

RESOLUTION 5-S.F.No. 3835

A resolution memorializing the President of the United States and the President's Council on Environmental Quality to expedite the environmental impact statement of the United States Forest Service to begin reducing fuel loadings within the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

WHEREAS, on July 4, 1999, storms caused serious damage to nearly 400,000 acres of forests in and around the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW), including 255,000 acres within the BWCAW; and

WHEREAS, the July 4, 1999, storms increased the amount of dead and down materials on the ground in the areas blown down in the BWCAW from normal amounts of five to 20 tons of fuel per acre up to 50 to 100 tons of fuel per acre, including 89,000 acres that have an average of 73 tons of fuel per acre and 76,000 acres with an average of 48 tons of fuel per acre; and

WHEREAS, this increase in material on the ground will allow ignition, development, and rapid spread of high-intensity fires that are difficult to control under a wide variety of weather conditions, and under the right weather conditions there is an increased potential for wildfire within the BWCAW that could move from within the BWCAW to adjacent private, state, and national lands or across the international border into Canada; and

WHEREAS, most lakes and waterways within the BWCAW are not wide enough to prevent spotting of wildfires across them so they will not slow down the spread of a fire within or outside of the BWCAW; and

WHEREAS, fires in the blowdown area are more likely to become plume dominated, with enormous smoke columns, and will be driven by extreme fire behavior that is not predictable using any current fire spread and fire behavior models; and

WHEREAS, fires in the blowdown area will burn at a higher, more prolonged intensity with an increased daily spread rate, and large fire growth will occur under moderate weather conditions and will not be dependent on wind events; and

WHEREAS, prescribed fire treatments within the BWCAW need to begin as soon as possible in large blocks to successfully slow the spread of wildfire; and

WHEREAS, an environmental impact statement may take from 12 to 18 months to complete; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Legislature of the State of Minnesota that it memorializes the President of the United States and the President's Council on Environmental Quality to provide the United States Forest Service with temporary alternative arrangements for National Environmental Policy Act compliance to begin reducing fuel loadings through controlled burning within the BWCAW.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council on Environmental Quality expedite approval of alternative arrangements to ensure that fuel loading reduction within the BWCAW may begin during the 2000 calendar year.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of State of Minnesota is directed to prepare copies of this memorial and transmit them to the President of the United States, the President's Council on Environmental Quality, and Minnesota's Senators and Representatives in Congress.

Presented to the governor May 19, 2000

Signed by the governor May 30, 2000, 2:06 p.m.