The National Congress of American Indians
Resolution #ATL-14-050

TITLE: Support the Wildfire Disaster Funding Legislation

WHEREAS, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

WHEREAS, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

WHEREAS, the forests, grasslands, and rangelands located in the territories of the members of NCAI have been managed over the last century in a manner that has led to deviations from the natural range of variability and resulted in lands that are less resistant to fire and disease; and

WHEREAS, the health of the forests, grasslands, and rangelands is critical to protecting our territories, reservations, treaty and trust resources and, sacred and religious sites; and

WHEREAS, management of the forests, grasslands, and rangelands to restore them to resilient ecosystems and a sustainable environment further the protection of our territories, reservations, treaty and trust resources, and sacred and religious sites; and

WHEREAS, the current practice of transferring funds from non-fire programs to cover the cost of essential fire suppression has undermined the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) and Department of the Interior’s (DOI) ability to sustainably manage the forests, grasslands, and rangelands that are critical to tribal culture, religion, treaty rights, and trust resources; and

WHEREAS, a bipartisan group of Senators and Congressmen introduced in legislation in Congress to improve the way USDA and DOI fund the response to emergency fires, especially the explosive growth of mega fires experienced in the West; and
WHEREAS, the wildfire disaster funding legislation would treat the budget for responsible fire suppression in a similar manner to other emergencies such as floods and hurricanes, while ensuring funding for general land management and restoration actions that can reduce the need for wildfire suppression in the future.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that NCAI does hereby support the immediate passage of legislation to address wildfire disaster funding by treating wildfires like other natural disasters and emergencies to ensure federal funding; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2014 Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Hyatt Regency Atlanta, October 26-31, 2014 in Atlanta, Georgia, with a quorum present.

ATTEST:

[Signatures]

President

Recording Secretary