

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 14

WHEREAS, the National Forest Service is a federal agency within the United States Department of Agriculture that manages public lands in national forests and grasslands, engages in important research as the world's largest forestry research organization, and provides assistance to state and private forestry entities; and

WHEREAS, the origination of the Forest Service can be traced back to the passage of the Forest Reserve Act of 1891, which allowed presidents to establish forest reserves from timber-covered land in the public domain; and

WHEREAS, a progressive United States Congress and President Theodore Roosevelt, the most notable conservationist among all U.S. presidents deceased and living, established the Forest Service in 1905; and

WHEREAS, a primary objective of the Forest Service is to enable citizens to enjoy its 155 national forest and 20 grasslands, which collectively comprise about 8.5 percent of the total land area of the United States; and

WHEREAS, another chief goal of the Forest Service is to protect the environment for generations yet to come and manage the National Forest System for the overall benefit of the American people; and

WHEREAS, Gifford Pinchot, the first Chief of the Forest Service, summed up the mission of the Forest Service by stating that it should "provide the greatest amount of good for the greatest amount of people in the long run"; and

WHEREAS, Pinchot's vision of the Forest Service has recently been called into question by a new Bush Administration proposal to possibly sell more about 274,000 acres of national forest to private owners and developers; and

WHEREAS, this newest proposal is similar to a 2006 Bush Administration plan that was largely opposed by Missouri citizens; and

WHEREAS, 21,588 acres of the Mark Twain National Forest in Missouri is under consideration for sale, which ranks Missouri in the Top 5 of states with potential lost forest; and

WHEREAS, Forest Service stewards have in the past participated in limited land-exchange programs but have never engaged in the outright sale of our national forests, which is undoubtedly one of our country's most precious assets; and

WHEREAS, the money raised from the sale of our national forests would be used to fund a program created by the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act of 2000 – a program that is of little benefit to the citizens of the state of Missouri, even under the spending guidelines of the newest proposal:

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the members of the Missouri Senate, Ninety-fourth General Assembly, First Regular Session, the House of Representatives concurring herein, hereby express their opposition to the Bush Administration's unprecedented proposed sale of national forest land; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge Missouri citizens to contact the Forest Service during its allotted time of public comment to speak out against this plan; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we ask Missouri's nine Congressmen in the U.S. House of Representatives and its two U.S. senators to use their influence to oppose the proposed sale of public lands; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Missouri Senate be instructed to prepare properly inscribed copies of this resolution for U.S. Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns, Chief of the National Forest Service Abigail Kimbell, and each of Missouri's federal representatives and senators.