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HOUSE MEMORIAL 42

54TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2019

INTRODUCED BY

Matthew McQueen

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE ENERGY, MINERALS AND NATURAL RESOURCES
DEPARTMENT TO CREATE A WORKING GROUP TO DEVELOP AN ANALYSIS TO
EXPAND THE PRACTICE OF PRESCRIBED FIRE IN NEW MEXICO.

WHEREAS, fire is an environmental driver and an essential
component in most New Mexico ecosystems; and

WHEREAS, prescribed fire is the use of fire applied under
specific conditions with appropriate planning; and

WHEREAS, prescribed fire allows the fire to be confined to
a specific area to accomplish planned land management
objectives; and

WHEREAS, healthy and resilient lands managed with
prescribed fire lower severe fire risk and help avoid loss of
life, property and infrastructure and support water sources,
wildlife habitat, ecotourism, jobs, economic development in

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1 rural communities and hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation
2 opportunities; and

3 WHEREAS, uncharacteristically large and severe wildfires
4 are affecting large land jurisdictions and putting New Mexico's
5 watersheds, forests and wildlife habitat at high risk; and

6 WHEREAS, wildfire knows no boundaries, and resilient
7 federal, state and private watersheds and forests are essential
8 for residents of New Mexico; and

9 WHEREAS, prescribed fire is known by land managers to be
10 effective at reducing fire behavior, as well as being cost-
11 effective; and

12 WHEREAS, many residents, scientists and stakeholders agree
13 that the current level of prescribed fire use in New Mexico is
14 insufficient to maintain or build upon restored landscapes; and

15 WHEREAS, New Mexico needs to increase the use of
16 prescribed fire as a management tool to improve the health and
17 resilience of ecosystems, watersheds and agricultural lands to
18 reduce the negative effects of high-severity wildfires; and

19 WHEREAS, inherent prescribed fire risks are mitigated
20 through training, practice, cross-boundary collaborations and
21 education; and

22 WHEREAS, knowledge and experience from diverse
23 stakeholders are needed to recommend actions and policy changes
24 that support the expanded use of prescribed fire statewide;

25 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF

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1 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the energy,
2 minerals and natural resources department be requested to
3 convene a working group to study the expansion of prescribed
4 fire in New Mexico, including issues relating to training,
5 certification, permitting, negligence, smoke impacts and
6 liability, and perform a review of how other states have
7 addressed these issues in state law while increasing the use of
8 prescribed fire; and

9 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group be composed
10 of representatives of the following: the forestry division of
11 the energy, minerals and natural resources department, the
12 state fire marshal, the department of game and fish, the state
13 land office, the department of environment, the New Mexico
14 department of agriculture, the office of the state engineer,
15 the office of superintendent of insurance, the New Mexico
16 prescribed fire council, the New Mexico acequia association,
17 agricultural and conservation groups, New Mexico state
18 university and the New Mexico forest and watershed restoration
19 institute; and

20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group be requested
21 to report its findings and conclusions to the appropriate
22 interim legislative committee by July 1, 2020; and

23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
24 transmitted to the secretary of energy, minerals and natural
25 resources, the state fire marshal, the director of the

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1 department of game and fish, the commissioner of public lands,
2 the secretary of environment, the director of the New Mexico
3 department of agriculture, the state engineer, the
4 superintendent of insurance, the chair of the New Mexico
5 prescribed fire council, the executive director of the New
6 Mexico acequia association, the president of New Mexico state
7 university and the director of the New Mexico forest and
8 watershed restoration institute.

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