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Washington DC 20250
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Date: 2/22/23

Delivered via ELECTRONIC MAIL

This letter is in response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request dated January 1, 2021, and received on January 4, 2021, by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service Washington Office FOIA Service Center and assigned tracking number 2021-FS-WO-01558-F. You requested "a digital/electronic copy of the transition briefing document(s) (late 2020) prepared by the US Forest Service for the incoming Biden Administration."

In response to your request, we conducted a search and found 48 pages of responsive records: 31 pages are released in entirety; and 17 are enclosed in part. Redactions were made pursuant to Exemptions 6 and 7(C) of the FOIA, 5 U.S.C. 552(b)(6), (b)(7)(C).

FOIA Exemption 6

Exemption 6 requires the Government to withhold all information about individuals in "personnel and medical files and similar files," where disclosure of such information "would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy." Exemption 6 also involves a balancing of the public's interest in disclosure against the individual's privacy interest.

Pursuant to FOIA Exemption 6, we have redacted employee cell phone numbers. These individuals have a clear privacy interest in the protection of this information, and there is little or no public interest in its release. The individual privacy rights outweigh the public's interest in this information.

FOIA Exemption 7(C)

Exemption 7(C) permits the Government to withhold records or information compiled for law enforcement purposes, but only to the extent that the production of such law enforcement records or information could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy. We have determined that the name and contact information (cell phone, email address) of a law enforcement officer must be withheld pursuant to Exemptions 6 and 7(C) of the FOIA.



The FOIA provides that requesters pay the reasonable costs for search, review, and duplication of records. Pursuant to Title 7, Code of Federal Regulations, Subtitle A, Part 1, Subpart A, Appendix A, there is no charge as the amount falls below the minimum required to collect fees.

This concludes the Forest Service's response to your FOIA request.


The FOIA provides you the right to appeal this response. Any appeal must be made in writing, within 90 days from the date of this letter to the Chief, USDA Forest Service. Additionally, due to the concerns surrounding the COVID-19 virus we are only accepting appeals electronically at this time. Please email your appeal to SM.FS.WOFOIA@usda.gov. The term "FOIA APPEAL" should be placed in capital letters on the subject line of the email along with the FOIA case number assigned to your request. To facilitate the processing of your appeal, please attach a copy of this letter to your request as well.

If you need any further assistance or would like to discuss any aspect of your request, please do not hesitate to contact the FOIA Public Liaison at (202) 205-6560. Additionally, you may contact the Office of Government Information Services, National Archives and Records Administration, to inquire about the FOIA mediation services they offer. The contact information for OGIS is as follows: Office of Government Information Services, National Archives and Records Administration, 8601 Adelphi Road-OGIS, College Park, MD 20740-6001, email ogis@nara.gov; telephone at (202) 741-5770; toll free at (877) 684-6448; or facsimile at (202) 741-5769.

Sincerely,

**JACOB
DONNAY**

JACOB DONNAY
Director, Legislative Affairs

 Digitally signed by JACOB
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Date: 2023.02.22 11:24:23
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Enclosures: 48 pages

Key Issues/Hot Topic Proposals

Natural Resources & Environment, Forest Service, Chief's Office

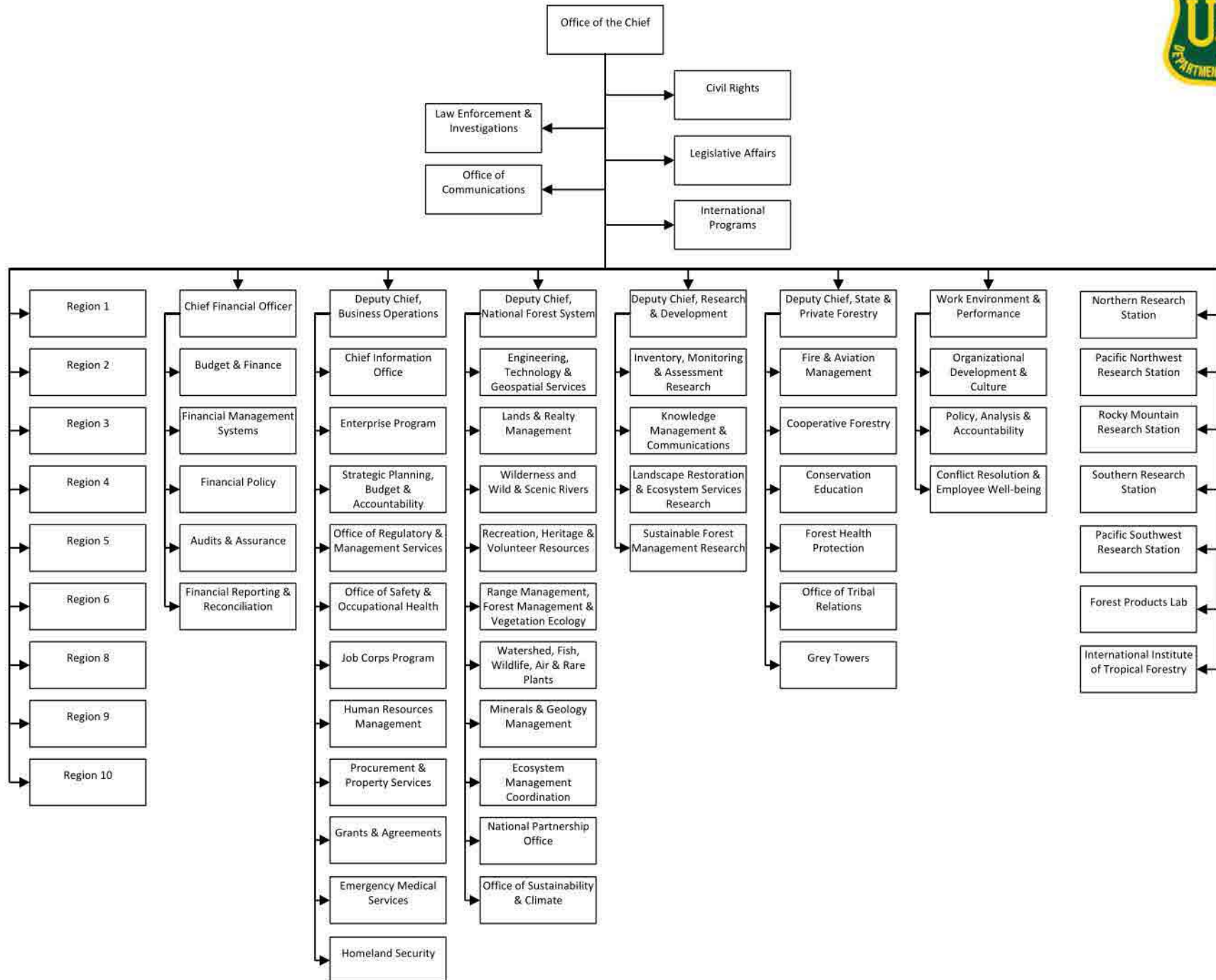
Issue Name	Issue Description	Point of Contact
1. Great American Outdoors Act: Forest Service Implements New Great American Outdoors Act that Funds Repairs and Maintenance on Facilities, Trails and Roads	<p>During the pandemic, National Forest visitation has increased 2.5-3 times over 2015 levels. Since 1998, however, the agency has seen a more \$5 billion backlog in facilities maintenance and a more than 40% decrease in non-fire positions. At the same time, we have seen dramatic increases in both visitor numbers and customer needs for services supporting our multiple use mission, including forest restoration, recreation, and special uses and permit management. Maintaining a functioning infrastructure for recreation facilities, roads and trails, alongside a workforce aligned with our broader conservation mission and customer needs is one of our key challenges going forward.</p> <p>The Great American Outdoors Act (P.L. 116-152) establishes a National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund to address deferred maintenance needs of the USDA Forest Service and other federal public land agencies. The USDA Forest Service will receive 15% of these funds (up to \$285 million per year) for FY 2021 through FY 2025. The bill also provides permanent full funding of the Land and Water Conservation fund which provides for federal land acquisition and Forest Legacy grants to states under existing programs. There is considerable interest from Congress and external stakeholders related to implementation of the Act.</p>	<p>Chris French, Deputy Chief, National Forest System christopher.french@usda.gov Phone: (b)(6)</p>
2. Post Fire Recovery: Forest Service Begins Work to Restore Forests in Aftermath of 2020's Western Wildfires	<p>In the last 5 years, America has experienced two of the worst fire seasons since 1953, resulting in tragic loss of lives and damage to communities; millions of acres burned; and flooding risk and mudslides impairing water sources. Focused recovery efforts to utilize millions of board feet of downed wood will be key after the fires are out in early FY 21. This will mean rapid salvage sales to take advantage of commercially viable wood products and support industry and communities in the aftermath of fires. We will also need to invest in building markets for that wood, including helping industry invest in new processing infrastructure and expanding new markets, like biomass and Cross Laminated Timber (CLT). Novel ways to assess landscapes after fires and improved collaboration across all the federal and non-federal programs that support communities after disasters will also be needed.</p>	<p>Chris French, Deputy Chief, National Forest System christopher.french@usda.gov Phone: (b)(6)</p> <p>John Phipps, Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry john.phipps@usda.gov Phone: (b)(6)</p>
3. Work Environment: Forest Service Works to Transform Culture and Improve Work Environment	<p>In recent years, the Forest Service has undertaken definitive agency-wide actions that aim to transform its culture and permanently end all forms of harassment, retaliation and discrimination. These actions include tougher anti-harassment policies, a new code of conduct, and raising level of accountability.</p>	<p>Leslie Weldon, Chief Executive of Work Environment and Performance leslie.weldon@usda.gov Phone: (b)(6)</p>

4. Shared Stewardship: More than 20 New Shared Stewardship Agreements Will Result in Shared Priority Work with States to Improve Conditions on Forests	In June 2017, the Forest Service unveiled a new approach to forest management that calls for stronger relationships with state to conduct cross-boundary work that improves conditions forests. This approach has led to nearly 20 new agreements between the Forest Service and States to mutually agree on high priority work, share resources and treat forests in the right places to make a difference on large landscapes – with nearly 31 anticipated by December 2020. With over 1 billion burnable acres at risk in the United States, communities are demanding an increase in the pace and scale of forest management, across boundaries, to reduce risk, restore healthy forests, protect watersheds and create jobs. To meet the challenge at a scale that will make a difference, the Forest Service and its partners will need to double or triple hazardous fuels treatment and active management of forests and use the best available science to target our investments towards the right places at the right times. Shared Stewardship is the pathway to making that a reality.	<p>John Phipps, Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry john.phipps@usda.gov Phone: (b)(6)</p> <p>Chris French, Deputy Chief, National Forest System christopher.french@usda.gov Phone: (b)(6)</p>
5. Forest Service Increases Effectiveness of Environmental Analysis and Decision-making	The Forest Service devotes considerable personnel and financial resources to meet its obligations under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to consider and inform the public of potential environmental impacts of agency activities. This work is important to the Forest Service's mission to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands, and it is a high priority to conduct these analytic and public engagement tasks as effectively and efficiently as possible. In January, 2018, the Forest Service initiated a regulatory action to streamline NEPA procedures and facilitate review of infrastructure management and environmental restoration activities, as well as for several special uses authorizations by adding new categorical exclusions. This regulatory action, expected to conclude in 2020, also reflects recent changes to the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA regulations. In addition, in September 2017, the Forest Service established a programmatic focus on operational changes to improve NEPA reviews through its Environmental Analysis and Decision Making initiative, which continues today.	<p>Chris French, Deputy Chief, National Forest System christopher.french@usda.gov Phone: (b)(6)</p>
6. Private Companies Eager to Invest their Funds to Restore Forests and Mitigate Effects of Changing Climate	Private sector interest in forest-focused investments is surging as corporations strive to fulfill their sustainability goals and investors seek investment opportunities that yield environmental outcomes and financial returns. High-level initiatives such as the Trillion Trees campaign launched at last year's World Economic Forum have amplified private sector interest in the Forest Service's work. The U.S. has committed to the Trillion Trees Initiative with the focus on restoring forests through collective action by multiple sectors for the benefit of people, wildlife, and a stable climate by removing carbon from the atmosphere. Trillion Trees partners, including the Forest Service, are working to create funding streams through innovative conservation financing for land management activities across ownerships. Private sector players have consistently demonstrated interest in climate change mitigation and co-benefits such as forest and watershed health, habitat conservation, and recreation. Many policymakers have recognized the importance	<p>Chris French, Deputy Chief, National Forest System christopher.french@usda.gov Phone: (b)(6)</p> <p>John Phipps, Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry john.phipps@usda.gov Phone: (b)(6)</p> <p>Alex Friend, Deputy Chief, Research and Development alexander.friend@usda.gov</p>

	of trees as a climate solution, and a variety of bills have been introduced that are aimed at increasing reforestation on National Forest System and other lands.	Phone: (202) 205-1665
7. Alaska Roadless Rule: State Petition for Alaska Roadless Rule Nears Completion	Roadless Area management on the Tongass National Forest in Southeast Alaska has been the subject of litigation since the 2001 Roadless Area Management Rule was established. In response to a petition from the State of Alaska, USDA conducted rulemaking for a Roadless rule for the State of Alaska. The Final Environmental Impact is expected to be published in late September 2020 with the Final rule and decision to follow. We anticipate considerable attention and additional litigation.	Chris French, Deputy Chief, National Forest System christopher.french@usda.gov Phone: (b)(6)
8. Wildfire Management: Improving Wildland Fire Management 2021 including Direct Fire Hire	It's been two decades since the nation first turned its attention in a holistic way to wildland fire, following a landmark 1999 fire season where almost 6 million acres burned; thousands of structures were destroyed; and firefighters and citizens lost their lives. Since that time, the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior have built robust fire response programs through billions of dollars of new funding. In 2014 federal and non-federal partners took this effort a step further with the National Cohesive Strategy for Wildland Fire Management (known as the Cohesive Strategy). The 2018 Omnibus Appropriations bill called for a re-evaluation of the National Fire Plan. This represents a new call to action to modernize the way we fight wildland fire in this country, especially given the magnitude and destruction of fires in 2020. We need a year-round workforce to match the season and Direct Hire Authority is helping us get there. In FY 2020, we hired 2,000 permanent firefighters using this authority. In FY 2021, we will hire an additional 3,000 temporary and permanent firefighters using this authority (5,000 total for both years combined). In FY 2021, we must also bring the full force of new technology, like Unmanned Aerial Systems and tracking software, to face forward to a firefighting force and strategy for the 21st Century.	Jaelith Hall-Rivera, Associate Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry jaelith.rivera@usda.gov Phone: (b)(6)
9. Job Corps: Reforming Job Corps Program to Enhance Performance and Ties to Natural Resource Conservation Trades	Curriculum trade changes were approved for five Civilian Conservation Centers (CCCs) – adding conservation trades and student capacity while closing lower performing trades. A comprehensive plan covering all CCCs was provided to DOL on August 31 that increases alignment with Forest Service (17 new conservation trades), increases students served by 25%, eliminates 27 lower-performing trades and reduces per-student costs. Further, the Forest Service is working with the Department of Labor on strategies to increase employment of students within the Forest Service. The agency is exploring development of a new Direct Hire authority to facilitate that effort. Additionally, the Department of Labor (DOL) is targeting a phased re-opening potentially beginning in late October. DOL mandated the removal of students, across entire Job Corps program, from all centers in March due to unknowns about the pandemic.	Malcom Shorter Associate Deputy Chief, Business Operations malcom.shorter@usda.gov Phone: (703) 605-4167
10. Forest Service looks to Permanently Adopt New Innovations in Business Practices that resulted from Response to Pandemic	In its national response to Covid-19 pandemic, the Forest Service learned and adopted new, innovative strategies that helped the agency respond to emergencies, response, provide customer services and operate effectively amid the pandemic. The Forest Service is now seeking to permanently absorb these innovations as a part of its business practices.	Chris French, Deputy Chief, National Forest System christopher.french@usda.gov Phone: (b)(6) John Phipps, Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry

		john.phipps@usda.gov Phone: (b)(6)
11. Maintaining Secure Rural School Resource Advisory Committees	<p>The Forest Service has taken several new steps recently to ensure more timely approval of committee members on local advisory committees that support implementation of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act. The law, which provides funding to rural schools, roads and national forest projects, requires approved membership on advisory committees. Committees recommend funding allocations for local projects. Delays in filling vacancies have resulted in slowed approvals for funds. The Forest Service is testing new strategies at USDA and local levels to spur approval that speeds funding for projects.</p>	Chris French, Deputy Chief, National Forest System christopher.french@usda.gov Phone: (b)(6)

U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service



Top Issue/Hot Topic: Great American Outdoors Act

Executive Summary

Forest Service Implements New Great American Outdoors (GAO) Act that Funds Deferred Maintenance restoration projects, including Repairs and Maintenance on Facilities, Trails and Roads

Introduction

The Great American Outdoors Act (P.L. 116-152) establishes a National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund to address deferred maintenance needs of the USDA Forest Service and other federal public land agencies. The USDA Forest Service will receive 15% of these funds (up to \$285 million per year) for FY 2021 through FY 2025. The bill also provides permanent full funding of the Land and Water Conservation fund which provides for federal land acquisition and Forest Legacy grants to states under existing programs.

Key Challenges to Date

Maintaining a functioning infrastructure for recreation facilities, roads and trails, alongside a workforce aligned with our broader conservation mission and customer needs is one of our key challenges going forward. The agency has a \$5 billion backlog in facilities maintenance. Since 1998 there has been more than a 40% decrease in non-fire positions while there have also been dramatic increases in both visitor numbers and customer needs for services supporting our multiple use mission, including forest restoration, recreation, and special uses and permit management. This year, during the ongoing pandemic, National Forest visitation has increased 2.5-3 times over 2015 levels. Although the Forest Service will receive 15% of the amount available through the Restoration Fund, the Forest Service currently represents more than 25% of the total federal public lands deferred maintenance need.

Key Progress to Date

FY 21 Projects ready to be implemented have been identified, evaluated, and prioritized in consultation with stakeholders and the public. Project lists were submitted to OMB for submittal to Congress in November. The Forest Service focused on improving access, enhancing the quality of the visitor experience and benefits to the range of multiple uses

Next Steps

Plans to implement the FY 22 GAO Act process are well underway, to ensure projects are submitted with the Presidents' FY 22 Budget. LWCF project lists are being developed in coordination with regions and state counterparts respectively. For the Restoration Fund, the Forest Service is incorporating the GAO Act process into the agency's National Asset Management Plan, in order to consider all capital improvements holistically. Ongoing dialog with stakeholders will inform the project selection and prioritization process, including identifying steps to ensure projects are selected with consideration of the shared stewardship framework.

Projected Next Steps	Key Dates
• Finalize FY 22 GAOA Restoration Fund project submissions as part of USDA Forest Service's National Asset Management Program.	12/7/20
• Proceed with implementation of FY 21 GAOA projects, both LWCF and Restoration Fund projects	First Quarter FY21

Relevant Internal Stakeholders

Internal stakeholders involve USDA Forest Service forests, regions, stations, and all WO Deputy Areas, the Department's Program Management & Procurement, OBPA and NRE Undersecretary's Offices. Key aspects of GAO Act implementation, carried out by these staffs and offices, include project identification and implementation, contracting and agreements support, budget and staffing considerations, and oversight and accountability.

Relevant External Stakeholders

There is considerable interest from Congress and external stakeholders related to implementation of the Act.

Points of Contact

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Hot Topic: Post Fire Recovery from the 2020 Western Wildfires

Executive Summary

In the last 5 years, America has experienced multiple extremely severe wildfire seasons, resulting in tragic loss of lives and damage to communities, millions of acres burned, and cascading impacts to public safety and natural resources. In 2020, over 3 million acres of National Forest System land burned, the most since 1910. California experienced its first 1-million-acre fire in history. Focused recovery efforts to utilize millions of board feet of downed wood and address critical public safety issues will be key after the fires are out in early FY 21.

Introduction

Severe wildfires can cause increased water run-off that may result in flooding, soil erosion and mud slides. Sediment and debris may move downstream and damage houses or fill reservoirs, putting endangered species and community water supplies at risk. After a fire, the agency's priority is emergency stabilization to prevent further damage to life, property or natural resources. The stabilization work begins immediately and may take several years in some cases. During this time, emergency tree removal and salvage logging takes place as soon as possible to remove hazard trees from transportation corridors and utilize wood. Longer-term rehabilitation actions, including reforestation, also begins as soon as possible; focusing on lands unlikely to recover naturally from wildland fire damage.

Key Challenges to Date

In many parts of the west where fire has been severe, wood markets are depressed or quite limited, constraining the ability of the agency to undertake salvage logging. Litigation against salvage logging is also expected in some places. Reforestation efforts are primarily dependent on the Knutson-Vandenberg (K-V) Trust Fund tied to timber receipts which have been declining over time; or the Reforestation Trust Fund, which has been capped since the 1970's. As a result of barriers created by litigation and limited agency resources, post fire restoration in the forms of reforestation and other revegetation, watershed protection work, and salvage sales of burned timber have only been meeting 10% of the needs.

Key Progress to Date

The Forest Service Burned Area Emergency Response program provides immediate and urgent assistance to prevent flooding and damage to high value facilities such as drinking water systems. The agency's research and assistance to expand new markets for wood, such as biomass and Cross Laminated Timber, has accelerated partnerships resulting in advancements in green building technology and renewable energy, generating demand for low-value wood products. Reforestation partnerships with private sector partners have expanded dramatically to support restoration of National Forests. Recent actions by the U.S. Government to join the international One Trillion Trees initiative have the potential to generate private sector support for post-fire reforestation efforts.

Next Steps

Participation in the One Trillion Trees initiative presents a major opportunity to leverage private sector partners to invest in reforestation and restoration public and private lands. The initiative will launch in the 4th quarter of 2020.

Shared Stewardship with States, Tribes and other partners and collaboration with other federal land management agencies can create novel ways to assess landscapes after fire. Improved collaboration across all the federal and non-federal programs that support communities after disasters will be needed, as cross-boundary, inter-agency solutions are key to addressing forest health and restoration challenges at scale.

Work with Congress to enact pro-active vegetation management authorities at a scale that fits the scale of the fire impacts and make available additional resources to implement critical recovery and reforestation activities.

Projected Next Steps

Key Dates

Launch Trillion Trees Initiative

By 12/31/20

Initial post fire assessments completed for emergency response (dependent on fire containment dates)

By 3/31/21

Relevant Internal Stakeholders

Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rural Development and Agriculture Marketing Service are internal stakeholders.

Relevant External Stakeholders

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry and House Agriculture Committee on Conservation and Forestry; Trillion Trees.org; National Association of State Foresters; County Commissioners in forest-dependent communities; Conservation NGO's

Point of Contact

Chris French

Deputy Chief, National Forest System

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Top Issue/Hot Topic: Work Environment and Performance

Executive Summary

In recent years, the USDA Forest Service has taken definitive actions to build and sustain a work environment that is safe, respectful and inclusive--free from harassment, retaliation and discrimination. We are creating a new culture that is values-based, purpose-driven and relationship-focused as we serve the public and meet mission goals. To guide this work, the Forest Service established in 2018 a new Work Environment and Performance Office. Its mission: Promote an affirmative agency culture, raise leadership accountability for maintaining harassment-free, respectful, inclusive workplace. This office will oversee and guide internal structures, processes and skills to achieve this vision.

Introduction

Over the past several years the Forest Service has taken significant actions to formalize and deliver its commitment to a harassment-free work environment and values-based agency culture. This follows the 2018 Congressional and news media scrutiny of sexual harassment and retaliation in the Forest Service. The agency took significant actions to engage employees, break the silence on harassment and retaliation, and build affirmative culture. These actions are yielding results and forging beneficial integration of the work environment, human resources and Civil Rights programs. A rise in employee confidence in the agency's new processes, coupled with a drop in Equal Employment Opportunity complaints illustrate encouraging signs of progress. The agency now tracks measures for harassment reports, disciplinary actions, Equal Employment Opportunity complaints and work environment survey trends. We tightened anti-harassment policies, opened a harassment call center, increased accountability for misconduct and created a new code of conduct founded on Core Values of Service, Conservation, Diversity, Interdependence and Safety to guide all mission activities and decisions.

Key Challenges to Date

To build on recent progress, the Forest Service has adopted a series of additional actions that respond directly to results from the 2019 National Work Environment employee survey, which more than 8000 employees responded. The Forest Service will raise the level of accountability for sexual misconduct offenders, work aggressively to prevent sexual and other harassment, invest in supervisor skills to improve employee morale and quality of work experiences, enhance training and resources to support employees to address harassment or conflict in the workplace, increase employee understanding of agency goals and expectations for diversity, equity and inclusion and improve experiences of female firefighters and under-represented employees. The Forest Service will also strengthen recruitment efforts to maintain a diverse workforce.

Key Progress to Date

The Forest Service has recorded significant progress in raising awareness, accountability, training and support among managers and employees. Key actions include an updated Anti-Harassment policy, a Harassment Reporting and Investigation Center, immediately investigating every allegation of sexual assault, harassment, or misconduct, established work environment performance standards and hiring criteria, training, and formal employee engagement groups.

Projected Next Steps

Key Dates

Elevate senior executive responsibility for all cases of substantiated sexual harassment and recommend maximum penalties as start point for substantiated misconduct

First quarter FY21

Relevant Internal Stakeholders

USDA Natural Resources and Environment leadership and USDA offices of General Counsel, Communications, and Congressional Relations, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Chief Human Capital Officer and the NRE Undersecretary.

Relevant External Stakeholders

House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, House Committee on Natural Resources, Employee Advocacy Groups, National News Media, Congressional delegation in California.

Point of Contact

Leslie Weldon

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Chief Executive of Work Environment and Performance

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Top Issue/Hot Topic: Shared Stewardship Work Prioritizes Treatments to Improve Forests

Executive Summary

The Forest Service (FS) (with bipartisan Congressional support) unveiled a new strategy in August of 2018 that calls for stronger relationships with States and others to conduct cross-boundary work that improves landscape conditions and community wellbeing. The “Shared Stewardship” strategy led to new agreements between Forest Service and States who have jointly identified goals for resource management and community benefits. With over 1 billion burnable acres at risk in the United States, communities are demanding more forest management, across boundaries, to reduce risk, restore healthy forests, protect watersheds and create jobs. Given the current wildland fire trajectory the West is experiencing, the concept of wildland urban interface has been out scaled by “landscape scale fire” – fires that know no boundary and range across 10 or more miles on a landscape. To meet the challenge at a scale that makes a difference, the Forest Service and its partners will need to double or triple hazardous fuels treatments and active management and use best available science to target investments. Shared Stewardship is the pathway to making that a reality.

Introduction

Shared Stewardship is a way of doing business that focuses on setting mutual priorities with partners and other stakeholders, working across jurisdictional boundaries, and seeking outcomes that improve forest, grassland, and watershed health at the scale needed to make meaningful impacts. Resource managers nationwide are facing urgent cross-boundary challenges, including catastrophic wildfires, invasive species and drought.

Key Challenges to Date

The Forest Service (FS), Department of the Interior, States, Tribes and localities have spent billions of dollars to treat millions of acres since 2000, but catastrophic fires continue to rage and it’s almost impossible to demonstrate whether those treatments have been successful in restoring forests and protecting communities. Federal and state agencies lack the financial resources to treat the landscape at a meaningful scale – 2-3 times more will cost billions of dollars annually. Success will require robust partnerships, a supportive coalition, and creative new funding mechanisms at the federal level and with the private sector.

Key Progress to Date

As of September 30, 2020: There are 19 agreements in place with States and 3 others. Eight more are in the final stages of development. Robust evidence suggests that Shared Stewardship has catalyzed positive engagements with State and other partners, including collaborative development of State Forest Action Plans, and enabled significant management actions to be implemented. Forest Service researchers have also developed tools that allow us to best target fuels treatments to reduce community risk and we are using it to build a “10 Year Implementation Plan”.

Next Steps

The FS, in collaboration with partners, is developing a performance framework to monitor progress and track accomplishments and progress toward goals and building a coalition of support to implement the 10 Year Implementation Plan to significantly reduce fire risk to the highest risk communities.

Projected Next Steps

Coalition Building

Socialize 10 Year Implementation Plan

Key Dates

First and second quarters of FY 2021

Second and third quarters of FY 2021

Relevant Internal Stakeholders

The Under Secretary for Natural Resources

Relevant External Stakeholders

State partners are our most critical external stakeholders. Tribes and Non-Governmental Organization partners are also critical stakeholders with whom we are collaborating.

Points of Contact

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Chris French
Deputy Chief, National Forest System
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Top Issue/Hot Topic: National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Decision Making

Executive Summary

In January 2018, the Forest Service initiated a regulatory action to streamline NEPA procedures and facilitate review of infrastructure management and environmental restoration activities, as well as for several special uses authorizations by adding new categorical exclusions.

Introduction

The Forest Service devotes considerable personnel and financial resources to meet its obligations under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to consider and inform the public of potential environmental impacts of agency activities. This work is important to the Forest Service's mission to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands. Conducting science-based analysis and engaging the public effectively and efficiently as possible is an agency priority.

Key Challenges to Date

Agency compliance with NEPA is a high profile public issue given our multiple-use mandate. Balancing good science-based analysis to disclose environmental impacts and delivering goods and service to the public in an efficient manner can be challenging. Public support for the wide variety of uses on National Forests varies across the geography of agency. Ongoing public engagement and education about agency practices and NEPA requirements helps address some of these challenges.

Key Progress to Date

In September 2017, the Forest Service initiated an agency-wide focus on operational changes to improve NEPA reviews through its Environmental Analysis and Decision-making initiative. As part of this effort, in January 2018, the Forest Service initiated a regulatory effort to streamline NEPA procedures and facilitate review of infrastructure and environmental restoration activities, and special uses authorizations by proposing new categorical exclusions. This regulatory action, expected to conclude in 2020, also reflects recent changes to the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA regulations.

Next Steps

The agency will deliver training and tools to field units to support implementation of new practices and procedures. The agency will revise directives to align with new procedures in 2021.

Projected Next Steps

Initiate NEPA conforming rule

Key Dates

By 12/31/20

Relevant Internal Stakeholders

The Secretary is the deciding official on the final rule. The Undersecretary, Natural Resources and the Environment.

Relevant External Stakeholders

There is considerable interest from Congress and external stakeholders, including industry and conservation organizations on these new NEPA procedures. These organizations have large constituencies and have a variety of opinions on the agency's compliance with NEPA and its efficiency. Engaging with these groups could help understand the variety of views.

Points of Contact

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Top Issue/Hot Topic: Private Sector Eager to Invest Funds to Restore Forests and Mitigate Effects of Changing Climate

Executive Summary

The Forest Service is working with partners to leverage private sector investment with the goal of accelerating the pace and scale of work to restore forests and mitigate climate change.

Introduction

Private sector interest in forest-focused investments is surging as corporations strive to fulfill their sustainability goals and investors seek investment opportunities that yield environmental outcomes and financial returns.

Key Challenges to Date

- Private sector demand for investment-ready projects exceeds supply
- Under current authorities the Forest Service cannot participate in **carbon markets** or enter into **long-term agreements that commit capital** beyond currently appropriated amounts
- **Proven partnership models are needed** to leverage private capital for projects
- Federal and State investment in **reforestation and nurseries** has not kept pace with need

Key Progress to Date

The Forest Service has been positioning itself to increase and unlock new sources of non-Forest Service funds to support agency priorities. Examples include:

- The U.S. has committed to the **Trillion Trees** platform to work collaboratively with state and private partners to increase investments in reforestation to mitigate climate change
- In partnership with Blue Forest Conservation the Forest Service developed and implemented the **Forest Resilience Bond**, a model that reduces wildfire risk by enabling private capital to cover the upfront cost of forest restoration and wildfire mitigation actions

Projected Next Steps

Key Dates

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Leverage investments by Trillion Trees partners by expanding reforestation opportunities | <i>December 31, 2020: finalize tree planting partnership agreements.
Jan-Mar 2021: analyze post 2020 wildfire restoration needs to determine additional tree planting needs</i> |
| • Invest in partners to develop and implement innovative finance models that leverage private capital through the Innovative Finance for National Forests grant program | <i>March 1-31, 2021: Next Innovative Finance for National Forests grant process.</i> |
| • Develop Carbon accounting enhancement | <i>March 2021- January 2022</i> |

Relevant Internal Stakeholders

USDA Office of Chief Scientist, Agricultural Research Service, Economic Research Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Relevant External Stakeholders

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry and House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation and Forestry; National Association of State Foresters; National Forest Foundation; It.org, U.S. Chapter; American Forests, Arbor Day Foundation; Blue Forest Conservation

Point of Contact

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Top Issue/Hot Topic: Alaska Roadless Rule

Executive Summary

State Petition for Alaska Roadless Rule Nears Completion

Introduction

Roadless area management on the Tongass National Forest in Southeast Alaska has been the subject of litigation since the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule was established to protect and conserve roadless areas on National Forests. In response to a petition from the State of Alaska in 2018, USDA conducted rulemaking for a state-specific Roadless Rule for the State of Alaska.

Key Challenges to Date

The preferred alternative and draft rule released for public comment in September 2019 proposed to exempt the Tongass National Forest from the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. The preferred alternative received support from all members of the Alaska Congressional Delegation and the Governor. It has received considerable attention nationwide from both those who support and those who oppose the action. We expect litigation on the final decision.

Key Progress to Date

Extensive public engagement and work with Cooperating agencies, Tribes, and a Governor's Advisory Committee informed a Final Environmental Impact Statement that was published in late September 2020.

Next Steps

A Final Rule is expected to be published in late October 2020. We anticipate litigation will be filed shortly thereafter.

Projected Next Steps

Publish Final Rule

Key Dates

Late October 2020

Relevant Internal Stakeholders

Relevant internal stakeholders include the Secretary of Agriculture, Undersecretary for Natural Resources and the Environment, Office of Congressional Relations, and Office of Tribal Relations. The Secretary is the deciding official, the Undersecretary for NRE has consulted with Tribes and Native Corporations on the Secretary's behalf.

Relevant External Stakeholders

Relevant external stakeholders include the State of Alaska, the Alaska congressional delegation, commercial fishing, tourism, recreation, timber and mining industries, Alaska Native Tribes and Corporations, the communities of southeast Alaska, conservation organizations, and the public at large. The state, the delegation, and the timber and mining industries support exemption from the 2001 Roadless Rule to increase economic opportunities. Other stakeholders supported a moderate change to the existing 2001 Roadless Rule but not full exemption.

Points of Contact

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Top Issue/Hot Topic: Wildfire Management: Improving Wildland Fire Management 2021

Executive Summary

The wildland fire season is now a wildland fire year. Millions of acres burn catastrophically annually, with loss of life and billions of dollars in damages. The 2018 Omnibus Appropriations bill called for a re-evaluation of the 2000 National Fire Plan (NFP), when the nation first came together to develop a response to severe wildland fires. “National Fire Plan 2.0” represents a new call to action to modernize the way we fight wildland fire and reduce risk to communities. The key to improving wildland fire management in the 21st Century will be leveraging cutting-edge technology to improve response; targeting landscape treatments in the right places; and ensuring communities are prepared for fire. It will take all jurisdictions to be successful.

Introduction

It has been two decades since the nation first turned its attention to wildland fire, following a landmark 1999 season where 6 million acres burned; thousands of structures were destroyed; and lives were lost. Since that time, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service (FS) and the Department of the Interior have spent billions of dollars to build robust fire response programs. In 2014, federal and non-federal partners took a step further with the National Cohesive Strategy for Wildland Fire Management and now in 2020, we are crafting the next evolution: National Fire Plan (NFP) 2.0. Although many of the same issues remain, we have learned how our wildland fire system works and the necessary levers for change. One of our focus points will be maintaining a year-round workforce to match year-round fire activity, leveraging Direct Hire Authority (DHA). In FY 2021, we must leverage new technology, like Unmanned Aerial Systems, tracking software and increased analytics, to evolve a firefighting force and strategy for the 21st Century.

Key Challenges to Date

The wildland fire system is complex, with five Federal agencies (the Forest Service and four in the Department of the Interior), States, Tribes, local municipalities and private entities. While wildland fire response is extremely efficient across jurisdictions, different mandates result in misalignment. Wildland fire suppression is very expensive, costing governments billions of dollars a year, along with billions of dollars in damage left behind. Development near wildlands has increased exponentially and 85% of it remains yet undeveloped. The potential for catastrophic wildland fire will increase if fuels aren’t treated in these highest risk places. Regulatory roadblocks, including air quality limitations, inhibit our ability to use prescribed fire at a large scale.

Key Progress to Date and Next Steps

FS has already leveraged DHA to convert hundreds of temporary firefighters to permanent and will continue in 2021. FS has also begun drafting NFP 2.0 and we will be working with partners in 2021 to complete the plan. We have begun to leverage new technology and new ways to respond to fire, which will be cemented into the whole system through NFP 2.0. We are developing a “10-year action plan” for the most important fuels treatment investments at a scale 2-3 times what we treat now as a component of NFP 2.0,

Projected Next Steps

Key Dates

The first draft of NFP 2.0 complete

12/30/2020

Build a coalition of support

First and second quarters FY21

Relevant Internal Stakeholders

Stakeholders include the Undersecretary for Natural Resource and Environment, Office of Budget Planning and Accountability, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Relevant External Stakeholders

External partners include the Department of the Interior, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Congress, State Governors, National Association of State Foresters, and other environmental and timber industry Non-Government organizations and groups.

Points of Contact

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Top Issue/Hot Topic: Job Corps: Realigning Forest Service Job Corps Program to Prepare Students for Conservation Careers

Executive Summary

The Forest Service Job Corps program, serving over 3,500 disadvantaged young adults, is realigning curriculum to prepare students for careers in natural resource management and support the core natural resource management mission of the Forest Service.

Introduction

The Forest Service operates 24 Civilian Conservation Centers (CCCs) across 16 states in partnership with the Department of Labor. Students, ages 16-24, receive vocational training, academic instruction and leadership development in a residential setting. The program is aligning training, curriculum, and support systems to fully integrate the students into the mission of the USDA Forest Service and to prepare them for careers in natural resource management.

Key Challenges to Date

The Department of Labor funds and oversees the Job Corps program including almost 100 urban centers operated by contractors. The Civilian Conservation Centers operate under an Interagency Agreement and must fulfill policy requirements of both USDA and the Department of Labor while achieving both student employment and conservation goals. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Job Corps has worked to provide students training and education through distance learning.

Key Progress to Date

Relationships with the Department of Labor are strong. In May of 2020, the Department of Labor approved 5 new conservation trade offerings for Forest Service CCCs, including 2 Advanced Wildland Firefighting academies and 1 Advanced Emergency Dispatch Academy. Students in every trade are afforded the opportunity to serve on fire crews and engage in conservation work on nearby national forests.

The Job Corps submitted the Phase 2 Trade Change and Slot Alignment Plan to the Department of Labor on August 31, 2020 and is currently working with DOL on a long-term strategy for implementation. Pending Department of Labor approval, the Forest Service anticipates increasing student capacity by 25% and adding 17 conservation related trades, while reducing lower performing trades and student year costs.

Projected Next Steps

Implementation of Phase 2 Trade Change and Slot Alignment Plan

Key Dates

First Quarter FY21, pending Department of Labor review

Relevant Internal Stakeholders

As many entry level positions within the Forest Service are in wildland firefighting, the Forest Service Job Corps program maintains productive working relationships with national program offices such as the National Forest System, Fire and Aviation Management, and Human Resources Management, as well as national forests at the local level. This aids Job Corps in understanding evolving agency needs, preparing students for Forest Service careers and hiring. Additionally, the Job Corps Advisory Board steers the program and connects the CCCs with Forest Service leadership across the country.

Relevant External Stakeholders

- The Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration provides Job Corps' funding and oversight and represents the single most important relationship to the program's success.
- The National Job Corps Association represents all Job Corps operators, including contract operators and the Forest Service, connecting operators to each other and the Department of Labor.
- The Corps Network represents conservation corps across the country, including non-governmental organizations as well as the Civilian Conservation Centers.
- Congressional Labor, Agriculture, and Natural Resource Committees have engaged in Forest Service Job Corps topics.

Point of Contact

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Top Issue/Hot Topic: Adopting Innovations in Business Practices Post Pandemic

Executive Summary

Forest Service to Permanently Adopt Innovations in Business Practices resulting from Response to Pandemic

Introduction

In its national response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Forest Service learned and adopted new, innovative strategies that helped the agency respond to emergencies, safely provide public access and customer services, and operate effectively. In review, the Forest Service is now permanently incorporating these innovations as a part of its business practices.

Key Challenges to Date

- Typically, firefighting resources move around the country to meet demand. This practice can lead to exposure and increase transmission risk for fire fighters and communities during the pandemic.
- Many agency processes have required in person contact to complete training, initiate permits and monitor compliance for activities including grazing, timber sales, and Christmas tree harvesting.
- The agency has historically supported extensive travel to move resources to meet mission delivery.
- Agency is experiencing historic recreation visitation/use.

Key Progress to Date

- Risk Management Assistance enabled the agency to help fire managers make high quality strategic response decisions to provide the most effective and appropriate response to wildfires.
- The Agency's COVID-19 prevention and mitigation measures have resulted in far fewer cases among fire personnel than may have been expected. Fire response has emphasized greater use of traditional and social media along with internet-based technologies to provide consistent communication with the public on wildfire issues.
- Staffs quickly developed evidence-based measures to determine COVID-19 safe operating procedures.
- The agency implemented virtual visitor service, permitting processes, and payment processes to protect the public, employees, and volunteers while maintaining high quality visitor services.
- The Agency has deployed virtual training and certification approaches, COVID-19 safe fleet management practices, reduced non fire travel, and virtual details and staffing to meet mission delivery needs.

Next Steps

The Agency is evaluating the efficacy of measures implemented this year to determine how to continue practices and the use technology to improve employee and public safety, enhance customer service, maintain quality standards and reduce costs.

Projected Next Steps

Key Dates

<i>Fire personnel are reviewing lessons learned and synthesizing information from 600 focus groups. Decisions on what will be made permanent for next fire year will occur in the first half of the fiscal year.</i>	<i>03/30/2021</i>
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Relevant Internal Stakeholders

USDA: Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, Office of General Counsel, Office of Budget and Policy Analysis. Forest Service: All Deputy Areas, Strategic Planning and Budget Analysis.

Relevant External Stakeholders

It is critical to continue working with our partners in states, tribes, counties, communities and organizations to find ways to engage people in shared stewardship.

Points of Contact

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Top Issue/Hot Topic: Secure Rural Schools Resource Advisory Committees

Executive Summary

The current process to recruit and approve members for Secure Rural Schools (SRS) Resource Advisory Committees (RAC) is burdensome and prevents some RACs from reaching a quorum. Without a quorum, RACs can't receive SRS funding for natural resource restoration projects, resulting in millions of dollars in unspent funds that could have been used to benefit the communities the program is intended to serve.

Introduction

Under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, the SRS program provides critical funding for schools, roads, and other municipal services to more than 700 counties across the U.S. and Puerto Rico. The Forest Service is testing new strategies, working with USDA and Regional Foresters, to tackle inefficiencies that have long hobbled the program.

Key Challenges to Date

- SRS requires periodic reauthorization by Congress, which results in unpredictability and instability, hampering efforts to establish a reliable program with good management practices.
- The process to recruit, nominate, and approve members for the SRS RACs is burdensome, causing delays.

Key Progress to Date

The Forest Service has recently enacted several strategies to speed project funding:

- Consolidated 114 RACs down to 102, after securing community buy-in and support, to serve more people across larger geographic areas and enlarge the pool of potential RAC candidates.
- Successfully piloted a 2018 Farm Bill program allowing Regional Foresters to appoint RAC members in Arizona and Montana, which reduced approval time from 6-12 months down to a few weeks.
- Worked with the Office of the Secretary to delegate appointment of RAC members to the Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment.
- Took key administrative steps to enable USDA to waive membership requirements from 15 members to as few as nine, so RACs can more easily achieve a quorum, as authorized in the 2018 Farm Bill.
- Worked with USDA to draft the Secretary's letter to Congressman LaMalfa clarifying that the SRS statute does not limit the number of terms RAC members may serve.

Projected Next Steps

Key Dates

- | Projected Next Steps | Key Dates |
|--|-----------------------|
| • Communicate to Forest Service field units that they may nominate current and former RAC members for multiple terms. | 10/15/2020-11/07/2020 |
| • Build awareness about successful 2018 Farm Bill pilot program allowing Regional Foresters to sign RAC nomination packages. | 10/15/2020-03/31/2021 |

Relevant Internal Stakeholders

- USDA: Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, White House Liaison's Office (WHLO), Office of General Counsel. The WHLO plays a key role in the advisory committee nomination process.
- Forest Service: National Partnership Office, Office of Regulatory Management Services, Legislative Affairs, Chief Financial Officer.

Relevant External Stakeholders

- Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee: Sens. Murkowski, Risch, Wyden, Gardner, McSally, Daines, and Lee. Senate Interior Appropriations: Sens. Murkowski, Daines, and Merkley. House Natural Resources: Reps. Bishop, Fulcher, Gosar, and Huffman. House Interior Appropriations: Rep. Simpson.
- Rural communities in beneficiary states; particularly California, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington.

Point of Contact

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Hot Topic: Negotiation Plan for Amendments to the California Fire Assistance Agreement

Executive Summary

On April 30, 2020, the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service signed the new California Fire Assistance Agreement (CFAA). The new CFAA agreement includes several key changes to address audits conducted by the State of California and the Forest Service, but additional changes are necessary before the start of the next fire season to ensure effective execution of the agreement.

Introduction

A Fire Assistance Agreement provides a mechanism for cross jurisdictional support for wildfire response operations. It outlines both financial and operational requirements. The Agreement is at a state level and is signed by relevant state and federal agencies. The Forest Service has agreements with 47 states.

The CFAA is significant because the state of California has the largest state wildfire response program as well as a very complex and challenging wildfire situation. The Forest Service, Department of Interior (DOI) and the state of California are co-dependent on each other's firefighting resources to ensure there is enough to respond appropriately and effectively to wildfires.

The CFAA is also unique in that it is one of two assistance agreements in California; all other states only have one. The CFAA enables participants to access local and county firefighting assets. The other agreement, California Fire Management Assistance agreement is between the Forest Service, DOI and California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, which allows for the utilization of state resources to occur between the government entities.

Key Challenges to Date

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has raised significant concerns with the new CFAA and required, through FY2020 passback direction, that the Forest Service immediately implement clear segregation of duties and renegotiate the terms of the agreement with a focus on cost accountability. In the FY2021 renegotiation OMB wants to elevate the negotiators beyond the Region and for the FS to negotiate lower (or standardized) rates for reimbursing California firefighters. This will be a point of contention with the State.

Key Progress to Date

The agency response to the requirements has been twofold:

1. The following amendments will be prioritized to improve the execution of the agreement:
 - a. Reimburse firefighting resources for actual expenses
 - b. Correct the Salary Rate formula error identified to ensure accurate reimbursements
 - c. Establish unique Federal Award Identification Number for Data Act compliance
 - d. Specify requirements for the reimbursement of indirect rates
 - e. Incorporate local government firefighting apparatus and personnel into the CFAA to significantly reduce administrative burden and improve efficiency (optional)
2. The Deputy Chief of State and Private Forestry will approve all statewide cooperative fire agreements

Projected Next Steps

Key Dates

Resume negotiations on CFAA

October/November

Revise CFAA

April 30, 2021

Relevant Internal Stakeholders

Pacific Southwest Region: Regional Forester; Fire leadership; and Grants & Agreements leadership; Forest Service Washington Office: Chief Financial Officer; Deputy Chief for State & Private Forestry; Director Fire & Aviation Management; and Director Office of Grants & Agreement; Others: USDA Under Secretary for Natural Resources & Environment and Office of General Counsel; Office of Management and Budget.

Relevant External Stakeholders

CFAA Signatory Agencies to include State of California, Governor's Office of Emergency Services; State of California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection; and US Department of Interior's Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Indian Affairs. Congressional Delegation to include Congressman LaMalfa; Senator Feinstein; and Senator Harris. Other: California Association of Tribal Chiefs and the Department of Defense.

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United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

I. ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

Part A: Mission, Stakeholders, and Major Functions

AGENCY MISSION

To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.

The Forest Service leads:

- Management of 193 million acres of National Forest System lands in 44 states and Puerto Rico for multiple uses and outdoor opportunities;
- Sustainable stewardship of more than 600 million acres of forestland across the U.S., including more than 400 million acres of private land;
- Largest forestry research organization in the world; and
- Sustainable stewardship of forests in more than 80 countries.
- Premier wildland fire fighting force

Workforce Snapshot

28,356 employees located across more than 600 ranger districts, 154 national forests, 20 grasslands, 9 regional offices, 5 research stations, Puerto Rico, and Washington, D.C.

MAJOR FUNCTIONS

The Forest Service is composed of four Deputy Areas: (1) National Forest System, (2) Forest and Rangeland Research, (3) State and Private Forestry, and (4) Business Operations. The Deputy Areas carry out the following programs:

- The National Forest System mission objective is to provide stewardship and management of over 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands that provide a wide variety of ecosystem services, including water-quality protection, recreation opportunities, energy for the nation, food security, timber and non-timber forest products, maintenance of open space, and wildlife habitat and habitat connectivity.
- The Forest and Rangeland Research program develops and deliver knowledge and innovative technology, to reduce risk, and improve the health and use of the nation's public and private forests and rangelands.
- The State and Private Forestry program sustains state and private forests and provides support to keep working forests intact. It facilitates sound stewardship across all ownerships.
- Business Operations provides direction, quality assurance, and customer service to execute administrative actions that include strategic planning, budget, human resource management and acquisition management.
- The Wildland Fire Management program aims to protect life, property and natural resources on the National Forest System and 20 million acres of adjacent state and private lands. It ensures timely, appropriate, risk informed, and effective wildfire response.

United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

CONGRESSIONAL RELATIONS AND ISSUES

Main Committees of Jurisdiction

The Forest Service works with a number of congressional authorizing committees and subcommittees that span the broad mission: Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources; the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry; House Committee on Natural Resources, including the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, And Public Lands; and the House Committee on Agriculture, including the Subcommittee on Conservation and Forestry. Forest Service's discretionary funds are appropriated through Interior, Environment, and Other Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee in both the House and the Senate. This differs from other USDA agencies who work through the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee.

Key Topics of Interest

Fire Fighters and COVID-19 - Members of Congress in both the House and Senate have expressed concern about firefighter's risk for contracting COVID-19 while on fire assignments and the availability and frequency of testing for COVID-19.

Air Tanker Availability - Members of Congress in both the House and Senate have asked questions and requested briefings on air tanker availability for the 2020 fire year.

Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act - The GAOA passed Congress and was signed into law in July 2020. Congress has a high level of interest in the project lists for fiscal year 2021, which are due to Congress within 90 days of passage.

Reforestation and the Trillion Trees Initiative - With the President's commitment to the Trillion Trees Initiative and the standup of the U.S. Chapter of ITT.org, Congress has introduced a variety of bills, including the REPLANT act, aimed at increasing reforestation on National Forest System lands after natural disasters, including wildfire.

Alaska Roadless Rule - There is significant interest in the Alaska Roadless Rule from both the Alaska Delegation and the House Natural Resources Committee. The Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, And Public Lands held a hearing last year on the draft rule.

Cottonwood Decision - Members of Congress have expressed interest and introduced bills to address the Ninth Circuit's adverse ruling in Cottonwood Environmental Law Center v. United States Forest Service, 789 F.3d 1075 (9th Cir. 2015) as it applies to the re-initiation of consultation on land management plans under section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1536(a)(2)) when new information is revealed.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Agency Stakeholders: [View ATTACHMENT 1: AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS](#)

Below is a cross section of key national organizations of the private sector and intergovernmental entities that play significant, collaborative roles in Forest Service policies, decisions and actions. They represent large interests of conservation interests and users. They engage regularly at the national level with Forest Service Leadership.

United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS:

[View ATTACHMENT 2: STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS](#)

KEY MISSION DELIVERY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The Forest Service has an established performance management framework that supports the identification, development, and use of evidence in decision-making. The Forest Service Strategic Plan details the goals and objectives for the major functions of the organization and aligns to the USDA Strategic Plan. Annual performance data provide a picture of what and how our programs are doing in relation to these goals and outcomes.

USDA Goal/ Objective	Performance Measure	2018 Actual	2019 Target	2019 Actual	2020 Target	2021 Target
6.1	Percent of customers satisfied with recreation facilities, services, and settings on National Forests	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%
6.1	Timber Volume sold (Billion Board Feet)	3.20	3.70	3.27	3.70	4.00
6.2	Percent of watersheds in properly functioning condition	N/A	N/A	N/A	42%	42%
6.3	Millions of acres of NFS lands where final treatment effectively mitigated wildfire risk	1.04	1.10	0.85	1.10	1.10
6.3	Millions of acres treated to reduce or maintain fuel conditions on NFS and non-federal lands	3.40	3.40	2.90	3.50	3.50

I. ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

Part B: Organization Chart and Biographies of Key Leaders

ORGANIZATION CHART:

[View ATTACHMENT 3: ORGANIZATION CHART](#)

BIOGRAPHIES OF KEY LEADERS:

[View ATTACHMENT 4: LEADERSHIP BIOGRAPHIES](#)

United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

II. BUDGET OVERVIEW: [View ATTACHMENT 5: BUDGET OVERVIEW](#)

Forest Service
Budget Authority FY 2013 - FY 2021
(Dollars in Thousands)

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Enacted</u>	<u>PB Level</u>
Discretionary	\$4,552,469	\$4,895,764	\$5,073,202	\$5,681,038	\$5,632,302	\$6,299,133	\$6,104,712	\$7,450,413	\$7,384,836
Mandatory	775,116	833,073	716,682	891,490	443,844	705,117	883,236	673,571	746,510
Recovery Act Funds	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Families First Coronavirus Response Funds	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CARES Act Funding	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	70,800	0
Supplemental Funding	4,180	600,000	0	700,000	0	304,252	854,271	0	0
User Fees	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reimbursements	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total, Agency	5,331,765	6,328,837	5,789,884	7,272,528	6,076,146	7,308,502	7,842,219	8,194,784	8,131,346

Staff Years	31,947	32,254	32,194	32,254	32,427	31,549	30,870	30,850	30,372
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III. OVERVIEW OF AGENCY CHANGES, FISCAL YEARS 2017-2020

INTERNAL AGENCY CHANGES

Budget Accountability and Modernization

In 2018, the United States Congress directed the Forest Service to restructure its budget to improve transparency and accountability for allocation and execution of appropriated funds. Forest Service implementation is expected by October 1, Fiscal Year 2021. The new structure makes more apparent investments needed for workforce capacity, salaries and operational expenses. It also better depicts distribution of funds in each budget line item and shows funding investments for each stream of work. This restructured budget will result in a significant shift in the way managers execute and oversee budget at all levels of the organization.

United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

Shared Stewardship Approach to Forest Management

In June 2017, the Forest Service unveiled a new approach to forest management that encouraged cross-boundary work with states and other partners. It focused investments, capacity and resources to forest treatments and work that improved the conditions of America's Forests. It identified mutually agreed upon priority work and resulted in new agreements between the USDA and nearly 20 states. It leads to greater cooperation between states and the federal government to do the right work in right places to improve conditions of forests.

Significant Restructuring Efforts, Fiscal Years 2017-2020

Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry Programs Combined with Eastern Regional Office in Milwaukee Wisconsin (2018)

Created New Office of Work Environment and Performance Office, Washington D.C. (2019)

New organization oversees agency-wide efforts to improve work environment and transform agency culture to ensure each employee can thrive, develop and contribute to the mission without fear of harassment, discrimination or retaliation.

Centralized Chief Information Office, (2019)

In this effort, Forest Service operations and personnel have been streamlined and integrated with USDA Headquarters Operations for delivery of majority of information technology services and functions. This restructure impacted 663 employees. No transfers or physical moves resulted.

Centralized Acquisitions Management Organization, (2019)

All acquisitions management positions have been streamlined to receive oversight and management from the Washington Office. Many positions remain field-based. New organization ensures more streamlined, consistent functions. This effort impacted 676 employees. No transfer or physical moves resulted.

Rezoned Grants and Agreements Organizations, (2019)

Agency Streamlined field-based organization for centralized oversight and guidance; but it allows local execution of work and service responsiveness. This restructure impacted 219 employees. No transfer or physical moves resulted.

Centralized Data Analytics Program, Washington Office, (2020)

This new organization has been created to implement requirement of the Evidence Act. The new organization includes one new position: Assistant Chief Data Officer.

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT CHANGES, FISCAL YEARS 2017-2020

Nation's Forests and Grasslands Face Increased Threats from Wildfires, Drought, Disease and Infestations

The foremost external force currently driving operations and mission delivery work in national forests and the nation's forest, as a whole results from unprecedented effects of catastrophic, hotter, longer wildfire seasons, natural disasters, extensive drought, infestation and diseases. More than 80 million acres of forested lands demand extensive forest management work that would improve forest health conditions and increase resiliency. Efforts to confront these external forces have led the Forest Service to commit increasingly more dollars and a workforce to treat forested lands. In recent years, the Forest Service has availed itself of new authorities and tools to confront this serious challenge that primarily plays out in Western forests. In addition, the agency has streamlined environmental analysis and decision making to reinforce the ability to increase work on the ground. The Forest Service is working to modernize outdated systems for wood production; support a forest management infrastructure and promote use of wood

United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

innovations to ensure a sustainable system that increases Forest Service work. This system also utilizes wood byproducts, bolsters local economies and sustains industries. The agency continues to invest in best science and innovation to address perilous forest conditions. These external stressors have called for the agency to work more effectively across boundaries. The Forest Service has adopted a new approach to forest management in 2017 that recognizes interconnections between lands. It is based on the premise any effort to improve forest health must transcend boundaries to make a difference in highest priority places. Land managers work more effectively alongside states and partners to mutually agree on highest priority work in the right places to reduce wildfire threats and protect communities. It encourages shared resources and investments across boundaries and has led to more than 20 shared stewardship agreements aimed at achieving priority work on the ground.

Evolving needs of Citizens for Quality Customer Service, Opportunities and Access to Forests and Resources

Another external dynamic that greatly impacts mission and operations is the ability to meet increasingly diverse needs for customer services, recreation opportunities and public access. This dynamic became dramatically apparent during the Covid-19 crisis as citizens converged in large numbers on forest recreation sites. These increasing needs draw more attention to a \$5 billion backlog of maintenance and repair needs on an aging infrastructure of facilities, sites, roads and trails. While the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act funds some maintenance needs, it does not keep pace with the growing citizen demand for high quality facilities and services.

Social Trends Reinforce Efforts for Workplace Change

Increasing multi-generational workplaces, coupled with social demands for racial, gender, disabled, sexual orientation, religious equality, have raised expectations for the quality of the work environment. The Forest Service has taken definitive steps to respond to this demand. Actions include tough anti-harassment policies; a new Work Environment and Performance Office to oversee cultural change and raise accountability; and a new code of conduct with core values that make clear a commitment to treat all employees with respect and dignity.

LEGISLATIVE CHANGES, FISCAL YEARS 2017-2020:

[View ATTACHMENT 6: LEGISLATIVE CHANGES](#)

REGULATORY CHANGES [FY 2017-FY 2020]

The Forest Service has identified 16 regulatory actions as priorities since 2017, reflecting a focus on deregulation, response to Executive Orders related to energy independence and infrastructure and implementation of the 2018 Farm Bill. Five rules have been completed, 3 have been published as proposed rules, and 6 additional rules are planned for publication in the next six months.

Final Rules

- Streamlining Communications Uses. (*Farm Bill*)
- Small Tract Act Amendments (2 rules) (*Farm Bill*)
- Vegetation Management in Utility Corridors (*Farm Bill and 2019 Omnibus*)
- Notice and Comment on Forest Service Directives (*Deregulation*)

Proposed Rules

- Streamlining National Environmental Policy Act Procedures (*Deregulation*)
- Alaska Roadless Rule (*Deregulation*)

United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

- Oil and Gas Rule (*Energy Independence*)

In Preparation for Publication

- Range Management, Excess Use (*Agency Priority*)
- Range Management, Range Improvements (*Deregulation*)
- Communications Uses, Programmatic Fee (*Farm Bill*)
- Special Uses Cost Recovery (*Agency Priority*)
- Locatable Minerals Rule (*Energy Independence*)
- Minerals Cost Recovery (*Energy Independence*)

IV. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON AGENCY OPERATIONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted nearly every aspect of how the Forest Service delivers its mission. In response, the Forest Service developed and implemented new policies and procedures for recreation, fire response, and contract administration. This included how we process requests for new and existing permitted uses while adapting to a virtual work environment.

KEY PROGRESS TO DATE

The Forest Service continues to be adaptive and resilient, using the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to innovate in the virtual work environment across geographic boundaries to sustain and improve public service. Achievements include:

- The Forest Service National Pandemic Coordinators and National Incident Management Team assist the agency in managing the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Forest Service established and instituted Enterprise Risk Management Protocols and Frameworks to provide agency managers a risk-management-based structure to assess risks, consider treatment options, and weigh residual risk against mission objectives.
- The Forest Service developed and implemented policy and program guidance for field employees working and providing visitor services in a rapidly evolving COVID-19 environment. The guidance has enabled a consistent level of service delivery of critical functions as public use and enjoyment has increased by 20% from 2019.
- The Forest Service and the Centers for Disease Control worked together to develop a tool called the Smoke COVID Dashboard to better understand and communicate wildfire smoke and COVID-19 effects in communities. The Dashboard enables fire teams and agency administrators to quickly access county level health information on prevalence of COVID-19 risk factors, COVID-19 infection rates and trends, and the vulnerability of communities in conjunction with predictions of wildfire smoke dispersion and air quality impacts.
- The Forest Service relies on local area resources and partnerships to deliver an aggressive wildland fire initial attack strategy during the fire season. Interagency mobilization and pre-positioning of fire response resources ensure continued rapid containment of large wildfires in a COVID-19 environment. Additional critical COVID-19 exposure reduction tactics include Module-as-One work configurations, fire camp restructuring, social distancing, distribution of personal protective equipment, proactive screening and testing of firefighters and leveraging contracts to provide adequate logistical support for reconfigured wildfire camps.

United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

KEY CHALLENGES TO DATE

The agency relies on lesson learned and scenario planning to ensure past experiences inform improved agency response to the following challenges:

- The Forest Service was challenged to respond to record recreational use levels during the pandemic. Many people are first time visitors and users of national forests, and agency staff have had to respond to a sharp increase in user conflicts, trash, and human waste. Between 2019 and 2020, the Forest Service saw reservations increase more than 100,000, an 18% jump from 2019. Response efforts include deployment of *#recreate responsibly* messaging on agency, partner websites and social media; communicating open/closed status of recreation sites as conditions evolve; reassigning forest level staff to augment recreation staffing levels; and encouraging public use of alternative locations.
- Developing COVID-19 mitigation and response measures that support wildland fire resource demands is also a significant challenge. As of September 24, 43% of Forest Service employees confirmed positive with COVID-19 are firefighters. Of that number, 91% have recovered. Reducing the number of affected employees and protecting states, communities and fire personnel is the first priority for the Forest Service. The agency developed an approach to “lessons learned” through weekly Incident Management Remote Response (IMRR) discussion platforms. Through these platforms, agency and interagency personnel have shared mitigation techniques for managing COVID-19 where hundreds or thousands of response personnel work side by side on wildland fires.

NEXT STEPS

The Forest Service is using an adaptive management approach to take next steps:

- The Forest Service has continued to move forward with developing the technology and processes to modernize and streamline our permitting system and improve customer service for permit holders electronically while in a virtual environment. Agency personnel continue accepting and processing applications for new special use permits virtually.
- The Forest Service is conducting interviews with employees, both line officers and staff, at all levels with intent to understand “lessons learned” from our experiences responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings are being used to inform changes in strategies for the allocation of scarce resources, policy development, and the development of future scenarios designed to inform and encourage proactive decision making.

V. KEY INITIATIVES AND ISSUES

CURRENT KEY ISSUES

Shared Stewardship: Improving Conditions of America’s Forests

The United States encompasses more than 1 billion burnable acres; two of the last five years recorded the most acres burned since 1953. Today we’re setting new records for active wildfires across the American West. To begin to reverse this troubling trend, citizens demand an increase in the pace and scale of forest management across boundaries, to reduce wildfire risk, restore healthy forests, protect watersheds and create jobs. In response, the Forest Service launched its Shared Stewardship Initiative in 2017. It partners with states and others to develop mutual priorities, share risk and prioritize investments and actions in high-risk places where we can make the most difference. By year end, 31 states will have entered into Agreements, setting the stage for increased interagency forest management across the landscape. In FY 2021 and beyond, we can take the next step by designing and implementing restoration and risk reduction activities across all lands. Only by working together at the scale of the problem can we turn the tide on wildfire risk and improve the health and vibrancy of our nation’s forests.

United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

Great American Outdoors Act

The Great American Outdoors Act is a historic milestone that makes permanent and mandatorily funds the Land and Water Conservation Fund and establishes the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund to address deferred maintenance on federal lands over the next five years. The Forest Service will receive 15% of the annual funds made available to federal land management agencies for deferred maintenance—roughly \$285 million in FY 2021. The Fund enables the Forest Service to begin to address an extensive backlog of repairs and maintenance (estimated at \$5.2 billion) on roads, facilities, trails, bridges and other critical infrastructure. The act also creates new opportunities for permanent land protection of important forest land through the Forest Legacy Program and National Forest land acquisitions. Together, these programs help conserve private and public working forests for public access and benefit.

Work Environment

The Work Environment and Performance Office is transforming agency culture and leading the Forest Service to high performance as a trusting, safe, harassment-free and inclusive work culture. It delivers programs to improve employee experiences, personal resilience, and strong accountability to address and correct unwanted behaviors. It supports employees to uphold a clear code of conduct as they perform their duties and serve the public.

Regulatory /Reform: NEPA, Farm Bill

The Forest Service has undertaken a suite of regulatory reforms designed to modernize and align agency directives with new legislative authorities and reduce regulatory burdens. Of the 16 regulatory actions initiated since 2017, eight have been finalized or published as proposed rules. Among others, the agency developed and sought public comment on a draft regulation to National Environmental Policy Act procedures, which helps to streamline environmental analysis and decision-making. The agency's final rule remains in final clearance.

Budget Modernization

Budget modernization was initiated by the Office of Management and Budget in November 2017 when they issued a directive in the fiscal year (FY) 2019 Passback to move away from cost pools by FY2020. In March 2018, the FY2018 Omnibus was passed and the accompanying conference report also directed the Forest Service to cease assessing for cost pools by FY2020 and to propose a new budget structure in the FY2020 Congressional Budget Justification. The goal of the directive from OMB and Congress was to create a transparent budget that could be responsive to changes in funding. The obvious change for the agency is a structural budget modification. On April 3, 2020, the Interior Appropriations Subcommittees notified the Office of Strategic Planning, Budget & Accountability to proceed with the development of Salary & Expense lines that fund the salaries, benefits, travel, training, and awards, as well as other cost centers such as unemployment and workers compensation. Due to Congressional timelines for enactment of funding bills, the new structure is being implemented in FY2021 and not FY2020 as originally directed.

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

Enhancing Forest Resilience and Addressing Changing Environmental Conditions

Resilient and healthy forests provide many benefits to people. Our nation has 823 million acres of private and publicly owned forests and woodlands. The Forest Service manages 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands and provides research and technical assistance to sustain over 500 million acres of state and private forests. Currently over 80 million acres of potentially productive forestland in the United States, including National Forest System lands do not maintain sufficient numbers of healthy trees as a result of wildfire and other disturbances. To enhance forest resilience and protect adjacent communities, the Forest Service uses science-based forest management. Our primary

United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

tools include harvesting to reduce tree density and prescribed burning to reduce surface fuels. Both thinning and burning (and especially thinning followed by prescribed burning) enhance the resilience of landscapes to wildland fire. We provide early detection and rapid response to non-native and invasive species to minimize impacts to forest health. Working with state and local partners, we provide technical and financial assistance to family forest owners and communities to support management of trees and forests for continued delivery of goods and services. While wildfire and other disturbances are often a component of healthy forests, severe wildfires reduce both environmental and economic benefits derived from forests. In areas where we have lost or damaged forests, the [Trillion Trees Platform](#) can accelerate forest renewal by tapping the expertise and resources of our science community and partners. Currently, the Forest Service has shovel-ready opportunities to increase reforestation on 1.3 million acres of national forests, including 700,000 acres of tree planting and 600,000 acres of activities to ensure successful natural regeneration. By planting and tending the right trees, in the right places, at the right time, we create resilient forests that are safer for communities and are more resilient to future wildfires, drought and other stressors.

Effective Ability to Serve All Americans

The Forest Service, along with other agencies, will need to position programs and services internally and externally so all citizens have equal access to public lands and the amenities they offer. This includes gaining an understanding of how our foundational work, forest stewardship and service can significantly influence the quality of life and economic wellbeing of citizens and communities of every segment of the population. The agency must continue to attract a multi-generational, diverse workforce that reflects and responds to the citizenry we serve; we must invite participation and collaboration in forest decision-making from all corners of our society; we must continue to advance a culture of inclusion so that services, access and programs meet the intention to connect and strengthen all people's connection to the land. This work ensures the sustainable and security of the nation's resources into perpetuity.

KEY CHALLENGES

Catastrophic Fire and Condition of Western Forests

What traditionally was known as a wildland fire season has evolved to become a wildland fire year—as firefighters respond year-round to fire outbreaks. Millions of acres burn catastrophically annually, resulting in loss of life and billions of dollars in damage to infrastructure and natural resources. Half of the Forest Service's \$5 billion budget goes toward firefighting; this has resulted in a 39 percent reduction in non-fire positions since 1998. The agency's ability to deliver its core mission functions is hampered, not only by the magnitude of the problem, but by the threats to the national forests themselves. Western forests, federal and non-federal, remain in poor health. Most of these forests are naturally adapted to low-severity fire, which has been excluded for a century. Fuels have accumulated; fires intensity increased. Appropriately scaled forest management can reverse this upward trend. Working across land ownerships, we must increase thinning and prescribed fire to two to three times more than current rates; that's 3 million acres to 6 or 10 million acres a year. We need to work in the most at-risk places to make a difference. We need an infrastructure to support this work: a robust forest products industry, innovative research on new market and products like biomass energy and small diameter construction materials.

Degraded Infrastructure

The agency oversees about a \$5 billion backlog on facilities, trails, roads and infrastructure. The agency's decreasing capacity in non-fire positions significantly affects our ability to scale up our workforce in key technical areas and meet the requirements of the Great American Outdoors Act. While the GAOA provides an important funding increase to address critical needs, the amount available to the Forest Service only addresses a fifth of our overall maintenance backlog.

United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

Capacity in non-fire positions

Since 1998, the agency has seen a more than 40% reduction in non-fire positions, while at the same time we have seen dramatic increases in visitor numbers and customer needs for services supporting our multiple use mission. Maintaining a workforce aligned with our broader conservation mission is one of our key challenges going forward.

Gaps in the Fire Funding fix

The FY2018 Omnibus spending bill included a long-term “fire funding fix” which stabilized our operating environment by addressing the rapidly rising suppression budget and treating catastrophic wildfire as disasters. This change will dramatically reduce the need for a practice called “fire transfer” which moved funds away from our other mission programs to cover firefighting costs. From 2020 to 2027, the bill provides for the appropriation of new joint budget authority, to the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior, of up to \$2.25 billion to cover firefighting costs that exceed regular appropriations beginning in FY 2020 and increasing by \$100 million per year through FY 2027.

The challenges posed by wildland fire to the Forest Service budget are no longer attributable to Suppression; instead, the Preparedness account presents both challenges and high risk. Specifically, the agency supports 10,000 permanent firefighters, engines, equipment, and contracts up to thirty-five large airtankers, and more than 200 helicopters. These assets are provided as national resources and our partners depend on them to protect public health and safety. The agency did not request increased Preparedness funds in the three fiscal years following the passage of the fire funding fix because there was an expectation that non-fire accounts would be supported. The result of the emphasis on non-fire accounts has created a tenuous management of the Preparedness budget and deficits are only avoided because of on-going protests of aviation contracts.

PROMISING OPPORTUNITIES

Shared Stewardship: The Next Generation

By December 2020, we anticipate 31 Shared Stewardship agreements will be signed with states, Tribes and other partners. We are poised to make a generational shift in our approach to land management, from managing public lands as individual agencies to managing together through Shared Stewardship, co-stewarding our landscapes. This is the path to meaningful conservation outcomes in the 21st century. The agency will continue developing and expanding a focused-investment strategy, informed by cutting-edge scenario planning tools, that allows us to take action on mutual priorities and collectively obtain the most benefit from resources invested, as we increase our collective impact of co-managing risk and sharing co-stewardship in over half the states. The focus will continue making a difference in forest health and resilience at scale by promoting cross-boundary active management particularly to reduce the risk of large wildfires and other land management challenges such as invasive species, insects and diseases, and for the first time, articulate those outcomes in a meaningful way through our investment in developing a Performance Framework for Shared Stewardship. The Forest Service has already invested significant resources, together with partners, to develop an initial set of outcome measures in FY 2020, and we will expand our ability to tell the full story of Shared Stewardship in FY 2021 and beyond.

The Shared Stewardship Conservation Corps

This opportunity will put 1 million unemployed Americans back to work to protect communities from wildfire, safeguard clean air and water, restore critical infrastructure, rebuild local economies, and awaken and strengthen all people’s connection to the land. Delivered through partnerships with federal agencies, states and localities, small businesses, and non-profits, the program will implement shared stewardship across the landscape. Several proposals for a conservation corps have emerged from constituent groups and legislators. The broad support for this corps could be a win for both economic opportunity and the conservation of natural resources.

United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

Outcome Based Investments in Land Management

Forest Service researchers have developed a cutting-edge application that, for the first, time can unequivocally show us the best places to invest to most effectively reduce wildfire risk to communities. Using this “Fireshed Registry” to guide land management investments will provide the opportunity to invest the significant resources that we and our partners can bring to bear to get an outcome that meaningfully turns the tide on risk. The amount of treatment we are doing now, while valuable in the individual places it is occurring, is too diluted to show a demonstrable difference and can’t reliably be said to be a good return on investment. Using the Fireshed Registry and other decision support tools will allow us to design an outcome-based investment strategy that is measurable and demonstrable.

Forest Plan Implementation Model

Land management plans provide guidance for uses and management of national forests and grasslands. Forest Service plans were first completed in the 1980s; revision is required every 15 years per the National Forest Management Act. The agency has a significant backlog of outdated plans due to insufficient capacity and funds, a highly technical regulation, and poor transition management. The agency is adopting a new model to centralize plan revision in 3 regional centers. This approach is expected to result in a more efficient, centralized, corporately consistent process for revisions, as well as reduced time and costs to complete revisions.

National Fire Plan 2.0

It’s been two decades since the nation first turned its attention in a holistic way to wildland fire, following a landmark 1999 fire season where almost 6 million acres burned; thousands of structures were destroyed; and firefighters and citizens lost their lives. Since that time, the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior have built robust fire response programs through billions of dollars of new funding infused by Congress as part of the National Fire Plan. Many communities have become “Firewise” and millions of acres of federal and non-federal forestlands have been treated to reduce hazardous fuels – a program that grew by an order of magnitude as a result of the National Fire Plan. In 2014, federal and non-federal partners took this effort a step further with the *National Cohesive Strategy for Wildland Fire Management* (known as the Cohesive Strategy), a focused, collaborative effort across all landscapes focused on three goals: Resilient Landscapes; Fire Adapted Communities; and Safe and Effective Wildfire Response. The Cohesive Strategy has resulted in increased cooperation and focused actions to implement the stated goals. But we can do more. The 2018 Omnibus Appropriations bill called for a re-evaluation of the National Fire Plan. This represents a new call to action to modernize the way we fight wildland fire in this country and improve the health and resilience of our landscapes so we can redeem the shared vision of the Cohesive Strategy: “*To safely and effectively extinguish fire when needed; use fire where allowable; manage our natural resources; and as a nation, to live with wildland fire.*” National Fire Plan 2.0 will establish a clear pathway to create a wildfire system that is focused on reducing the risk of catastrophic fires to people, communities and our environment by strategically targeting a significant increase in the pace and scale of our land management treatments while also being efficient and effective in the use of technology and resources to meet the suppression response expectations of the nation.

GAO AND OIG AUDITS, FISCAL YEARS 2016 -2020:

[View ATTACHMENT 7: GAO AND OIG AUDITS](#)

LITIGATION SUMMARY:

[View ATTACHMENT 8: LITIGATION SUMMARY](#)

VI. ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT 1:

FEDERAL AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)

USDA Forest Service International Programs promotes sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation internationally. International Programs has three main staff units: Technical Cooperation, Policy, and Disaster Assistance. Both Technical Cooperation and Disaster Assistance work closely with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Department of the Interior (DOI)

The Forest Service coordinates closely with DOI's *Office of Wildland Fire* to provide strategic leadership and oversight to advance the three goals of the National Cohesive Wildfire Strategy to: 1) restore and maintain fire-resilient landscapes; 2) create fire-adapted communities that will withstand the effects of a wildfire without the loss of life and/or property; and 3) safely and effectively respond to wildfire.

The Forest Service also works closely with *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service* in management of critical habitat of sensitive, threatened and endangered species.

The Forest Service works closely with *Bureau of Land Management* on minerals development and oil and gas leasing.

The Forest Service also works extensively with DOI under the Service First authority to improve customer service by providing streamlined, one-stop shopping across agency jurisdictional boundaries for public land users.

Department of Defense

The Forest Service contracts with private companies to provide airtankers to drop fire retardant as part of wildfire suppression efforts. During periods of high wildfire activity, often there aren't enough contracted airtankers to meet demands. During these periods of need, Modular Airborne Fire Fighting Systems (MAFFS) are used. MAFFS are portable fire retardant delivery systems that can be inserted into military C-130 aircraft without major structural modifications to convert them into airtankers when needed.

Department of Commerce

National Weather Service and National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration's Fisheries

Department of Transportation

Federal Highways Administration: Management and Maintenance in National Forest System Roads

Department of Homeland Security

Federal Emergency Management Agency: Forest Service serves key roles in disaster response

Department of Labor

Employment and Training Administration: Forest Service works with Department of Labor in the oversight and management of its Job Corp program.

United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

Key Federal Advisory Committees

Secure Rural Schools Advisory Committees

More than 100 advisory committees convene throughout the country at the national forest level. They offer recommendations for the funding investments that result from Secure Rural Schools and Determination action.

Recreation Advisory Groups

More than 100 advisory committees on national forests across the nation provide recommendations for investment of funds resulting from implementation of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act.

Black Hills National Advisory Board

The Board offers recommendations on a broad range of forest issues such as forest plan revisions or amendments, forest health, recreation fees, and site-specific projects having forest-wide implications.

Forest Research Advisory Council

The Council provides reports to the Secretary of Agriculture on regional and national planning and coordination of forestry research within the federal and state agencies, forestry schools, and the forest industries.

Lake Tahoe Basin Federal Advisory Committee

The purpose of the Committee is to provide advice to the Secretary of Agriculture and to the Federal Interagency Partnership.

The Land Between the Lakes Advisory Board

The Board advises the Secretary of Agriculture on promoting public participation for the land and resource management plan for the Recreation Area and Environmental education.

Pacific Northwest Scenic Trail Advisory Council

The Council makes recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture on matters relating to the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail (Pacific Northwest Trail).

Provincial Advisory Committee

These committees provide advice regarding implementation of a comprehensive ecosystem management strategy for federal land within three ecological provinces and the entirety of the Okanogan-Wenatchee and Deschutes National Forests.

National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council

This Council develops a national urban and community action plan in accordance with the law. They develop criteria and make recommendations for the urban and community forestry challenge cost share program.

Employee Labor Organizations

National Federation of Federal Employees

American Federation of Government Employees

National Association of Government Employees

United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

ATTACHMENT 2:

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978

Authorizes cooperation and assistance to non-federal forest landowners and communities in rural forest management, urban and community forest management, production of and other forest resources, insect and disease control, rural fire prevention and control, forest management and planning assistance, and technology implementation.

Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2003

Title I of HFRA provides for expedited environmental review, a pre-decisional Forest Service administrative review process, and other measures on national forest and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands that are at risk of catastrophic fire. Titles II through VI authorize various forest health restoration programs, including promoting the use of woody biomass, creating the Health Forest Reserve Program, and providing watershed forestry assistance.

Multiple Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960

Clarifies forest lands are to be administered for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife, and fish. Authorized and directed the development and administration of the renewable surface resources of the national forests for multiple use and sustained yield of the several products and services obtained there from.

National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976

The NFMA requires the Forest Service to prepare and revise at fifteen-year intervals a land management plan (LMP) for each national forest to provide for multiple use and sustained yield of the products and services obtained from the forest. NFMA also establishes restrictions on timber harvest, such as provisions that harvest can only occur where soil, slope or other watershed conditions will not be irreversibly damaged.

Organic Administration Act of 1897

Provides authority for the administration, protection, and management of the national forests, for the purposes of improving and protecting the forest, securing favorable conditions of water flows, and to furnish a continuous supply of timber. The Act also directs Secretary of Agriculture to protect national forests against destruction by fire and depredations.

Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000

The SRS Act provides for payments to states that are distributed to counties in which national forests are situated. Under the Act, a county elects to receive a share of the state's 25-percent payment (a receipts-based payment) or a share of the state payment (a formula-based payment). The SRS Act was originally enacted in 2000, substantially amended and reauthorized in 2008, and since then has been annually reauthorized – the most recent expired at the end of fiscal year 2020.

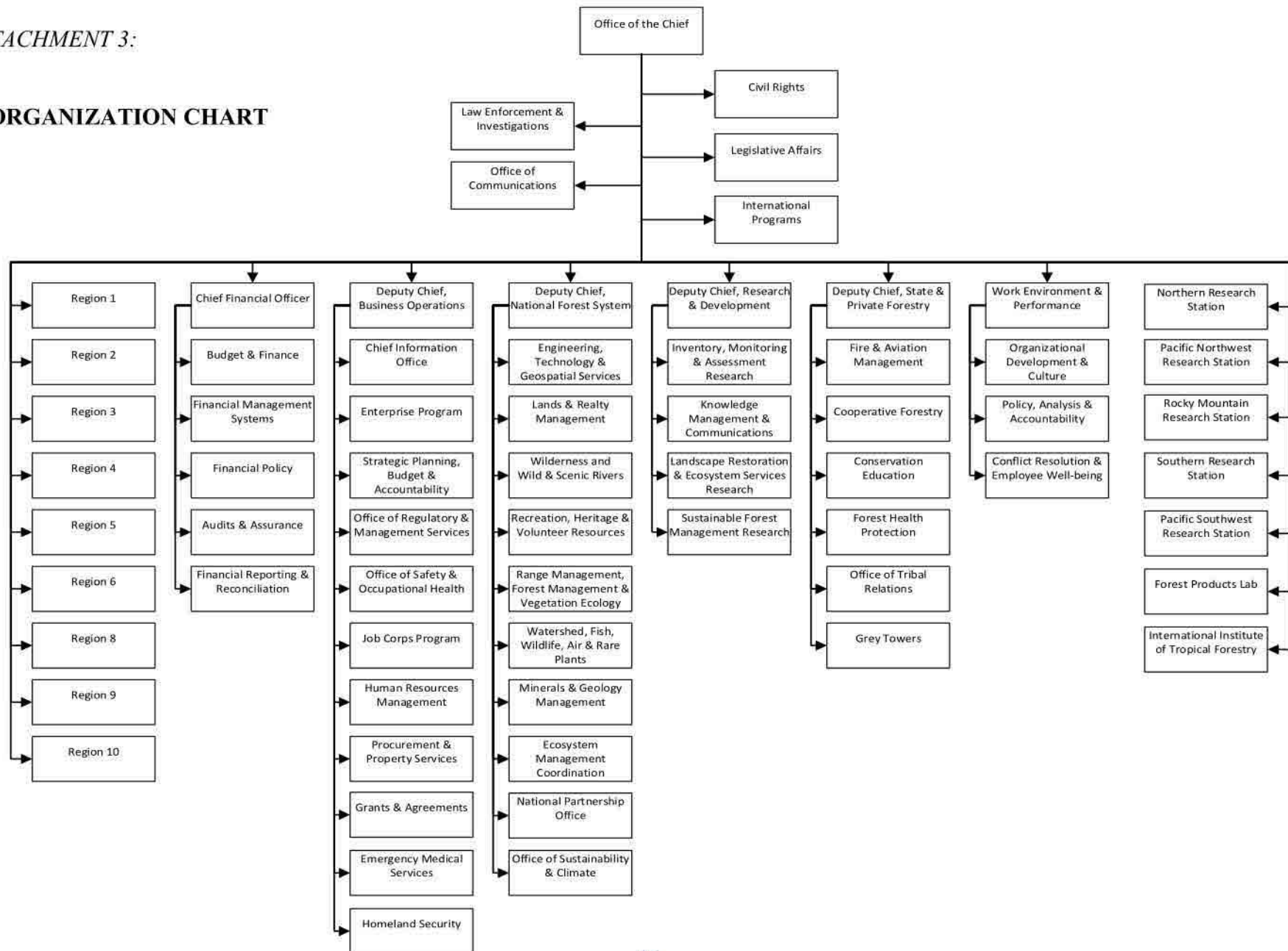
Weeks Act of 1911

Sections 1 and 2 authorize land acquisition for watershed protection and timber production. One of the primary land acquisition authorities.

United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

ATTACHMENT 3:

ORGANIZATION CHART



ATTACHMENT 4:

LEADERSHIP BIOGRAPHIES

Victoria C. Christiansen, Chief

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Vicki Christiansen serves as Chief of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, leading a workforce of more than 28,000 permanent employees who steward 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands; support the world's largest forestry research organization; and work with states, tribes and other partners to sustain forests for the benefit of all citizens, today and in the future. The priorities she sets for the agency are guided by her commitment to the Forest Service's core values: conservation, service, interdependence, diversity and safety.

As Chief, Vicki is leading agency efforts to improve the conditions of America's forests and grasslands by modernizing how we do business. Through sharing stewardship with local, state and national partners and tribes, communities are engaged in active forest management and achieve long-lasting results in landscape conservation. Vicki's focus on relationships inside and outside the agency is reflected in the Forest Service's dedication to caring for the land, communities and the people we serve.

Over her 39-year career, Vicki has accumulated a wealth of experience in natural resource and wildland fire management. Vicki joined the Forest Service in 2010 as the Deputy Director of Fire and Aviation Management. Prior to serving as Chief, she worked as Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry. Before joining the Forest Service, Vicki served as the Arizona State Forester and director of the Arizona Division of Forestry. She had previously served as the Washington State Forester, the culmination of a 26-year career with Washington State Department of Natural Resources.

Angela V. Coleman, Acting Associate Chief

202-205-1779, angela.coleman2@usda.gov

Angela Coleman serves as the Acting Associate Chief of the United States Department of Agriculture's Forest Service since March 2020. As Acting Associate Chief, Angela oversees Chief's Office daily operations and staff, issues management, Office of Communications and Legislative Affairs programs. She provides senior-level support to the Chief of the agency and the Executive Leadership Team to advance and deliver the agency's natural resource conservation mission.

Angela has served permanently as Chief of Staff of the Forest Service, Washington D.C. since 2015. Prior to this assignment, Angela served as the Associate Deputy Chief, Business Operations, guiding integration of the agency's people-focused programs in Human Resource Management, Civil Rights, Employee Relations, Recruitment and Retention advance corporate efforts to create an inclusive and diverse work environment. Angela has also served as Associate Deputy Chief of Research and Development, where she assisted in leading scientific and technology advancement to support natural resource management. Before that, she served as Deputy Regional Forester for the Pacific Southwest Region for National Forests located in California and parts of Nevada. Prior to this position, she served as Chief of Staff to the Deputy Chief of the National Forest System, Forest Service in Washington, DC, providing direct assistance to the Deputy Chief as a senior advisor on policy, personnel, and issue management.

United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

Before joining the Washington Office Deputy Chief's staff, Angela served seven years as Regional Communications Director for the Forest Service, Southern Region in Atlanta. A native of Phenix City, Alabama, Angela's career with the Forest Service spans more than 22 years.

Antoine Dixon, Chief Financial Officer

202-205-0429, aldixon@fs.fed.us

Tony Dixon currently serves as the Chief Financial Officer for the Forest Service, a position he has held since July 2016. In this capacity, he is responsible for overseeing financial management, execution of the Agency's six billion dollar budget, and management of more than 500 employees. His goals are to achieve sound financial management, improve financial reporting, and develop internal controls that ensure compliance with accounting principles, standards, applicable laws, as well as fulfilling Office of Management and budget requirements.

Tony Dixon has contributed more than 30 years to the Agency as a veteran leader in natural resources management and public service. He launched his career as a cooperative education student on the Routt National Forest in Steamboat Springs, CO. Tony has served in a variety of positions and geographical locations, including the National Director of Strategic Planning, Budget, and Accountability; National Director of the Forest Service Job Corps Program, Deputy Regional Forester of the Rocky Mountain Region, and Forest Supervisor of the National Forests in Mississippi. He also served as the Deputy Regional Director of Public Affairs in the Atlanta-based Southern Regional Office and held a number of positions in the National Headquarters in Washington, DC, including Program Analyst, Legislative Affairs Specialist, Deputy Area Budget Coordinator, and Chief of Staff for the Deputy Chief of the National Forest System.

Tony earned a bachelor's degree in marketing and forestry from Alabama A&M University and a master's degree in administration from Central Michigan University.

Chris French, Deputy Chief, National Forest System

202-205-1689 Christopher.french@usda.gov

Chris French serves as the Deputy Chief for the National Forest System for the United States Department of Agriculture's Forest Service in Washington D.C. Chris accepted this appointment in July 2019. Chris is responsible for policy, oversight and direction for the natural resource and public service delivery programs across the 193 million acres of National Forests and Grasslands that comprise the National Forest System.

Prior to his current position, Chris served as Associate Deputy Chief of National Forest System, Director of the Ecosystem Management Coordination (EMC), Deputy Director of Forest Management, and Assistant Director for Planning (EMC). In these positions he has led the agency's implementation of forest management, range management, land management planning, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), administrative reviews, land management litigation, monitoring, timber sales, stewardship contracting, reforestation, and nursery programs.

Chris began his career on the Coronado National Forest (AZ) in 1991 working as a seasonal employee in recreation and wildland fire management. He is a graduate of Arizona State University where he earned a Bachelor's of Science degree in Wildlife Conservation Biology. Chris has served in a variety of field and national leadership positions at all levels of the agency.

Leslie Weldon, Chief Executive, Work Environment and Performance

United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

202-403-8995 leslie.weldon@usda.gov

Leslie Weldon was named the first Chief Executive of Work Environment and Performance Office in 2018. In that role she oversees the United States Department of Agriculture's Forest Service efforts to transform agency culture and improve the work environment. Leslie's priority is to create a supportive workplace where every employee can thrive and contribute to the agency's mission without fear of discrimination, harassment or retaliation.

Leslie dedicated over 35 years to the Forest Service in a variety of roles. Prior to her appointment as Chief Executive of the Work Environment and Performance Office, Leslie served as the Deputy Chief for the National Forest System. She has also served as Regional Forester for the Northern Region of the Forest Service, Forest Supervisor for the Deschutes National Forest in Bend, Oregon, and External Affairs Officer in the Office of the Chief. In service to the agency, Leslie has been responsible for several national programs including, Legislative Affairs, Office of Communication, Press Office, and the National Partnership Office.

Leslie's career with the Forest Service began in 1981 as a summer hire monitoring seedlings, fighting forest fires, and surveying spotted owls on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest in Washington. During this time she began training in fisheries through the coop-education program. After receiving her bachelor's degree in Biological Sciences from Virginia Tech, Leslie was hired as a fisheries biologist for three districts on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest.

John Phipps, Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry

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John Phipps serves as the Deputy Chief of State & Private Forestry, Washington Office, overseeing the agency's cooperative forestry work, assistance to private landowners and management of the wildland fire system.

Prior to assuming his current position in 2019, John served as Station Director of the Rocky Mountain Research Station 2015-2019. Other career assignments include Associate Deputy Chief and Senior Advisor for State & Private Forestry, in which he led the initiative to establish an agency-wide safety culture and transform Fire and Aviation Management operations, resulting in more effective and efficient ways of achieving the agency's mission.

John also served as a Deputy Regional Forester in the Eastern United States, prior to becoming the Associate Deputy Chief. He started his Forest Service career in 1976 on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, Washington State. He later became District Ranger on the Sawtooth National Forest, Idaho. He was subsequently named Deputy Forest Supervisor on the Olympic National Forest, Washington. In 1992 John became the Forest Supervisor of the Eldorado National Forest and then returned to the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest as Forest Supervisor before moving to the Washington Office.

John earned bachelor's and master's degree in natural resource management at the University of Washington.

Claudette Fernandez, Deputy Chief, Business Operations

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Claudette Fernandez has served as Deputy Chief for Business Operations since 2019. She provides leadership and oversight to more than 4,000 employees in executing all the administrative functions for the agency which includes Human Resources, IT, budget, acquisition, safety, lease and facilities,

United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

records management, Freedom of Information (FOIA) services, and Job Corps. Claudette has gained more than 20 years of experience leading and managing in the public sector, including 8 years of service with FEMA and 5 years with USDA Rural Development (RD).

Prior to this role, Claudette served as the Director for the Office of Block Grant Assistance with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Community Planning and Development. In this position, she led HUD's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) programs managing \$85 billion in CDBG grants and \$35 billion in disaster recovery funds.

From 2016-2018, Claudette served as USDA RD's Deputy Administrator for Business Programs, Assistant Administrator for Water and Environmental Programs, and as the first Chief Innovation Officer for Rural Development. From 2013-2016, she served as Director of USDA RD's Rural Business Cooperative Service where she orchestrated the creation of the USDA National Community Economic Development (CED) Office, served as the first Director, and led a number of place-based initiatives.

Claudette has a Master of Engineering in Emergency Management from George Washington University as well as a Master of Public Administration and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Valdosta State University.

Alexander L. Friend, Deputy Chief, Research & Development

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Alex Friend was appointed Deputy Chief of Forest Service Research and Development in November 2018. In this role, Alex serves as the lead executive responsible for policy, budget, oversight, and direction of all Forest Service research activities. With an annual budget of \$300 million and 1,500 permanent staff, the work addresses all of the nation's forests and grasslands and has relevance and application internationally. The enterprise includes seven field research locations and a national headquarters staff. Alex's goal is to use research to enhance the rigor and impact of the whole agency with a commitment to impactful science, effective delivery, and organizational synergy.

Prior to this assignment, Alex served as station director for the Pacific Southwest Research station, in Albany CA from 2012 to 2018. In that role he managed eight research facilities in California, Hawaii, and the Pacific Islands, interacting with federal, Tribal, state, and local land managers and engaging on the forest resource issues facing the West.

Alex joined the Forest Service in 2002 as a project leader and research ecologist at the Northern Research Station in Houghton, Michigan. From there, he transferred to the Washington Office to serve as research budget coordinator, where he provided support in planning, formulating, monitoring, and executing the R&D budget.

Prior to joining the Forest Service, Alex was Professor of Forestry at Mississippi State University from 1989 to 2001. He received a Doctor of Philosophy in Forest Resources from University of Washington and a Bachelor of Science in Forestry and Geology from the University of the South. Alex has a distinguished career of scientific research, teaching, and leadership spanning more than 30 years.

Doug Crandall, Director, Legislative Affairs

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Doug Crandall has been Director of Legislative Affairs for the Forest Service since 2007. As Director he has responsibility for all interactions with Congress including legislation, hearings, meetings and communications.

United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

During this time he also completed two assignments for the Secretary of Agriculture, first as Acting Assistant Secretary of Congressional Relations for one year, and second as Acting Deputy Under Secretary of Natural Resources and Environment for five months.

Previous to this, for eight years, he was Staff Director for the Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health, with jurisdiction in the U. S. House of Representatives over most legislation and oversight concerning the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management.

He also served with the Society of American Foresters as Policy Director, the National Forest Foundation as Vice President, and the American Forest and Paper Association as Director responsible for National Forest issues. Prior to that, he spent ten years managing a lumber company in Livingston, MT, and four years on the Brazilian Amazon, first as a forester and float-plane pilot, then as a plywood mill manager. Doug graduated with a BS in Forestry from Oregon State University where he was selected as Most Outstanding Graduating Senior by the faculty. He has been a member and officer of numerous forestry, industry, conservation and community organizations.

(b)(6), (b)(7)(C) *Director, Law Enforcement and Investigations*

(b)(6), (b)(7)(C) [@fs.fed.us](mailto:fs.fed.us)

(b)(6), (b)(7)(C) has served as Director of Law Enforcement and Investigations for the Forest Service since July 2016. In this position, he provides management and oversight for over 650 employees responsible for public and employee safety and resource protection on 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands throughout the country.

Prior to accepting the role of Director, (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) served as Deputy Director of Law Enforcement and Investigations for more than 6 years. In that position, he provided oversight and technical supervision to nine Special Agents in Charge and four Assistant Directors located at various duty locations throughout the nation. He also provided legal advice and technical guidance to National and Regional level Line and Staff Officers related to law enforcement issues on national forests and grasslands.

(b)(6), (b)(7)(C) has worked for the Forest Service Law Enforcement and Investigations program since 1989. During his 27 year Forest Service career, he has worked at the District level as a Law Enforcement Officer, at the Forest level as a Special Agent, at the Regional level as Assistant Special Agent in Charge and at the National level as Deputy Director, Acting Director, and now Director. He was instrumental in the development of the agency's national case management policy, the Law Enforcement and Investigations National Recruitment Plan and the National Timber Theft Prevention Plan.

His formal education includes a Bachelor's Degree in Forensic Science and a Master's Degree in Criminal Justice from Jacksonville State University. He is a graduate of the FBI National Academy program (Session 194) and the Federal Executive Institute's Leadership for a Democratic Society program.

He is a member of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National Sheriffs' Association, the Western States Sheriffs Association and the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives.

Kathryn O'Connor, Director, Office of Communications

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United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

Katie O'Connor serves as the Director of Communication for the USDA Forest Service since September 2018. She has a diverse background in conservation education, community outreach, and public affairs, bringing a fresh approach to communication at the Forest Service. Katie manages a team of 25 and oversees issues management, media relations, corporate communication, social media, digital media, publications, and web content for the Forest Service. She leverages the agency's network of 400+ field public affairs specialists to deliver transparent and timely strategic communication to the public and throughout the agency's local, regional and national networks.

Katie's previous positions with the Forest Service include Deputy Director of Communication in the Washington Office and Director of Public and Government Relations in the Eastern Region in Milwaukee, WI. She has also served as an Acting Associate Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry. Katie is a current member of the USDA 2020 Senior Executive Candidate Development Program.

Katie began her federal career with the Peace Corps as a conservation education volunteer in Nicaragua and later worked for the agency for 8 years at their Midwest Regional Office as a recruiter, recruitment supervisor and regional manager. She earned a Master of Arts and a Master of Public Affairs from Indiana University and earned a bachelor's degree in Spanish from Dartmouth College.

Katie is a Chicago native and she grew up playing basketball on the south side of the city. She played for Dartmouth College as an undergraduate where her team won the Ivy League championship her senior year. Katie's experience as a teammate and athlete and her work with the Peace Corps are heavily influential in her leadership style.

Valdis E. Mezainis, Director, International Programs

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Dr. Valdis E. Mezainis, Director of International Programs, came to the Forest Service from the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service, where he had been the Director of the Research and Scientific Exchange Division since 1988. He served as Director of the Office of International Cooperation and Development's International Training Division from 1985-1988. Prior to that, Dr. Mezainis held several positions with the Peace Corps.

A native of Chicago, Illinois, Dr. Mezainis earned his Bachelor of Science degree in biology from Loyola University (Chicago). He received his master's degree in fisheries and aquatic ecology from Auburn University in 1977, and a Doctor of Philosophy degree in soil and water science from the University of Arizona, where Gamma Sigma Delta named him the outstanding graduate student in the College of Agriculture.

Dr. Mezainis has worked worldwide in international development for over 40 years and has had long-term residential assignments in India and Cameroon. He has received numerous federal government achievement awards throughout his career including the Presidential Rank Award given to members of the Senior Executive Service for outstanding public service.

United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

ATTACHMENT 5:

BUDGET OVERVIEW

The Forest Service's discretionary funds are appropriated through the Interior, Environment, and Other Related Agencies, Appropriations Subcommittees. The agency's discretionary budget remained relatively flat from FYs 2015 through 2017, and increased in FYs 2018 and 2019, largely because Congress provided greater funding in Wildland Fire Management to fund the rising costs of fire prior to the fire funding fix going into effect. The FY 2020 enacted budget includes \$1.95 billion in new budget authority from the fire funding fix.

The total Forest Service discretionary funding for FY 2020, excluding the \$1.95 billion in new budget authority for fire, is \$5.5 billion. This is a decrease of \$604 million from FY 2019. The decrease was caused because the fire funding fix was implemented, and the Suppression line item was set at \$1.011 billion versus \$1.665 billion enacted in FY 2019. There were increases of approximately \$50 million to non-fire discretionary programs.

The growth in fire suppression costs over the last few decades has steadily consumed an ever-increasing portion of the agencies' appropriated budgets. In FY 2017, 56 percent of the agency's total appropriation was for Wildland Fire Management. When the costs of fire suppression exceed the Forest Service's appropriation, the agency initiates 'fire transfer' – the transfer of funds from discretionary and mandatory accounts to cover suppression costs. These mid- to late-season transfers stop projects, cause uncertainty and instability in planning, and impact the agency's ability to implement projects, including efforts to reduce wildfire risk through mechanical thinning, prescribed fire, and other means.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (2018 Omnibus), included an 8-year fire funding fix that, beginning in FY 2020, provides a total of \$2.25 billion of new budget authority to USDA and the Department of the Interior (DOI). The budget authority increases by \$100 million each year, ending at \$2.95 billion by FY 2027. For the duration of the 8-year fix, the Forest Service Suppression account will be funded at the FY 2015 President's Budget request of \$1.011 billion. The fire funding fix greatly reduces the likelihood of the disruptive practice of transferring funds from non-fire programs to cover firefighting costs. This will allow the Forest Service to continue its non-fire mission operations uninterrupted, including on-the-ground forest health improvements that reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires threatening lives, homes, and communities. The product of more than a decade of hard work, this bipartisan solution will ultimately stabilize the Forest Service operating environment.

In FY 2020, the Forest Service has access to \$1.95 billion of the new budget authority, called the Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund, and DOI has access to \$300 million. There is unlimited transfer authority on this amount between DOI and USDA. The Forest Service FY 2021 budget requests \$2.04 billion in the Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund.

United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

ATTACHMENT 6:

LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

Great American Outdoors Act

Legislation that provides substantial additional mandatory funding for the Forest Service, including full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which will dramatically increase the funding for the Forest Legacy program and for Forest Service land acquisition. In addition, the legislation provides \$285 million/year for five years to the Forest Service to address deferred maintenance.

2018 Farm Bill

The Forestry Title contained a number of new authorities and important updates to existing authorities, including: expanding the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) to allow counties and Tribes to participate; allowing funds received by the Governor from the sale of federal timber through GNA agreements to be retained by the Governor for future GNA work; codifying the wood innovation grant program; reauthorizes the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program and increases the authorization of appropriations from \$40 million to \$80 million; and increases the maximum value and types of small parcels that may be exchanged or sold under the Small Tracts Act.

2018 Omnibus Appropriations Bill

Fire Funding Fix - Freezes the 10-year average for fire suppression funding at the FY 2015 President's Budget request of \$1.011 billion. Without the freeze, the 10-year average, and therefore our Suppression request, would be expected to increase \$500-\$800 million over the next 5-10 years.

Forest Management Authorities – included authorities to increase the pace and scale of hazardous fuel reduction, such as increasing the length of stewardship contracts and agreements to 20 years, expanding Categorical Exclusions for certain hazardous fuels projects and changes to the road work provisions of the Good Neighbor Authority.

The John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act

Bundles over 110 individual lands bills, including provisions related to wildland fire technology use, land conveyances, boundary adjustments, wilderness designations, and mineral withdrawals. It permanently reauthorized the Land and Water Conservation Fund and included provisions related to sportsman's access to federal lands.

United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

ATTACHMENT 7:

GAO AND OIG AUDITS, FISCAL YEARS 2016 -2020

Audit Number	Report Issue Date	Audit Title/Link
GAO Audit Reports:	<i>Note: "R" indicates a Restricted Report</i>	
GAO-20-424	4/29/2020	Wildfire: Forest Service response and effects of the Chetco Bar Fire
GAO-20-175R	12/5/2019	Land, Water Conservation Fund: Forest Service Has Not Taken Steps to Ensure Compliance with Limitation on Land Acquisition
GAO-19-436R	9/18/2019	HARDROCK MINING: BLM and Forest Service Hold Billions in Financial Assurances, but More Readily Available Information Could Assist with Monitoring
GAO-18-56	1/31/2018	FOREST SERVICE: Improvements Needed in Internal Controls over Budget Execution Processes
GAO-18-593	04/15/2018	FEDERAL TIMBER SALES: Forest Service and BLM Should Review Their Regulations and Policies Related to Timber Export and Substitution
GAO-20-240R	04/14/2020	JOB CORPS: DOL Should Provide Greater Transparency in Communicating Its Rationale for Closure Decisions
GAO-20-461R	05/28/2020	MINING ON FEDERAL LANDS: More Than 800 Operations Authorized to Mine and Total Mineral Production Is Unknown
GAO-19-435R	05/16/2019	HARDROCK MINING: Availability of Selected Data Related to Mining on Federal Lands
GAO-20-238	03/05/2020	ABANDONED HARDROCK MINES: Information on Number of Mines, Expenditures, and Factors That Limit Efforts to Address Hazards
GAO-19-643	9/25/2019	FEDERAL LAND MANAGEMENT AGENCIES: Additional Actions Needed to Address Facility Security Assessment Requirements
GAO-20-52	12/19/2019	WILDLAND FIRE: Federal Agencies' Efforts to Reduce Wildland Fuels and Lower Risk to Communities and Ecosystems
GAO-18-72	10/26/2017	FEDERAL FACILITY SECURITY: Selected Agencies Should Improve Methods for Assessing and Monitoring Risk

United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

GAO-17-357	5/10/2017	<u>WILDLAND FIRE RISK REDUCTION: Multiple Factors Affect Federal-Nonfederal Collaboration, but Action Could Be Taken to Better Measure Progress</u>
GAO-20-101	12/20/2019	<u>FEDERAL PROPERTY: Improved Monitoring, Oversight, and Data Would Help Understand Effects of Providing Property to Non-Federal Recipients</u>
GAO-19-543	9/16/2019	<u>ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: Federal Efforts Need Better Planning, Coordination, and Methods to Assess Progress</u>
GAO-19-434R	4/30/2019	<u>HARDROCK MINING: Trends in U.S. Reliance on Imports for Selected Minerals</u>
GAO-19-131	4/29/2019	<u>INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY: Effective Practices Have Improved Agencies' FITARA Implementation</u>
GAO-18-491	9/20/2018	<u>GRANTS WORKFORCE: Actions Needed to Ensure Staff Have Skills to Administer and Oversee Federal Grants</u>
GAO-17-426	4/25/2017	<u>FEDERALLY OWNED VEHICLES: Agencies Should Improve Processes to Identify Underutilized Vehicles</u>
GAO-17-680R	7/17/2017	<u>ANIMAL WELFARE: Information on the U.S. Horse Population</u>
GAO-17-225	4/13/2017	<u>AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION: USDA's Environmental Quality Incentives Program Could Be Improved to Optimize Benefits</u>
GAO-17-73R	10/31/2016	<u>Reported Inventory, Use, and Cost of Federally Owned Aircraft</u>
GAO-17-119	10/14/2016	<u>ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION: Information on Federal Agencies' Expenditures and Coordination Related to Harmful Algae</u>

United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

OIG AUDIT REPORTS

Audit Number	Report Issue Date	Audit Title/ Hyperlink
08801-0001-41		Regional Forester Authorities for Cost Share Agreements- Inspection Engagement Letter received 8/24/2020 Inspection in progress
11601-0001-12	11/8/2019	USDA Fiscal Year 2019 First Quarter DATA Act Submission
50701-0002-21	3/30/2020	USDA's Controls to Prevent the Unauthorized Access and Transfer of Research Technology
50501-0020-12	6/27/2019	Improper Usage of USDA's Information Technology Resources
08026-0001-41	6/30/2020	Final Action Verification - Forest Service Initiatives to Address Workplace Misconduct (08601-0008-41)
08099-0001 -21	12/17/2019	Final Action Verification - Audit of Forest Service's Next Generation and Legacy Air Tanker Contract Awards (08026-0001-24)
08026-0001-31	9/27/2019	Final Action Verification - Forest Service Wildland Fire Activities – Hazardous Fuels Reduction (08601-0004-41)
08702-0001-41	9/5/2019	Forest Service's Controls Over its Supplemental Disaster Appropriations
08601-0008-41	2/11/2019	Forest Service Initiatives to Address Workplace Misconduct
08601-0009-41	12/18/2019	FS Controls over its Contract Closeout Process
08003-0001-22	3/30/2018	Drug Enforcement on National Forest System Lands
08601-0008-41-1	3/5/2018	Forest Service Initiatives to Address Workplace Misconduct – Interim Report
08601-0007-41	12/22/2017	Forest Service Controls Over Service Contracts
08016-001-23	12/1/2017	Review of Forest Service Controls Over Explosives and Magazines

United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

08601-0006-41	8/10/2017	<u>Forest Service Secure Rural Schools Program</u>
08601-0005-41	8/7/2017	<u>Forest Service's Plan for Addressing Climate Change</u>
08001-0001-21	7/13/2017	<u>Forest Service Watershed Management</u>
08099-0001-12	7/7/2017	<u>Audit of Forest Service's Next Generation and Legacy Airtanker Contract Awards</u>
07601-0004-31	5/22/2017	<u>Forest Service Deferred Maintenance</u>
08601-0004-41	7/29/2016	<u>Forest Service Wildland Fire Activities – Hazardous Fuels Reduction</u>
08601-0002-41	12/24/2016	<u>Forest Service Firefighting Cost Share Agreements with Non-Federal Entities</u>

United States Department of Agriculture
2020 Presidential Transition Preparation
Executive Summary – Forest Service

ATTACHMENT 8:

LITIGATION SUMMARY

Cottonwood (Salix v. USFS (Cottonwood Environmental Law Center v. U.S. Forest Service) - USA v. Cottonwood Environmental Law Center (13-35624, 13-35631, 9th Cir.).

This decision requires the agency to reinitiate consultation on completed forest plans when new information suggests a new effect to an Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed species or critical habitat. New information is broadly interpreted by courts; nearly any information could trigger a cycle of continual re-initiation of consultation on a land management plan or policy. This model is unsustainable and inhibits effective land management. Since January 2016, there have been at least 23 lawsuits and 45 notices of intent to sue involving new information claims. Of the 45 NOIs filed, 21 challenge programmatic decisions. It is the federal government's position that a completed forest plan is not an ongoing action and the agency should not be required to reinitiate ESA consultation on completed plans. This ruling contradicts 10th Circuit precedent. In 2016, the U.S. Department of Justice petitioned for and was denied Certiorari before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Center for Biological Diversity v. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service et al. (17-475, D. Ariz.); Save the Scenic Santa Ritas v. USFS (17-576, D. Ariz.); Tohono O'odham Nation v. USFS (18-189, D. Ariz.),

concerning the Rosemont Copper Mine on Coronado National Forest, Arizona. Potential national implications. District Court offered a new interpretation of law; "the Forest Service's application of its regulations to mining operations cannot grant rights outside bounds of 1872 Mining Law. Defendants' remedy lies with the Congress, not the Courts."

Alliance for the Wildlife Rockies v. Savage et al. (18-0067, D. Mont.),

concerning the Pilgrim II Restoration Project on the Kootenai National Forest, Montana. Regional implications. District Court ruled the Kootenai National Forest had to reinitiate consultation on their completed Land Management Plan on the effects to grizzly bears as a result of increased illegal use of closed roads. Multiple NOIs filed on this same issue on other projects.

The Wilderness Society and Friends of the Boundary Waters, et al. v. David Bernhardt, et al. (20-01176, D. DC),

concerning mining lease renewals for Twin Metals hard rock mine on the Superior National Forest, Minnesota. Regional implications. Plaintiffs request relief from the Court that would require the agency to maintain its ability to withhold consent for future renewals of leases issued by the Bureau of Land Management.

WildEarth Guardians v. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Forest Service (13-0151, D. Ariz.),

concerning forest management impacts on the Mexican Spotted Owl on six Southwestern national forests. Impacts in New Mexico and Arizona with regional implications. District Court of Arizona enjoined 6 national forests from conducting forest management activities until the agency complies with the Endangered Species Act concerning potential impacts to the Mexican Spotted Owl.

WildEarth Guardians, Western Watershed Project, Wilderness Watch v. U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (19-203, D. Idaho),

concerning the Forest Service reinitiation of Endangered Species Act consultation on the National Baiting Policy due to alleged take of grizzly bear over black bear bait sites. Impacts in Wyoming and Idaho with national implications. U.S. Department of Justice motion to dismiss pending; motion claims there is no federal action requiring Endangered Species Act consultation. National Baiting Policy is that states manage wildlife/hunting rules, such as use of bait for hunting black bear.

Forest Service
Budget Authority FY 2013 - FY 2021
(Dollars in Thousands)

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Enacted</u>	<u>PB Level</u>
Discretionary.....	\$4,552,469	\$4,895,764	\$5,073,202	\$5,681,038	\$5,632,302	\$6,299,133	\$6,104,712	\$7,450,413	\$7,384,836
Mandatory.....	775,116	833,073	716,682	891,490	443,844	705,117	883,236	673,571	746,510
Recovery Act Funds	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Families First Coronavirus Response Funds.....	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CARES Act Funding.....	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	70,800	0
Supplemental Funding.....	4,180	600,000	0	700,000	0	304,252	854,271	0	0
User Fees.....	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reimbursements.....	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total, Agency.....	5,331,765	6,328,837	5,789,884	7,272,528	6,076,146	7,308,502	7,842,219	8,194,784	8,131,346
Staff Years.....	31,947	32,254	32,194	32,254	32,427	31,549	30,870	30,850	30,372