



COUNTY OF ALPINE
County Administrative Office

C0-10-110

Pamela Knorr, County Administrative Officer

October 10, 2008

Mary D. Nichols, Chair
California Air Resource Board
1001 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

ORIGINAL: Board Clerk
Copies: Executive Officer
Chair



RE: Climate Change Scoping Plan, June 2008 Discussion Draft

Dear Chair Nichols,

Alpine County welcomes the opportunity to comment on the June 2008 Discussion Draft of the Climate Change Scoping Plan, and appreciates the efforts of ARB to reach out to local governments during this process. However, we are concerned that the document does not adequately address the serious issue of Catastrophic wildfire, and believe that wildfire mitigation and prevention are vital to ARB's success in meeting the goals set forth in AB 32.

As you are aware, in May 2008, Governor Schwarzenegger issued Executive Order S-03-08, which specifically directed CalEPA and the California Resources Agency to oversee the Climate Action Team's development of measures for wildfire reduction and biomass utilization. In light of the Executive Order, the current rampant wildfires around the state, and the Governor's recent emergency declarations, we are troubled that no such measures have been outlined in the Scoping Plan.

Recent wildfires statewide have had major impacts on air quality, contributing significantly to California's carbon and particulate emissions. As the wildfire season progresses, thousands of acres of forest lands will needlessly burn, releasing even more carbon and further contributing to our poor air quality. Catastrophic wildfires are typically on United States Forest Service (USFS) lands, and we maintain that many of those fires, along with the corresponding emissions, could be prevented if USFS lands were more efficiently managed. We are concerned that the Draft Scoping Plan makes only a vague mention of fuels reduction and fails to address emissions from fires on USFS lands.

Alpine County strongly urges ARB to include in the Final Draft Scoping Plan a firm commitment by the state to join with local governments to advocate at the federal level for enhanced management on USFS lands, as well as an extensive program to quantify wildfire emissions that could be avoided through better forest management practices. This is vital not only in meeting the goals of AB 32, but more importantly to improving the quality of air and public health. We thank you for your consideration of our comments.

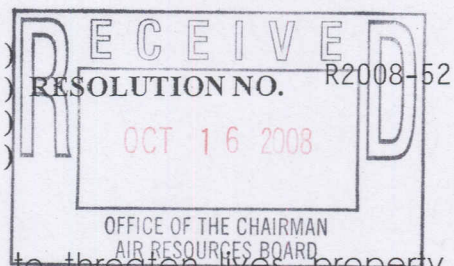
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Pamela Knorr".

Pamela Knorr
County Administrative Officer

CC: Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
Members, California Air Resource Board

**RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS,
COUNTY OF ALPINE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA,
REGARDING WILDFIRE PREVENTION AND
FORESTRY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY PROGRESS**



WHEREAS catastrophic wildfires continue to threaten lives, property and the natural resources of the state of California;

WHEREAS the insurance losses for the 2007 Fire Season in Southern California were \$1.6 billion and the Angora Fire in the Tahoe basin was more than \$150 million alone, insurers have paid out in excess of \$8 billion to thousands of policy holders from the top 10 California wildfires since 1970;

WHEREAS the estimated loss of employment from the 2007 Southern California fires was in excess of \$500 million;

WHEREAS California is approximately 50% publicly owned land and 50% privately owned land but many rural counties have substantially higher percentages of federally owned land;

WHEREAS Alpine County has over 700 square miles of publically owned land which is 96% of the total land in the county;

WHEREAS in the 2008 fire season so far alone, Alpine County has suffered 1 fire, over 216 acres have burned, and of these, 100% where on federally owned land;

WHEREAS approximately 12,500 acres of Alpine County have been destroyed by catastrophic wildfire over the last 20 years, which destroyed lives, property, businesses, and the environment;

WHEREAS California has over 43 million acres of federal land, much of which has not been adequately managed to mitigate the risk of catastrophic wildfire;

WHEREAS two of the three largest wildfires in California in the past 100 years began on federally-owned land;

WHEREAS many acres of dead and decaying trees remain in the national forests within Alpine County due to lax forestry management practices on federal lands;

WHEREAS millions of dollars are spent each year fighting fires in our national forests;

WHEREAS the escalating costs of fighting fires on federal land over the last 10 years has significantly diminished the available resources for the critically needed prevention measures that can minimize these catastrophic fires;

WHEREAS, the U.S. Forest Service and Department of Interior have spent over \$1 billion on fire suppression every year since 2000 with suppression costs now consuming over 50% of the total wildland fire budget, as compared to 13% of the total fire budget in 1991, leaving few resources for critically needed preventive maintenance of our national forests in the west and throughout the country;

WHEREAS the resources to manage the federal lands to reduce fire risk would be a small investment relative to the skyrocketing costs of fire suppression;

WHEREAS the State of California has made significant strides towards reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfires on state and private lands such as ranking lands as to the level of fire hazard, requiring 100 feet of defensible space around homes, requiring ignition-resistant materials on all new construction that is built in any Fire Hazard Severity Zone within State Responsibility Areas, any Local Agency Very-High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, or any designated Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Fire Area, and many other things to not only address preservation of life and property but the environmental risks of large scale wildfire as well;

WHEREAS the increased risk of catastrophic wildfires in Alpine County will result in harmful secondary environmental effects, including diminished air and water quality, impacted watershed, increased air pollutant emissions, and threatened habitats of sensitive wildlife species;

WHEREAS, approximately *eighty percent* of the State's developed surface water supply originates on watershed lands within our rural counties. California's residents use a portion of this water for domestic, commercial, agricultural, industrial, recreational, and other beneficial uses and these rivers, lakes, and watershed lands also serve as habitat for hundreds of species of fish and wildlife;

WHEREAS, the detrimental effects on these watersheds affect all of California, not just rural California;

WHEREAS the increased risk of catastrophic wildfires significantly impacts the levels of greenhouse gases in Alpine County;

WHEREAS the mitigation of wildfire emissions is vital to reach the goals stated in the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32);

WHEREAS the Draft AB 32 Scoping Plan, released in June 2008, fails to adequately address the need to mitigate wildfires and the importance of quantifying and modeling wildfire emissions on private, state, and federal lands;

WHEREAS there continues to be a widely recognized extremely high risk of catastrophic wildfires in Alpine County due to unnaturally heavy fuel loads and the early drying of wild land vegetation;

WHEREAS the Alpine County Board of Supervisors calls for immediate measures to be taken to prevent imminent catastrophic wildfires;

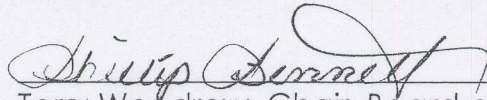
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alpine County Board of Supervisors declares that there is an ongoing emergency due to the threat of wildfire in California, that the state and the local governments have taken many steps to resolve this issue and now requests that the Governor take an active role at the federal level to demand that the United States Forest Service take action in California's federal wild and forest lands to do the prevention and maintenance work required to mitigate the risk of catastrophic wildfires.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Alpine, State of California, this 7th day of October 2008, by the following vote:

AYES: Supervisors Jardine, Veatch, Bennett, Kaiser

NOES: None

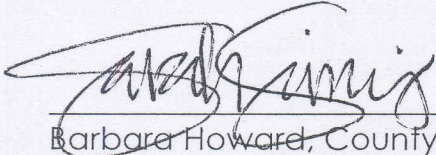
ABSENT: Supervisor Woodrow



Terry Woodrow, Chair, Board of Supervisors,
County of Alpine, State of California
By: Phillip Bennett, Vice Chair

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

ATTEST:



Barbara Howard, County Clerk & ex
Officio Clerk to the Board of Supervisors,
County of Alpine, State of California
By: Sarah Simis, Deputy



Martin Fine, County Counsel