

**“THE FUTURE OF THE UNITED
STATES FOREST SERVICE”**

OVERSIGHT HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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OVERSIGHT HEARING ON “THE FUTURE OF THE UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE”

**Wednesday, May 1, 2002
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Resources
Washington, DC**

The Committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:02 a.m., in room 1334, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. James V. Hansen, (Chairman of the Committee), presiding.

The CHAIRMAN. We are privileged this morning to have the Secretary of Agriculture, Ann Veneman, with us. She is accompanied by Under Secretary Rey and Chief of the Forest Service, Mr. Bosworth. We are grateful to have all of you with us this morning, and let me point out that this is a bad day for us, and I know a lot of members will feel bad about this because they wanted to talk to all three of you, and we must have four markups going on. Personally, I have one in Armed Services that is very important to me, and I know the other members do also. So expect a little in and out, and also let me just respectfully point out that there has been some frustration with the Department of Agriculture expressed by members of this Committee, and we don't mean to take it out on you today, but we appreciate you being with us and hope you can stand to be with us for the time that we have allotted to this.

Let me give my opening statement, and then I understand that someone from the Democratic side will give theirs, and then if anyone else has an opening statement, we will be happy to hear from you, and members will be coming by periodically.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. JAMES V. HANSEN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF UTAH

The CHAIRMAN. The Forest Service manages about 8.5 percent of total land area in the United States, according to some 192 million acres of land. These areas are managed by 9 regions, 155 national forests and more than 600 ranger districts. National forest lands are found in 44 states and 739 counties. Out west we have millions of acres of public domain forests. To say that Forest Service affects millions of America is a gross understatement.

National forest lands are home to a myriad of activities. Americans hunt and fish on national forests. Others quietly reflect in the solitude offered them by towering pines and sparkling brooks. Hikers and campers use developed trails and facilities for recre-

ation. Cities and towns utilize resources from watersheds to provide drinking water to their residents. Indeed, national forests influence our economic, educational, commercial, personal and spiritual well-being.

We are here to talk about the future of the Forest Service. It is fair to say that the Forest Service has changed considerably since it was established by Congress in 1905. We need to figure out where it is headed and then see if that is where we want it to be going, and that is our purpose today.

I have been doing some interesting reading. It seems that the Forest Service is no longer the agency it used to be. In the beginning rangers were required to pass rigorous examination. Among other skills, they had to be able to saddle and pack a horse, build trails and cabins. They had to be able to run a compass line and find their way through the forest both in daylight and darkness. They had to know how to scale timber. They even had to cook a meal, and most importantly, be able to eat it afterwards. These skills had to be demonstrated before an applicant could be hired. And experience, not book education was sought by the Forest Service and they didn't just hire anyone. They hired the right person for the job. Thus a force on-the-ground experts was created. A force that knew the land and what it was best for.

Gifford Pinchot, the first Chief of the Forest Service, wrote that the agency was "generally recognized as the best Government organization of its day." This happened, he claimed, as a direct result of the agency's purpose and its foundation of recognition and responsibility. He outlined several of the reasons why the Forest Service worked so well. Managers were allowed to be innovative and were directly responsible for the land they managed. Those who knew what was best for the land were able to do it, not postponed indefinitely by bureaucracy and red tape. If any man failed to do his job, he was "promptly taken out of it." Management policies were dynamic and subject to change if a better way was found.

That description is kind of a far cry from today's Forest Service, and we realize that things change over the years, but under the previous Administration, the agency created mandates, such as the Roadless Rule, that applied to all lands equally regardless of their unique situations. Local managers were effectively prohibited from managing the forests. Regulations required assessment of assessments and made even small tasks difficult to achieve. I have heard this problem called "analysis paralysis." Today a 34-cent stamp can stop a timber sale. Some employees are no longer responsible for their actions, as we saw in the lynx hair debacle. Beetles and fires are destroying great stands of timber because of the inability of local managers to manage them. Experience and common sense has been replaced by book smarts. Indeed it looks as though the Forest Service in many cases has lost its way.

I don't know if there is a specific occasion when this occurred. Perhaps the Forest Service has chosen to follow a sustained version rather than a sustainable version. The axiom that "the greatest good for the greatest number in the long run" appears to have been dented by a new ideal that places preservation as the top priority and leaves local managers dangling without the tools to manage the national forests. Following this idea, the Forest Service has

replaced management of timber, once thought as a commodity and a renewable resource, with recreation management. We fully realize that that happens and that those things are occurring, but we are concerned about the way it happens.

It is important to realize, however, that none of us want all of the timber on our national forests to be logged. In fact, some of the most beautiful places I have been are in national forests. One of the first things I did as a Congressman was to sponsor the first and only bill that designated some national forests lands in the State of Utah as wilderness. That is the beauty of the multiple use concept coupled with a vision of sustainability. Uses can be balanced and forests can be healthy at the same time. Local economies can benefit; so can hikers. It is not an all-or-nothing situation like some groups would try to lead us to believe.

If the Forest Service has lost its way, it is time to put it back on track while we still have that opportunity. It is going to take a lot of hard work to make this agency the best Government organization that it used to be, and I believe it is possible, and I believe the right people are in place to do it. Forests must once again be managed for multiple use access and sustainability. National Forest timber must once again become a commodity. Management tools must be restored to local managers. The people on the ground, not in Washington, should have the say of what happens in local forests. And like the first gentleman said, give them their heads and let them use them.

With that said, I would also like to go on record that I have a good relationship with the Forest Service, and Chief Bosworth, who served as the Regional Forester in Ogden, Utah. I also have a close working relationship with Forest Supervisors and District Rangers, and I know that they have the best intentions for the Forest Service. I am pleased to have them in these leadership positions. Chief, I think you have got some awfully good people that work for you. Let's let them lead. We have worked together on a number of issues over the years, and I hope that this relationship will continue to be fruitful.

Let me just point out that, no disrespect to anybody over the years, but access is a big deal, and people in America want access to their ground. I had a man come up to me and put his face right in mine the other day and he said, "Read the Constitution, Mr. Chairman. The first words are We the people", and we the people want to use the public grounds of America. And I am almost embarrassed to go to some places in my home State and my home district because people will jump all over me and say, "How come we didn't have any input when that road was closed? How come we didn't have any input when someone ruined this thing on grazing or timber or whatever it may be."

And I mentioned to the Secretary yesterday, and I apologize, but I still remember in 1981 when President Ronald Reagan was in the White House and invited me to come down, and Secretary Block and Secretary Watt were there. And he said, "There will be no more war on the West. We are going to come, let us reason together." And he said, "When you go out there, it is not them and us, it is we are all Americans." And when you come with your green truck and your badge and your gun and all that stuff, keep

in mind that a lot of those people have been there a long time and they know a lot about the forest and they want to use the forest. They do want access and they do want use of the forest. And I sustain that idea.

Further than that though, I know all of you have been there a relatively short time. We appreciate you coming today and putting up with this Committee, which is probably here to harass you and badger you a little bit, but we know that you are all big and strong and can handle that.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hansen follows:]

**Statement of The Honorable James V. Hansen, Chairman,
Committee on Resources**

The Forest Service manages about 8.5% of total land area in the United States, equating to some 192 million acres of land. These areas are managed by 9 regions, 155 national forests, and more than 600 ranger districts. National Forest lands are found in 44 states and 739 counties. Out West, we have millions of acres of public domain forests. To say that Forest Service affects millions of Americans is a gross understatement.

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Gifford Pinchot, the first Chief of the Forest Service, wrote that the agency was "generally recognized as the best [government organization of its day]." This happened, he claimed, as a direct result of the agency's purpose, and its foundation of recognition and responsibility. He outlined several of the reasons why the Forest Service worked so well. Managers were allowed to be innovative and were directly responsible for the land they managed. Those that knew what was best for the land were able to do it, not postponed indefinitely by bureaucracy and red tape. If any man failed to do his job, he was "promptly taken out of it." Management policies were dynamic and subject to change if a better way was found.

That description is a far cry from the Forest Service today. Under the previous Administration, the agency created mandates, such as the Roadless Rule, that applied to all lands equally regardless of their unique situations. Local managers were effectively prohibited from managing the forests. Regulations require assessments of assessments, and make even small tasks difficult to achieve. I've heard this problem called "analysis paralysis." Today, a 34-cent stamp can stop a timber sale. Some employees are no longer responsible for their actions, as we saw in the lynx hair debacle. Beetles and fires are destroying great stands of timber because of the inability of local managers to manage for them. Experience and common sense has been replaced by booksmarts. Indeed, it looks as though the Forest Service has lost its way.

I don't know if there's a specific occasion or point in time when this occurred. Perhaps the Forest Service has chosen to follow a sustained vision rather than a sustainable vision. Pinchot's axiom "the greatest good for the greatest number in the long run" appears to have been dented by a new ideal that places preservation as the top priority and leaves local managers dangling without the tools to manage the nation's forests. Following this ideal, the Forest Service has replaced manage-

ment of timber, once thought of as a commodity and a renewable resource, with recreation management. This must be changed.

It is important to realize, however, that none of us want all of the timber on our national forests to be logged. In fact, some of the most beautiful places I have ever seen are in national forests. One of the first things I did as a Congressman was to sponsor the first and only bill that designated some national forests lands in the State of Utah as wilderness. That's the beauty of the multiple use concept coupled with a vision of sustainability. Uses can be balanced and forests can be healthy at the same time. Local economies can benefit; so can hikers. It's not an all-or-nothing situation like some groups lead you to believe.

If the Forest Service has truly lost its way, it is time to put it back on track while we still have the chance. It's going to take a lot of hard work to make this agency be the "best government organization" that it used to be, but I believe it's possible. Forests must once again be managed for multiple uses and sustainability. National Forest timber must once again become a commodity. Management tools must be restored to local managers. The people on the ground, not in Washington, should have the say on what happens in local forests. Like Gifford Pinchot said, give them their heads, and then let them use them.

With that said, I would also like the record to reflect that I have had a good relationship with the Forest Service, especially with Chief Bosworth, who served as Regional Forester in Ogden, Utah. I also have a close working relationship with the Forest Supervisors and District Rangers in Utah, and I know that they have only the best of intentions for the Forest Service. I am pleased to have them in leadership positions in this agency. Chief, you have some good people on the ground. Let's let them lead. We have worked together on a number of issues over the years, and I hope that our relationships continue to be fruitful.

I look forward to hearing from our panel today. I'm sure this will prove to be an interesting discussion.

The CHAIRMAN. With that said, Mr. Kildee, are you the spokesman or is Mr. Kind the spokesman? I turn to my friend from Wisconsin.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. RON KIND, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF WISCONSIN**

Mr. KIND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank Madam Secretary for her presence today, and bringing us to speed on this very important issue. But first of all I want to thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to visit the Badger State on Earth Day and meet with a lot of the State and local officials, and also the conversations we now have. We have been battling a very important problem in the State of Wisconsin. For the first time, chronic wasting disease has been detected east of the Mississippi, affecting our deer herd. And just to put this in economic perspective, everyone knows that deer hunting is fairly popular in the upper Midwest. In the State of Wisconsin alone, based on 1996 statistics, it is a \$2.6 billion economic impact for the entire State, and now we have detected it east of the Mississippi. It has been detected west of the Continental Divide. It is sweeping across the continent. We look forward to working with you and your Department in regards to perhaps some emergency funds to get out ahead of the curve on eradication programs and how we can best implement prevention programs for this. I thank you for your attention to that matter.

Now, in regards to the subject of your testimony today, the Roadless Conservation Rule, this is a very important rule, and many of us are somewhat chagrined and a little disappointed in how slow the Department has been in implementing the Roadless Conservation Rule. It has been almost a year to the date when you

had indicated that you were going to put a hold on going forward on the new rule, while at the same time you stated that providing roadless protection for our National Forests is the right thing to do. You asserted your commitment to roadless protection, yet you wanted to reopen the process, a process that had countless public comment period, with over 600 public meetings, resulting in over 1.6 million documents produced on the Roadless Conservation Rule. And for many of us, we felt that there was plenty of vetting throughout the course of that process, and now are somewhat surprised that the Administration is so slow in regards to moving forward on this very, very important rule.

And from my perspective, I think it is sensible to move forward on the rule for a host of environmental and fiscal reasons. Over 383,000 miles of road crisscross our National Forest today, and these roads have generated an \$8.4 billion repair backlog, yet the Forest Service receives less than 20 percent of its annual maintenance needs. And it is the taxpayer that is ultimately saddled with the cost of this maintenance. And until this backlog is dealt with sufficiently, it makes no fiscal sense to be building more roads and adding to future backlog problems until we can get a grip on existing problems as they exist, and that is this routine repair and maintenance on the roads right now, resulting in this 8 billion plus backlog. Roads also generate significant public safety and environmental problems, increased fire risk and increased chance of landslides and slope failures that endanger watersheds and fish habitat. The flip side of this problem is that the unroaded areas have enormous ecological benefits as fish and wildlife habitat, as bulwarks against invasive species, and in sources of drinking water, just to name a few.

And that is why many of us believe that the time has come to move forward on the Roadless Conservation Rule. And we appreciate your attendance. We appreciate the focus you have given to this important subject, and we will look forward to your testimony today. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. You probably notice that our friend, Charlie Norwood from Georgia is sitting with us. I ask unanimous consent that Charlie Norwood can participate in this meeting and sit on the dais.

Is there objection?

Hearing none, thank you.

Mr. Walden had an opening statement.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. GREG WALDEN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF OREGON

Mr. WALDEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Madam Secretary, colleagues and guests.

I cannot emphasize strongly enough the desperate state of affairs in our forests and our rural communities. Report after report produced by the General Accounting Office have consistently sounded the alarm that our national forests in the West are at critical risk to catastrophic fire. And indeed, in my district and throughout the west we have seen fires that have burned hotter and hotter every year. Meanwhile, at a time when our forests are choked with trees,

the people in the small towns they live in are being choked economically. Some mills in my district have resorted to importing logs from as far away as Alaska and New Zealand, just to keep the communities in which they operate alive.

Mr. Rey, I know you understand this as you were recently in one of those communities, probably the most distressed in my district, John Day, Oregon. You heard firsthand of the failure of the Forest Service to be able to prepare sales that will survive a court challenge. While I am certain the dedicated people in the Forest Service who want to properly manage this national resource, must be frustrated at their inability to get anything accomplished that meets a court challenge. I daresay that frustration is a flicker in the day compared to the lightning in the night frustration of the people who are losing their jobs in their communities. Why does it take years and years to get approval to remove even dead, burned and diseased trees? I highly doubt there is a member of this Committee who would wait 3 or 4 years or perhaps forever to replace a dead tree in their back yard. In my district the Federal Forests are our back yard, and if this were public housing, the press would call the Government a slumlord. I know you share my concerns and I know you are working to try to find solutions.

Where the Forest Service has been able to get approval to properly manage the forests, we are able to control fire and produce healthier stands, and I look forward to hearing more about this Administration's charter forest concept because I believe it may hold hope for managing our forests in a healthier way, in a way that will stop the death of our timber dependent communities.

I also look forward to your comments on the implementation of the Northwest Forest Plan. The promises made to the people of the Northwest simply have not been kept. The facts are clear on that. The issue is what can we do to meet the goals that were promised to the people in the Northwest? And given the incredible fire danger we face in my district, I want to also get on the record an assurance that if various conditions are met, the Forest Service will permanently keep the tanker base in Medford open. As you know, both of our Senators, Ron Wyden and Gordon Smith, and Congressman DeFazio and I, are committed to working with you and this Administration to keep this base open and operating.

Finally, and right now most importantly, I would like to solicit your comments regarding the terrible situation afflicting the good people of the Klamath Basin. As you may know, this Committee, especially Chairman Hansen and Mr. Young, worked closely with me and with Chairman Combest on the Ag. Committee to earmark \$50 million in the farm bill's EQUIP program specifically for conservation projects in the basin. In addition, I am pleased to announce that we were able to get the legislation passed by this Committee, cosponsored by my colleague, Mr. DeFazio and passed by the House, inserted in the farm bill, to require a study of fish passage issues at Chilequan Dam, which presently blocks 95 percent of the habitat for the suckerfish, which are endangered.

And finally, the legislation, farm bill legislation includes some 750 million in conservation funds, water conservation funds, Madam Secretary, that could really provide us with the funding we need to solve the problems in the Klamath Basin.

I commend you and your staff for the great work you have done to help solve the problems in that basin. As you know, the water was cutoff to 1,400 farm families, and while we still don't have the final information on what kind of flows we will see this year for them, or waive the biological opinion from NAS. I know the situation is severe. I also know that for decades and decades, literally projects have been identified that will improve water quality and water quantity, that will improve habitat, that will improve wetlands, that will improve the environment and make sure we have water for the people. What we lack is a commitment from the Government to go in and actually fund and implement these projects. And certainly there are Native American projects and issues that must be dealt with in the basin. So I look forward to continuing to work with you and to learning more about how you might be able to access these various pots of money in the farm bill that we will vote on tomorrow to help solve the problems in the Klamath Basin.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your continued and strong support to stand up for the farmers and ranchers and improve the problems in the basin, and for your willingness and the work of your staff to hold the hearing in Klamath and to hold the hearing back here on the NAS study. And to help us find real solutions that will work for the fish, the water fowl and the farmers and ranchers. And with that, I appreciate your courtesy in allowing me to share those remarks.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

One further opening statement, and then we will go to the Secretary. Mr. Simpson.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. MICHAEL K. SIMPSON, A
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF IDAHO**

Mr. SIMPSON. Mr. Chairman, thank you. I didn't have an opening statement to start with, but I did want to comment on a couple of things that were just said, one dealing with the Roadless Rule.

And contrary to some people's perception, it was not the Bush Administration that gutted the Roadless Rule as some groups have indicated, some environmental groups and others have indicated that that is the case. It was a Federal Judge in Boise, Idaho that put an injunction on the Roadless Rule because it was put into effect illegally, and on May 10th 2001, the U.S. District Court in Boise issued a preliminary injunction enjoining the Forest Service from implementing all aspects of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. The Court based its decision in part on concerns related to the public's review, mainly that the Court conclusively finds that the comment period was grossly inadequate, and thus deprived the public of any meaningful dialog or input into the process.

Since that time, the Forest Service, as I understand it, has put together the Forest Roads Working Group, which is a group of all stakeholders, land users, environmental groups trying to work on this rule to try to come to some compromise that will work, and I understand—and you can verify this during your testimony, if you would, that during that time period since this rule was enjoined by the Federal Judge, that there has not been one road built

in a roadless area; nor has there been one tree cut in a roadless area that was designated before.

So the claim that somehow the Administration is gutting the Forest Service and the Roadless Rule that was proposed by the Clinton Administration I think is just false. So I wanted to get that on the record.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. I didn't mean to exclude Mr. DeFazio, I apologize.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. PETER A. DeFAZIO, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF OREGON

Mr. DeFAZIO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Madam Secretary, Chief, and Secretary Rey.

I have had correspondence, Madam Secretary, with both the Chief, his predecessor Chief with Assistant Secretary Rey and his predecessor, on an issue that I have been trying to get the attention of the past amendment, and hopefully yours, for nearly a decade now.

The Clinton Forest Plan was destined to fail in part because it based a substantial amount of its harvest in old growth. Timber, which was always the heart of the controversy, at the time of the drafting of the Clinton Forest Plan I attempted to get the Administration and the scientists and Lord Thomas to look at an alternative, which would reserve the remaining old growth but move to a more dispersed forestry over a larger land base. Subsequent to that, work has been done by Jerry Franklin and other scientists, developing this sort of a approach on some forests in the Northwest for different reasons. It is credible environmentally. You can get the same output. You can actually get more reliable timber outputs and potentially certainly greater numbers than you are getting now, and you don't have the controversy over the harvesting of old growth.

We have hundreds of thousands, millions of acres, particularly in the coast range that are reaching a critical point. If we don't go in there and do some thinning in those areas, you will never be able to go in and thin because the trees won't be able to develop the root systems. I would urge any—I am certain the Chief has made this—I don't know if Secretary Rey has made this trip yet, but the Forest Service has a great trip where they can take you out into the Siuslaw Forest, and just by hiking less than a mile, you can see a stand and trees that are about 10 inches in diameter and a barren ground. You can go to a thin stand see trees that are 13, 14 inches in diameter with ground cover up about two feet. And then you can go to a more robustly thin stand and see even larger trees with stuff growing over your head.

We have hundreds of thousands, millions of acres that need that sort of approach, and you know, obviously this is something that I believe you could bring together environmental groups and industry. You can get out a viable product, you can manage these forests back toward a more sustainable ecological basis, and in effect, you put off the controversy of what they are going to be, whether you're just going to manage them to become old growth again some day for 20 or 30 years till the next generation, and I know I won't be

here then. So I am really desirous that we take a look at this approach and I just wanted to bring it to your attention. The gentlemen on either side of you have both discussed this with me, and I would really hope that we can get the Administration focused on this. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman from Oregon for that very interesting statement.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. We are grateful to have you again, and I appreciate you being here, and we are pretty informal sometime in this place, and if you want to turn to your companions for a comment, by all means, please do. Madam Secretary, I return the time to you.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. ANN M. VENEMAN, SECRETARY,
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE; ACCOMPANIED BY MARK REY, UNDER SECRETARY, NATURAL
RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE; AND DALE BOSWORTH, CHIEF,
UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE**

Secretary VENEMAN. Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, it is a great privilege for me to appear before you today to discuss our vision for the USDA's Forest Service. The Forest Service, as you know, is a vital part of the Department and the future of the agency has great significance, as you mentioned, Mr. Chairman, to all Americans, especially those though who work, who recreate, who live in or near our National Forests.

As you mentioned, I am accompanied today by Mark Rey, our Under Secretary for Natural Resources and the Environment, and our Chief of the Forest Service, Dale Bosworth, who is a second generation member of the Forest Service with his son also involved. And these two gentlemen, along with their whole team, are doing a terrific job helping to manage this very valuable resource.

At the outset, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for your support of the Forest Service role in making the Olympic Winter Games in Utah an outstanding and memorable event. Two signature events, the Downhill and the Super G took place at the Snowbasin Ski Resort located in the Wasatch-Cache National Forest. Our intent was to provide Olympics-related activities on the National Forest that were not only thrilling but also safe and environmentally responsible. I believe that we achieved all three objectives. And I was very pleased to at least share the opening ceremonies of those Olympics and to celebrate with our Forest Service people the success of their participation in this mission.

I also want to note how proud I was to go to New York City less than a month after September 11th, and to see our Forest Service Incident Management Teams working side by side with the New York City Fire Department, to help as they dealt with the devastation of the fires and the collapse of the World Trade Center. Many people don't know this important role that our Forest Service played and Forest Service Firefighters played in helping to manage the incidents in New York City following the September 11th incidents.

Our goal is for the Department of Agriculture, including all our agencies including the Forest Service, to be a world-class provider of goods and services to the American people.

The Forest Service has hard working and dedicated employees. It maintains the world's premiere wildland firefighting force. It maintains high quality recreation to hundreds of millions of visitors each year. National forests are the source of clean water to hundreds of communities throughout our country. Forest Service scientists are world leaders in forest and rangeland research. The agency maintains the oldest and most comprehensive forest census in the world. And, through its ongoing partnership with state foresters, the Forest Service assists thousands of non-Federal forest land owners. These are only a few of the many successes of our Forest Service.

Yet, while we have much to be proud of, we also recognize that we have much to do. My comments today will focus on five key areas: managing our forests and rangelands, cooperation across Government, process gridlock, accountability and reconnecting with local communities.

Although this list is not exhaustive, it includes the most critical areas for improving the Forest Service in the long run.

In 1960 Congress enacted the Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act, thereby defining the mission of the Forest Service. The law mandated that the Forest Service manage all of the various renewable surface resources of the National Forests so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the needs of the American people. The ability to actively manage our forests and rangelands lies at the heart of the Forest Service's multiple use. 73 million acres of National Forest land is at moderate to high risk from unacceptably damaging wildfire. 70 million acres are susceptible to destruction from insects and disease. Invasive species infestations are increasing. Our transportation infrastructure and recreational facilities are deteriorating and in need of repair. As these conditions worsen, it will become increasingly difficult to meet the multiple needs of maintaining healthy ecosystems, protecting rural communities and supporting the public users of our national forests.

A renewed emphasis on proactive management is the first step toward reversing this trend. Management by doing nothing is not an option. We must take proactive measures to improve forest health, restore watersheds, improve our transportation and recreation infrastructure, and address other serious resource needs. Proactive management can also provide wood, forage, energy and other important products. By emphasizing what we leave on the land, rather than what we take, we can ensure that our active management will be environmentally responsible while producing forest and rangelands that are more resilient, productive and better able to provide goods and services and other important benefits to people and communities.

Key to the success of the Forest Service is its ability to cooperate with other agencies to accomplish its mission. Our joint effort with the Department of Interior to implement the National Fire Plan is an excellent example of our commitment to establish a seamless delivery of services across Government. On April 10th, the Depart-

ments of Agriculture and the Interior announced the creation of the Wildland Fire Leadership Council to achieve consistent implementation of the goals, action and policies of the National Fire Plan. This council oversees the development of consistent fire management plans, a uniform set of outcome-based performance measures, common data elements and reporting systems, unified procedures for the delivery of an effective hazardous fuels reduction program and a unified preparedness model and a number of other significant measures to ensure consistent management between the departments and across the landscape.

In addition, last August, the two departments, in cooperation with the Western Governors Association, tribal interests, the National Association of State Foresters and the National Association of Counties, adopted a 10-year wildfire strategy, establishing a new collaborative approach to reducing wildfire risks to communities and the environment. The implementation plan for the 10-year strategy will be finalized soon and will establish, for the first time, a uniform set of interdepartmental goals, performance measures and tasks for improving prevention and suppression, reducing hazardous fuels to protect communities, restoring fire-adapted ecosystems and promoting community well-being.

Perhaps our greatest challenge is to address what Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth describes as “analysis paralysis.” This is caused by overlapping statutory requirements, unnecessarily complicated internal rules and procedures. Several decades of court-made law and a proliferation of appeals and litigation have combined to substantially delay and increase the cost of our decision-making processes. Each year the Forest Service processes more NEPA documents to support management decisions than any other Government agency. According to Forest Service estimates, the process and paperwork required to: (1) complete these documents, (2) meet other statutory and regulatory requirements, and (3) prepare agency decisions to withstand possible appeals and litigation, account for between 40 and 60 percent of the total time spent on management activity. This does not include the time associated with appeals and litigation, which frequently ensue once decisions are made. Frequently the onerous process does little to improve the quality of agency decisions.

The Forest Service is preparing a report to the Chief on process gridlock. The report will provide a diagnosis of the factors that contribute most directly to unnecessary and counterproductive procedural delays. We hope it will stimulate a constructive dialog that will help us identify our most serious problems and solve them together.

Consistent with the President’s management agenda, the departments and the Forest Service are committed to improving our financial and performance accountability to the Congress and to the public. First and foremost we are committed to fidelity in the management of taxpayer dollars. To that end, we have committed significant departmental resources to helping the Forest Service and the Department achieve a clean audit opinion. The Forest Service has already made significant progress in reconciling the agency’s cash records and accounting for real property. It is a priority to achieve a clean audit for the Forest Service, and our Chief Finan-

cial Officer and Under Secretary Rey are actively engaged in assisting with process reforms to achieve that goal.

We are also committed to improving the way the Forest Service measures its performance. As demonstrated by our progress under the fire plan, the agency is moving aggressively to account for its accomplishments using meaningful, outcome-based performance measures that fully account for what it achieves with each investment. We are also working across Government to integrate the Forest Service's performance measures with those of other land management agencies. Our progress is somewhat limited by the agency's over complex structure that emphasizes programs over performance. The agency appreciates the assistance Congress gave to begin to address the issues during the 2001 appropriations process. We would like to continue to work with this Committee and the Appropriations Committees to simplify the Forest Service budget while placing greater emphasis on performance. By focusing on performance, we expect the agency to measurably improve in the quantity and quality of goods and services it delivers to the public per unit of investment.

To succeed in the long run, the Forest Service must establish and maintain strong ties to local communities. Our recent success with the Olympics demonstrates what can be accomplished when the agency and the communities come together as partners. Community-based management can and must be a bedrock principle within the Forest Service.

We have made significant progress toward strengthening our relationships with local communities. For example, we have worked hard to fully implement the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act. Over the last year, we have chartered 65 local resource advisory committees, which will work with counties and local Forest Service managers to identify and implement community-based resource management projects. We are receiving positive reports from all over the country about the success of these committees.

Local collaboration is also a fundamental principal of the 10-year comprehensive wildfire strategy. The strategy emphasizes that key decisions on management priorities, resource allocation and project implementation are best made in connection with communities at the local level.

Finally, we are working to deliver more local contracts across all of the agency's mission areas, particularly in fire prevention and suppression. Through the efforts of the Forest Products Lab, we are also promoting alternative markets and uses for the smaller diameter material and the biomass that comes from thinning and fuels reduction projects. The lab has actively cooperated with small businesses and in rural communities to development new technologies for producing furniture, home construction materials and other value-added products.

As Congressman Kind indicated, we highlighted many of these innovations during our recent Earth Day celebration at the Lab's Advanced Housing Technology Center in Madison, Wisconsin.

In conclusion, let me re-emphasize our most basic objectives. We are committed to managing and restoring our forests and rangelands, protecting communities from risk of catastrophic wildfires,

and building the Forest Service into a world-class provider of goods and services to the American public. This will require, at a minimum, a sustained effort in the five areas that we have identified. We look forward to working with the Committee and with you, Mr. Chairman, on these and other priorities the Committee might identify as critical to the long-term success of the Forest Service.

Thank you very much again for the opportunity to appear today and I look forward to answering your questions and those of the members of the Committee.

[The prepared statement of Secretary Veneman follows:]

**Statement of The Honorable Ann M. Veneman, Secretary of Agriculture,
U.S. Department of Agriculture**

Chairman Hansen and Members of the Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to meet with you today to discuss our vision for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service. The Forest Service is a vital part of the Department, and the future of the agency has great significance to all Americans, especially those who work, recreate and live in and near our national forests.

I am accompanied today by Mark Rey, Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, and Dale Bosworth, Chief of the Forest Service. Both Under Secretary Rey and Chief Bosworth have a wealth of experience in natural resources, and we are delighted to have them as part of our management team.

At the outset, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for your support of the Forest Service's role in making the recent Olympic Winter Games in Utah an outstanding and memorable event. Two signature events—the downhill and super G—took place at the Snowbasin Ski Resort, located on the Wasatch–Cache National Forest. Our intent was to provide Olympics-related activities on the National Forest that were not only thrilling, but also safe and environmentally responsible. I believe we achieved all three objectives.

Our goal is for the Department of Agriculture including the Forest Service to be a world class provider of goods and services to the American people.

The Forest Service has hard working and dedicated employees. It maintains the world's premier wildland firefighting force. It provides high quality recreation to hundreds of millions of visitors each year. National forests are the source of clean water to hundreds of communities throughout the country. Forest Service scientists are world leaders in forest and rangeland research. The agency maintains the oldest and most comprehensive forest census in the world. And, through its ongoing partnership with state foresters, the Forest Service assists thousands of non-Federal forestland owners.

These are only a few of the many successes. Yet, while we have much to be proud of, we also recognize we have very much to do. My comments today will focus on five key areas:

1. Managing our Forests and Rangelands
2. Cooperation Across Government
3. Process Gridlock
4. Accountability and,
5. Reconnecting with Local Communities.

Although this list is not exhaustive, it includes the most critical areas for improving the Forest Service in the long run.

Managing our Forests and Rangelands

In 1960, Congress enacted the Multiple–Use Sustained Yield Act thereby defining the mission of the Forest Service. This law mandated that the Forest Service “manag[e] all the various renewable surface resources of the National Forests so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the needs of the American people.”

The ability to actively manage our forests and rangelands lies at the heart of the Forest Service's multiple use. Seventy-three million acres of national forest land is at moderate to high risk from unacceptably damaging wildfire. Seventy million acres are susceptible to destruction from insects and disease. Invasive species infestations are increasing. Our transportation infrastructure and recreational facilities are deteriorating and in need of repair. As these conditions worsen, it will become increasingly difficult to meet the multiple needs of maintaining healthy ecosystems, protecting rural communities, and supporting the public users of our national forests.

A renewed emphasis on proactive management is the first step toward reversing this trend. Management by doing nothing is not an option. We must take proactive measures to improve forest health, restore watersheds, improve our transportation and recreation infrastructure, and address other serious resource needs. Proactive management can also provide wood, forage, energy and other important products. By emphasizing what we leave on the land rather than what we take, we can ensure that our active management will be environmentally responsible while producing forests and rangelands that are more resilient, productive, and better able to provide goods and services and other important benefits to people and communities.

Cooperation Across Government

Key to the success of the Forest Service is its ability to cooperate with other agencies to accomplish its mission. Our joint effort with the Department of the Interior to implement the National Fire Plan is a good example of our commitment to establish a seamless delivery of services across government. On April 10, the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior announced the creation of the Wildland Fire Leadership Council to achieve consistent implementation of the goals, action and policies of the National Fire Plan. This council will oversee the development of consistent fire management plans, a uniform set of outcome-based performance measures, common data elements and reporting systems, unified procedures for the delivery of an effective hazardous fuels reduction program, a unified preparedness model, and a number of other significant measures to ensure consistent management between the departments and across the landscape.

In addition, last August the two departments, in cooperation with the Western Governors Association, tribal interests, the National Association of State Foresters and the National Association of Counties, adopted a Comprehensive 10-year Wildfire Strategy, establishing a new collaborative approach to reducing wildfire risks to communities and the environment. The implementation plan for the 10-year strategy will be finalized soon and will establish, for the first time, a uniform set of inter-departmental goals, performance measures and tasks for improving prevention and suppression, reducing hazardous fuels to protect communities, restoring fire-adapted ecosystems and promoting community well-being.

Process Gridlock

Perhaps our greatest challenge is to address what Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth describes as “analysis paralysis.” This is caused by overlapping statutory requirements, unnecessarily complicated internal rules and procedures. Several decades of court-made law and a proliferation of appeals and litigation have combined to substantially delay and increase the cost of our decision-making processes. Each year the Forest Service processes more NEPA documents to support management decisions than any other government agency. According to Forest Service estimates, the process and paperwork required to: (1) complete these documents; (2) meet other statutory and regulatory requirements; (3) and prepare agency decisions to withstand possible appeals and litigation, account for between 40 and 60 percent of the total time spent on management activities. This does not include the time associated with appeals and litigation, which frequently ensue once decisions are made. Frequently, this onerous process does little to improve the quality of agency decisions.

The Forest Service is preparing a report to the Chief on process gridlock. The report will provide a diagnosis of the factors that contribute most directly to unnecessary and counterproductive procedural delays. We hope that it will stimulate a constructive dialogue that will help us identify our most serious problems and solve them together.

Accountability

Consistent with the President’s Management Agenda, the Department and the Forest Service are committed to improving our financial and performance accountability to Congress and to the public. First and foremost we are committed to fidelity in the management of taxpayer dollars. To that end, we have committed significant Departmental resources to helping the Forest Service and the Department achieve a clean audit opinion. The Forest Service has already made significant progress in reconciling the agency’s cash records and accounting for real property. It is a priority to achieve a clean audit for the Forest Service, and our Chief Financial Officer, and Under Secretary Rey are actively engaged in assisting with process reforms to achieve that goal.

We are also committed to improving the way the Forest Service measures its performance. As demonstrated by our progress under the fire plan, the agency is moving aggressively to account for its accomplishments using meaningful, outcome-based performance measures that fully account for what it achieves with each in-

vestment. We are also working across government to integrate the Forest Service's performance measures with those of other land management agencies. Our progress is somewhat limited by the agency's overly-complex budget structure that emphasizes programs over performance. The agency appreciates the assistance Congress gave to begin to address the issues during the 2001 appropriations process. We would like to continue to work with this Committee and the Appropriations Committees to simplify the Forest Service budget, while placing greater emphasis on performance. By focusing on performance, we expect the agency to measurably improve in the quantity and quality of goods and services it delivers to the public per unit of investment.

Re-connecting with Local Communities

To succeed in the long run, the Forest Service must establish and maintain strong ties to local communities. Our recent success with the Olympics demonstrates what can be accomplished when the agency and communities come together as partners. Community-based management can and must be a bedrock principle within the Forest Service.

We have made significant progress toward strengthening our relationships with local communities. For example, we have worked hard to fully implement the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (Public Law 106-393). Over the past year, we have chartered 65 local resource advisory committees, which will work with counties and local Forest Service managers to identify and implement community-based resource management projects. We are receiving positive reports from all over the country about the success of these committees.

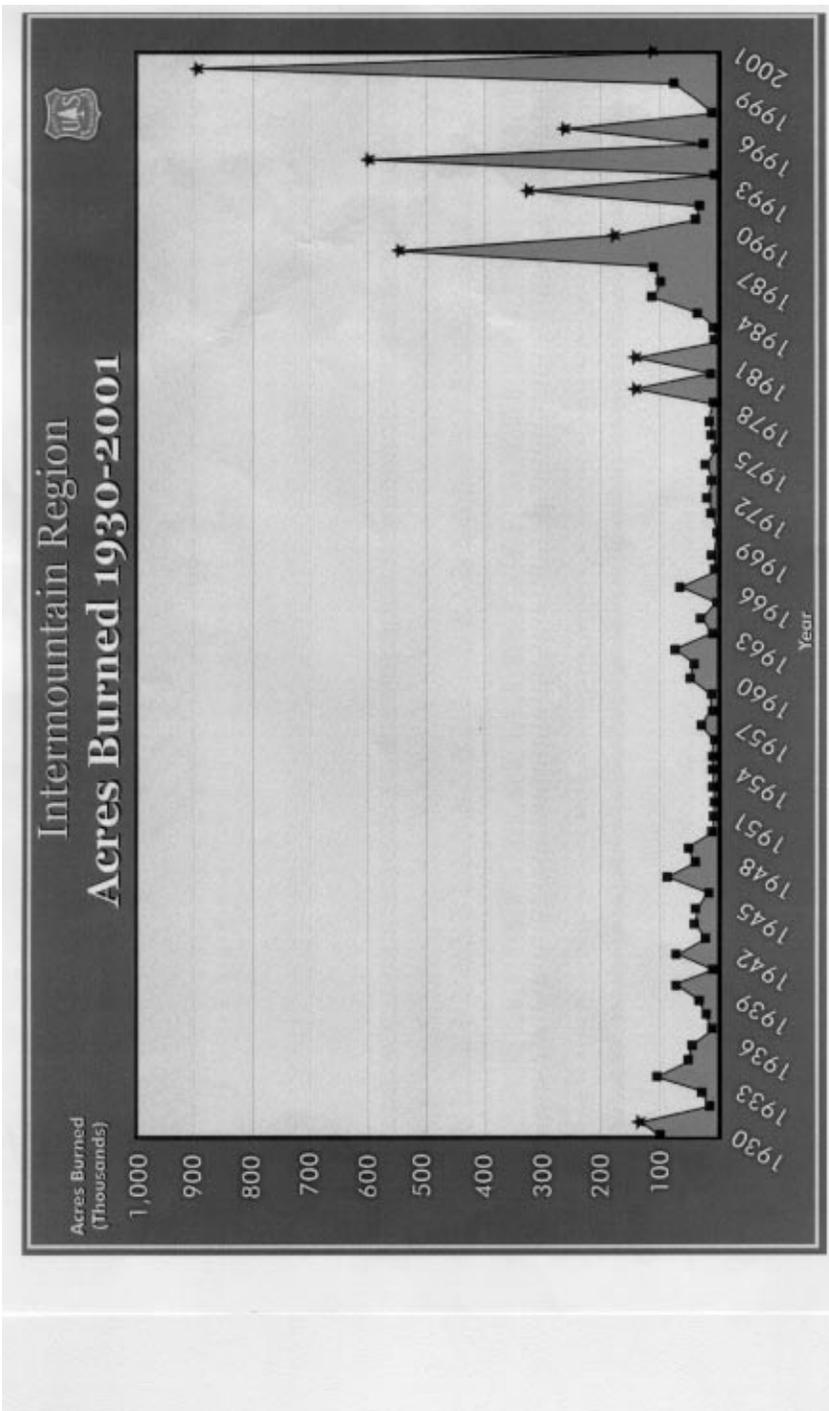
Local collaboration is also a fundamental principle of the 10-year Comprehensive Wildfire Strategy. The strategy emphasizes that key decisions on management priorities, resource allocation, and project implementation are best made in cooperation with communities at the local level.

Finally, we are working to deliver more local contracts across all of the agency's mission areas, particularly in fire prevention and suppression. Through the efforts of our Forest Products Lab, we are also promoting alternative markets and uses for the small diameter material and the biomass that comes from thinning and fuels reduction projects. The lab has actively cooperated with small businesses in rural communities to develop new technologies for producing furniture, home construction materials, and other value-added products. We highlighted many of these innovations during our recent Earth Day celebration at the Lab's Advanced Housing Technology Center in Madison, Wisconsin.

Conclusion

In conclusion, let me re-emphasize our most basic objectives. We are committed to managing and restoring our forests and rangelands, protecting communities for risk of catastrophic wildfires, and building the Forest Service into a world-class provider of goods and services to the American public. This will require, at a minimum, a sustained effort in the five areas we have identified. We look forward to working with the Committee and you, Mr. Chairman, on these and other priorities the Committee might identify as critical to the long-term success of the Forest Service.

[An attachment to Secretary Veneman's statement follows:]



The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Madam Secretary. We appreciate your comments. I especially appreciate the kind words you said about the Utah Olympics. I guess they really pulled one off. Yes, to me it turned out very, very successful, and without the help of the Forest Service, we would have never had that downhill you are referring to, and appreciate that good work. And besides that, we now have a world class new ski resort, which of course is far superior than anything we have in Colorado.

[Laughter.]

Mr. MCINNIS. Keep in mind, Mr. Chairman, we don't buy our snow.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. I had better let all this go with my two colleagues from Colorado sitting here. I just had to say that with my good friend, Scott, sitting here.

Mr. MCINNIS. Pulled a win out of the West.

The CHAIRMAN. And the new member of the Ethics Committee, the other gentleman from Colorado, Mr. Udall.

Let me thank you for that, and point out that most of us have got markups. They are calling me to come over to the Armed Services right now, but I would like to submit some questions, and I would really appreciate your answers to some of those. And let me hit the toughest one that this Committee has brought up many, many times. I would like you folks to tell us why this should be under Ag., Forest Service, and not under Interior. Now, that is one of those tough issues, and I understand that.

Let me also point out to members of this Committee, we have got a lot of members here, and I am sure you all have questions. I would hope you could hold it within your 5-minute period of time, and keep in mind that the acoustics in this room are horrible. The one down at 1324, which is all torn up, is a little better, so if we can kind of hold the chatter, it would be helpful as questions are asked.

And I am going to turn this over to the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health, Mr. Scott McInnis, from Colorado, and he can manage the meeting, and I would appreciate your doing that, and I withdraw the statement I made about your areas of skiing.

And with that, sir, it is yours. Thank you again.

Mr. MCINNIS. [Presiding] Mr. Chairman, as I have often said, the only mistake we made in Colorado was not drawing our border a little further to the west, to pick up that great State of Utah.

Thank you. Under the Chairman's time, he did ask that question. I think it is a question, Madam Secretary, that is obviously logical, and I think it is a question of interest to the rest of the Committee, so we are going to go ahead and utilize the rest of Mr. Hansen's time and I am going to ask that you answer the question about why is the Forest Service under the Department of Agriculture instead of under the Department of Interior, and what is the future of that arrangement? What do you see? If you would proceed, thank you.

Secretary VENEMAN. Well, thank you. I do appreciate the opportunity to answer this question, because it is one that I think it confusing to the public as well, and as you know, around the turn of

the century, Teddy Roosevelt determined that the Forest Service is a multiple use agency and one that harvested substantial amount of produce from public lands, should be contained in the Department of Agriculture, and so the decision was made to place it in the Department of Agriculture. Forest Service has continued to remain a multiple use agency, and as I indicated in my opening statement, we continue to operate the forest lands for multiple uses.

I think that the issue is much more important to look at from the standpoint of how public lands are operated, rather than where it may or may not be located. And I think one of the very important things that has happened particularly under this Administration is the commitment that we have to work together in a seamless way with our friends who manage other public lands in this country, and that has been particularly apparent as we have dealt with the National Fire Plan. As I indicated, we worked with the National Governors Association, to design a plan last summer establishing the National Fire Plan. We have the National Fire Center, which is located in Boise, Idaho, which I recently had—or last summer also had the opportunity to visit again a joint project of the Department of Interior and the Department of Agriculture, where we seamlessly deal with fire issues throughout the country. We just established this new Wildland Fire Management Council, which Secretary Norton and I announced together. Again, our fire management in this country is being put together in a completely seamless way, and it seems to me that is what the American public ought to be concerned about, how we are managing rather than where the boxes are placed.

I would note also that there are some very important areas where the Forest Service overlaps with other parts of the Department of Agriculture. Clearly in the resource areas and the management of private forest lands, which we do in conjunction with the Natural Resource Conservation Service. We work closely with other conservation activities in the Department through the Forest Service. Many of our research activities work with the Agricultural Research Service and the Forest Service researchers. We are finding an increasing overlap with the duties and the obligations of the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service and the Forest Service as we seek to manage increasing numbers of pests and invasive species in forest land, some of which also impact our agricultural lands.

And so we find that we indeed do really appreciate having the Forest Service in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It plays a very valuable role, and we are continuing to expand that role. We are now, under the guise of Homeland Security, for example, using these Forest Service Incident Management Teams more broadly as we are looking to manage pest and disease outbreaks, for example. The Forest Service is now a full partner with our Animal Plant Health Inspection Service. So I can say that we are certainly very proud to have the Forest Service as part of the Department of Agriculture, and we think it is a very valuable partner in many missions of our Department.

Mr. McINNIS. Thank you, Madam Secretary, let me begin by first of all commending you on the Fire Council.

As you know, that is absolutely critical, I think that coordination. I can tell you in my district, as you know, we have a couple fires going right now, and we had the No. 1 priority last week, and we will have a number of others that occur out there, but over the weekend we had a fire in a small town called Westcliffe, and some of the local people commented about the Forest Service saying that they could not believe the response. Within an hour they had smoke jumpers in there. I mean, it really seems that you have gotten your act together. Now who knows what this season holds, but, you know, a thousand-year fuel measurements and things like that show we are in for a tough year. I want to commend you on that.

I also want to commend the Forest Service, you mentioned early on that you had very good employees, and I think that is absolutely right. We have a lot of dedicated professionals out there. We had a Committee hearing earlier in the year where we had an ex-Forest Service employee talk about all of the threats that Forest Service people had received and kids at school have received threats. We have not been able to verify any of that kind of testimony. In fact, in my community, and it is very controversial, because of the approximately 120 communities I have, 119 of them are completely surrounded by public lands, much of which is forest. Our relationships with our local people are excellent, and I commend the Forest Service for that.

I want to also mention that we have completed the White River National Forest. The plan has been signed and results will be released here pretty soon. One individual, in particular, Rick Cables, the regional guy out there, was excellent. I think he has done very, very well in bringing the parties together.

To give you an idea how controversial this was, Madam Secretary, 15 years ago, when we did the plan, we had 200 comments. This time we had 40,000. Now a lot of those were machine-generated, computer-generated, but a lot of them were not, and it took a real balancing act. I felt so deeply about it, for the first time in the history of Congress, I actually, as a Congressman, wrote my own forest plan, which was done by, as you know, by professionals and so on, but I felt very seriously. But anyway, I thought that is worth mentioning. Those are the good things.

I need to talk to you about these biologists on the lynx survey. As you know, the Forest Service did not mete out any kind of discipline. In fact, as I understand, these employees may have received bonuses for performance or pay raises. Jack Ward Thomas, who was President Clinton's head of the Forest Service, spoke the other day and said that this necessitates accountability, and I would just urge that you take a personal look at that and see if the punishment fit the misbehavior.

Accountability is absolutely crucial, as you know, for our biologists or our professionals, and all we need is one bad apple in the bushel and, as you know, it throws a disdain on the rest of the bushel. It is the same thing here. When we speak of good employees, we have a couple of employees that commit obvious wrongs, and if we don't address that in an appropriate fashion, and I am not being critical of you, you have come in after the situation.

Also, I would like to ask, and by the way, this clock, I have my own 5 minutes. That thing is not right.

[Laughter.]

Mr. McINNIS. That was the Chairman's 5 minutes before. Now I get my own 5.

But anyway, as you know in the East, you have east of the Mississippi River 73 or 75 percent of the surface water flow in the country. Up in the Northeast, Northwest section, you get about 13 percent, but in the West, which consists of about half the land mass in the country, we get 14 percent. In the East a lot of times they worry about drainage water. In the West, we worry about being able to store that water. We have lots of opposition against water storage in this country, people who don't understand it, people who are not dependent upon it. We use it for flood control, we use it for a generation of electricity. We use it for reservoirs. The first dam in the country we know of was the Anasazi Indians down in the Southwest part of the State. I mean, there is lots of history to it.

The State that I live in, Colorado, the average elevation, we are the highest place on the continent, so a lot of States depend on us for that water. And in the past, the Federal Government has always recognized the States negotiating between States. Well, under the previous Administration, the Forest Service came in with something called bypass flows. I just would urge and would like a comment, and I don't want to catch you off-guard because it is a complicated issue, but I would urge that the Forest Service consider very carefully that before they jump the gun and put in these things like bypass flows, that they understand the, while it may be good-faith intended, that they understand the implications and the unintended consequences that happen when you deal with water law in the West, which is uniquely different than water law in the East.

Of course, this year with our drought, the likes of which we haven't seen for 100 years, and only 100 years, because that is when we started keeping records, this is the cooperation between our Federal Government and those of us out there really demand attention to this multiple-use concept and the critical nature. As you know, out there in the West, in a typical year, we have all of the water we need for about 90 days, spring runoff. The rest of the year, if we don't have it stored, we don't get it. And the only way we are going to get through this year is because, in the past, we had cooperation with our Federal agencies building reservoir projects.

I am very concerned about the bypass flow and would ask that you take a look at that. If you have any comments, I would be happy, on the subjects that I just covered, I would be happy to have you respond.

[The prepared statement of Mr. McInnis follows:]

**Statement for The Honorable Scott McInnis, Chairman,
Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health**

As the Forest Service approaches its second century as the chief steward of our national forest treasures, it has run up against a challenge that is arguably as onerous and weighty as any the agency has confronted since Theodore Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot and their contemporaries first established the National Forest System. This challenge is rearing its vexing head in communities all across the West, from California's Sierra Nevada, to the Black Hills of South Dakota, the Bitterroot Valley in Montana, and Colorado's southern Rockies. The great challenge for the Forest

Service, as I see it, is no less than defining its mission—its very purpose for being—in a time when our forests are under diverse and at times irreconcilable pressures from rival quarters of the American body politic.

For generations, the Forest Service was an agency guided in statute and in mindset by the multiple-use ethic—a guiding concept that the likes of Teddy Roosevelt and Pinchot held near and dear. President Roosevelt forcefully articulated that multiple-use ideal like this: “I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use the natural resources of our land; but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob, by wasteful use, the generations that come after us.” This notion that the national forests should be managed for the people—both those living and those to come—was enshrined in both the National Forest’s Organic Act and in the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act decades later.

Today, it is not at all clear that the agency’s multiple-use heritage endures in any meaningful way. To be fair, this erosion of the multiple-use concept is partially Congress’ fault. This body has passed a myriad of laws that have resulted in a sea of administrative regulations and court decisions that have made the Forest Service’s multiple-use charge nightmarishly difficult. While these laws were implemented with the best of intentions and for policy reasons that remain verifiably critical, together they have had the cumulative impact of creating a decision-making climate that is unspeakably confused and complicated—a veritable invitation to litigation. This has resulted in a decision-making apparatus that is focused more on “process” than on-the-ground, real world outcomes.

While Congress bears real responsibility for this unacceptably bureaucratic approach to forest management, the lion’s share of the blame rests at the doorstep of the agency. Many of the wounds of needless bureaucracy and unwanted process have been self-inflicted by my friends in green shirts. In an apparent attempt to be all things to all people all the time, the Forest Service has become the agency of multiple-processes, instead of multiple-use. The agency has fashioned tomes of self-imposed administrative guidelines and directives that rival the Federal tax code in complexity. The consequence is that the Forest Service’s very purpose for existence has been entirely obscured, and the public feels increasingly isolated—both in person and spirit—from their National Forests.

Clearly this must change, but change will only occur if the agencies leaders move affirmatively and boldly to outline a vision for the future of the agency. As they do, my advice is two-fold—focus less on process and more on real world outcomes, what’s left on the ground as it were; and return the Forest Service to its legacy of multiple-use, as the agency’s founders intended.

Secretary VENEMAN. Well, thank you. You have covered a lot. Let me see if I can touch on a few of these.

First, thank you for your comments on the Council. The Council actually does meet this afternoon and beginning to, particularly with the fire season, as it is now beginning, I think it is important that this council meet and really look at the issues we are facing today, as well as how we coordinate for the long term.

On the lynx issue, as you know, both Secretary Norton and I, immediately, upon learning of this issue, did ask our Inspector Generals to look into this as an investigative matter, which they have been doing. Our Forest Service is in the process of reviewing the report and looking at actions.

I do know, however, from talking with the Chief, that the person that appears, at least from the Forest Service side, that was most intimately involved with this issue has retired. So he is no longer with the Service.

The issue of water storage in the West, as you know, I come from the West, and I come from California, where water is a very, very big issue, particularly, the availability and storage of water and how it impacts agriculture and the forest, and so it is something—

Mr. MCINNIS. And you are the beneficiary of some very good, clean Rocky Mountain spring water, I might add.

Secretary VENEMAN. We recognize that.

And I was recently in Colorado, and the issue of bypass flows was an issue that came up during our conversations in our round table with a number of farmers and members of the community. I must say the whole issue of water I could have been in my home State of California because the issues are so similar between our two States. But I think it is important to recognize that we have to work with the States, as the Forest Service, mostly with the States and the water rights holders to determine, in a cooperative way, how to resolve these water rights issues.

There are a number of water rights claims that we are trying to work through in the Forest Service, and we are putting a priority on trying to work through these cases as expeditiously as possible to create the fairest outcomes for all of the parties involved, and I think that is the best way that we can work through these issues is to involve all of the stakeholders to work closely with everyone and to try to come up with the fairest solution that we possibly can.

And I finally want to simply reiterate the value of our employees. As I indicated in my opening statement, I think it is extremely important that we have employees that are involved in local communities. We have to involve local communities in local forest decisions because, as you know, and I certainly know, having grown up going to a national forest every summer during my childhood, every forest is unique, and so we have to have local input into these decisions, and local involvement with communities and people with the Forest Service, and that is absolutely a goal of our Department.

Mr. MCINNIS. Thank you, Madam Secretary.

Mr. Inslee?

Mr. INSLEE. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate you being here. We are delighted to have a chance to talk with the Administration about these important issues. I wanted to ask you a general question about the ability for your agencies to enjoy the trust of the American people. You have a very difficult job. You are between a lot of different forces, and it seems to me keeping and winning that trust is very important on whatever you think in any of these issues. I am very concerned about that right now for a variety of reasons because I think a review, even a cursory review of the Administration's environmental policies have created a very, very significant mood of distrust of the Administration. I want to just ask you about some of those things. I want to review them just quickly.

First, the Administration abandons an environmental policy and their energy policy and designs it with the oil and gas industry, and then refuses to tell us about their contacts with the oil and gas industry;

Second, the Administration waives environmental rules regarding hard-rock mining;

Third, the Administration refuses to work with the international community to do something about global warming;

Fourth, the Administration attempts to essentially defund the Superfund Trust Fund by not implementing the revenue sources;

Fifth, the Administration wants to drill for oil in the Arctic in the refuge created by Dwight David Eisenhower;

Sixth, the Administration wants to weaken the Clean Air rules at the very time where there is an epidemic of asthma in our children in this country;

Seventh, the Administration, we hear, is attempting to weaken the mountain-top removal rules on coal mining;

Eighth, the Administration apparently is intent on weakening wetlands mitigation rules;

Ninth, the Administration refuses to defend the Roadless Area Rule, a rule adopted after 1.2- or 1.6 million comments by the American people, despite the specific promise of Attorney General Ashcroft to defend that rule.

Now I think a cursory review of this environmental failure would be described as disappointing, and I think it arguably can be characterized as the worst environmental failure of any Administration in American history, and I will leave that to argument. But I think it has created a significant distrust of the American people of the Administration's ability to act as a fair broker for these precious national resources, and I think that is very difficult in the discharge of your duties.

Now I realize you are not responsible for a lot of the failures I just alluded to. Your agencies were not involved in significant numbers of those, but that distrust I think washes over to your duties.

So I just ask you a general question. Why should the Administration trust your agencies when it comes to the discharge of environmental law and what do you believe you can do to regain or win that trust? And that is a general question to any and all who would like to answer it?

Secretary VENEMAN. Well, I think certainly I think it is an unfair statement to say that this Administration has not paid attention to the environment. I think that we have done a tremendous amount, and I worked very closely with both Secretary Norton and Administrator Whitman as we worked through a number of environmental issues and, in fact, I just had them both over to our Department for a joint event earlier this week. I know that we are all working to do the right thing with regard to the environment.

Let me just say that on the agriculture side, the environmental groups have strongly supported our Department as we put out our book last year on food and agriculture policy, "Taking Stock for a New Century," because it so emphasized the environmental interface with agriculture and the role of our forests.

I think that that book is an example of how strongly we take our environmental responsibilities. We have a farm bill that will be voted on soon. That farm bill will have more money for environmental spending than any farm bill in the history of this country, and I certainly think that that is something that we are proud of, and something the Administration supported, and something that is an important part of our environmental record.

In the energy policy, we have a strong emphasis on renewable resources. We have a strong emphasis on wanting to be less dependent on foreign sources of energy, which is why the energy policy looks for domestic sources, not only in terms of new sources of oil and gas, but also renewable sources from agriculture, and both the energy policy, the energy bill that has been passed by the Senate has a renewable energy standard, something the Administration

supports, and the farm bill is going to have an energy title for the first time.

I think all of these things are indications of a strong emphasis on balanced environmental policy that will provide benefits to the environment, while we have the best utilization of our resources. That is what this Administration is about, is about finding the right balance. I think that the characterization that you have described is not a fair characterization of this Administration's environmental policy.

Mr. INSLEE. Thank you. I don't have the Chairman's same time-piece, so I will have to defer to the next round.

Thank you.

Mr. MCINNIS. I would point out to the Ranking Member that you did go over your time about the same time I went over my time, and remind the ranking member that the time previous to my comments were those of the Chairman answering his question.

Mr. INSLEE. We can't even agree on the time. I am disappointed.
[Laughter.]

Mr. MCINNIS. We can agree on who is Chairman.

[Laughter.]

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Gallegly, you may proceed.

Mr. GALLEGLY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome, Secretary Veneman.

Secretary VENEMAN. Thank you.

Mr. GALLEGLY. It is refreshing to have a fellow Californian at the Cabinet level, particularly representing the agriculture interests in this country. For all too long I think we have had too few people that really understood agriculture and the West that we have today, and it is very welcome to my constituency and I think to the entire West.

I want to personally take just a minute and thank you for your help with the Glassy Wing Sharpshooter issue. My good friend, George Radanovich, who has been a stalwart representative of the wine industry has, I am sure, brought that to your attention, and we have good success with your help in declaring the emergency status in California.

I would like an opportunity at some point in the immediate future to discuss with you the issues beyond the wine industry. Certainly the citrus industry is one that has been identified, but the one industry that I think has been somewhat unrepresented, and it is probably due to their own lack of organization, is the nursery business. We have three of the largest nursery growers in the country, and while this issue does not have a direct impact on the product, it does have a direct impact on their ability to move their product. So, for all intents and purposes, the product is no good if you can't move it and sell it. So I would really like an opportunity to discuss that with you sometime in the very near future or a member of your staff.

The issue of the wildfires in the West, we know this as not something that may happen. It is a matter of when it happens. Of course, in my district, where the base for the 146 Air National Guard, it provides a tremendous amount of support for fire suppression in the entire West. In fact, we have 13 new MAF units

coming online to work in the C-130's and four new J model C-130's, which should go a long way.

In the interest of time, as the Chairman said, we do have an acoustical problem. We have a lot of folks here. I do have some questions, with unanimous consent, I would like to submit to the record for Chief Bosworth and also for you, Madam Secretary, on the fire issue.

In the interest of time, then, I would defer back to our Chairman, and thank you very much for being here.

Mr. MCINNIS. Thank you. On the unanimous consent, any objection?

No objection, so ordered.

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. DeFazio?

Mr. DEFAZIO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Madam Secretary, just sort of following up on my introductory remarks and recent statements by the Administration regarding the Northwest Forest Plan. If you or either of the two gentlemen on either side of you would care to answer, what is under consideration for the Northwest Forest Plan in terms of revisions? Is there a possibility of concentrating on restoration forestry and forestry activities in areas that are previously managed and now badly in need of thinning and hopefully something that could be done less controversially, but will cost some money?

Secretary VENEMAN. Well, I think certainly this issue of how we manage the forest is an important one and one that I covered I think in my opening statement, that we do believe that we need proactive management, that we need to be looking at, and we are doing a comprehensive look at where the priority areas are in terms of thinning the forests, of taking out the biggest issues in terms of fire risk and risk of large wildfires. And so I think that overall it is important, as we look toward the thinning issues, that we actively manage the forests, and we are doing that and working closely with the Department of Interior as we do this.

As to the Northwest Forest Plan, I am going to ask Mr. Rey to comment quickly on the status of that particular issue.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Thank you.

Mr. Rey?

Mr. REY. Each of the agencies that is involved in implementing the Northwest Forest Plan has nearly completed a review of what needs to be fixed in order to understand, and we expect the results back to us in probably a week or two.

Once we have those results, I think we have a basis for discussing with you what sorts of changes need to be made. We have talked before, and I am interested in pursuing some of the ideas that we have discussed.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Well, I thank the gentleman. As I pointed out to you in one conversation that perhaps you could, you know, there is sort of a unique, but very fragile, opportunity here that I see to bring along a substantial body of environmental groups and some parts of the industry on a new management regime, particularly in dealing with areas like the coast range. It is delicate, and has to be approached with a good degree of confidence. So I would be happy to have those discussions with the gentleman, but obviously any revisions or major changes in the plan that are proposed would

need to be done through a public forum and with the full cognizance of the protections of the law, and NEPA or whatever would be required for those sorts of changes.

I assume that is—

Mr. REY. That is all correct.

Mr. DEFAZIO. If I could then, Madam Secretary, just as a famous former member said, "All politics is local," I recently was conducting a town meeting, this is a very minor issue, I just bring it to your attention. I don't ask for a response now, but I have had concerns about Wildlife Services, former Animal and Damage Control Agency, and in particular in one urban interface area we have had now two incidents where these M, I think, 80's or whatever they are called, the cyanide shot shells that are attached to meat baits have been placed without proper signage. In fact, perhaps, in one case without the consent of the property owner, and in two cases dogs, pets have been killed and one woman whose dog had been killed and died very horribly came to one of my last town meetings.

I made an inquiry on her behalf as to the facts regarding the matter because we think there is a particular problem employee, and was told to buzz off. File a FOIA if I want any information about what happened. I find that extraordinary. The Agency cited some sort of a precedent having to do with a case in Texas, and the last time I checked we are not in the Texas circuit. So, even if there is some sort of precedent or injunction pending in that circuit, it does not apply in ours, and I found that fairly extraordinary to get that sort of a response, and I will direct to the appropriate member of your staff the letter I sent and the response I got.

The constituent is obviously distressed. I don't want to see another occurrence. It could be a child the next time, I mean, with this sort of a practice, and I am just very distressed about it.

My time seems to be going very quickly, but if I could just, on the Roadless policy, we have a huge, huge backlog of deferred road maintenance in the Pacific Northwest, and I know that is common throughout the entire system. I am concerned, you know, I am supportive of the Roadless policy, as promulgated by the past Administration, and I am concerned that, I mean, one of the many problems that we are trying to deal with in promulgating the roadless policy in addition to the idea of the controversy and the environmental problems of entering roadless areas was to begin to deal with that backlog. Could anybody comment briefly on that issue, how your proposals or what you are doing with the roadless policy—

Mr. BOSWORTH. Yes, I would be happy to comment on that.

First, let me say that the backlog that you are talking about, in terms of our road maintenance, as well as facility maintenance, is about \$6.8 billion, which is a lot of money. We are looking for a lot of ways to deal with that. I don't believe that the roadless issue really affects that one way or the other a whole lot. We are not going to be building new roads in the roadless areas without the Roadless Conservation Plan. Most of our Forest Plans, existing Forest Plans, do not call for a lot of road construction in at least half those roadless areas.

So I don't really see myself that those things are really closely aligned. I believe, and I have heard the Secretary state a number of times, that we do want to protect roadless values. And so from my perspective, it is how you go about doing that in a way that is satisfactory to people, local people, as well as people across the country. And so in our effort to try to sort through this, we are trying to make sure that we are able to involve local people in a way that I don't believe they are involved in the original Roadless Conservation rule development.

What we have done is we have gone out with an advanced notice of rulemaking, and we had like 10 questions or several questions that we asked the public to respond to, to give us some different ideas on how we might be able to deal with the roadless issue. We are evaluating those, doing the content analysis now, and so we are continuing to work on that.

We have not built any roads into any roadless areas since the Roadless Rule was adopted, other than roads that would have been allowed for under the Roadless Conservation Rule anyway, and there is the Roads Working Group, a sort of a self-appointed working group that we have been collaborating with that is also looking for ways to pull people together.

Roadless areas are important, and we need to have a more collaborative approach to solving the issue rather than the kind of resolution that leaves some people on the outs and other people on the in. We have to find a way, a collaborative way, to resolve that problem.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will follow up, Chief. I am curious because you did quantify saying half of the plans wouldn't permit, and I would just be, if you have a listing or breakdown, I would be curious on getting that.

Mr. BOSWORTH. Yes, we can give you the numbers on the existing Forest Plans that were in place when the Roadless Conservation Rule was established on how those areas were designated to, they basically would not allow road construction.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Thank you.

[The information referred to follows:]

APPENDIX A
INVENTORIED ROADLESS AREA ACREAGE
CATEGORIES OF NFS LANDS SUMMARIZED BY STATE

Note: All Categories of Inventoried Roadless Areas receive equal protection under the Final Rule

State ¹	State Acres (1,000 acres)	Total area of National Forest System land ² (1,000 acres)	Total area of National Forest System land in Designated Areas ³ (1,000 acres)	Total area of Inventoried Roadless Areas within National Forest System land ⁴ (1,000 acres)	Inventoried Roadless Areas allocated to a prescription that does not allow road construction and reconstruction (1,000 acres)	Inventoried Roadless Areas allocated to a prescription that does not allow road construction and reconstruction, and the forest plan recommends as wilderness (1,000 acres)	Inventoried Roadless Areas allocated to a prescription that allows road construction and reconstruction (1,000 acres)
Alabama	33,432	685	47	13	13	0	0
Alaska	393,747	22,083	8,603	14,779	8,479	1,638	4,661
Arizona	72,864	11,255	2,165	1,174	415	61	699
Arkansas	34,036	2,586	133	95	22	0	73
California	101,676	20,698	5,674	4,416	1,727	163	2,527
Colorado	66,624	14,509	3,368	4,433	925	11	5,499
Connecticut*	3,548	0	0	0	0	0	0
Delaware**	1,534	0	0	0	0	0	0
District of Columbia**	39	0	0	0	0	0	0
Florida	38,392	1,153	86	50	20	5	25
Georgia	37,745	865	162	63	38	0	25
Hawaii*	4,134	0	0	0	0	0	0
Idaho	53,487	20,438	4,818	9,322	2,285	1,371	5,666
Illinois	36,060	293	34	11	4	0	6
Indiana	23,158	196	13	8	0	0	8
Iowa**	36,017	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kansas	51,660	108	0	0	0	0	0
Kentucky	25,863	800	125	3	0	0	3
Louisiana	31,776	604	16	7	2	0	5
Maine	21,594	53	11	6	1	0	5
Maryland**	7,870	0	0	0	0	0	0
Massachusetts**	5,914	0	0	0	0	0	0
Michigan	37,448	2,858	214	16	0	0	16
Minnesota	54,014	2,838	815	62	0	0	62
Mississippi	30,903	1,159	8	3	0	0	3
Missouri	44,614	1,493	72	25	0	0	25
Montana	94,109	16,893	4,124	6,397	1,729	824	3,644
Nebraska	49,523	352	18	0	0	0	0
Nevada	70,783	5,833	1,173	3,186	18	2	3,166
New Hampshire	5,941	728	103	235	121	0	114
New Jersey**	5,258	0	0	0	0	0	0
New Mexico	77,823	9,327	1,617	1,597	1,101	66	430
New York	32,056	16	0	0	0	0	0
North Carolina	33,710	1,244	144	172	16	15	142
North Dakota	45,251	1,106	0	266	0	0	266
Ohio	26,451	230	0	0	0	0	0
Oklahoma	44,738	397	94	13	0	0	13
Oregon	62,140	15,658	2,265	1,965	797	0	1,168
Pennsylvania	28,806	513	42	25	24	0	1
Commonwealth of Puerto Rico	2,245	28	2	24	6	18	7
Rhode Island**	788	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Carolina	19,961	613	23	8	3	1	4
South Dakota	49,357	2,012	35	80	0	0	80
Tennessee	26,923	698	130	65	39	0	46
Texas	171,057	795	39	4	0	0	4
Utah	54,339	8,179	894	4,013	445	0	3,567
Vermont	6,154	376	82	25	16	0	10
Virgin Islands*	109	0	0	0	0	0	0
Virginia	27,089	1,660	200	394	273	12	109
Washington	45,208	9,214	3,360	2,015	1,284	15	716
West Virginia	15,508	1,033	138	202	14	0	188
Wisconsin	35,933	1,523	49	69	0	0	69
Wyoming	62,604	9,238	3,364	3,257	154	17	3,085
TOTAL ACRES	2,343,144	192,309	44,915	58,518	19,970	4,212	34,336

* These states have less than 500 acres of National Forest System land area.

** These states have no National Forest System lands.

¹ Acreages from Government Accounting Office Land Ownership Report to Congressional Requesters, March 1988

² USDA Forest Service Land Areas Report September 1989, plus an additional 254,000 acres for Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area and Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Acquisition. Acreages for National Forest System land and do not include private inholdings.

³ Designated areas include national wilderness, national primitive areas, national scientific research areas, national scenic areas, national wild and scenic rivers, national recreation areas, national game refuge & wildlife preserves, national monuments, national volcanic monuments, national historic areas, research natural areas, wilderness study areas, and other Congressionally designated areas. These designated areas include 6,015,000 acres of Inventoried Roadless Areas.

⁴ Inventoried Roadless Areas are based on forest plans, forest plan revisions in progress where the agency has established an inventory, or other assessments that are completed or adopted by the agency. RARE II information is used if a forest does not have a more recent inventory based on RARE II.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MCINNIS. Chief, I might add I am pretty deeply concerned about what I have just heard from Mr. DeFazio in regards to a Freedom of Information demand made on a typical inquiry by a Congressman. Madam Secretary, maybe you have a comment there.

When we talk about cooperation, it would seem to me that only as a last resort for some legal technicality would an employee of the Forest Service say to a Congressman go through the Freedom of Information Act. Madam Secretary, I think it is important enough for the whole Committee to hear this.

Secretary VENEMAN. Mr. Chairman, I am very concerned about what was stated as well. Although if we are talking about Wildlife Management, this was probably not a Forest Service issue, this is an APHIS issue.

My experience in California is that these programs are run in conjunction with the State. So we will look at this and determine what the problem was. Certainly, I would not condone this kind of behavior by employees either, if they are not cooperative, but we will want to look at who was actually involved in the incident, and we will do that. I commit that to you.

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. DeFazio, your staff and my staff, we both have had this experience on the lynx survey recently, where we asked for the investigator's report, and they just said, "File Freedom of Information." I can't believe we work with the same Agency sometimes, work as partners, but I am confident in your leadership.

Mr. Simpson?

Mr. SIMPSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Veneman, Chief Bosworth, and Under Secretary Rey, I appreciate you being here today. I want to associate myself with the comments of the Chairman about Forest Service employees. I think those in Idaho that I have been associated with and working with over the last few years, particularly when I was, me and my Chief of Staff went up on the Clear Creek fire in the Salmon-Challis Forest in the Year 2000, and really met Forest Service employees from all over the country that were there fighting this fire. I think they are dedicated employees that are doing a tremendous job. Obviously, there are sometimes exceptions to that, as was pointed out with the lynx study and a few other things like that, but on the whole I have been very impressed with the employees in the Forest Service, and I want you to know that.

There have been some comments today about the Administration and their lack of environmental policy, and the lack of implementing the Road Rule and a few other things. The previous Administration developed the Roadless Rule, in cooperation with a few environmental groups, including the Heritage Forest campaign, the Wilderness Society, the National Resource Defense Council, U.S. PIRG, the Earth Justice Legal Defense Fund, the Audubon Society and the Sierra Club.

These groups had continuous communications with and access to Federal employees that were directly involved in the creation of the rulemaking. This access was not only limited to meetings, but included providing draft language, legal memorandum and survey data to the Administration which was then used to justify and

frame the Roadless Area Rule. What will be the current Administration's position on involving more people and trying to rectify this one-sided input that was done by the last Administration on development of this rule?

Secretary VENEMAN. Well, I think we can clearly reiterate that it is our goal, with regard to managing public lands, and certainly our goal in the USDA and the Forest Service to involve local communities in local decisions, and we are looking at the Roadless Rule as part of the management planning process for the forests, and we are going to involve local input into those decisions. We think that is very important in whatever decision we are making, but certainly it is one that we think is an important process with regard to looking at the roadless areas.

Mr. SIMPSON. Let me also reemphasize, as I did in my opening statement, that contrary to the advertisements and the commercials that have been on TV that seem to be taking after the Administration, that this Roadless Rule was gutted by a judge, not by the Bush Administration. A judge is the one who issued the injunction against the implementation of that Roadless Rule.

I understand that has been appealed to the Ninth Circuit, that decision, and the judge in that case has not decided whether those appealing entities can actually be a party to appealing that suit, the environmental groups that appealed that because they were friends of the court when they were originally part of that suit.

In spite of that, in spite of the fact that that is under appeal, and I just want to, and I say this for emphasis again, because I know that the Chief just answered that, how many commercial logging operations or trees have been sold or cut in the roadless areas since the Roadless Rule proposal was put into effect?

Mr. BOSWORTH. Again, it is my understanding that there have been no roads constructed in any inventoried roadless area that would not have been allowed for under the Roadless Conservation Rule itself.

Mr. SIMPSON. Thank you. There have been Members of Congress who have proposed codifying the Roadless Rule. Their argument is that the Administration won't implement it, won't defend it, and so they are going to codify it in statute. In your opinion, would this be a wise thing to do? Would it interfere with the progress being made by the Forest Roads Working Group in trying to come to some compromise on this Roadless Rule?

Secretary VENEMAN. Well, I think it would do a couple of things. One is, obviously, the courts, a Federal judge has issued a preliminary injunction on this rule because, according to the judge's opinion, it didn't comply with NEPA. So, if you were to then codify something that was not in compliance, according to a judge, with NEPA, it could override NEPA, and I am not sure that is an intended consequence that the Congress would want to pursue.

But I think it would also undermine the work of the working group. It is so much better to try to make these kinds of decisions by consensus of various interested parties, and I think in moving forward within ANPR on Roadless, as we have, moving forward to discuss the issue, as we have said, we want to maintain the value of Roadless. We want to do it in the right way, however.

Mr. SIMPSON. I thank you for your testimony. I think most of us here on the Committee agree with you on the value of the roadless area and maintaining that unique important aspect of our forests.

Thank you.

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Udall?

Mr. UDALL OF COLORADO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to also welcome the panel, and thank you for taking the time to come up to the Hill today.

Madam Secretary, I note that the purpose of the hearing was the future of the Forest Service, but we are certainly talking quite a bit about present-day challenges we face, and I wanted to direct my comments and questions, in particular, to the wildfire danger we face in the West. Chairman McInnis articulately talked about the challenges we face there.

He has been working, in his own right, on some important aspects of coordination among the agencies. My colleague, and he also happens to be my cousin, Mr. Udall from New Mexico, and Congressman Hefley joined together in a letter to you earlier—I guess today is the 1st of May, so earlier in April—encouraging you to really focus on the Wildland-Urban Interface or what we call in Colorado the Red Zone.

I wonder if you have had a chance to review the letter, and if you have any reactions to it?

Secretary VENEMAN. I have to say I am not familiar with that particular letter.

Mr. UDALL OF COLORADO. It is not as if you just get a couple of letters every day, so I understand.

Secretary VENEMAN. No, we get quite a few.

Mr. UDALL OF COLORADO. Same in our office.

Let me build on my comments about the Red Zone. I just wanted to make an appeal to you and to the Chief that we do all we can to lessen the controversies that could lead to appeals or litigation and end up slowing down the progress we could make. I think, in part, if we concentrate on these areas that are eroded, where we have this interface, we can do the job that needs to be done, particularly when it comes to the risk to human life and human property.

Secretary VENEMAN. Well, I couldn't agree with you more. I think that it is extremely important that we look at the areas where human life and property are most at risk, as we look at actively and proactively managing the forests, as we have talked about. We are certainly committed to do that, and the Forest Service has been engaged in looking at all of the areas that are in need of more proactive management, particularly with regard to brush removal, so that the risk of wildfire is lessened and that people are protected.

Mr. UDALL OF COLORADO. The Interagency Council, what do you have in mind for the council, particularly in regard to this Red Zone situation that we are discussing right now?

Mr. REY. One of the things that the council will be involved in is selecting priority areas for treatment. So that was part of the reason to form the council, to make sure that where we have mixed ownerships, both Interior and Agriculture, that we are coordinating our fuel reduction efforts.

Mr. UDALL OF COLORADO. Mr. Under Secretary, this may not be accurate, but I had run across a quote attributed to you where you had said logging is the best thing for the environment in fire-suppressed forests. I wanted to give you a chance to comment on that.

But, before I let you comment, I want to make just the point that I think that raises, for a lot of people, a red flag, and that what we are really trying to do, and I think Congressman DeFazio spoke eloquently to the point, is reduce fuel loads. In many cases, the fuel loads are small-diameter trees, brush, and those other kinds of materials.

I would further add that I think we have enormous opportunity to create some new rural economies with biomass and alternative wood products. I am very, very supportive of that as the co-chair of the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Caucus in the House. There are a lot of people excited about this possibility if we can help create these markets in these rural areas.

Would you comment about that general thrust, and then this comment that has been attributed to you.

Mr. REY. The comment was, I think, incomplete. There are a number of tools which, in combination, we need to use to reduce hazardous fuel loads. One of those is prescribed burning. Some places we can't use prescribed burning, either because of air quality concerns or because the fuel loads are so high that controlled burning isn't possible.

Mechanical reduction, through either logging contracts, if there is material of commercial value there, or through service contracts, if the material isn't of commercial value, are also useful tools.

Neither of them is magical in any particular respect. Where we do have commercial material there, there is something of value that we can exchange for the service that we are getting, and that means that we can extend our dollars a little further.

But I think it is important for people to appreciate that the magnitude of the effort before us is so great that we ought to try to speak to one another directly, and honestly, and not worry that there is a hidden motivation behind what we are doing. I think we have been pretty forthright in saying we believe that there is a role for the national forests in the production of some measure of wood fiber to meet America's needs.

The level is something that needs to be worked out on a case-by-case basis. There is no number anywhere that we are striving for. So, given that we are up-front about that, I would hope that when we do approach, together with our counterparts at the Department of Interior, State and local agencies, the fuel reduction problem, we can do so honestly. We are not trying to reduce fuels to create logs to put into sawmills. We are trying to reduce fuels as fast as we can, using as many tools as we can, before more people are put at risk from wildlife.

Mr. UDALL OF COLORADO. Mr. Chairman, I see my time has expired, but I know Mr. McInnis and I are really concerned that we direct these efforts into these areas in the Red Zone, where people and property exist. In the end, we want fire to be returned to the forest because it is a natural part of the ecosystems, but if we were to see that fire develop in a lot of the forests now, it becomes catastrophic.

I thank the Chairman.
Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Walden?

Mr. WALDEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Madam Secretary, Chief, Mr. Under Secretary, thank you again for your work and your comments.

My first question, obviously, goes to the Klamath Falls situation, and given the funding in the farm bill, I would be appreciate to know what it is, Madam Secretary, you think you can do to help. We had hoped to get more earmarked funds. We succeeded because of Chairman Combest and Chairman Hansen in getting \$50 million specifically earmarked, but there are hundreds of millions of dollars there.

My second question would involve the Medford Tanker Base and to get on the record an assurance that if certain things are done that, indeed, we can keep that base open. Chief, I know you are familiar with that.

And then I just have to ask about the low timber yields and some stewardship contracting issues as well. As you know, in the farm bill, we had hoped to be able to expand the use of stewardship contracting. It was the Senate conferees on the other side of the aisle that "nuked" that provision.

I would be curious to know about your views on stewardship contracting as it relates to the forests. Certainly, in my district, Mr. Rey, you were out there in John Day. I remember reading a report about the sustained yield in the Malheur was somewhere on the order of 200 million board feet a while back that was projected. Last year, they hit 10 percent of the projected 38 million board feet, 10 percent of that is all they got out. If you calculate that out, just to put in perspective what has changed in a rural area, we are down to less than 2 percent of where they were a couple of decades or a decade ago or so in what they are able to access.

The point I would get at, because Mr. Udall sort of raised this issue to a certain extent, and I am one of the co-chairs as well and very supportive of biomass and all, but I am continuing to hear, Chief, from my regional foresters that they are very concerned that we are losing the remaining infrastructure, in terms of mills, loggers and such, to be able to do the kind of stewardship contracting, to do the kind of work that has to be done, whether you call it logging or thinning or just trying to make our forests more healthy.

So I will stop with that and then just flag one other agriculture-related issue, and that is Sudden Oak Death, which is afflicting our nursery business. It is a big scare in the area, and we may need some help getting some funding to deal with that. So I know that is a rapid-fire progression, but we don't get much time to ask questions.

Secretary VENEMAN. I think you are going to win the prize for the most questions in the shortest amount of time.

[Laughter.]

Mr. WALDEN. Thank you, Madam Secretary. I try to make the best use of my opportunity here.

Secretary VENEMAN. Let me answer some of them, and then I will turn others over to my colleagues. Let me start first with the Klamath Basin.

As you know, I was out there recently with Secretary Norton as we turned on the irrigation water for this year for the farmers and ranchers in that area, and we were very pleased that Mother Nature cooperated this year enough so that we were able to do that.

I will also say that that trip gave me a very good feel for the issues in the region, for the layout, for the kinds of competing demands that is only possible with a firsthand look, and so I was very thankful for that opportunity.

As you also know, the President, after he visited Oregon with you and Senator Smith, did form a Cabinet-level task force to oversee the issues of the Klamath Basin. I am a member of that task force. It is chaired by Secretary Norton, and we are working very diligently to look at all of the options. There are many competing interests, not just farmers and fish, but there are tribes. There are national forests involved. There is obviously the Bureau of Reclamation. There are numerous areas that are involved in this issue, and that is why it is so important that we have this cooperating task force that includes, at the Cabinet level, myself, Secretary Norton, and Secretary Evans.

We haven't seen the final details of the farm bill, but I can tell you that we certainly appreciate your efforts to try to get specific, to get specific amounts of or designations in the farm bill to deal with the Klamath issues, and we will work with you and other members of the delegation in Northern California and Oregon to try to utilize the resources that have been given both in the farm bill and that we have through other programs to do as much as we can for the Klamath area.

Mr. WALDEN. You, clearly, and I know the President understands, this has got to be one of the major priorities of this country because if we can't fix it in the Klamath Basin, we are not going to be able to fix it anywhere. I mean, are you willing to make this, and do you think the President's committee will make this a No. 1 priority when it comes to accessing the billions that are now available in the farm bill once we pass it for conservation and water—

Secretary VENEMAN. Yes. I mean, this will certainly be a priority. I mean, we have got, as I indicated, the President has established a Cabinet-level task force, and we will be looking at this as a priority as we look at the issues in the farm bill. Again, it is very difficult to commit specific resources because we have not seen the details.

Mr. WALDEN. I understand that.

Secretary VENEMAN. But, certainly, I will commit to making this a priority and say to you that it already is a priority for this Administration to deal with this issue.

Mr. WALDEN. I appreciate that. Thank you.

Secretary VENEMAN. Let me also make another comment on the farm bill because you raised the issue of the Forest Stewardship program. We are also disappointed that that was not included. As I indicated, however, this is a farm bill that has the largest amount of spending for conservation ever in a farm bill before, and we are pleased about that, but there are things like this program that were not included that could have been a very important program,

in terms of overall fuel reduction, for example, as we were talking about earlier.

This is a farm bill of compromise. It is a farm bill where not everyone got what they wanted, and certainly this is one of the programs I think we would have both liked to have seen, but unfortunately it was not included.

I do want to comment on the alternative uses in the biomass, which was also asked in the previous question. As I indicated in my opening statement, I was able to visit just last week, on the occasion of Earth Day, our Forest Research Lab that is looking at a number of these opportunities for forest products, particularly some of the smaller cuts, some of the recycled uses. Biomass is another important renewable energy resource that we have from the forest. We are also looking at a number of agricultural uses with regard to biomass. It is a priority. It is a priority that we have placed, in terms of in the Administration, not only in our energy plan, to look at the renewable sources, and biomass is one of those, renewable fuels as well, and also these new and innovative discoveries.

And I would commend to this Committee anyone who has the opportunity to visit this Forest Products Lab and see the innovations that they are making with regard to new uses for forest products there in Wisconsin. It is very interesting, and I think it would give everyone a good opportunity to see what technology can do to help us in these areas.

Mr. WALDEN. I would also, Madam Secretary, commend you to the Oregon Institute of Technology Renewable Energy Center as well because they are doing some impressive work on geothermal, and solar, and other fuel-cell development as well down in Klamath Falls. Next time you are down, maybe we will get you there.

Secretary VENEMAN. I would very much enjoy visiting that.

We are sensitive to the point you made, also, about losing the infrastructure that support the forests. Certainly, that is an issue that I think needs to be addressed as we work with local communities and get local input. This needs to be put into the mix of that discussion.

And, finally, what we do have is a focus on Sudden Oak Death syndrome. It is a big issue, also, in California, and we are working with a number of members there as well.

I would like to turn it over to the Chief to talk a bit about the Medford issue and the logging issue.

Mr. MCINNIS. Let me add we have gone over our time considerably here, and we do want to give the other members time. So, if the Chief would visit with the representative after the meeting in further response to this question.

Mr. Udall?

Mr. UDALL OF NEW MEXICO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Veneman and company here, I wanted to address this issue of focusing and targeting National Fire Plan monies specifically to the Urban-Wildland Interface, and it seems to me, as I have watched this unfold, that we seem to have such a broad definition or such an expansive view of what the Wildland-Urban Interface is, is that we are doing a lot of reduction in back-country areas, we are doing a lot of reduction in areas that don't need it,

and in my opinion, we really need to target very specifically what is Wildland-Urban Interface.

And on April 11th, I wrote you about the legislation that Congressman Hefley and my cousin, Congressman Udall, had introduced, and in that legislation we take what the GAO has done and try to urge you and your counsel to very specifically define Urban-Wildland Interface. And specifically there we talk about a definition. This is a definition that is used in the Rocky Mountain area, where we would talk about, first, homes and other structures that are immediately adjacent to or intermixed with Federal-public lands containing flammable vegetation; two, that the conditions on such lands are conducive to large-scale disturbance events; and, three, that there is a significant probability of a fire ignition and a resulting spread of the disturbance event.

It seems that definitions are being used all over the country. If you read through the GAO report, you see California has one definition, and then the Rocky Mountain area has one. I would urge you, I think, to get this focused, you, and the Chief, and the Under Secretary. It may well be, from your level, to try to define what it is we are talking about so that we can spend these monies in an effective way. We can measure what it is that we are getting, in terms of spending money, and so we do not reach the situation where we get to the end of this, and everybody says, well, the National Fire Plan is a failure.

I mean, that is what I really fear, being a Westerner, is that we know that an incredible amount of work needs to be done, and if we don't do it well early on, the support out there will disappear for continuing the National Fire Plan and specifically trying to address these high-risk communities.

With that, I would love to hear from you or either of the two individuals you have with you.

Secretary VENEMAN. Well, I think you bring up very important points, and part of the reason that Secretary Norton and I together signed this agreement, establishing this Wildfire Council just—well, it is May 1st—last month, was to address these kinds of issues, to look at how do we best create the definitions, how do we set the priorities, in terms of where we need to first put the resources, and certainly the Urban Interface is one that is very important and needs to be addressed.

Mr. Rey I think indicated earlier that the council is going to be meeting just this afternoon, and some of the definitional issues are things that this council will be addressing.

Do you want to comment on that further?

Mr. REY. I think that is pretty much it.

Mr. BOSWORTH. I would like to just make one comment, though, about the Wildland-Urban Interface areas. One of the things I think we have to be very, very careful of is to not assume that a Wildland-Urban Interface situation in California is the same as it is in Georgia or is the same as it is in Wisconsin. We have to look at the local situation. Fire behaves differently in those different circumstances. The fuel loads are different. The kind of treatments that it takes to deal with those fuels are different.

I think that we need to keep our focus on protecting communities and recognizing that, of course, those are the higher cost areas to

treat as well. We have got to keep our focus on the communities, but be very cautious about one definition that would cross everywhere in the country, and that may not work. We just need to make sure we think that through very, very carefully.

Mr. UDALL OF NEW MEXICO. Chief, do you have any, in hearing me read this definition that I think is used in the Rocky Mountain area, the last two conditions on such lands that are conducive to large-scale disturbance and events, there is a significant probability of fire ignition and resulting spread of the disturbance event. It seems to me that that kind of definition is something that could apply all across the board because what we are looking at is large-scale devastation. That is what we don't want, and we need to be targeting the monies to those areas that are at the highest risk. Isn't that where we should be headed?

Mr. MCINNIS. Gentlemen, I hate to interrupt—I am sorry, Mr. Udall, but I have got five other people and 20 minutes to give them an opportunity to question.

Mr. UDALL OF NEW MEXICO. Would you just let him just give a brief answer, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. MCINNIS. No.

Mr. UDALL OF NEW MEXICO. He is a very concise gentleman.

Mr. MCINNIS. I am turning the floor over to Mr. Peterson. Mr. Peterson needs to leave. It is either give you more time and cut these guys short, and they outnumber you five to one, so you are outnumbered.

Mr. UDALL OF NEW MEXICO. I will come back.

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Peterson, you may proceed.

Mr. PETERSON. Thank you very much.

I want to welcome you, Madam Secretary, and Chief, and Mr. Rey, for joining us today. You have difficult jobs, a lot more difficult than a lot of people think.

I would like to just begin by saying I come from Northern Pennsylvania, the finest hardwood forest in America. I grew up in the forest. When I was a youngster, I slept in the forest, you can ask my mother, more often than I slept in my house in the summertime, and I grew up alongside of oil wells because I was from the original oil patch near Drake Well. So we had oil activity, we had timber activity, and it is a beautiful forest today because we managed it. Most people managed it well.

But I guess I would like to comment just for a moment about the ranking member's comments, when he hit you with 10 issues that he thinks this Administration has failed on. It is my view that you had somewhat stopped policies that were not well thought out, policies that were from the radical left, policies that had devastating impacts on the economies of rural America. And so by slowing them down and allowing public input, in my view, you have proven that you really are interested in the environment because, in my view, the Vice President's office should never have managed the Forest Service, and in my view, they tried to.

Is it not true that today we market 84-percent less timber than we used to on an annual basis?

Secretary VENEMAN. It depends upon the timeframe in which you are talking about, but we are marketing substantially less timber.

Mr. PETERSON. It is less than 2 billion board feet, it used to be 12 billion per year, that is the figure I am going on, and we have never met our mark yet. So it is going to be less than 84 percent from what we used to.

But I think we have to realize that those who are against marketing timber want it zero. They want all public land to be for the critters, not for people, because, in my view, when you look at the roadless areas, I would doubt that a quarter of a million Americans would spend quality time in a roadless area out of our vast population. People don't go.

I am an avid hunter. Avid hunters don't go a mile from a road, the majority of them. They just don't. The few young that understand the forest and are not afraid of getting lost. When you go roadless, you go peopleless. So not only does timber and other activity stop, recreation stops for most of Americans, and I think that is a debate that has not been had and, in my view, is a part of this process, that when you make an area roadless, you make it peopleless because people won't go there. They just don't.

I guess I wanted to make the point that, in the Forest Service, as you manage the forests, you have range biologists, you have soil scientists, you have hydrologists, you have fish biologists, you have wildlife biologists, environmental engineers, insect and disease scientists, and foresters, botanists, civil engineers, economists and social scientists that help you make your decisions; is that a correct statement?

I don't think the public gives you credit for that. I don't know of any agency that brings in that many highly educated professionals to analyze every decision you make, whether it is a timber cut, whether it is a trail building or any activity that you are going to allow in the forest, those people interact, am I not correct?

Secretary VENEMAN. That is correct.

Mr. PETERSON. And so I guess my message is we talk about analysis paralysis. You know, if I was a businessperson, and I have been, previous to being here, and I had that kind of scientists backing me up, I would be less timid defending what I am doing than the Department of Agriculture and the Forest Service has been in the last few years, and that is the situation you have inherited.

But I mean you have a lot of very well-educated professionals helping you make every decision, people who worry about fish biology, people who worry about wildlife biology, people who worry about soil scientists, hydrologists. All of those professionals are a part of your decisionmaking process, and I don't think you get any credit for that or take any credit for that.

Would any of you like to respond to that?

Secretary VENEMAN. Congressman, I think that is a very important point. We do have a very diverse cadre of professionals in the Forest Service that help with all of the determinations we make with planning, with determining how we are going to manage the forests, and they are a very important part of what we do.

I think part of your comments also go to what we have referred to as the analysis paralysis, the difficulty in getting decisions made. As we have indicated on numerous occasions, so much of what we do ends up in the court system. That has been a real problem, and we are looking through what the Chief, through his lead-

ership, he is looking at a report on what is it that is holding up decisions and the decisionmaking process, and then he wants—

Mr. MCINNIS. Madam Secretary, I am sorry to interrupt, but, members, we have got to keep it within the time limits. We have exceeded that time limit, and, Mr. Peterson, as you know, you were granted the courtesy by these other two to jump ahead, so—

Mr. PETERSON. Thank you very much.

Mr. MCINNIS. Thank you.

I am sorry, Madam Secretary. I know you are trying to get out by noon as well.

So, Mr. Norwood, thank you for allowing us to jump—

Mr. NORWOOD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, for allowing me to come and ask a couple of questions today. My inclination is to defend the political attack that occurred earlier today, and I am not going to do that, but I would say to you, Madam Secretary, that there are many, many, many Americans who have increased trust in this Administration and are very pleased with the balanced, common-sense, fair approach that our President is taking. Just because it doesn't agree with somebody, it doesn't mean a lot of us aren't real happy with it.

I want to associate my thoughts with the Chairman's opening statement and with yours, Madam Secretary. I couldn't agree more, and there have been so many important questions, I hope I am not going to trivialize this, but please do understand my questions are based on that I am trying to stop a war. All of us are getting new districts, and I am lucky enough to get seven new counties in North Georgia, the most beautiful mountains in the world, and the interesting part of it is that 50 percent of that land mass is the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest. So the people who have lived in those mountains for years, and years, and years, have a great interest in what your supervisors do in that area.

My first question, and please quickly answer, is who does a supervisor answer to?

Mr. BOSWORTH. The forest supervisor reports to a regional forester, and in that case it would be a person by the name of Bob Jacobs, who is in Atlanta, Georgia.

Mr. NORWOOD. Well, I am going to come talk to you later, and we will get into real details, but finally it kicks up to you, doesn't it, Chief?

Mr. BOSWORTH. And he reports to me.

Mr. NORWOOD. Now the Secretary said that it was very important that we have strong ties to local communities. The Secretary said we have to involve local communities in local decisions. Frankly, my question is does that mean the local community gets to put in their point of view, and everybody listens, and then the supervisor does what they want or does it mean it really does have an effect on the decision?

Mr. BOSWORTH. The reason for working with both local communities, as well as people outside of the local communities, the region and people that are in some of the cities that have an interest in the national forest is to try to arrive at decisions, based upon their input and others input, decisions that will work on the land, that will be—

Mr. NORWOOD. Here is the deal, and the reason this is important is I am trying to stop a war in a district I am not even in yet. I want to know what the policy is of the Forest Service when it comes to ATVs. Can you use an ATV on a forest road or not?

Mr. BOSWORTH. That would depend on the individual Forest Plan. So there is a Forest Plan for the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest, and the Forest Plan sets out, and every national forest has a Forest Plan, that sets out the direction for what can and can't take place.

Mr. NORWOOD. So, in some parts of America, you can ride down the road on an ATV and other parts you can't. It all belongs to us.

Mr. BOSWORTH. There are some places that there would be some restrictions for ATVs, partly from a safety standpoint. There may be places where you have the potential for faster vehicles going down the road, and you have, say, an ATV that there is the potential for accidents and for—

Mr. NORWOOD. Well, there are potentials for accidents on interstate highways, too, but we don't prohibit cars. And Clara Johnson, the supervisor down there, is trying to prohibit ATVs, and it is going to start a war, and I want to know how to stop it.

First of all, I don't appreciate her trying to take ATVs off the road. I don't think they ought to get off the road into the forests, but this is land owned by the people, and many of my people like to go trout fishing, maybe some of them even like to go bird watching, some of them may want to go turkey hunting, some of them are not old enough to climb the mountains, but could get up there and enjoy their land, and I want to know what do we need to do to have some local input that will be meaningful.

Mr. BOSWORTH. I need to talk with the regional forester and the forest supervisor on that particular situation because, again, ATVs are a part of the National Forest recreation opportunities around the country.

Mr. NORWOOD. That is right.

Mr. BOSWORTH. Like any other use, we try to work together with local people, as well as others, to try to figure out how we can do that in a compatible way to satisfy as many people's desires as possible. I can't speak specifically to the situation you are talking about, but I can certainly check into it and get back to you.

Mr. NORWOOD. And I want to talk to you specifically about it outside of this hearing room because you and I have to divert a war.

Mr. BOSWORTH. Well, I don't want any wars over national forest lands.

Mr. NORWOOD. I don't think you do either, and I don't want one in my new district, but I am telling you, I know those mountaineers up there, I do know that, and I also know that as good of employees as you have, everybody agrees with that in this room, some of them are political appointees.

Mr. WALDEN. Gentlemen.

Mr. NORWOOD. My time is expired. I thank the Chairman, and I thank the Chief, Madam Secretary.

Mr. BOSWORTH. Excuse me. I just want to correct that. Our forest supervisors are not political appointees, our deputy Chiefs, I am not a political appointee.

Mr. NORWOOD. I will show you how it happens when we meet.

[Laughter.]

Mr. WALDEN. Thank the gentleman. We want to avoid war in this Committee room too.

Let us go to Mr. Gilchrest now for 5 minutes.

Mr. GILCHREST. I thank the Chairman.

I had a solution for Charlie's ATV problem. I think that people down there should just use horses.

[Laughter.]

Mr. GILCHREST. Enjoy the wilderness a little bit better. It is a lot more quiet, and a lot of different birds eat that dung. It is good for the ecosystem.

I want to, Chief, I just want to tell you that my daughter is ecstatic. She has a student job in one of your forests for the summer.

Mr. BOSWORTH. That is great. She will love it.

Mr. GILCHREST. I don't want to say in public where. It is near Butch. It is a great spot.

Madam Secretary, thank you for coming today. We do, and I want to confirm the fact that when you became Secretary of the Forest Service, people feel a lot more comfortable, and they feel secure with your pragmatic, reasonable, visionary approach to both agriculture and the forestlands.

I come from back East—that is an unusual thing for this Committee—not too far from here, just a stone's throw away on the Chesapeake Bay. I live on a peninsula called the Delmarva Peninsula, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia, and we have predominant industry there is agriculture and fishing. There are also some conflicts on agriculture, silviculture and the fisheries because of habitat reasons and so forth.

We have, in the farm bill, and I hope to God it passes tomorrow, a pilot project in the conservation title. I think it is 203, letter G, called the Conservation Corridor, and it will bring together the five key areas that you have described, in my opinion, by making agriculture unique, value added, profitable so farmers will have the option to stay in farming because they can or to sell their land. Right now it is becoming clear they can't. They only have one option, and that is to sell their land if they want to keep their house or send their children to college.

The other part of that bill, and that is a contiguous corridor of agriculture, the other part of that bill is a Conservation Corridor. That is, for the most part, a forested corridor. We don't have a lot of national forests on the Delmarva Peninsula, but the Department of Agriculture can go a long way into helping create this Conservation Corridor by the ideas that we have in the three-State area to make agriculture profitable. Create a Conservation Corridor, mostly a forested corridor, that fundamentally follows the hydrologic cycle. By doing that, you reduce conflicts between agriculture, the fisheries, forest practices, wildlife habitat and clean water. We think it is a fundamentally sound approach. It is a pilot project that will last 5 years—in 3 years, mix to see whether or not it is successful will be reported to Congress. It is a totally voluntary program. Anyone that participates or decides halfway through their participation can back out without any repercussions.

It brings basically the myriad of agricultural programs that are out there mostly in the conservation arena, which are very often

fragmented. One county doesn't know what another county is doing, let alone one State to another State, but we have a region that will take advantage of the vast array of resources and expertise that Mr. Peterson mentioned to bring to bear in this one region.

If you look at the Delmarva Peninsula, perhaps it is like a heart or an organism, and it has veins and arteries that proliferate that particular watershed, and that is the area that we are looking for the Conservation Corridor. So I just wanted to bring that to your attention, and I hope we can meet shortly after the farm bill is passed and pull all of this together.

Secretary VENEMAN. Well, we will look forward to working with you on that. I am not familiar with that particular provision. However, this sounds very much like our Conservation Reserve Enhancement programs, where we have been very successful in working with States, in particular watersheds, to build corridors of planting and so forth to enhance water quality, to keep people in farming, and to overall enhance the environment, and I think these kinds of programs are extremely successful. They are the kind of programs we have talked a lot about as we have discussed the importance of having conservation programs that help with working farmlands, that keep farmers in business, and so we will look very much forward to working with you on this project.

Mr. GILCREST. Thank you, Madam Secretary.

Mr. WALDEN. Now we would like to recognize the gentleman from Idaho, Mr. Otter, for 5 minutes.

Mr. OTTER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Under Secretary, Madam Secretary, and Chief, thanks for being here. Once again, it has been a great experience, educational, as well as very informative.

Chief, I understand the process that we are going through now to review the actions of those folks that were involved in the Canadian lynx study, and I don't want to belabor that, but I would like to make a point. In the process of answering questions, Madam Secretary said that the individual involved was retired. Now my understanding is that was the person that actually came forward with the truth and said that, in fact, they had falsified that study, and he had retired.

I don't want to belabor the point, but I do want to make this point; that during the Clinton years, 38 lumber mills were shut down in my State, and all of those folks didn't get a chance to retire. They lost their jobs, and they lost their benefit programs, and eventually, in many, many cases, their family had to uproot generations of living in a particular locale and move someplace else because the economic vitality, with the closure of the forests and with the closure of those mills, was no longer possible.

And so while we might celebrate the fact that we have, indeed, gotten rid of somebody who was a problem in terms of true science and using true science to drive our good intentions, I just want to remind you that those individuals will probably all have their retirement, they'll have their continuing Government package of medical benefits, and for the most part their families are going to remain intact with their generational roots. I wish I could say the same about in excess of 8,000 Idahoans who are not in their locales

and in the pleasant circumstances under which a Government employee retiree might be.

During the process of your opening statement, Madam Secretary, you mentioned the existence of some advisory groups that were actually a compilation of all of the driving forces within a community, the stakeholders, and trying to come up with a plan, trying to come up with a process which they could all agree to and go forward with.

How much authority do these people have? Is this simply advisory? I guess my question goes back to the gentleman from Georgia, that after these 65 advisory groups complete their work, are they going to get to celebrate probably the beginning of a new idea about managing the resources which they all had a say-so in and eventually all agreed to? Is there any authority attached to this process?

Secretary VENEMAN. Well, let me first say how much value we put on this local input from local communities in making these decisions, again. I am going to ask Mr. Rey to comment specifically on these advisory committees.

Mr. REY. These are committees that were charted under the Secure Rural Schools and Communities bill that passed in the last Congress. They have the responsibility of improving and approving investments in projects on the national forests, and they have, in the aggregate, about \$25 million of money available for that purpose. So, yes, they do have specific authorities.

Mr. OTTER. And when the plan is finished, when they can come together and work things out, this then has some authority, this has some resolve for implementation?

Mr. REY. Some of the advisory committees have already approved plans that are being implemented with the funding available. In addition to the funding that is available through the bill, which is a mandatory expenditure, some of them are also matching the Federal funds with State and local Government funds.

It is our hope that these committees will, over time, even take a somewhat broader role in providing assistance and advice to the Forest Service. They are balanced committees by statute.

Mr. OTTER. Before my time runs out, Chief, I wanted to mention a couple of names to you. I just met with Brad Powell yesterday. He came in my office and introduced himself. I am quite encouraged by his appointment to District One, and by Jack Troyer in District Four. That is a good signal for getting folks that truly understand the resource, rather than having political agendas, back on the ground and back actually operating the resource.

So thank you very much.

Mr. WALDEN. The time of the gentleman has expired.

We go to the gentleman from California, Mr. Radanovich?

Mr. RADANOVICH. I thank the esteemed Chairman.

Welcome, Secretary Veneman. It is good to see you here. I was just thinking a little bit earlier you might be a constituent of mine with the California reapportionment. If that is the case, it is an honor.

Secretary VENEMAN. We are close.

Mr. RADANOVICH. I do want to thank the Administration's balanced approach. I know that the issue of balancing preservation

with multiple uses is a tough one. Despite what was said here today, I want to state that, as one who is an advocate of increased multiple use, I share my frustration in not getting what I want as fast as I want.

A case in point would be the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan amendment that was recently adopted. I am disappointed that it was adopted, and I do have some questions referring to that, but I also understand your necessity to recuse yourself from the issue and perhaps might want to direct this, it is your call, to Mr. Rey.

But I am kind of withholding judgment until the regional forester develops an action plan to execute Chief Bosworth's directive and would like to state on the record that my understanding of what might be accomplished in that. One would be to reexamine the framework to find ways to continue to lower the risk of catastrophic fire, while providing and protecting resources; No. 2 would be better coordinate the framework with the priorities of the Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group Act; and No. 3, to better assess the impacts on recreation and grazing communities this plan amendment might have.

What is the time line, if you have got any comments as to whether I am correct or not, on what is going to be researched, but also what might be the time line that we might see something come back that we can take a look at?

Mr. BOSWORTH. We set out to accomplish that in 1 year. I can't remember the date that it started from, but when I issued my decision, we were expecting to have this review completed in the region in a year. You are pretty close, I think, on your understanding in terms of the direction that I gave. The regional forester has developed a plan. He has a team in place. I believe they have broadened it somewhat to take a look at a couple of other aspects, but they are going to work with interested people and evaluate that and make the appropriate changes.

Mr. RADANOVICH. Will you be consulting with Members of Congress and related agencies, local Governments, tribes, environmental groups, as you begin to go through this process?

Mr. BOSWORTH. Particularly the regional forester will be doing that, and then I will, to some degree, as needed. Yes, we will be dealing with local communities, already are, with interest groups on all sides of the issue, I believe that with many of the congressional staff. So, yes, it is going to require a lot of public interaction, and comment, and involvement.

Mr. RADANOVICH. Chief Bosworth, do we have an idea of when that year is up?

Mr. BOSWORTH. I will have to get the date. I am not recalling quickly.

Mr. REY. I think it is December of this year.

Mr. RADANOVICH. December of this year? Good. I look forward to that.

Mr. BOSWORTH. This last year has all run together for me. I can't remember when I did what.

Mr. RADANOVICH. Thank you.

The only other thing I want to mention, since the hearing is regarding the future of the United States Forest Service, I want to hold up for the cameras a chart that I came across just recently,

which was very alarming, and it speaks a lot, in and of itself, and it is a little bit dim on this side. It is hard to see. But this is a chart that charts the number of acres burned in the inter mountain region due to forest fire from the 1930's up to present time. I think it is 2001, from 100,000 acres to a million acres. I noticed the dramatic increase since what looks to be like 1987, from 2001, the dramatic spike in number of acres burned.

I think that while we are trying to assess the future of the United States Forest Service and their management practices on public land, I would think that one of the questions you might want to ask is why are we burning six to ten times more forests every year than we have in the last 70 years. I would like to provide this to you as evidence that we might want to take a second look at our forest management policies.

With that, no required comment, and if you would like to, that would be just fine, but I thought it was an interesting thing to point out for the hearing.

Secretary VENEMAN. Well, I think that, certainly, we are looking at the whole area of wildfire management, as we have indicated, through our partnerships with Interior, with our whole Fire Management Plan, and the committee that is going to meet this afternoon of the USDA and the Interior Department, the various agencies that are involved, to look at these issues. I think, certainly, that chart would argue that we need to aggressively look at how we control fire risk much better, which is why we are talking about active management, about fuel reduction, and about how do we best protect the forests for all of the users of those forests.

Mr. RADANOVICH. Very good. Thank you very much.

Mr. WALDEN. The Chair would now recognize the gentleman from Washington, Mr. Inslee. This will be the final round of questions.

Mr. INSLEE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your courtesy. Thank you for staying to accommodate this. I really appreciate that.

Mr. Radanovich brings up a really interesting question about fire loss. I would just sort of editorially note that eight out of the ten hottest years in recorded human history were in the last decade. We are experiencing this global warming trend, which I believe, and many scientists believe, has prospectively some impact on our forest fire danger. It is one of the reasons I hope we can join to do something about global warming at some point.

I was asking you earlier about this trust issue with the agencies and their difficult decisions. One of the issues that has caused great concern in the Northwest is the Administration's decision not to defend the Roadless Area Rule that was adopted after the largest amount of public input in American history in any rule, 1-point-some-million comments, and 5 percent of which were in favor of a very strong roadless area bill.

The Attorney General of the United States, Mr. Ashcroft, promised the U.S. Senate, during his confirmation hearings, that he would, indeed, defend that Roadless Area Rule if, and when, it was challenged in court. Then, in the Idaho litigation, he essentially took a dive and refused to defend that rule, and that is causing great concern out in the Pacific Northwest.

I would like, if you can, to tell us who made that decision in the Administration not to defend the roadless area bill, contrary to the specific promise by Mr. Ashcroft, be it you, the President, Mr. Ashcroft, who made that decision?

Mr. REY. First of all, I don't think we agree that the rule was undefended. The Justice Department mounted an aggressive, albeit unsuccessful, defense at the District Court level in Idaho. The Justice Department is today defending the rule in pending legal action in North Dakota and in Wyoming in cases that have not been stayed as a consequence of the Idaho preliminary injunction.

After losing the decision at the District Court level, the Department of Justice and the Department of Agriculture, which is the client agency in this case, had the review, as the Department of Justice and its client agency does in every instance when we lose a District Court decision, what the merits of trying to reverse that loss on appeal are. What goes into that evaluation is, is it likely that we are going to succeed at the Circuit Court level or are we likely to fail? Is it necessary to continue the defense to achieve the objectives that we set out when the Secretary and the Chief announced their support for protecting roadless areas?

The conclusion of that review, we believed that, as the Department of Justice and the Department of Agriculture, believed that it was highly unlikely that we would prevail in the appeal. The Ninth Circuit has ruled in similar cases before, when the Government has failed to adequately comply with NEPA, indeed, the last time an Administration tried to do a national Roadless Rule was in the Carter Administration, and it was reversed by the Ninth Circuit for almost expressly the same reasons that Judge Lodge had so far reversed it.

So I think we have defended that rule as aggressively as we could, given the legal infirmities that the rule, unfortunately, possesses.

Mr. INSLEE. Well, let me just say that I hope that we prosecute these cases against terrorists with a lot more vigor than you assert we defended this rule in the Idaho courts. It was laughable. And the American people deserve better when, in fact, there has been an affirmation that the rule is going to be defended by the Attorney General of the United States. And it is this type of conduct which causes you difficulty, in the performance your duties, to win the trust of the American people, and that is what I am talking about today.

Now one of the things I ask you about trust and how to win it back from the American people, I was hoping that you would have talked about the Tongass area, specifically, and your work on the roadless area bill. I was hoping that because I have heard that the Administration intends to pursue a course that would allow subsidies of roads being built in roadless areas that have been inventoried in the Tongass and allow foreign sales, if there is no viable domestic market. If you can tell me that is not true, I would love to hear that, and I would love you to tell us what your plans are in the Tongass, please, in regard to the Roadless Rule.

Mr. REY. The Tongass is under its own separate litigation. At present, the judge has agreed not to enjoin those timber sales that are currently operating. Those are sales that would have operated,

even under the Clinton Roadless Rule, because they were grandfathered by that rule. As a result of that litigation, the Forest Service is currently conducting a wilderness review, and it will go through a revision of its Forest Plan and complete that wilderness review, which will decide which of those roadless areas are going to remain roadless and which may be put back into multiple use.

The vast majority of land holdings in the Tongass National Forest, 16,300,000 acres of the 17 million acres of the forest, are not used for timber production and are presently roadless.

Mr. INSLEE. Just briefly, if I may, could you address the foreign sales issue, Mr. Rey.

Mr. REY. I don't believe there area any foreign sales on the Tongass. There are some species that are not used by the domestic producers which remain on the Tongass, yellow cedar and, to a smaller extent, red cedar. Some of these logs are exported to the Pacific Northwest mills, as well as to some mills abroad.

But they are not selling timber sales to foreign bidders. Those are all American logging and manufacturing companies that are bidding on the sales.

Mr. INSLEE. Thank you. Thank you for your courtesy.

Mr. WALDEN. The gentleman's time is expired.

I would conclude the hearing with my own 5 minutes, a couple more questions, and I want to give Chief Bosworth an opportunity to respond to my question about the Medford tanker base.

As you know, the "Quartz" fire burned over 6,000 acres of Federal, State and private land in Oregon last summer. The fire initially had been forecast to spread to 28,000 acres, but because we were able to get in and do the initial attack because of the close proximity of the tanker base in Medford, the fire was contained to 6,000 acres, which saved the taxpayers and the Forest Service 28.8 million in fire suppression costs. In light of these savings and the fact that 55.9 percent of the Quartz fire occurred in the Rogue River National Forest, does it not make sense for the few hundred thousand a year to keep that base open, to do that as opposed to run the risk of a fire getting away from us that could cost 28 million?

Mr. REY. When we are determining where we want to keep air tanker bases, we look across the board and try to figure out exactly where the fire frequencies are, the length of time it takes to reload and to do the initial attack with air tankers, where the closest reload bases might be, and our folks go through a fairly heavy evaluation, also recognize that there are limited dollars to do the improvements at some bases that need to be done.

I know that in this particular case there has been a lot of discussion with local folks, and there is a big concern from people in Medford about whether or not they will be adequately protected. I know also that the Regional Forester, Harv Forsgren, has worked with your staff and Heather's, and my understanding is they have come to some agreements that we would be able to—there are some dollars involved, but in the event that we are able to achieve those dollars, that we would keep it open.

In the meantime we will have a reload facility there, and I believe that that reload facility will work very well.

Mr. WALDEN. Thank you. Mr. Rey, you were out in John Day Oregon with Senator Smith at a timber meeting, and you have seen what is going on out there. You have talked to the folks that are in such desperate straits. One of the issues that we have run into is this Beschta Report, and as you know, Judge Haggerty ruled in favor of the plaintiffs in a suit against the Forest Service for its failure to cite the Beschta Report when preparing the Hash Rock salvage sale. Again, that is a few hundred acres out of how many thousands of acres that were burned that we are trying to get in there and get cleaned up.

Can you talk to me about, are there other studies out there that can be referenced? Why wasn't Beschta referenced? What does it take—and this isn't necessarily a criticism—but what is it going to take to prepare a timber sale that can withstand a court decision? It seems to me there ought to be some template. Will your Charter Forest concept help us get to the goal of healthier forests, better-managed forests and product for our mills?

Mr. REY. Possibly, but I think we are going to have to continue to improve our ability to articulate our objectives and develop completed decisionmaking documents, because I don't think that the environmental litigants who are challenging this are going to go away. Before we came up here we took a tally of how many legal actions the Forest Service is currently involved in, and the number is over 5,000. So we are looking at the Beschta Report and potentially may augment that report and make sure that our line managers have a complete understanding of all of the things that they have to evaluate and disclose in the decisions they make.

Mr. WALDEN. I had a Regional Forester, a few years ago, tell me in my office that in order to replace the steps on a lookout tower, which of course a fire lookout on top of a mountain, they had to do an aquatic study. Now, I don't know about many walking fish or climbing fish, but that seems a bit absurd to simply replace the steps. And she went on to say that there are some 99 laws, rules, whatever they have to try and keep track of when they do anything. And the Forest Service employees, a number of us have commented what dedicated people you have, and again, we all have people in this Congress and any occupation that we might disagree with their tactics or their ethics, but people I have met with in almost every instance have been just stellar. But I also have a sense, as I have gone around, that more and more people in the service are feeling a bit demoralized that no matter what they try to do, somebody sues, and you just never get it done. Is there a way that we could go back and sort of recodify, without reducing necessarily, the environmental standards, but just to get to a system where we can move things though.

You know, in the Malheur, I know it took 3 years, 3 years, just to harvest trees that had been burned in a catastrophic fire. By the time they got in, because they were pine, they were all burned. The value for the taxpayers had gone from 30 million to a million. If we were on a real board of directors here, we ought to be sued by our taxpayers for fiduciary irresponsibility.

Mr. REY. I think we are being sued by the—
[Laughter.]

Mr. WALDEN. All right. We are back in court. Is there any way to break through that?

Mr. REY. I think that first next step is the report that the Forest Service is preparing for the Chief, and that will be the subject of the subcommittee hearing on the 16th, I believe, and what we hope that report provides you is our best diagnosis of what the problems are in our rules and regulations in some of the statutory requirements. And with a good and fulsome discussion of that, I believe we can then move forward to work on some solutions. We already have some things, some administrative things in progress, but I think that is the next first big step.

Mr. WALDEN. Because I have seen—I have been out after some of these fires in the forest with some of your people, Leslie Weldon and others out in the Deschutes, and they took me through where we had been in and actually done some thinning. I guess that is a politically correct term. I don't know any more what to say, but that is what happened. And where they hadn't. And it was a clear line right down the forest. And on the side that had been treated, even some of the underbrush was surviving. The lodgepole pine, some of it was going to die, but most of it was going to survive, and the ponderosa was going to make it just fine. And literally you could walk to the other side. The soils were scorched, the underbrush was gone, the habitat destroyed. The lodgepole mostly all would die, and a lot of the ponderosa would die.

And I don't think people all over this country of ours understand what has happened in the west, that we have suppressed fire for a hundred years. We have done heroic efforts to stop forest fires, Smokey Bear—I will get it right, not Smokey the Bear—Smokey Bear, yeah we have all said stop forest fires. But then we have also stopped any management of those forests in most cases, and so it is just like a garden where you never weed. And so when the fire does hit in these hot, hot summers, it is catastrophic, and it troubles me because that is not good for the environment.

I think it was in either this hearing or one the Ag. Committee a year or so ago, had photos of a stream where a fire had raged through, a catastrophic portion, and it looked like it was snow, and this was taken much later after the fire. And yet it was that dust that you sink down to your knees in, and that is the habitat left for the fish out from these stream banks. And I don't want to see that happen.

I realize we are never going to go back to the cuts of the '70's or '60's or whatever. That is not even on the table. But somewhere we have got to find a middle ground, as my colleague, Mr. DeFazio was talking about, or you are going to have enormous blowdowns and destruction and disease. And I know the Chief has spoken quite eloquently about the gridlock that you are running into. And, Chief, do you want to weigh in on this, or Madam Secretary, whatever you want to do?

Mr. BOSWORTH. Well, I can't ever resist the opportunity to comment about the problems that we have in terms of our process. And it is very demoralizing for our folks in the field to work hard to do good things in the ground, and it is not—often people are believing that it keeps us from harvesting timber but that is all. No, it keeps us from improving fish passage, from replacing culverts, from doing

good travel planning so that we can designate off-highway vehicle trails, so that we can get the off-highway vehicles off the cross-country and on to designated trails. Every—

Mr. WALDEN. So when you go to replace the culverts to make them more fish friendly, you are getting—

Mr. BOSWORTH. We still have to go through many of the same processes. We still have to go through consultation processes. And it is not that that stops it necessarily, it is just that such a large percentage of the dollars that we get go to doing all the planning and the analysis, and then we get less culverts replaced.

And so it is my objective, is to review these processes and review the way that we are managing this internally, because we have got to take some of the heat on this and fix some of our management processes, but look at all of the other processes that we are dealing with, and make a process that works for the public and where we can make good decisions on the ground in a timely way so that we can be an organization that people point to and say that is an organization that is good government.

Mr. WALDEN. Well, I think that is a very forward-looking way to approach it, because it is not to cutoff public discussion or to necessarily even tilt the scale one side or the other, I mean I have got my biases. People know that. That is fine. But it just seems like we get caught in gridlock.

Madam Secretary?

Secretary VENEMAN. Well, I think you have made a very strong case for why it is so important to actively manage our forests. Whether it is protecting against more catastrophic fires. I mean the active management of a forest, it is proven, is truly beneficial from an environmental standpoint. It helps protect against the catastrophic fire. It helps protect habitat. It helps to protect trees. And I think we have seen numerous examples of this, and it is truly our desire to find a way so that we aren't so bound by this process gridlock that we can't do the job that needs to be done for all of the public to better preserve the forest, because that is really what we are talking about.

And I think oftentimes we think we aren't really considering the fact—as has been brought by people on both sides of the aisle today—that we need to actively manage to protect communities, to protect the forest/urban interface, to protect the forests themselves, because the losses will be so much greater, and to, in the process of doing that, involve local communities and find ways to allow these decisions to be made in a timely manner so that we can do the best thing in the most expeditious way and in the most protective way for all that are concerned.

Mr. WALDEN. There are some great organizations out in my district and in my State, where they have got the tribes, the environmental community, industry, local elected officials, I think of Wallowa resources up in the Wallowa National Forest, Wallowa-Whitman, I think the Deschutes Resource Conservancy in Central Oregon, the Applegate down in Souther, there are these groups that have come together on the ground to say let's figure this out and make it work. And that is why I am hoping, as you explore this idea of other models to go to, to actually improve the environment, I mean we Oregonians are pretty proud of our environment,

and while we may have our differences in how we work that out, at the end of the day we want clean water, we want fish in our streams, but we also recognize a need for agriculture and timber.

Nobody else is here to complain about me going over 5 minutes, but I just feel so passionately about we can have good clean water, we can have restored fish runs. We can screen. And in the Klamath Basin, you saw what is down there. We have known about the need to screen those canals for a decade. It just does not happen. It is expensive. We get water. People ignore it. Now, we have got funds in the farm bill. We will have funds in other ways. And what this Administration is driving—I know firsthand, having flown with the President, that he is tenacious, and he wants this solved, and he wants water for the farmers. But he also understands the Endangered Species Act and understands the needs to have health habitat too.

That is the interesting thing and the incredibly vexing challenge in the Klamath Basin is if we satisfy the ESA and if we restore healthy runs, we will have water for the farmers, and that is why I was so pleased that Chairman Combest included our study of fish passage at Chilaquan Dam. 95 percent of the habitat of the sucker is blocked by that irrigation dam. The irrigation district and the Klamath tribes worked with me on that legislation. And that is going to move now. In a year we will know whether you take the dam out and pump water or can you do better fish passage? You know, it is one less thing that blocks the survival of the sucker.

So anyway, I know you have a very busy schedule, and I will draw this to a close. And again, thank you for your initiatives.

The record will be open for 10 days for members to submit questions to the Secretary.

And again, we appreciate the tough challenges you face, and the friendly attitude and tenaciousness that you face it with, and thank you for being here and thank you for the work you are doing for our country.

Secretary VENEMAN. Thank you very much.

Mr. WALDEN. The hearing is closed.

[Whereupon, at 12:32 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

