

ing of individuals representing public and private organizations actively involved in the conservation of marine turtles.

(b) Public participation

(1) Meetings

The Advisory Group shall—

(A) ensure that each meeting of the advisory group is open to the public; and

(B) provide, at each meeting, an opportunity for interested persons to present oral or written statements concerning items on the agenda.

(2) Notice

The Secretary shall provide to the public timely notice of each meeting of the advisory group.

(3) Minutes

Minutes of each meeting of the advisory group shall be kept by the Secretary and shall be made available to the public.

(c) Exemption from Federal Advisory Committee Act

The Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.) shall not apply to the advisory group.

(Pub. L. 108-266, § 6, July 2, 2004, 118 Stat. 795.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The Federal Advisory Committee Act, referred to in subsec. (c), is Pub. L. 92-463, Oct. 6, 1972, 86 Stat. 770, as amended, which is set out in the Appendix to Title 5, Government Organization and Employees.

§ 6606. Authorization of appropriations

There is authorized to be appropriated to the Fund \$5,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2005 through 2009.

(Pub. L. 108-266, § 7, July 2, 2004, 118 Stat. 795.)

§ 6607. Report to Congress

Not later than October 1, 2005, the Secretary shall submit to the Congress a report on the results and effectiveness of the program carried out under this chapter, including recommendations concerning how this chapter might be improved and whether the Fund should be continued in the future.

(Pub. L. 108-266, § 8, July 2, 2004, 118 Stat. 796.)

CHAPTER 86—SOUTHWEST FOREST HEALTH AND WILDFIRE PREVENTION

Sec.	
6701.	Findings.
6702.	Purposes.
6703.	Definitions.
6704.	Establishment of Institutes.
6705.	Cooperation between Institutes and Federal agencies.
6706.	Monitoring and evaluation.
6707.	Authorization of appropriations.

§ 6701. Findings

Congress finds that—

(1) there is an increasing threat of wildfire to millions of acres of forest land and rangeland throughout the United States;

(2) forest land and rangeland are degraded as a direct consequence of land management

practices, including practices to control and prevent wildfires and the failure to harvest subdominant trees from overstocked stands that disrupt the occurrence of frequent low-intensity fires that have periodically removed flammable undergrowth;

(3) at least 39,000,000 acres of land of the National Forest System in the interior West are at high risk of wildfire;

(4) an average of 95 percent of the expenditures by the Forest Service for wildfire suppression during fiscal years 1990 through 1994 were made to suppress wildfires in the interior West;

(5) the number, size, and severity of wildfires in the interior West are increasing;

(6) of the timberland in National Forests in the States of Arizona and New Mexico, 59 percent of such land in Arizona, and 56 percent of such land in New Mexico, has an average diameter of 9 to 12 inches diameter at breast height;

(7) the population of the interior West grew twice as fast as the national average during the 1990s;

(8) catastrophic wildfires—

(A) endanger homes and communities;

(B) damage and destroy watersheds and soils; and

(C) pose a serious threat to the habitat of threatened and endangered species;

(9) a 1994 assessment of forest health in the interior West estimated that only a 15- to 30-year window of opportunity exists for effective management intervention before damage from uncontrollable wildfire becomes widespread, with 8 years having already elapsed since the assessment;

(10) healthy forest and woodland ecosystems—

(A) reduce the risk of wildfire to forests and communities;

(B) improve wildlife habitat and biodiversity;

(C) increase tree, grass, forb, and shrub productivity;

(D) enhance watershed values;

(E) improve the environment; and

(F) provide a basis in some areas for economically and environmentally sustainable uses;

(11) sustaining the long-term ecological and economic health of interior West forests and woodland, and their associated human communities requires preventing severe wildfires before the wildfires occur and permitting natural, low-intensity ground fires;

(12) more natural fire regimes cannot be accomplished without the reduction of excess fuels and thinning of subdominant trees (which fuels and trees may be of commercial value);

(13) ecologically based forest and woodland ecosystem restoration on a landscape scale will—

(A) improve long-term community protection;

(B) minimize the need for wildfire suppression;

(C) improve resource values;