

One Hundred Third Legislature - First Session - 2013

Introducer's Statement of Intent

LB634

Chairperson: Senator Tom Carlson

Committee: Natural Resources

Date of Hearing: February 22, 2013

The following constitutes the reasons for this bill and the purposes which are sought to be accomplished thereby:

2012 was the worst wild land fire year on record in Nebraska with nearly 500,000 acres burned, 65 structures lost and at least \$12 million in suppression costs. Mega fires are predicted to occur far more frequently than in the past, spread and grow very rapidly immediately upon ignition, and burn over large areas for weeks. They are difficult to control and threaten lives, property, communities and infrastructure statewide.

LB 634 directs the Nebraska Forest Service to:

Contract with private aviation companies to place two single engine air tankers during the fire season at airports near Chadron and Valentine. These planes would provide rapid initial attack across a broad area of western Nebraska on both private and public lands, keeping fires small and less destructive.

Thin forests to reduce fuel loads, substantially reducing wildfire risk, intensity, and rate of the spread, and reduce risks to residents, communities and emergency personnel.

Provide expanded training programs for volunteer firefighters, private landowners, and communities in order to increase fire suppression effectiveness and safety.

Develop a Nebraska-based Type 3 incident management team that would serve as a comprehensive resource to augment and help manage large wildfire operations.

Expand the federal excess property programs managed by the Nebraska Forest Service to provide volunteer fire districts with fire suppression equipment.

Rehabilitate forest lands that have been destroyed by wildfires.

Principal Introducer: _____

Senator Al Davis