg, Proos and Walker offered the following concurrent resolution:

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 21.

A concurrent resolution to urge Congress and the United States Forest Service to take immediate and aggressive action to correct the mismanagement of national forestlands.

Whereas, The management of our national forests must be redirected toward long-term sustainable, multiple use management principles. This management will not only promote healthy forests that are resistant to insect, disease, fire, and weather damage, but it will provide forest products that will strengthen rural economies and enhance other forest uses by upholding and improving the integrity of the forests' recreational and aesthetic attributes; and

Whereas, Michigan is home to a great expanse of forestland consisting of 19 million acres that cover 53 percent of the state. More than 3.1 million acres are encompassed in three national forests, the Huron-Manistee National Forest in the Lower Peninsula and the Ottawa and Hiawatha National Forests in the Upper Peninsula. Michigan's timberland acreage is the fifth largest in the nation. In addition to providing hunting, fishing, and other recreational opportunities, these forestlands provide habitat for wildlife and contain a substantial, sustainable, precious, and valuable renewable timber resource; and

Whereas, Michigan's forest products industry is dependent on a consistent supply of healthy timber and the sustainable management of all forestlands within the state, including the national forests. Logging operations, sawmills, paper mills, and related businesses have provided well-paying jobs for many generations of Michigan residents in communities across the state. The timber industry has been an important part of the tax base and has helped school districts in many rural communities provide schoolchildren with a quality education; and

Whereas, National forests in Michigan and elsewhere are no longer being sustainably managed, which is contrary to the 1960 congressional directive to the United States Forest Service (USFS) to manage national forests in a manner that creates multiple-use forests, including timber for our economy. For more than 30 years, from 1955 to 1988, national forests produced an average of 11 billion board feet of timber each year. However, over the last two decades, extreme interpretations of environmental policies, such as the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), have resulted in diminishing wood fiber harvests. For example, in 2008, the USFS harvested only 2.3 billion board feet of timber, or nearly 80 percent less than the average in 1955 to 1988; and

Whereas, Last year, the timber harvested in the Huron-Manistee, Ottawa, and Hiawatha National Forests was less than half of the timber required to maintain forest health. For example, the 2006 forest plan for the Ottawa National Forest authorizes an average annual Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) of 90 million board feet. Yet timber sales from the Ottawa National Forest average only 41 million board feet per year, or approximately 45 percent of the ASQ. The 2006 forest plan for the Hiawatha National Forest authorizes an average annual ASQ of 109 million board feet. However, only an average of 42 million board feet per year, or approximately 38 percent of the ASQ, are annually sold. The 2006 forest plan for the Huron-Manistee National Forest authorizes an average annual ASQ of 91 million board feet. However, it is only selling an average of 47 million board feet per year, or about 52 percent of the ASQ. Since 1999, the forest plans for the Ottawa and Hiawatha National Forests authorized harvests totaling more than 2 billion board feet. However, only 930 million board feet of timber has been sold, or approximately 47 percent of the ASQ. Since 1999, the forest plans for the Huron-Manistee National Forest authorized harvests totaling more than 1 billion board feet. Yet only 504 million board feet of timber has been sold, or approximately 49 percent of the ASQ. Millions of board feet of timber are being lost each year to biological maturity, insects, disease, fire, and weather events because national forestlands are being mismanaged; and

Whereas, The forest products industry and the entire state are feeling the direct impacts of this lack of sustainable forest management. Sawmills and paper mills are cutting jobs and pay or closing their doors altogether. Rural school districts are going without tax revenue previously realized. Michigan's employment opportunities, tax base, and overall economy are suffering because one of our greatest renewable resources is being greatly underutilized; and

Whereas, Federal action should be taken to increase timber production from national forests and ensure these forests are being sustainably managed. Congress should use the appropriations process to reform the policies of the USFS and require sound silvicultural practices that improve forest regeneration and health in the short and long term. Environmental laws, such as NEPA and the Endangered Species Act, should be reviewed and amended to ensure that they are not prohibiting the ability to effectively manage national forests and to inhibit extreme interpretations. Federal officials who have been responsible for forest mismanagement should be replaced with commonsense forest management professionals. Finally, hearings should be held in the communities around national forests so congressional delegations and state legislators in Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin can hear directly from those impacted by the lack of sustainable forest management; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That we urge Congress and the United States Forest Service to take immediate and aggressive action to correct the mismanagement of national forestlands; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States Senate; the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives; the members of the Michigan congressional delegation; the chief of the United States Forest Service; the forest supervisors of the Hiawatha National Forest, the Huron-Manistee National Forest, and the Ottawa National Forest; and the director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.