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HOUSE MEMORIAL 2

56TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2023

INTRODUCED BY

Debra M. Sariñana and Pat Woods and Antoinette Sedillo Lopez
and Ambrose Castellano and Kristina Ortez

A MEMORIAL

HONORING THE RESPONSE OF NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY'S COLLEGE
OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES' STAFF
DURING THE HERMIT'S PEAK/CALF CANYON FIRE.

WHEREAS, the New Mexico state university college of
agricultural, consumer and environmental sciences' agriculture
experiment station, the John T. Harrington forestry research
center, operates in Mora with a mission to advance the
understanding of restoration activities on forested areas; and

WHEREAS, the forestry research center also provides
science-based solutions for private, tribal, state and federal
forest managers who face the threat of catastrophic wildfires
due to overgrown forests and the inability of post-fire forest
communities and ecosystems to naturally regenerate after such
fires; and

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1 WHEREAS, in the spring of 2022, New Mexico suffered the
2 largest and most destructive wildfire in the state's history;
3 and

4 WHEREAS, the Hermit's peak fire began on April 6, 2022,
5 when the United States forest service lost control of a
6 prescribed burn, and the Calf canyon fire began on April 19,
7 2022, when an improperly extinguished United States forest
8 service pile burn operation from January 2022 rekindled; and

9 WHEREAS, the two fires merged during a major wind event on
10 April 22, 2022, creating the Hermit's peak/Calf canyon fire and
11 ultimately torching more than three hundred forty-one thousand
12 acres; and

13 WHEREAS, the Hermit's peak/Calf canyon fire breached the
14 John T. Harrington forestry research center's property, the
15 only facility in the southwest dedicated to reforesting lands
16 burned by catastrophic wildfires, and appeared to be on a path
17 to destroy the forestry research center; and

18 WHEREAS, when faced with evacuation orders and the threat
19 of losing critical research, Professor Owen Burney, director of
20 the John T. Harrington forestry research center, and team
21 members Tammy Parsons, Pouli Sikelianos, Joshua Trujillo and
22 Donna Ebler mobilized to save the forestry research center's
23 vast seed collection; and

24 WHEREAS, the forestry research center team installed
25 impromptu irrigation systems during the evacuation to keep

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1 seedlings alive, built fire lines and flood protection facility
2 structures around the property and moved the entire seed bank
3 and tree seeds to safety; and

4 WHEREAS, the forestry research center team also gave up
5 planned personal leave to be available twenty-four hours, seven
6 days a week during the height of the fire to assist with all
7 staff and research needs; and

8 WHEREAS, the seed bank of more than three million seeds
9 was originally moved to Las Vegas, New Mexico, followed by a
10 move of more than one hundred fifty miles south to the Los
11 Lunas agricultural science center of the college of
12 agricultural, consumer and environmental sciences of New Mexico
13 state university after the fire shifted toward San Miguel
14 county; and

15 WHEREAS, about seventy-five thousand tree seedlings were
16 retrieved from the forestry research center's nursery in a
17 rescue operation carried out over two days with assistance from
18 outside groups, including a New Mexico state police escort; and

19 WHEREAS, the New Mexico state university college of
20 agricultural, consumer and environmental sciences cooperative
21 extension service district team made significant contributions
22 to the fire response; and

23 WHEREAS, Christina Turner, Suzanne DeVos-Cole, Tom
24 Dominguez, Monica Gonzales-Wilder, Boe C. Lopez, John Martinez,
25 Tom Dean and Leigh Ann Marez coordinated and communicated

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1 information among counties in the northern district, emergency
2 services, the New Mexico livestock board and other crucial
3 agencies; and

4 WHEREAS, thanks to the heroic work of Dr. Burney and the
5 John T. Harrington forestry research center team and the New
6 Mexico state university college of agricultural, consumer and
7 environmental sciences team, the resources of the only research
8 program in the southwestern United States that focuses on
9 forest nursery technologies, tree improvement and the
10 ecophysiology of young forest trees to facilitate ecological
11 restoration were saved;

12 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
13 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that Professor Owen
14 Burney and team members Tammy Parsons, Pouli Sikelianos, Joshua
15 Trujillo and Donna Ebler be recognized and honored for their
16 roles in saving the vast seed collection and tree seedlings of
17 the John T. Harrington forestry research center in the Mora
18 agricultural experiment station; and

19 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the New Mexico state
20 university cooperative extension service team of Christina
21 Turner, Suzanne DeVos-Cole, Tom Dominguez, Monica Gonzales-
22 Wilder, Boe C. Lopez, John Martinez, Tom Dean and Leigh Ann
23 Marez be recognized and honored for their significant
24 contributions in addressing the challenges created by the
25 Hermit's peak/Calf canyon fire; and

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1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
2 transmitted to Professor Owen Burney and team members Tammy
3 Parsons, Pouli Sikelianos, Joshua Trujillo and Donna Ebler; New
4 Mexico state university cooperative extension service team
5 members Christina Turner, Suzanne DeVos-Cole, Tom Dominguez,
6 Monica Gonzales-Wilder, Boe C. Lopez, John Martinez, Tom Dean
7 and Leigh Ann Marez; and the board of regents of New Mexico
8 state university.

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