

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

RS24587

This is a fiscal year 2016 supplemental appropriation and transfer in the amount of \$60 million to cover the costs of wildfire suppression.

The state forester described the 2015 fire season as the perfect storm. A mild winter, a warm dry spring and summer, record low soil and fuel moisture, record low humidity, high likelihood of ignition from lightning, a shortage of resources, and a long fire season.

With that said, it was only slightly above average in terms of fire occurrence. There were 321 fires on lands protected by the state. That was 102 percent of the 20-year average of 315 fires. However, 16 escaped initial attack and the 78,571 acres burned were 391% percent of the 20-year average of 20,100 acres. Furthermore, the agency estimated fire costs of \$60.2 million which was 354% of the ten year average of \$17 million. The largest, most expensive fire was the Clearwater Complex that burned 68,100 acres, 62 residences, and 211 outbuildings. A large portion of the lands protected by the state are in the wildland urban interface (WUI).

FISCAL NOTE

This bill transfers \$60 million from the General Fund to the Fire Suppression Deficiency Fund for fiscal year 2016. This appropriation accounts for the cost of the 2015 fire season. On a cash basis, the balance of the Fire Suppression Deficiency Fund was negative \$10.4 million as of January 2016. There were \$16.5 million in outstanding obligations from prior years and \$36.2 million in obligations outstanding for the latest fire season. That leaves an estimated \$3 million in outstanding obligations; however, the estimates change over time as reimbursements from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other agencies are settled.

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