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FOREST SERVICE BUDGET PROPOSAL FOR FISCAL YEAR 2013

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

TO

CONSIDER THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSED BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2013 FOR THE FOREST SERVICE

MARCH 6, 2012

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FOREST SERVICE BUDGET PROPOSAL FOR FISCAL YEAR 2013

TUESDAY, MARCH 6, 2012

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:05 a.m. in room SD–366, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Jeff Bingaman, chairman, presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JEFF BINGAMAN, U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW MEXICO

The CHAIRMAN. OK. Why don't we get started?

Today the committee will consider the President's request for the Forest Service in the fiscal year 2013 budget. The request would result in a 1-percent decrease in the overall Forest Service budget with a slight increase in the discretionary accounts.

The budget has a number of high spots. For example many of us on the committee support full funding for the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program. This budget does that as well.

It maintains a strong commitment to hazardous fuels reduction.

It includes a modest increase in land acquisition funding for a number of high priority projects such as the broadly supported Miranda Canyon acquisition in New Mexico.

At the same time the Forest Service and its budget continue to face some significant challenges. For example, past emergency borrowing from discretionary accounts and congress? recent rescissions from fire fighting accounts have left the Forest Service, once again, at risk of running out of fire fighting funds. As we discussed last year at this hearing the fleet of airplanes used for fire fighting continues to approach the end of its lifespan. The value of timber remains low. Climate change and drought have left an unprecedented number of acres of western forest affected by bark beetles.

After congress rejected the same proposal last year the budget again proposes to eliminate the account for the Valles Caldera National Preserve. Obviously that's of great concern to me.

I'd like to welcome back Chief Tom Tidwell and Acting Forest Service Budget Director Susan Spear to testify this morning.

Chief Tidwell, I've been very pleased that New Mexico's National Forests have been able to take advantage of the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program and will be among the first in the Nation to implement the Forest Service's new planning rule and will serve as a demonstration project for the integrated re-

source restoration account pilot program. So we welcome you here this morning. Thank you for those excellent opportunities.

Let me defer now to Senator Murkowski for any opening remarks she has.

STATEMENT OF HON. LISA MURKOWSKI, U.S. SENATOR FROM ALASKA

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome to you, Chief Tidwell. I appreciate you being here this morning.

I want to start this morning by recognizing the efforts that your staff is making to be a cooperative partner in this quest to finally finalize the Sealaska bill. I hope that we can cross the finish line on that soon, but wanted to start off with that.

I was in Southeast Alaska over the President's day recess. While I was there I was told that there are more Forest Service employees in the forest in Southeast Alaska than there are employees of the timber industry which I thought was kind of interesting.

Then that same week that I was there, I heard President Obama speak of the need to revitalize manufacturing here in this country. So I have to ask the question, if revitalization of manufacturing is truly a goal it would seem to me that you'd want to flip the Forest Service employee to timber industry employee ratio on the Tongass there.

I see once again that you've proposed the Integrated Resource Restoration Program. This past year Congress provided you with a partial authority to test that concept in regions I, IV and III. I think before that pilot can or will be expanded, we're going to need to see the details on the results from the initial pilots to really understand what the various component parts of the integrated Resource Restoration program produced as well as how much funding was needed for each component to gain the accomplishments.

While I appreciate the Administration's willingness to include a Secure Rural Schools proposal in the proposed budget, it is at a significantly lower level than the counties enjoyed back in FY 2011. The proposal did not include any detail on how to pay for the recommended 1 year extension. So I hope that the formal legislative proposal from your agency will be arriving soon with sufficient detail on which Forest Service programs you would prefer that the Interior Approps Committee target to pay for the extension of the program. I think that it is critical that this detail be provided to avoid either across the board cuts or cuts to programs that might not reflect the agency's idea of what's in its best interest.

I also want to congratulate your staff on getting the budget explanatory notes up to our offices on the same day that the President announced his FY 2013 budget. I'm told by my staff that this is the first time in their experience that the agency got this document to our offices on the same day that the budget proposal was released. So please convey my appreciation to your staff. I know that's hard work.

Now having said that, let me recommend that you attempt to provide the regional station and area allocations for the fiscal year you're working toward in the budget justification. Giving Congress the allocation and accomplishment information for FY 2009 through 2011 was nice, but many of us want to have some idea of

how the FY 2013 funds will be allocated to the various regions and to the budget line items if Congress should decide to fund the President's request. This information will not only help us better understand how the agency will prioritize program management, but also which regions may be advantaged or disadvantaged by the construction of that proposed budget. I think this kind of information becomes even more important when the Forest Service is attempting to convince the Approps Committee to consolidate budget line items in the IRR program.

The last thing I want to mention is the replacement of the large air tanker modernization strategy that was recently released. As I read that document it's kind of a rehashing of the alternative aircraft types that your agency thinks might be available, but a little more than that. So I'm not quite sure whether we've actually laid out a strategy.

I do understand that the Forest Service has legacy aircraft requests for proposals out for bids. Will shortly offer an RFP on next generation large air tankers which I hope will help both your fire and aviation group and Congress understand your modernization plans. My hope is that once these proposals have been reviewed, the Forest Service will be able to give us a clearer picture of exactly how it plans to move forward given the budget realities that face our country.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I look forward to the comments from the Chief and the questions and answers.

The CHAIRMAN. Chief Tidwell, why don't you go ahead and make whatever comments you'd like about the proposed budget. Then we'll have some questions.

STATEMENT OF TOM TIDWELL, CHIEF, FOREST, SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, ACCOMPANIED BY SUSAN SPEAR, ACTING DIRECTOR OF BUDGET, FOREST SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Mr. TIDWELL. Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee, once again it's a privilege to be here to discuss the President's 2013 budget request for the Forest Service. You know, I really appreciate the support that we receive from the subcommittee. I look forward to working with you to do the best job that we can to provide what the public, the American public, wants from their National Forests and Grasslands.

The President's budget request reflects our commitment to fiscal restraint with significant reductions in some areas and some very difficult choices to ensure that we're spending as efficiently as we can and focusing on the priorities for the American public. The budget supports these priorities through 3 key objectives.

The first is to maintain our focus on restoring and sustaining another 2.6 million acres of forest and grasslands by increasing our collaborative efforts to build support for these restoration activities that create thousands of jobs each year.

We're going to continue to request full funding for the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration fund.

We're also requesting permanent authorization for stewardship contracting.

We'll continue to apply our science that's developed by Forest Service researchers to help us address the increasing frequency of forest disturbances from longer fire seasons, record insect and disease outbreaks, invasives, floods and droughts.

Yes, we'll continue to propose an integrated resource restoration budget line item to align our budget structure with the work we're doing.

Now I appreciate the pilot program that you've provided us for the 3 regions. I look forward to be able to submit our program to you to how we're actually going to track the outputs and the outcomes. Be able to work with you to be able to show you that this is a better way for us to align our budgets.

The second key objective is to request the funding that we need for wild land fire suppression.

Now this will include a level of preparedness that will continue our success to suppress 98 percent of our wild land fires during initial attack. They request the 10-year average for suppression. But also it will continue to reduce the threat of wildfire to our homes and communities by requesting the same level of funding in hazardous fuels so that we can treat another million acres in the wild land urban interface.

It also requests an additional $24 million to begin to modernize our large air tanker fleet.

Now our third objective is that through the America's Great Outdoors initiative we're going to increase support for community based conservation, provide opportunities for economic expansion to continue to retain and create jobs. We're going to do this with our focus on recreational opportunities that not only add to the quality of our lives. But support our communities by maintaining over 223,000 jobs with over $23 billion in annual spending by recreation visitors.

We want to continue to help America reconnect with the outdoors by increasing conservation education, volunteer opportunities and increasing new employment opportunities.

We also do request a modest increase in LWCF funding in our Forest Legacy program so that we can use conservation easements and land acquisition to protect some critical forests while acquiring public access and reducing Administration costs.

We'll continue to work with our States to ensure their State and private forestry programs promote conservation. We're doing everything we can to keep private forests, forested.

We also want to continue our work to encourage biomass utilization and other renewable energy opportunities while working to process our oil and gas permits, applications and energy transmission proposals as efficiently as we can. We do include a framework for reauthorization of Secure Rural Schools Act that I hope we continue to be able to work with you as to find a solution to be able to reauthorize Secure Rural Schools.

Now in addition, we will continue our ongoing actions to increase Administrative efficiencies and reduce our management and overhead costs by $10 million over the next 2 years. That's in FY 2013 and FY 2014.

So, Mr. Chairman, with that I want to thank you again for the opportunity to address the subcommittee. I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Tidwell follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF TOM TIDWELL, CHIEF, FOREST SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, it is a privilege to be here today to discuss the President's Budget request for the Forest Service for fiscal year (FY) 2013. I appreciate the support this subcommittee has shown for the Forest Service in the past, and I look forward to working together with Members of the Committee in the future to ensure that stewardship of our Nation's forests and grasslands continues to meet the desires and expectations of the American people. I am confident that this budget will allow the Forest Service to meet this goal while demonstrating both fiscal restraint and efficient, cost-effective spending.

Our Nation can and should take steps to reduce the deficit and make government leaner and more efficient in the 21st century. The FY 2013 budget that the President is proposing reflects the difficult choices we need to make to help reduce the deficit while investing in long-term economic growth and job creation. To make the strategic investments to grow the economy and tackle the deficit, this budget makes difficult cuts to programs. It also reflects efficiency and improvements to reduce our administrative costs. It is designed to appropriately fund programs that matter to Americans.

BUDGET CONTEXT

The Forest Service manages 193 million acres of public lands on 155 national forests and 20 national grasslands in 44 States and Puerto Rico. We also work effectively with States, Tribes, local governments, communities and private forest landowners to support the sustainable stewardship of the 423 million acres of private forest, 68 million acres of state forests and 18 million acres of forestlands on Indian reservations in the United States. Forest Service management is based on peer-reviewed science; we lead the way for the Nation and, indeed, the world in cutting-edge research on a full range of conservation issues, including bioenergy, ecological restoration, wildland fire management, forest pests and diseases, and sustainable outdoor recreation.

Our mission is to work with the American people on all lands to sustain all the benefits needed and wanted from their forests and grasslands. For example, approximately 80 percent of the Nation's freshwater resources originate on forests, and Americans get more than half of their water supplies from sources that originate in the Nation's forests. Forest Service management, combined with assistance to private landowners, helps to protect the single greatest source of drinking water in the Nation.

Jobs are maintained and created through the work of the Forest Service. Millions of Americans have forest-related jobs, from forest restoration work to recreation use, wood products, grazing, and energy and mineral development. In 2010, the National Forests attracted over 170 million annual visitors, and recreation use, which alone sustained nearly 223,000 jobs while contributing $14.5 billion annually to the U.S. economy.

Water and jobs are only some of the benefits Americans get from their forests and grasslands. These lands provide a whole range of ecosystem services-clean air, clean water, fertile soil that provides timber, forage, energy, food and fiber, fish and wildlife habitat, carbon storage, and opportunities for outdoor recreation just to name a few. These critical services to people are now at risk due to declining forest health, such as bark beetle infestation in the West. Regional drought, invasive species, loss of open space, catastrophic wildfires, devastating outbreaks of insects and disease, and the overarching challenge of a changing climate are degrading our Nation's natural infrastructure-the forests and grasslands that Americans depend on for so many services, values, and benefits.

By making targeted investments in the landscapes most at risk, we can restore healthy, resilient forests and grasslands, provide recreational and hunting access, and provide forest products for the benefit of all Americans. Our FY 2013 budget request is designed to do just that by working with partners across borders and boundaries at a landscape level. Our focus on landscape-scale conservation dovetails with broader Administration priorities, including the President's America's Great Outdoors initiative, the Secretary's "All-Lands" vision, and the Department's high-

priority goal for enhancing water resources. Landscape-scale conservation is designed to maintain and enhance the resilience and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands through targeted investments in natural infrastructure. Our investments will put Americans back to work, maintaining and creating jobs and economic opportunities for both rural and urban Americans.

FY 2013 BUDGET REQUEST AND PRIORITIES

The FY 2013 President's Budget requests $4.86 billion for the Forest Service, an increase of $15.5 million over the 2012 appropriated level. This budget responds to the public's desire for the conservation and stewardship of the Nation's forests and grasslands. Through strategic partnerships, we accomplish more work that yields benefits for all Americans, while sustaining forest and grassland ecosystems for future generations. In these tough economic times, this budget balances spending on priorities against reductions. It establishes spending on conservation principles and natural resource development needed by the Public and for the Nation's economy. Forest Service managers will continue to scrutinize spending and programs to ensure the public's investment is used wisely toward safely achieving key outcomes and shared priorities.

The Forest Service's FY 2013 President's Budget prioritizes Forest Service funding in three themes: restoration, communities, and fire. Our priorities are designed to respond to the needs of the American public. The President's Budget aligns with the Secretary's "All Lands" vision to meet the challenges of ecological restoration through collaborative approaches to address forest mortality and live tree density, invasive species and watershed degradation. The budget request will engage communities and help Americans reconnect to the outdoors, expand on recreation benefits and create a wide range of opportunities for economic expansion to retain and create jobs. The budget request also fosters partnering with communities and cooperating agencies to reduce the threat of wildland fires to people, property and watersheds.

RESTORATION THEME

With the current threats from insects and disease, wildfire, urban development, and impacts of a changing climate, active restoration is a key component of our FY 2013 budget strategy. To achieve our restoration goals, we engage a broad set of partners in active forest management at large, landscape scales and apply peer-reviewed science related to forest disturbances, fire management, and the effects of a changing climate. Our restoration efforts are guided by a continuous cycle of assessing, implementing and adapting based on information from inventory and monitoring efforts. This strategy will yield a variety of forest products and restore the structure, function, composition, and processes of healthy, resilient ecosystems across the Nation.

Restoration means jobs and economic opportunities. In order to maintain forest-related jobs we are requesting permanent authority for stewardship contracting. This authority allows the agency to accomplish collaborative restoration work at a landscape scale. Current authority for stewardship contracting expires in September 2013.

Landscape-Scale Restoration Priorities

Through active forest management, the Forest Service is restoring ecosystem structure, functions and processes in order to improve the health and resilience of ecosystems across large landscapes. Through the proposed Integrated Resource Restoration program, we expect to continue to collaborate using an inclusive process to find common ground across the many stakeholders and to leverage our investments for broader conservation impacts. Integrated Resource Restoration blends a cross-section of forest management activities,[1] such as forest thinning to reduce hazardous fuels, decommissioning roads, and removal of fish passage barriers-all of which lead to improved forest and grassland health and watershed function. The Watershed Condition Framework, released in 2011, will help managers prioritize Integrated Resource Restoration activities. This framework provides a nationally-consistent approach for classifying watershed conditions and allows us to track the number of watersheds that move to an improved condition in the long term.

[1] Integrated Resource Restoration includes activities accomplished through the following previous budget line items: Wildlife & Fisheries Habitat Management, Vegetation & Watershed Management, Forest Products, Legacy Roads & Trails, Roads Decommissioning, Hazardous Fuels in non-wildland urban interface areas, and Rehabilitation & Restoration.

In FY 2011, we restored or enhanced over 4.9 million acres of both public and private lands. We will continue to invest in and accomplish restoration on the ground. In FY 2013, through Integrated Resource Restoration we propose to restore or sustain 2.6 million acres on National Forest System lands; provide 2.8 billion board feet of timber; decommission over 2,000 miles of road; and restore or enhance 2,750 miles of stream habitat. By focusing on restoration outcomes, the Integrated Resource Restoration program empowers Forest Service managers and local communities to find the best, most-efficient way to meet their ecological, economic and social objectives. For example, a landscape thinning project may be accomplished under a combination of timber sales and stewardship contracts which reduces the threat of catastrophic wildfire, improves forest and watershed health and resilience, and removes unneeded erosion prone roads. These outcomes help reduce risk from threats like fire, insects, and diseases; provide clean, low-cost drinking water to communities; and maintain local infrastructure and jobs by creating economic opportunities such as uses for biomass and other forest products.

Our Forest Health Management program provides insect, disease, and invasive plant survey and monitoring information on forest health conditions on Federal and non-Federal (Cooperative) lands and provides technical and financial assistance to prevent, suppress, and control outbreaks threatening forest resources and watershed conditions. Forest Health Management helps to implement the States' Forest Action Plans and focuses on the highest priority areas and on high-priority pests, as identified by mapping and surveys. In FY 2013, Forest Health Management will continue to utilize science, active land management, and technology transfer expertise to restore and sustain forest landscapes, across urban, private, State, Tribal, and Federal forests, and create private sector jobs because of the expertise required to carry out this work.

The Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program is a high-priority program that embodies our integrative, collaborative, landscape-scale restoration focus. In FY 2011, Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration projects implemented treatments to restore ecosystem resilience and adaptive capacity while generating forest products to help support local infrastructure and economies. Forest vegetation was improved or established on over 26,000 acres; 121 million board feet of timber was sold; and approximately 268,000 green tons of woody biomass was made available for biomass or bioenergy-related production. Cooperators played a substantial role in FY 2011 by providing over $8 million in additional funding. The FY 2013 request supports the community-based Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration projects chosen in FY 2010 and FY 2012. The Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program is creating job stability by supplying a reliable wood and biomass supply for forest products and bioenergy production; improving forest health and wildlife habitat; and reducing fire suppression costs in overgrown forests.

Research Priorities

The Forest Service houses the world's largest forestry research organization. We conduct research that develops new technologies and brings cutting edge science to bear on the sustainable management of the Nation's forests and rangelands. Long-term research from our experimental forests and rangelands contributes to an understanding of the impacts of forest disturbance on the natural and cultural resources of U.S. landscapes. This knowledge assists public and private land managers in identifying strategies to mitigate and adapt to forest stressors. Rigorous, applied research is also key to supporting new and emerging markets with innovations that enhance and diversify the forest products industry. Private investment in the forestry sector relies on Forest Service research. Finally, our social science research is critical to appropriately aligning agency activities with society's values and priorities for the Nation's natural resources and public lands.

The proposed funding will maintain essential levels of research in our high-priority and strategic program areas to ensure that we develop, apply, and deliver new knowledge and technologies that support sustainable management objectives. One high-priority program is Forest Inventory and Analysis, which provides the resource data, analysis, and tools needed to assess current status and trends of forests; management options and impacts; and threats such as fire, insects, and disease. In FY 2011, the Forest Service's Research and Development deputy area implemented the Forest Inventory and Analysis annual forest sampling in all 50 States (though we have not been able to sample interior Alaska), providing accessible data for 96 percent of the Nation. The data provides important information for private forest landowners to use in developing management objectives for sustainable management of private forests. In FY 2013, Forest Inventory and Analysis will continue in all 50 States and seven reports will be published.

Planning, Monitoring, and Analysis Priorities

Restoration efforts are guided by a continuous cycle of assessment, project planning and implementation, and adaptation based on information from inventory and monitoring. Consistent with the Forest Service's priority of landscape-scale conservation, our proposed Planning Rule emphasizes a collaborative, science-based approach with broad-scale monitoring strategies at the regional and national level for the National Forest System. Forest Service managers collaborate with a wide variety of stakeholders to consider all interests affected or influenced by land management planning and project level implementation decisions. We are integrating and improving monitoring databases to enhance efficiency and transparency. These monitoring data provide baseline information from which managers plan the mix of goods and services for individual national forests and frame objectives for planning and subsequent restoration activities. The data helps managers set conservation objectives to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the National Forest System.

This budget proposes consolidation of the Land Management Planning and Inventory and Monitoring programs to form the single, integrated program of Land Management Planning Assessments and Monitoring. This new budget structure highlights the connectedness of these activities under the proposed Planning Rule. High-priority resource issues include watershed and ecological conditions; habitat needs for a number of species; visitor use and recreation objectives; forest disturbances; and other local, regional and national objectives. Forest Service units completed 58 plan assessments in FY 2011-an initial step for determining the need to revise or amend land management plans in response to changing ecological, social, and economic conditions.

COMMUNITIES THEME

Communities continue to be a priority for the Forest Service in FY 2013. We are committed to engaging communities across the Nation to reconnect with the outdoors, expand recreation benefits, and harness the many economic opportunities our land management activities create in a way that supports diverse employment in forest-dependent communities. As part of the President's FY 2013 budget, we request reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 for five years. The FY 2013 proposal supports rural communities through assuming enactment of the FY 2012 President's proposed reauthorization through mandatory funding.

We continue to develop successful collaboration with municipalities, non-governmental organizations, and private companies at many levels. Through approximately 7,800 grants and agreements in FY 2011, we engaged a wide circle of partners in land management projects and activities, leveraging agency investment for an additional $616 million in partner contributions. In FY 2013, this collaboration will continue to expand recreation opportunities, reconnect people with the outdoors, and use land management activities to create employment and sustain communities. Our budget request includes proposed language that would authorize the Secretary to enter into agreements with interpretive associations (including scientific, historical, educational, and other societies, organizations, and associations) to enhance visitor awareness and knowledge of the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage, and to enhance and leverage our collective interpretative efforts. Based on our current efforts, we know that increasing collaboration with local communities can move conservation efforts from a scale of thousands of acres to hundreds of thousands of acres. The President's FY 2013 Budget strategically allocates resources to support exemplary local stewardship and collaboration models and to catalyze new partnerships and innovations.

Landscape-Scale Conservation Priorities

Restoration projects across broad Federal landscapes, such as the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program, are not sufficient alone to address the restoration needs and challenges of today. The Forest Service's approach to land management focuses on landscape-scale outcomes through cross-boundary landscape conservation. We consider current and desired resource conditions across all ownerships-putting national forests and grasslands in the broader social, economic, and ecological context of the entire landscapes. Considering the well-being of communities adjacent to national forests, as well as urban populations that depend on forest-derived ecosystem services such as water filtration, is a top priority

In FY 2011, our State and Private Forestry programs competitively allocated $19.8 million to State Foresters, supporting 72 projects in 47 states.[2] These allocations enable the Forest Service to leverage over $21 million in partners dollars and in-kind contributions. In FY 2013, we propose to build on the success of our recent redesign of State and Private Forestry by combining funds into a Landscape Scale Restoration program to continue our work with the State Foresters and engage multiple landowners across boundaries. This program helps address challenges like forest fragmentation and the conversion of forestland due to urbanization and other land uses. Through competitive grants, it will implement innovative projects that address the greatest threats to forest sustainability, as identified by States in their Forest Action Plans.

The Forest Legacy Program is an incentive-based approach that uses easements to permanently protect non-Federal forest lands vital for wildlife habitat and rural jobs. The focus is on forest lands at risk of conversion to other (non-forest) land uses. To date, more than two million forested acres have been protected from conversion, ensuring a robust natural infrastructure to support rural jobs in the forest sector.

Through Land Acquisition, we work to consolidate non-Forest Service properties within or adjacent to national forest boundaries. These acquisitions protect critical ecosystem connectivity, enhance visitor access, and reduce expenditures associated with boundary management and fire suppression. This request includes up to $25 million for support of the Federal Interagency Collaborative Land and Water Conservation Fund initiative. This interagency partnership with the Department of the Interior will guide acquisitions in support of objectives set by the America's Great Outdoors initiative, achieving targeted, coordinated Federal acquisitions that are locally-driven and supported by local governments. The request also includes up to $5 million to acquire land to open up additional access for recreational purposes, specifically to increase priority recreation access to National Forests System lands. The Forest Service will use the funds to acquire parcels that provide access to National Forest System lands whereby access is not currently available or is impeded.

Just as we recognize the importance of conserving working forest lands in rural areas, we also support the creation of community forests that connect urban populations to nearby outdoor areas. Through the Community Forest and Open Space Program, we fund cost-share (matching) grants for the acquisition of community forests that provide public recreation and watershed benefits. Such benefits include enhanced drinking water quality, wildlife habitat, forest management jobs, and opportunities for wildlife viewing, hunting, fishing, and other outdoor experiences readily accessible to urban populations. In October 2011, the Forest Service issued regulations to ensure a consistent and transparent program. We are in the process of soliciting applications to award the first projects.

Recreation and Trails Priorities

Forest Service lands are a public treasure providing unparalleled outdoor recreation opportunities. Population growth and loss of open spaces contribute to ever-greater demand for high-quality recreation opportunities. Annually, more than 170 million visitors enjoy activities such as camping, picnicking, skiing, fishing, and hunting. The Recreation, Heritage and Wilderness program provides the interpretive, outreach and infrastructure needs vital to connecting Americans to the great outdoors.

In response to the America's Great Outdoors initiative, we are improving recreational access and expanding opportunities for youth and diverse populations. The Youth Conservation Corps creates jobs, as do expanded opportunities for private sector outfitters, guides, ski areas, and resorts. Through the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation, we are implementing actions to eliminate redundancy and create seamless programs between the Federal agencies to increase recreation opportunities.

Our Trails program ensures public safety and backcountry access through the operation, maintenance, rehabilitation, and improvement of National Forest System trails, serving a wide constituency of visitors at a relatively low cost. In FY 2013, we are prioritizing the designation of trails for motorized use, consistent with the Travel Management Rule. Our trail system also accommodates non-motorized uses such as cross-country skiing, hiking, hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, horseback riding, and mountain biking. In FY 2011, partners contributed approximately $7 million and maintained almost 5,500 miles of national and scenic trails. Through strengthened partnerships in FY 2013, we will emphasize trail stewardship activities and youth programs.

[2] The $19.8 million includes Wildland Fire Management allocations.

Our proposed legislative language to make permanent our authority on Administration of Rights-of-Way and Land Uses would ensure timely customer service, reduce the potential liability to the United States associated with uses on National Forest System lands under an expired authorization, and enable us to accept new applications to expand our support for local and regional economies. Special Uses enable a wide range of public services that support thousands of jobs, from large-scale energy and communication transmission to small-scale outfitters and guides. Processing these permit applications is time intensive and expensive. Recovered funds will remain at the local office of collection to enable more-timely service to permit holders and applicants. The existing authority expires on September 30, 2012.

The Forest Service assists in developing and sustaining urban forest infrastructure within cities, as well as connecting urban residents-especially youth-to recreation experiences in national forests. With more than 83 percent of all Americans living in metropolitan areas, the Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry program supports the active management of forests and trees in over 7,000 communities, reaching 194 million people in FY 2011. This program seeks to optimize benefits from urban forests by planting trees for carbon sequestration and energy conservation objectives. Forest Service Research and Development helps to create more livable and desirable urban areas and improve urban ecosystem services, like cleaner city air and water, through leading science and new technology. In New York City, for example, the Forest Service's iTree tool provided baseline information about trees that has been a critical foundation for the MillionTreesNYC campaign. The Conservation Education program-through initiatives like "Children's Forests" and "More Kids in the Woods".builds on both long-term and new partnerships. In FY 2011, over 5 million children and families participated in environmental education, recreation and related literacy programs on public lands and waters, increasing their understanding of the natural world and its benefits.

Facilities and Roads Maintenance Priorities

Maintenance of physical infrastructure-including the best and safe use of over 40,200 buildings for administrative, recreation-related, and other uses, approximately 373,000 miles of roads (102,000 miles are closed but provide options for future use) and 6,200 bridges-is an important priority in fulfilling the Forest Service mission. Maintaining our facilities saves money over time and provides for safe, pleasurable, and accessible sites for the public's enjoyment while recreating. In FY 2013, strategic investments in facilities and infrastructure maintenance will reduce our agency's environmental footprint and save money by lowering energy costs. This budget request proposes deferring new facilities construction when other cost-effective and reasonable options exist.

This budget request also prioritizes road maintenance to ensure we protect water quality, meet Highway Safety Act standards, and meet the need for motorized use, as identified on Forest Service motor vehicle use maps. We also emphasize replacing deficient bridges, upgrading stream crossings, and providing a transportation system to and from timber and stewardship project sites that support local jobs and our collaborative restoration priorities.

FIRE THEME

Our final priority for the FY 2013 budget request reflects the President's commitment to a responsible budget for wildland fire management. We will continue to partner with States, communities, and other Federal agencies to maximize our suppression capabilities and support community efforts to reduce direct threats from wild fires.

Wildland fire is a natural and necessary component of restoring ecosystem resilience in fire-adapted ecosystems. In many places, drier conditions and longer fire seasons, along with invasive species like cheatgrass, have further altered the timing and pattern of fire, making fires bigger and harder to suppress. Addressing these challenges will reduce fire risk to communities and maintain and create jobs through activities that restore ecosystem resilience.

The cost and complexity of both fuels treatments to reduce fire risk and wildfire suppression have gone up due to growing numbers of housing developments adjacent to wildlands and other factors. In this context of more costly fire management, we continue to refine our use of decision-support tools. These tools help us allocate resources more efficiently and to adopt appropriate risk management principles. Further, we responded to the Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement (FLAME) Act of 2009 by collaborating broadly to develop the new National Cohesive Wildland Fire Strategy. The strategy is designed to:

- Restore and maintain resilient landscapes at a regional and sub-regional scale;
- Create fire-adapted communities; and
- Respond to wildfire effectively through partnerships among local, State, Tribal and Federal fire organizations.

The Nation depends on the Forest Service to take proactive measures to reduce the threat of wildfire. By working proactively to re-establish fire-adapted ecosystems, we can reduce the costs associated with catastrophic wildfire. The proposed budget for FY 2013 would direct fire management resources toward the highest priority areas while maximizing cost-effectiveness. We are ready to protect life, property and community, and public safety.

Fuels Reduction Priorities

The Hazardous Fuels budget line item for FY 2013 focuses on treatments in the wildland-urban interface and other high priority areas with a target of one million acres vital to protecting lives, property and public infrastructure. The priority for these funds is in wildland-urban interface communities that are working to achieve Firewise standards, have demonstrated local investment, and that have developed a Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The agency will continue to emphasize the importance of Community Wildfire Protection Plans by prioritizing hazardous fuels treatments in Wildland Urban Interface areas that are indentified in these plans. This funding is also used for grants that encourage woody biomass utilization and to facilitate market development for the biomass removed from the landscape through fuels treatments.

Biomass for energy is an important byproduct of hazardous fuels reduction and restoration work. Currently one-quarter of all renewable energy consumption comes from wood. Biomass utilization is important because it helps diversify the forest products industry and creates new markets that ensure alternative uses for material that would otherwise be piled or burned at the treatment site. With active management, America's forests can sustainably supply woody biomass for fuels and high-value chemicals and help meet national energy, environmental, and employment goals.

In FY 2013, the Forest Service plans to reach out to municipal water providers and pursue additional investments to protect water supplies. For example, three of the five major Front Range water utilities (in Denver, Aurora, and Colorado Springs) have invested nearly $34 million in forest thinning treatments to reduce wildfire risks. Our strategy is to attract investments from all Front Range cities and to substantially increase amounts invested by those cities and other partners through matching Forest Service funds.

The hazardous fuels management efforts compliment restoration activities conducted through Integrated Resource Restoration and the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program to reduce fuels, restore forest landscapes, and protect communities. These projects leverage partner investments through innovative collaboration to restore landscape resilience across 50,000 acres or more. Contracted services for fuels reduction in core forest zones provide jobs, as do the forest products and woody biomass utilization activities that result from fuels removal and reduction.

Preparedness Priorities

The second way we are responsibly addressing wildland fire management with this budget request is through our Preparedness program, which ensures the capability to protect life, property, and natural resources while assuring an appropriate, risk informed and effective response to wildfires, consistent with land and resource management objectives.

The preparedness program pre-positions resources as needed to ensure an appropriate, risk-informed, and effective wildfire response. This budget also includes $24 million to pay for the increased costs of modernizing the firefighting large airtanker fleet. We are soliciting bids for modern air tankers to complement the remaining 11 in our fleet.

Suppression Priorities

The suppression program combined with the FLAME Wildfire Suppression Reserve Fund, meets the funding level at the 10-year average cost of suppression for FY 2013. Wildland fires continue to be larger and more difficult to suppress due to many factors including longer fire seasons, fuel accumulation, and the increased size and complexity of housing developments adjacent to or in forested lands.

In FY 2011, the Forest Service contained over 97 percent of the fires we managed during initial attack. Wildfire response decision making is evolving based on risk-informed analysis that reduces exposure to wildland firefighters while ensuring that

high-value resources are protected. The results of these decisions allow us to manage fires more cost-effectively while achieving agency land management objectives by enabling fire to play its natural role in restoring landscapes. For FY 2013, the Suppression, Preparedness and FLAME budget request continues to emphasize our efforts related to strategic risk assessment and programs to improve wildland fire operational decisions and meet overriding objectives of maintaining public and firefighter safety. These efforts are expected to result in significant increases in the effective and efficient use of agency resources.

For the few fires that escaped initial attack, the percentage that exceeded expected containment costs fell from 39.7 percent in FY 2010 to 20.8 percent in FY 2011, a notable achievement in responsibly budgeting for fire suppression. Implementing the agency's broader restoration goals will lead to further progress. Given the highly variable nature of fire seasons from year to year, the FLAME Wildfire Suppression Reserve Fund ensures our ability to cover the cost of large, complex fires that escape initial attack.

GAINING EFFICIENCIES AND COST CONTROL MEASURES

We must be efficient and effective in meeting our mission and delivering services to the American people. We have been gaining efficiencies, managing costs and our workforce to achieve our mission in the past and will continue to do so. We are making difficult choices to work better and leaner to live within constrained budgets. The Forest Service's FY 2012 target for cost savings is $44 million. Reduced travel accounts for $14 million of these savings. An additional $30 million is achieved through new acquisition management procedures including the use of strategic sourcing, competitive and/or performance-based contracts, and ongoing training of contracting staff to better manage contracts.

Our efforts to gain efficiency in FY 2012 and this FY 2013 budget request focus on implementing the President's Executive Order, Promoting Efficient Spending. We identified reduced spending levels in travel, information technology, printing, fleet and promotional items. We have planned a $100 million reduction in cost pools over the course of FY 2013 and FY 2014. We are also implementing the USDA Administrative Solutions Project to reduce redundancies and take advantage of existing resources across USDA. We will also continue our strategic investments in safety and cultural transformation for our employees. These efforts will enable employees to spend less time on operational functions and more time on priority work in a safe, healthy and productive manner. We expect these efforts to result in costs savings in the future. We also estimate that our workforce will be reduced by nearly 1,500 full-time equivalents between FY 2011 and FY 2013. This level of reduction is within our average annual attrition rate. We will continue to manage our workforce and organizational changes to provide service at the local level.

CONCLUSION

The Forest Service's fiscal year 2013 President's Budget aligns with priorities set by the Administration and the Department of Agriculture while balancing the need for fiscal restraint. The magnitude and urgency of forest restoration work, along with the demand for safe, accessible outdoor recreation opportunities, are growing in a context of declining budgets. This means that the agency will face unprecedented fiscal challenges in the next few years. The Forest Service must act strategically and tackle fiscal challenges directly, focusing our resources on continuing to provide services and goods to the American public.

Through landscape-scale conservation, our three funding priorities of restoration, communities, and fire will pass on to future generations the water, wildlife habitat, renewable resources, scenic beauty, and other natural riches that Americans enjoy today from their forests and grasslands.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Chief Tidwell. Let me start with 3 questions related to my home State.

I think I said in the opening statement I made that I strongly support the full funding that you asked for for the CFLRP program, the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration program. As I think of that program, it is a follow onto a smaller program we have had in New Mexico for some time, the Collaborative Forest Restoration program. That has allowed us to work with local communities to have a great many individual projects to help restore the forests of our State.

I'm disappointed. As I explained to you yesterday that the Administration has asked for a cut in the funding there. It's a very small program.

It's a $5 million a year program. I think the request was it be cut. I hope you can work with me to see if we can't revisit that and persuade the appropriators to do otherwise.

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, I'll be glad to work with you. It's, as I mentioned, we have to make some difficult choices, you know, with budgets like this. But the program you're referring to has been a tremendous success.

I think it's, over the years, there's been over 150 proposals, projects that we've moved forward with. It's created hundreds of additional jobs. I think it's involved close to 500 different partners.

Because of the success of that program in New Mexico, I think it has allowed us so that the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration program is proving to be so successful across the country. It's because of the efforts that you started there in New Mexico. So you have my commitment to look to work with you and the Appropriations Committee to see if we can find some additional funding.

The CHAIRMAN. That would be greatly appreciated.

Let me ask also about this New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute. I notice you're requesting $1.5 million to fund these institutes in New Mexico, Colorado and Arizona. I'm glad to see that funding is requested.

Unfortunately the funding allocation is fairly skewed. We've got $2 million requested for fiscal year 2011. Fiscal year 2013 we've got—well each year until now there has been 5 or 6 times as much money going to Arizona as there has been to Senator Udall's State, Colorado or to my State of New Mexico. I would hope that we could have a more equitable allocation of that funding.

Is this something that you're still looking at or how do you anticipate that playing out?

Mr. TIDWELL. The funding between the 3 States is established based on direction from, I think it was back in the 2006 Appropriations bill or it might have been the 2008. But to be able to change that mix we'll need to have to basically develop a different formula to spread the money. Of course, we'd be glad to work with you on trying to find the—if we need to make a change in how to spread that money.

All 3, you know, universities that we work with do outstanding work for us. But you did point out that over the years and especially with some reduced funding that, you know, the majority of it is still going to one State.

The CHAIRMAN. We will be in touch with you about how to try to correct that in the future.

The Los Conchas fire recovery is something that's still very much on the minds of people in my State. We had a very bad fire, as you know. It burned more than 156,000 acres of land in and around Los Alamos and Santa Fe National Forest, Bandolier National Monument, the Valles Caldera and the Santa Clara reservation was scorched very substantially. Could you give me a little update on what the Forest Service is doing to continue trying to help that area recover from that Los Conchas fire?

Mr. TIDWELL. We're continuing to finish up the burn area emergency rehab work that we started last year. Be able to finish that this year. Then want to, you know, continue to work to see if how we can move forward to do more of the restoration work on those lands to put us in a better position for the, you know, the next fire. So we're going to complete the emergency burn rehab work. It will be completed this year with ongoing efforts to do some additional restoration.

I really want to use this as a chance to kind of point out how things are changing. A few years ago we had another fire that threatened a lab. That fire and it burned about 40,000 acres. It took that fire about 7 days to burn 40,000 acres.

With Los Conchas it too, burned 40,000 acres early in the fire. It took 12 hours. I just point this out as how things are changing out on the landscapes today with the extended droughts that we're dealing with and the need for us to find more and more ways to do more of this restoration work so that these communities are in a better position to be able to deal with these large wildfires that we're going to have to continue to have to deal with.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Murkowski.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Again, thank you, Chief. You know, your comments this morning in your testimony focus a lot on the recreational opportunities through our public lands and what the Forest Service is able to offer. I mentioned the number of employees through the Forest Service.

As I said, I was up in the State the week before last and spent most of my time in the Tongass. I was in Yakutat, Juneau, Ketchikan. I will suggest to you that there is sure not much tourism going on in a town like Yakutat between about oh, September through maybe May when you've got 15 feet of snow around you and you can't even see the tops of the chalets that the Forest Service have opened. It's pretty tough to think about tourism.

So as significant as that is, I think we need to recognize that we have many communities, many parts of the country where tourism on a year round basis is simply not possible. I worry. I worry that if we're not successful with things like extending Secure Rural Schools funding that a community like Yakutat, where two-thirds of that school budget comes from Secure Rural Schools funding, that your employees will be coming to you seeking a hardship waiver so that they can move their families to another community where they've got a school.

It's a tough situation for us. I think you know because you've got good folks on the ground that are telling you. But as we think about those things that are real and possible, I think we need to appreciate that in some parts of the country, and particularly in the Tongass, it's tough to find that year round recreational opportunity.

Speaking of the Forest Timber sale program there in the Tongass, I don't think that the current Forest Service plan for the Tongass is implementable. The Forest Service prepared an analysis that estimated that only 18 percent of the mature timber in the plan will support economic timber sales. The Forest Service in

Alaska have achieved only about 20 percent of their planned timber sale volume. They only plan to offer about half of the allowable sale of quantity in the first place.

You've heard my pleas, if you will, about what's going on with our saw mills, their capacity, their ability to get timber supply. But we don't have much that is left. We've got a few mom and pop mills. They're trying hard to hold on. But it's due primarily to a lack of timber supply.

What immediate actions can you tell me about? You know who I'm talking about. It's Viking. It's some of the others.

What can I go back to them with that gives them some assurance that we're not going to lose the last remaining mills in Southeast? Start to restore some of those that have been lost? What's our action plan?

Mr. TIDWELL. Our action plan is to continue the work that we've started to move into being able to use the second growth along with——

Senator MURKOWSKI. Do you think that we're ready for the second growth?

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes.

Senator MURKOWSKI. I mean, we keep talking about these transition plans, but our reality is that it sounds good on paper. But actually going out there and implementing it has been exceedingly difficult.

Mr. TIDWELL. We awarded 3 stewardship contracts last year. One of those was in the second growth/young growth. It was a very successful stewardship projects.

We harvested 7 and a half million board feet. It produced an additional $600,000 for other restoration work. So I think that was an essential project so that we could demonstrate that not only is there a market for this wood. But we can put packages together that are economically viable.

So for this coming year we're—the target for the Tongass is at 80 million board feet. They indicate that they're on track to be able to put that amount of material out. There's currently about 100 million board feet that's under contract that, you know, for the existing mail up there in the one logging, the large logging company there.

We're fortunate that in Alaska they have the option to be able to export, you know, some of the material that provides an additional market because that's one of the things we continue to struggle with is——

Senator MURKOWSKI. That's why the Sealaska bill is as significant as it is because it does allow for that export market.

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes, yes. We're committed to getting that Sealaska completed to fulfill our legal requirements and also to be able to move forward together with the movement or the move into the second growth. I think it's an area that, not only with the Forest Service offering more sales on that type of material, but along with what Sealaska has indicated they want to do. It will help actually create additional markets, you know, for the second growth.

So we're optimistic. Sealaska has had a successful sale in the second growth. We've now shown that it will work with the stewardship sales.

So those are the things that we want to continue to build on. Tourism is important in Alaska, like it is in all of our States. But it's essential we have a mix of economic activities.

Our focus is going to be to continue to do what we can so that the wood products industry helps to sustain those communities. It's going to take, I think, a mix of every economic activity that we have available to be able to have sustainable communities in the Southeast Alaska. That's what we're going to continue to focus on.

Senator MURKOWSKI. My time is over. But I'll come back to this question when we do second round. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Udall.

Senator UDALL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, Chief. I want to turn to a topic that's familiar to both you and me. That's the bark beetle epidemic in my State, but more broadly all over the west and wildfire.

In the wildfire management budget it looks to me like hazardous fuels sees a 24 percent cut, about $74 million. This concerns me as you can imagine. We need to reduce hazardous fuels, particularly where wildfire poses real risks to water storage projects, transmission lines. You know the list.

The Western bark beetle strategy which you issued last summer has a goal of treating more acreage every year. Can you talk about how you plan to meet the goals in the bark beetle strategy while protecting the areas most at risk for wildfire?

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes, Senator.

First, our request for hazardous fuels is the same request that we received in FY 2012. The difference there is that there's a portion of it that's included in our request for the Integrated Resource Restoration. But if you look at the funding it's available in the IRR budget line item plus what we have in hazardous fuels.

It's equal to what we have, what we received in FY 2012. So we have, basically, a stable request for funding.

In addition on the bark beetle strategy with our request it will allow us to continue to dedicate about $100 million to the bark beetle there in the Western States which includes, of course, Colorado, Wyoming, South Dakota, Idaho and Montana and Oregon and Washington. But we're going to maintain that commitment with expectations that we'll be able to continue to get more work done, more acres treated because the bark beetles, where the expansion has started to slow a little bit, we're still seeing about an additional 600,000 acres infested each year.

So we're going to have to continue to maintain this focus for the next few years.

Senator UDALL. I want to extend a thank you to the Forest Service for working in Colorado in response to the call I put forth to allow mutual cancelation of some timber sale contracts. I think that's worked well. I hope we'll continue to look for other opportunities to do that.

You've helped this. Senator Murkowski talked about her State and our State in preserving these small saw mills which provide jobs and are a key part of forest health management. We could have the discussion further about timber itself. But thank you for that.

There's a new report, your new report, increasing the pace of restoration and job creation in our National Forests. It talks a lot about how we expand the market for forest products from our National Forests. Can you give us some examples of how this has worked, or will work on the intermountain west because this is just crucial?

As you know the private sector is key to dealing with this epidemic.

Mr. TIDWELL. Our restoration report that we titled, Accelerating Restoration, is basically a report on what we've been doing the last couple years. Based on some of that additional flexibilities and some efficiencies that we've put into place, is that each year we've been able to get more and more work done even though we've had flat budgets. So that's why we were able to—I have the confidence to be able to indicate that we're going to continue to be able to get more acres created and more biomass, more saw logs produced over the next couple years based on the things that we're putting into place.

I just wanted to—I just need to just kind of stress very quickly. The differences that we're making and I'll start with the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration projects. Those are proving to be tremendously successful. Not only because of the work that's being done, but the level of partnership and agreement that comes together around those projects.

The key thing there is that we've, with those projects, we make a commitment of 10 years of funding. So it's a lot easier for folks then to understand that there's a greater chance that that work is going to get done each year. That the funding is going to be there. So it's easier for people to make the right investments in new equipment.

The second thing is with NEPA efficiencies. We are learning how to do NEPA on much larger areas, across large landscapes. So instead of doing our NEPA on a few thousand acres, we're learning how to do that on like tens of thousands of acres which has increased once again, our efficiency. It also allows us to be able to put projects together and treat much larger areas.

Our stewardship contracting, it's essential that we get that reauthorized. It's just absolutely necessary we be able to maintain that tool. When we have stewardship contracts there is more agreement. There is less appeals. There is less lawsuits. We get more work implemented.

The other thing is just our overall efforts on collaboration. I cannot stress this enough the difference that this is making. We have examples all over the country now where these collaborative efforts have come together. Folks understand the type of work that needs to be done. Then we're able to really focus our NEPA on just the issues that are remaining. That's where we're able to also implement more work.

Then the last thing is with our planning rule. That our preferred alternative we have out there is just essential to be able to build on these efficiencies to be able to have a rule that's going to be cost less. It's going to take a lot less time. In my view, provide a better framework for our planning in the future.

So Senator, these are the things that we're counting on to be able to continue to be able to get more acres treated every year and to be able to—which is going to result in more biomass, more saw timber produced.

Senator UDALL. My time is expired. You anticipated my next question. I want us to keep working with you and your staff.

I know Senator Shaheen and others on the committee have biomass electricity plants in their States. We'd like to accelerate the way in which we improve these plants, streamline procedures. I think you just spoke to that, but there's more to do because there are a lot of people willing and ready to do this. It also has a national security effect that's positive.

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes.

Senator UDALL. So look forward to working with you further. Thanks.

Mr. TIDWELL. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Barrasso.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much, Chief Tidwell for being here today.

I wanted to follow up a little on what Senator Udall talked about the bark beetle and the concerns that we have as a neighbor of Colorado with what's happening there with the bark beetle which brings me to the issue of the Good Neighbor authority. There's been significant inaction on the part of the Forest Service on the Good Neighbor authority. I will tell you it's unacceptable.

Good Neighbor authority exists in Colorado and in Utah. In my home State of Wyoming, we need and want the authority to fight the bark beetle and other forest health related problems. In May of last year, under Secretary Harris Sherman, testified in this room. He said, "Good Neighbor Authority is an excellent program, a very helpful tool and it would not involve an extensive analysis." The Good Neighbor bill that we have is a bipartisan bill supported with Senator Johnson.

On August 8th of last year my staff inquired about the analysis.

On August 22nd, we received a reply that said that the analysis Mr. Sherman called for in his May testimony has now produced some findings and suggestions. We'll get you a short briefing paper that outlines them in a few days. That's what we were told August 8th of last year, in a few days.

On January 6th of this year the staff, my staff, followed up again.

It's now March. We still don't have anything from you.

Are the same political barriers that we've seen with the Keystone pipeline preventing Good Neighbor Authority in forest health management under this proposal? I'm just shocked that we're waiting this long.

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, I'll check to see why we haven't produced that information to you. We'll get it up to you right away.

The Good Neighbor Authority is one that we've used in the 2 States. It's worked very well for us. Do we want to take what we learned with the projects there in Utah and Colorado and as we move forward with it, even improve on it? Of course. But that's what we want to look at.

So I'll get that information up to you as soon as I can.

Senator BARRASSO. The last time I heard it was going to be in the next few days and that was August 22nd. So you can imagine the concern that the people of Wyoming have as we continue to see the changes in our forests. Thank you.

Now I want to move on to the Off-Highway Vehicle report. I have a copy of the Forest Service report titled, "A Comprehensive Framework for Off-Highway Vehicle Trail Management." It states the report was developed to help trail managers, "Corral the off-highway vehicle management dragon." That's how the report put out describes it.

The report encourages the adoption of, "best management practices for planning, implementing and monitoring trail projects." But who wrote these, "Best management practices"? You actually published them in the appendix and it's the Wildlands CPR.

You know, to have something written by this organization with their background and their goals, to me, it really undermines the credibility of the Forest Service. I want to know when the Forest Service first adopted and published best management practices supported by the groups who opposed motorized access and the use of off-highway vehicles.

Mr. TIDWELL. Our best management practices are what we have found to be the right things to be able to address issues, especially like with erosion and run off from drainage, you know, on trails. So those are our best management practices. We would of course, expect everyone to be supportive of those because they've proven to be very effective to address the issues. By following best management practices, it's easy then to be able to not only address the issues, but also be able to move forward and be able to implement the work.

So I would hope that everyone would be supportive of those. So that's where our best management practices come from. It's what we've learned on the ground what works. We want to be able to have consistent application across the board.

Senator BARRASSO. As I read it, it seems to be biased and against any off-highway vehicle use is their approach.

Next I wanted to go to the issue of secure rural schools. February of this year Senator Merkley stated the following on the Senate floor about the Secure Rural Schools program. He said Secure Rural Schools is not an entitlement program. It's a commitment our Federal Government made to rural forest communities and counties out of fairness and common sense when it determined that it would put environmental overlays over large blocks of forest land that were dedicated to timber production with the revenue shared with the local counties.

So I'm curious, what is the Forest Service doing to limit the impact of these environmental overlays and increased timber production and revenue for these communities.

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, we're committed to first, reauthorization of Secure Rural Schools. I personally worked on the first authorization of that. I know how important that funding is to our counties and boroughs.

Second of all we want to continue to increase the amount of restoration work, timber harvest, activities on our National Forests because of the need. If you, in our restoration report that we put

out a few weeks ago, we identify there's like 65, a minimum 65 to maybe 80 million acres where we need to do restoration work to improve the forest health. At a minimum there's over 12 million that we must, have to use, mechanical treatment. We have no other options.

It's essential, for all the things that we're seeing, whether it's fire or insect and disease, is a need for us to get more of this work done. The results of our collaborative efforts that have been going on for the last few years are really starting to pay off in that we are moving forward in being able to implement more work, have more agreement, you know, less appeals, less lawsuits. So that's what we want to continue to build on.

So we want to get Secure Rural Schools reauthorized, but at the same time we want to be able and we need to expand the amount of active management that's currently occurring in our National Forests. It's just driven by this need to restore the health and resiliency of these forests.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Franken.

Senator FRANKEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Chief Tidwell, for your service and it's good to see you again.

Last time you testified here you talked about, were talking about, the wildfires. You and I had a discussion about scientists who were basically saying that climate change is creating, will be creating, more intense, larger fires and that there's going to be a larger seasonal window now for fires. 40 percent of your budget is now spent on forest fire issues.

We had a discussion about the bark beetles. From my understanding some are making it through the winter at higher elevations than they used to because of climate change. Is that what your scientists have determined?

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes.

Senator FRANKEN. OK. So we talk a lot about every Administration official who comes to every committee I sit on, always talks about tough budget choices. I just want to have my friends on this committee, who throw doubts about climate change to make, to get them, to consider how much it has to do with the budget and how much we spend because of the effect of climate change.

So many things are getting crowded out because you've got to work on fire suppression.

So many things are getting crowded out because you've got to work on the bark beetle.

I just want to—to me, it is so obvious the costs already of climate change that we're paying and that these are never factored in when we're talking about the cost of things like burning more coal or burning dirtier oil. This is why I'm so happy that The Chairman introduced the Clean Energy Standard. This debate that has been going on in this country and it saddens me sometimes when what your scientists are telling us is called a hoax.

It's just, it seems like there is and I don't know if it's pull for political gain or if it's to curry favor with big donors who can fund

Super PACs or what it is. But there is a climate change denial culture among my colleagues that I find very disturbing. So can you tell me what the scientists in the Forest Service are saying about the effect of climate change on these fires, on the bark beetles?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, we've been doing research on the effects of the changing climate to the vegetation on our Nation's forests for over 2 decades. When it comes to fire, yes, we're definitely seeing much longer fire seasons in many parts of the country. Another 60 to 70 days longer than what we used to experience.

We're also seeing that we're having much more severe fire behavior than we've ever experienced in the past because part of it is the extended droughts that we're dealing with.

The other thing about the effects of this changing climate is we're seeing this increase in disturbance. The increase in the frequency of disturbance events whether it's the floods, whether it's the droughts, the severity, the length, whether it's the wind storms, whether it's everything that's going on. That's another one of the, with this changing climate with the effects of this changing climate we're seeing more of these disturbance events. We have to continue to deal with.

Also with, as you mentioned with bark beetle and there's numerous examples. But the bark beetle is probably one of the better examples of where this, a natural pest, you know, is now being able to survive at much higher elevations than we've ever had to deal with, that the species at those elevations have never had to deal with. We're also seeing these infestations go on for much longer periods of time than they ever did before because in the past it was usually we'd get a very cold winter, especially in the early part of winter that would really set back the bark beetle populations. That's what's always, kind of, kept it in check.

We've had infestations in the past. But we've never had anything that's come close to the level of the infestation that we're currently experiencing. Part of it is definitely because of mild winters.

So those are some of the things we're continuing to deal with. Then also to understand that, like in your part of the country, that how the, just the overall mix of our forests, the species mix, is going to change over time. Some of your country is going to become a little drier and a little bit warmer. So that we're seeing, you know, more probably red pine in your country and more oak.

We need to understand that. So as we move forward with our prescriptions on how to manage this land that we understand those effects so that, you know, we can continue to have a healthy forest while dealing with the effects of a changing climate.

Senator FRANKEN. Thank you. My time is expired. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

But I just want my colleagues to really listen to this testimony and understand that climate change is real and actually has an effect. It actually has a cost. That when we make a calculus about what kind of mix of fuels that we use in this country and how much carbon we put in the air that it has an actual cost.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Lee.

Senator LEE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Welcome, Chief Tidwell. I appreciate your willingness to come and testify today.

After reviewing your budget I commend you for consolidating a number of programs and making efforts to trim costs any way you can. I wonder whether these decreases in requested funding are enough given the current status of our financial condition as a country and as a government. I nevertheless commend you for the efforts that you have made.

The timber industry in Region IV, the Intermountain Region, that includes my State of Utah, is really struggling. Over the last few years a lot of saw mills have either gone out of business or have gotten to the point where they likely will be going out of business soon. If the National Forest loses the remaining timber industry in this area, they'll lose an important management tool that in addition to being good for local economies and for our national economy, also helps to maintain healthy and productive forests.

It's come to my attention that many of the saw mills in Region II have been experiencing similar problems. That's the region directly east of where we are in Region IV. As of August of last year I think you issued a decision to offer timber sale contract mutual cancellations within Region II.

Can you explain a little bit more of the background and the circumstances in which certain contracts in Region II could be mutually canceled?

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes, Senator. There is a series of steps that we need to go through both on the purchaser's part and with the Forest Service to see if we've exhausted every other option before we pursue a mutual cancellation like we did in some of the sales there in Colorado. So our staff is already working with our staff out there in Utah to see if it's possible to be able to move forward.

Your point on that we need to maintain our wood products and industries is just absolutely correct. That's the only way we're going to be able to get this work done that must be done. So we're very committed to do everything we can to maintain the existing infrastructure.

So we want to work closely to see if we can't work through this to be able to do what we can to make sure that that mill in the southern part of your State can stay in operation.

Senator LEE. OK. So if you're—it sounds like you're open to the possibility of pursuing this same approach in other regions, including possibly Region IV, as you pursued in Region II?

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes.

Senator LEE. OK.

We look forward to working with you on that. I really appreciate your willingness to keep an open mind on that and to consider that option. It is a matter of vital importance to all of us and especially to those who are affected directly by this industry. At a local level this could be devastating to an economy but actions like these can help soften the blow when we face conditions like they're facing right now.

So thank you very much for coming in. I look forward to working with you on that. Thanks.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Johnson.

Senator JOHNSON. Chief Tidwell, welcome and thank you for being here today. In your testimony you mentioned the bark beetle infestation in the West and the impacts of declining forest health. I appreciate the attention and resources that the Forest Service has dedicated to this issue, but we need to do more, especially in the Black Hills National Forest.

The pine beetle epidemic in the Black Hills has grown in scope and severity and impact nearly a third of the forest. The 1.2 million acres, that make up the Black Hills National Forest, are interspersed with more than 300,000 acres of private lands as well as other public resources like Mount Rushmore and Carson State Park. This is truly a landscape scale problem that has implications for forest health, tourism and our economies.

My understanding is the Black Hills National Forest requested about $14 million in FY 2012 with a timber program target of 240 ccf to support beetle response. Ultimately the Black Hills expects to see about $9.3 million in FY 2012. While I recognize this is a significant funding I'm disappointed we couldn't come closer to making resources with capabilities.

What can we expect from Fiscal Year 2013 budget for the beetle response in the Black Hills?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, we were not able to meet the full funding request from the one forest. That's probably true with every forest that we have across the country. But the Black Hills has done a great job of working with, you know, the local mill owners there to have one of our more successful programs that we have. To the point where in FY 2012, well actually, increase. We expect to increase the number of sales that we had over FY 2011 which is at some of the higher levels we've seen in the Black Hills and then be able to continue this in FY 2013.

One of the reasons we'll be able to do that is that we're developing a, what we call an adaptive environmental impact statement there in the Black Hills. A very large analysis or project or, excuse me. We're looking at a very large area and doing one analysis on that so that in the future as we see outbreaks of the bark beetles we won't have to do additional analysis. We'll be able to quickly move into that area. You know, put a cell out there so they can get in there and remove those trees.

So this is going to be a significant improvement. It's one of the areas we want to use as a model about how to do this analysis, this concept of adaptive analysis, so that we could be more proactive to deal with the bark beetles. So I'd like to be able to say we're going to be doing more, but I'll tell you I'm very pleased with the amount of work we are getting done.

Our folks on the ground, working with local loggers and the mill owners, I think are just doing an outstanding job. We have, I couldn't ask for better support from the State and from the counties. That everybody is coming together to deal with this issue that is so essential in the Black Hills like it is in the rest of the country.

Senator JOHNSON. We were fortunate to have a relatively robust forest products industry in the Black Hills including 2 saw mills in South Dakota and one in Wyoming. The Black Hills Forest Resource Association estimates there are about 1,500 direct jobs and 28 manufacturing businesses throughout the region. They estimate

the sales value of lumber and other wood products to be about $160 million.

Could you elaborate or comment on the value of having active saw mills from both the forest health and economic perspective?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, having the infrastructure, the mill capacity, is essential for us to be able to do the work. There's just no way that they'll ever be enough appropriated funding to be able to restore these forests. So we need to have the mills to be able to process the material, the wood products industry, to be able to go out and do the biomass removal, the logging that needs to occur.

In addition are the jobs. These are some of the, you know, essential jobs. There's several research articles that are out there that investment in forest restoration, you know, creates the most jobs verses a lot of other things that we can invest in.

So not only is it a good investment. It's just absolutely necessary that we are able to keep the infrastructure in place, keep the mills working producing those jobs so that we can actually do the work that needs to be done on the forest.

Senator JOHNSON. My time is expired. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Chief Tidwell and Ms. Spear for being here this morning.

Let me begin by saying how much I appreciated the fact that you provided a slight increase in the budget to the Forest Legacy and the Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Programs. Those are both important in New Hampshire, particularly the Forest Legacy Program. As you pointed out talking about the collaborative effort to save open spaces and forests is something that we've done very well in New Hampshire. Those programs have been very important.

I do want to focus first, though, on the White Mountain National Forest because it is part of the Northern Forest lands. It's critical, not just to the State of New Hampshire, but to so much of the Northeast. It stretches 800,000 acres and has about 6 million visitors annually. Is located within a day's drive of 70 million people which is why we have so many visitors. Had extensive damage as a result of tropical storm Irene, as I'm sure you know.

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes.

Senator SHAHEEN. About $10 million in damage. They've been working very hard since the storm last year to try and get the trails open to address all of that damage. But are still waiting on funding that has been expected, I think, from the Emergency Relief or federally Owned Rails and Trails funding which is administered by the Federal Highway Administration. They've gotten about 350,000.

I know the Forest Service has provided about a million on recovery efforts. But can you give us any hope that any more of that funding might be available in a timely way so that they can continue some of the work on these trails?

Mr. TIDWELL. We're looking at finding some additional funding. There's no way it will be able to come close to really their total request. But we do expect to be able to send some additional funding that way.

They've, you know, they've just had to deal with a very unusual event, as you are well aware. The amount of flooding that occurred. In fact, that was from the hurricane, that part of the country got hit probably as hard as anyplace and having to deal with the aftermath of that.

So we are, I expect, we'll be able to send some additional funding. It won't be everything that they need. But it should help a little bit.

You know, just want to thank you for your support. It's everyone up there. The communities have just been outstanding. When this event hit, everybody pulled together.

Talk about an all lands approach, people were not concerned about if this was county lands, private lands or Forest Service lands. Everybody pitched in together to be able to get the roads opened and to get some of the debris out of the streams to reduce the flooding. So I just want to thank you for your support and for everybody up there did such an outstanding job.

Senator SHAHEEN. It really was a State and community and collaborative effort, as you point out. That's why it would be so helpful to be able to get some additional funding to continue some of that work.

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes.

Senator SHAHEEN. Before the tourist season opens, as you know. They were able to get the main roads and some of the trails open before the foliage season started last fall, but there will be a huge impact if we can't get more of the work done.

I want to switch to biomass. A number of my colleagues have raised the importance of the timber industry in their States. It is also very important in New Hampshire. We're the second most heavily forested State. It's the third largest industry in New Hampshire, the timber products industry.

I know that the Administration has been important in supporting the development of renewable energy. But a place where I would like to see more support is with biomass and combined heat and power. Because that's a place where there is a lot of opportunity for us in New Hampshire and in parts of the Northeast where we're so heavily dependent on oil to be able to make some inroads that would significantly reduce our dependence on oil.

So I wonder if you can give me any hope that there might be some support for the programs that are authorized in the budget, but have not been funded to provide some more initiatives in the area of combined heat and power, the community scale projects. We have several communities that would like to do it. If they had a little support they could go ahead and make that work.

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, in addition to the other programs we have in FY 2012, we also have requested funding for the Community Wood Energy program that was part of the 2008 Farm bill and also for Forest Biomass to Energy program that both of these programs are going to help our communities understand the benefits and to provide the technical assistance and support for them to make those decisions about the investments. We're lucky that up in your State there at the Supervisor's office we have an excellent facility there with the biomass boiler that we have there at the Super-

visor's office that provides all the energy for the Supervisor's office by burning wood pellets.

Senator SHAHEEN. It's about 90 percent efficient.

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes. You know, and when it produces excess energy it's put onto the grid and then in a peak of the summer when they need to pull more energy off for air conditioning they're able to then pull that energy back off, the electricity, off the grid. It's an excellent example of what we can do. We want to be able to help folks understand.

So these 2 other programs that we've requested funding in would help our communities be able to understand what's available, the technology. We'd be able to provide additional support so that they can make those decisions on where to invest with biofuels in the future.

Senator SHAHEEN. Is there a dollar figure that you've attached to those programs?

Mr. TIDWELL. The Community Wood to Energy, it's about, a little over $4 million. Then the Forest Biomass to Energy it's $10 million.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Mr. TIDWELL. These would be additional programs though in addition to what we currently have in FY 2012.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Wyden.

Senator WYDEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Chief and thank you for your many courtesies. You always reach out. Keep us informed and we appreciate it.

I wanted to ask you about the question of dwindling aviation resources for the fire season. My concern is that this year in particular we could be looking at a perfect storm. In effect, we'd have limited air tankers. We've got 4 helicopter bases closed in Oregon and California, snow packs being down, drought and temperatures already being up.

As you know we're now in a situation where we've got substantially fewer air tankers. We're down from 44 to somewhere in the vicinity of 11. The press is reporting that these are museum quality air tankers where the manufacturer no longer even makes spare parts for repairs.

So question one is what are we going to do this fire season, this particular fire season, where it looks like our capacity to fight these fires is atrophied to the point where there are real questions about whether we're going to be able to deal with this season. That's my first question.

Mr. TIDWELL. OK. Senator, we're short this coming year. We're already short 8 air tankers that we had relied on last year that will not be available.

So in addition to the 11 that we have, we're also going to contract for 2 water scoopers this year. We'll have the one very large air tanker that's on a call when needed contract. We've also put out a request for proposals for 7 additional aircraft. We're optimistic that we'll have at least 3 of those will be operational this year and the other 4 will be operational in FY 2013.

With that being said, this is not enough. From what we feel we need with large air tankers our strategy that we sent up to the

Congress here a few weeks ago had a range in there of a minimum of 18 to 28 large air tankers. We feel that that is absolutely necessary. So we're moving forward to work with contractors to get additional aircraft available and—but we are going to probably be depending more on the Air National Guard's, their C130s, their MAFs units, probably even more so than we did last year.

But that's the approach that we have going forward. Then we'll also will rely on our large helicopters. Where we will have 30 large air—large helicopters under contract at the start of the season versus 34 last year.

But all of our large air tankers are all the Type 1. They're all the largest class of helicopters. So we've actually increased the amount of capacity for water drops with those 30 than what we had under the 34.

Senator WYDEN. I want to get into one other area. So I'll just ask this for the record, Chief. Senator Murkowski and I were part of a large bipartisan group that sent you a letter with respect to the large air tankers and aviation innovation. I think the agency has to speed up the effort to consider new technology.

We've got a tanker in Oregon, for example, a very large air tanker that can disperse 7 times what the current fleet that can. It's sitting grounded. I'm going to ask you this for the record, but if you could get back, could you get back to me within 30 days specifically on the question of what the agency will do to start considering these new technologies.

As I say we've got a bipartisan group of Senators interested in this. Can you get back within the next 30 days on that?

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes. I hope that that company submitted a proposal.

Senator WYDEN. Good.

Mr. TIDWELL. So that we can consider them as one of the new generation aircraft.

Senator WYDEN. Very good.

Let me ask you about the second area that I'm concerned about. That's the 9th Circuit Court's decision with respect to forest roads. As you know it would replace our current system which is essentially based on best management practices with what it would really amount to a mandatory Federal permit when forest roads are used for timber management.

In your judgment would something like that, you know, make sense? Would something like this provide additional environmental benefits? Certainly there's concern about paperwork and litigation and the like.

What are your thoughts with respect to an approach that could come out of the 9th Circuit involving a mandatory Federal permit?

Mr. TIDWELL. I believe that our using the best management practices that we've been using provides for the steps that we need to ensure we have clean water. They've proven to be very effective. They're adaptive. That we feel that this is adequate.

We're working with EPA. We have been having some very—they've been beneficial discussions about how to be able to move forward in a way that we can continue to use our best management practices.

Senator WYDEN. I share your view. Look forward to working with you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Alright. We've had one round. Let me ask a couple of questions and then see if Senator Murkowski and Senator Franken have any others or Senator Wyden.

On this whole issue of fire borrowing, I guess is the phrase we use for it, which we've struggled with here for many years now. In recent years the Forest Service has had to borrow about $2.3 billion from other accounts in order to do this emergency wildfire suppression work, I understand. About $1.85 billion of that 2.3 has been repaid. So there's a shortfall of around $400 million that has not been repaid.

Is this a factor that impacts Forest Service programs? That's the first question, I guess.

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, when we've had to borrow or transfer funds from other programs to pay for fire suppression it has a direct impact on this less work, less forest restoration work being accomplished, less trails being maintained, less roads being, you know, maintained. So there's been a direct effect versus if we hadn't had to borrow or transfer that money, we would have gotten more work done.

The CHAIRMAN. Do you believe that you have enough of a reserve this year that you can avoid having to borrow from other accounts, or do you have an opinion on that?

Mr. TIDWELL. We do not have a reserve this year. Based on the Flame Fund report that we'll be getting up to you here in the next couple days where we estimate what we anticipate we'll need for funding for this, you know, coming year. The medium estimate is very close to what we currently have in our budget for suppression this year.

So it's close. We're going to watch it very closely. We'll continue to send a report every week to your staff on our spending.

But depending on how this fire season develops, it's going to—it will be as tight as we've had since probably 2007 and so we'll continue to work with you to keep you informed on it. But a lot will depend just on how the fire season develops primarily in the middle part of the country.

We expect to have an active fire season in the south similar to what we had last year.

The northwest is probably, hopefully, will have more of a moderate to late fire season.

But that central part of the country is the area that we're probably going to have to wait and see how just the weather patterns develop this year and the amount of lightning.

But it's going to be very tight for us to be able to have adequate suppression funding this year.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me ask on another subject. An issue that we hear complaints about relates to visitor fees for various recreation uses of the Federal lands. In 2004 we enacted the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act which authorized the Forest Service and other agencies to charge these visitor fees.

We've received some complaints that the Forest Service position is that the Federal fee policies that are set out in the 1994 law do

not apply to National Forest recreationaries administered under a concession permit. So that there are areas under concession permits where fees are being assessed by concessioners for recreational uses where the Forest Service could not itself charge fees and that Federal fee passes which supposedly provide for nationwide acceptance are not recognized in these concessioner managed areas. Is this something you have looked at?

Can you tell me what the Forest Service position is with respect to the applicability of Federal recreation fee policies in areas that are administered under concession permits?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, we are looking into this. I want to have a consistent approach to fees across the board whether it's an area that concessioners are operating or it's an area operated by, you know, by the Forest Service, so that for the public they understand where we do charge fees. Then also what the fees are used for.

So it's essential we have a consistent application between our concessioner operated facilities versus just the agency operated. So it's one of the things I will look into this and I'll get back to you on it.

The CHAIRMAN. Alright. We appreciate that.

Senator Murkowski.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I wanted to make sure that I understood clearly on the issue of the fire air tankers that you were speaking with Senator Wyden about. First of all, I appreciate that you're going to be getting back to us on the letter that so many of us signed about the diversification of the fire fighting air tanker fleet. So we'll look forward to receiving that.

I thought I heard you say that you were going to be looking to utilize the Air National Guard C–130 more. It was my understanding that the Department of Defense has once again indicated that they do not desire to take on the additional responsibility with the C–130. So did I hear you incorrectly or how does the strategy document that you all provided my office just in February?

Are we going to have to change this? Where are with the C–130s there?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, you heard me correctly. We have relied on the Air National Guard to provide up to 8 C–130s that are equipped with a retardant tank that we can slip into these aircraft. We've relied on these now for quite a few years to provide us additional capacity at the peak of our fire season.

The Department of Defense made, at least it was clear to me, that they're not interested in expanding their mission to assist in this. But also at the same time we have, it's my understanding, they're going to continue to work with us with these Air National Guard units to provide these 8 planes when we need them. But we only use those after everything else is fully committed.

So it's part of our strategy in that it will just help bridge. My point that I would that when I said that I expect this year that we're going to maybe have to rely on them more, it's because we're entering this year with 8 less air tankers then we were planning to have even a year ago. So with our request for proposal to get some additional aircraft brought online and under contract, that will help, but to get all 7 of those is going to take the next 2 years.

So we're going to enter into this year with fewer large air tankers, even with the 2 water scoopers we're going to bring on. So that's why I believe that if we have an active fire season that we'll probably need to rely on those 8 MAFs planes.

Senator MURKOWSKI. I hear what you're saying but I'm also very cognizant that we are asking our National Guard to do so much more in so many other areas.

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes.

Senator MURKOWSKI. As we're bringing down the number of our Army, our Marines and the folks that are active, we are really relying so much more on our Guard units. So we've got to be very cognizant about the stresses that we are putting on a system here.

I wanted to ask you a question about the Sealaska bill that we have been working on. Let me ask you about the provisions within the Sealaska bill that relate to documented grave and historical sites. The Forest Service is proposing to really severely limit the selections that are allowable under the Native Claims Settlement Act that was passed in 1971 that allows sites to be selected under the Historical and Cemetery sites.

But in these negotiations that are underway now, the effort by the Forest Service to limit those selections to really only a fraction of the sites that have been documented in Southeast is something that we're still hung up on. I guess the question to you is whether or not you are aware of and actually support the Forest Service opposition of the transfer of these documented grave and historical sites to Native Alaskans even though Congress has specifically authorized these transfers under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, we want to continue to negotiate on those areas that are being requested to be included in the legislation and to be able to look at that along with all the other parts of the bill. So I'm optimistic that, you know, through our negotiations we'll be able to result in having a bill that everyone is supportive of and we can get this completed.

So I'm optimistic we'll be able to get this addressed.

Senator MURKOWSKI. I hope that you're optimism carries through then in these negotiations because this is, again, this is something that Congress authorized decades ago. Yet now we're hung up on this because of Forest Service objections. As the Chief of the Forest Service, I don't know how involved you are in this aspect of it, but it is something that has not allowed the negotiations to proceed to conclusion.

Again, what I'm trying to do is not only finish off the entitlement to Sealaska when we recognize that promises were made 40 years ago to complete these conveyances. Some of us feel pretty strongly that that time has expired a long time ago. We need to get this resolved.

Last question for you and this kind of dovetails on the conversation that we had initially about planned timber sales. Your predecessors in the Department had committed to 4, 10-year timber sales each with a volume of 150 to 200 million board feet. You know, we've had 2 of these timber sales that were begun but they've been downsized. They've been delayed.

So what I need to know from you is whether or not you will direct the Regional Forester and the Forest Service Supervisor to take immediate action, to take those steps to honor that 10-year timber sale commitment in the Tongass.

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, we're committed to moving forward with long term, you know, contracts. I believe the stewardship contract, you know, is probably a better tool for us right now. We're able to issue those for, you know, up to 10 years. I think that is a better approach.

Senator MURKOWSKI. So you're not willing to keep the commitment that was made by other Chiefs of the Forest Service to the 4, 10-year timber sales?

Mr. TIDWELL. I know that we've issued 3 on stewardship contracts last year. I know that we wanted to continue to move forward and issue more of those. I want them to be long term, you know, contracts.

So you have my commitment to that we will move forward to issue long term stewardship contracts. But I want to be able to do it in a way that we can get the work done. I'm not interested in doing something that will just go in front of a judge and will be stopped. We will not be able to implement.

We've done too much of that. Where there's been decisions that have been made and even though we win the majority of the times in court. There's no work that gets done.

I think the course that we're on in Southeast Alaska and across this country about working together with a way to be able to put projects together that we can implement that we can actually get work done on the ground, people get employed, jobs are created and forests are improved. We'll be able to make use of the resources. I do believe it's a better model.

That's what I want us to continue to work on there in Southeast Alaska and across the rest of the country. I want us to be successful.

Senator MURKOWSKI. I share the concern and the frustration that we have that seemingly every sale is stopped by litigation. As you know, those that have been part of a once vibrant industry have basically been shut down. Shut down by their own Federal Government because of the policies that have been put in place, the policies that have been enacted.

I understand your commitment to restoration policies. But in Ketchikan they're calling it a restoration to poverty. They are not optimistic about the direction that we have taken. They are not optimistic that the approach that has been taken is one that will allow them to sustain.

You know that this is a fight that I'm going to keep at.

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes.

Senator MURKOWSKI. I need you to understand the significance of what is happening within the Tongass because these people cannot survive for too much longer given the environment that they're in.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Franken.

Senator FRANKEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have a meeting in a couple minutes. So I'll make this short. But I really wanted to stick around to associate myself with Senator Shaheen's advocacy for combined heat and power and for biomass.

As you know in Minnesota the pulp and paper industries use a lot of biomass for the production of the pulp and the paper, but also for powering the facilities with renewable biomass energy. We have a lot of biomass gasification projects. The facility that you talked about in New Hampshire I think is a great model. We do a lot of combined heat and power.

We have a lot of combined heat and power. We have a great combined heat and power project in St. Paul. I want to build on that.

In fact I sponsored or authored a piece of legislation that Kit Bond in the last Congress was my lead co-sponsor on that. I'd like to get going again. Because I think that combined heat and power is just part of the one piece in the clean energy standard that we can put together to address, you know, the need to bring down our carbon footprint if we are going to address global warming.

Because I just want to repeat again. If we don't do something about it, the cost of what you're spending on fire suppression is going to crowd out everything everybody else is asking about. The cost of this is going to crowd out.

Everyone here is asking about a specific program and these are all very important programs. The fact of the matter is as climate change continues to worsen. We are going to see lots and lots of programs crowded out by the cost of dealing with that climate change.

I want to thank you for your service. I gotta run. I gotta run.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Chief Tidwell, thank you very much for your time. You've been very generous with it. We appreciate your good work.

We will continue to stay in touch.

Mr. TIDWELL. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. That will complete our hearing.

[Whereupon, at 11:30 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

Responses to Additional Questions

Responses of Tom Tidwell to Questions From Senator Wyden

SNOW BASIN PROJECT AND TIMBER SALES

Question 1. Timber sales are an ever present issue, and I am very pleased by the agency's efforts to ramp up to landscape scale restoration. I was thrilled to have two more Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration projects awarded in Oregon. These should be a great benefit going forward in boosting timber sales. However, I continue to hear concerns from the timber industry that the agency is not providing enough timber harvest. For example, it appears the agency will fall far short of the goal for board feed sole that was provided in the Consolidated Appropriations Act report for FY12. And, as you know from our recent discussions, this concern is reflected in specific projects that the Agency has been slow to advance.

Several weeks ago, you and I spoke about critical project on the Wallowa Whitman National Forest—the Snow Basin project, which exemplifies many of the agency goals you highlighted in the budget hearing: forest restoration, woods products, landscape scale efforts. As we discussed over the phone, the timeline for the project has been continuously pushed back—despite letters of support from the community, the timber industry and environmental community, as well as myself. When we spoke, you assured me the agency would sign the Record of Decision and put this project out in March. Yet, a little over a week ago my field heard—initially second hand, despite my clear interest in this project—that the project decision was now being delayed yet again, to April. Chief, I simply don't understand why these delays—on one of the only timber projects on this National Forest—keep occurring, despite your assurance to the contrary. This sale should be a top priority for the agency; it means jobs—critical jobs that are needed in this rural area. Can you explain to me what is going on and tell me what you will do to ensure these delays stop and the projects moves forward quickly?

Answer. The Snow Basin Final Environmental Impact Statement was completed and the Record of Decision was signed on March 19, 2012. Both documents have been sent to the Government Printing Office for expedited printing. The Notice of Availability was published in the Federal Register on March 30, 2012.

The Wallowa-Whitman National Forest has partnered with Wallowa Resources and Sustainable Northwest in initiating a broad-scale collaborative group to engage stakeholders in building consensus for forest restoration projects at the landscape scale. The forest has identified restoration needs across all sub-watersheds, and will bring this information to the stakeholders group for discussion in May 2012. We anticipate this will facilitate development of broader support from the community, timber industry and conservation community for more landscape scale projects on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, while streamlining the time it takes to complete environmental analyses.

AS INNOVATION AND VERY LARGE AIRTAKERS

Question 2. As I mentioned in the hearing, I want to submit a question for the record on the important issue of aviation innovation. At the hearing you stated you would deal with the 2012 fire season by adding two scoopers, having a VLAT on a Call When Needed contract, and planning to rely heavily on Air National Guard planes. That underscores the importance of a plan and I'm not satisfied that the "Large Airtanker Modernization Strategy" report lays out much of a strategy beyond stating the obvious—that the Agency needs to replace the current fleet. The report focuses on types of aircraft; however, I want more emphasis placed on an oversight strategy that provides Congress and the public with an objective analysis of the costs and benefits of different aviation tools and modernization strategies. A central

questions to that analysis is what kind of fleet do we need to fight the fires of today and for the next 50 years. Yet the Agency's tepid response to Very Large Air Tankers, and refusal to objectively evaluate initial attack capability, give me little confidence that the agency is ready to answer that central question. What will it take for the Forest Service to consider new technology? I want confidence that you've thoroughly and objectively evaluated all the tools available to fight fires, and confidence that you'll adopt those benefits expediently and wisely. What policies do you have in place to foster innovation among private companies who are partner with the forest service? I just fear that the Forest Service—through its slowness and indecision—stifles adoption of innovation and cost-savings that I believe is available to the agency.

Answer. The Forest Service welcomes and seeks out innovation and technology that may improve safety, effectiveness or reduce cost. Several on-going projects that track aircraft use and record maneuver load impacts to the aircraft are a direct result of adopting innovative technology that is low impact to the contractor yet provides important data to improve safety and effectiveness. Technology and our partnerships with contractors will be key components of the evaluation of next generation large airtankers, the very large airtanker, helicopters and water scoopers. Aircraft will have telemetry units paid for by the Forest Service to help evaluate drop effectiveness, accuracy and fire control objectives. Infrared and video cameras will document retardant drops to evaluate drop locations and other metrics. The Forest Service has engaged with private industry throughout the next generation contract process going back several years to gauge their ability to provide next generation aircraft and technology. The current Request for Proposals (solicitation) for next generation large airtankers included a Request for Information phase which gauged private industry's response and potential ability to develop and provide these aircraft.

The Forest Service believes the next generation large airtanker fleet should be modern aircraft with technology that reduces costs while improving effectiveness. Proposed aircraft need to be faster, more fuel efficient and use technology to improve drop effectiveness and drop accuracy. The program can be more cost effective through using these tools.

Analysis will continue during the upcoming fire season that will evaluate airtankers, water scoopers and helicopters. The primary objective of this analysis is to develop and implement performance metrics to analyze the use of all firefighting aircraft. Technology is the key to this study and will include real time infrared and camera analysis, digital real time data tracking and mapping, and command and control computer programs.

INTEGRATED RESOURCE RESTORATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Question 3. I appreciate that IRR is a top agency priority, and I generally agree with your assessment that project integration makes sense, particularly in shifting to broad landscape scale restoration. However, like others in Congress, I remain concerned about the accountability for use of these funds and how success will be tangibly measured through concrete outputs (i.e. board feet provided; acres treated; stream miles restored). In the hearing you mentioned that you will provide a program to track the outputs of IRR. Details on how the pilot programs are progressing would also be useful. Can you please flesh out how you plan to provide accountability and measure the effectiveness of the money spent on the pilots? When shall my office expect to see receive this information? What measurements for success do you plan to put in place for future IRR activities?

Answer. The FY 2012 Consolidated Appropriations Act funded a proof of concept and authorization for the Forest Service to implement an Integrated Restoration Resource (IRR) pilot program in Regions 1, 3, and 4. The Appropriations Act provided funding up to $146,350,000 for the program in FY 2012. The IRR program implementation guidance was made available to the three regions on February 6, 2012 including IRR target guidance to ensure that performance and accountability goals will be met. The direction includes an emphasis on program integration whose outcomes will be measured using traditional targets such as timber targets, miles of road decommissioned, and miles of stream habitat restored while also including new measures related to the watershed condition framework. A national report of the IRR Pilot Authority summarizing accomplishments from Regions 1, 3, 4 will be completed no later than November 30, 2012.

The Statement of the Managers accompanying the FY 2012 Consolidated Appropriations Act required the Forest Service to ". . .Within 90 days of enactment, the Forest Service should present a plan and guidance to the pilot regions for measuring performance and accountability." The IRR program implementation guidance was

made available to the three regions on February 6, 2012 including IRR target guidance to ensure that performance and accountability goals will be met. The Integrated Resource Restoration Pilot Accountability and Implementation Report will be submitted to Subcommittees soon.

How funding and targets were allocated in FY 2012

The Forest Service's Washington Office provided program direction to the pilot regions to ensure funding allocations are consistent across the regions. Overall IRR funding limits were set by the FY 2012 Consolidated Appropriations Act. Funding for each region is based upon capability, past performance, and adjusted according to expected national targets.

Our primary outcome-based accomplishment measure associated with IRR work is the number of watersheds moved to an improved conditions class. We will also track four more traditional output-based measures to gauge our progress including: total acres treated annually to sustain or restore watershed function and resilience; volume of timber sold; miles of roads decommissioned; and miles of stream habitat restored or enhanced.

Watershed Condition Framework and Priority Watersheds

A critical component of the successful implementation of IRR is the Watershed Condition Framework. This framework provides foundation and guidance for consistent identification of factors limiting a watershed's condition, determining the overall condition class of a watershed, identifies the priority watersheds to focus restoration efforts on, and identifies the essential suite of projects to improve a watershed's condition. The three pilot regions have already determined the condition class of all 5,926 watersheds containing significant portions of National Forest System lands. Among them 78 priority watersheds were selected for restoration activities in the next three to five years.

Ongoing Evaluations and Monitoring

To evaluate the effectiveness of the Forest Service's IRR Pilot Authority, Regions 1, 3, and 4 will submit accomplishments reports. Information will be compiled into a national report illustrating how the pilot authority addressed operational efficiencies and met desired outcomes. Regions will submit the following:

- Three to five case studies from each region showcasing accomplishments and successes implementing the IRR authority
- Description of outcomes associated with activities to improve watershed condition within the context of the Water Condition Framework
- Examples of combined focus and funding with Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program and other agency strategies
- Description of how consolidation of multiple budget line items affected programs/activities/project selection
- Advantages and disadvantages of a consolidated budget line item
- Recommendations on how IRR authority can be improved
- Communication tools and/or websites highlighting the public aspects of IRR pilot implementation

Monthly video teleconferences are scheduled by the Washington Office staff, to identify emerging issues, discuss unforeseen consequences, and maintain consistency, as appropriate, among the three regions.

NEXT GEN CONTRACTING

Question 4. How do you plan to be open, consistent, and fair in your dealings with commercial contractors? Undertaking a switch to a Next Gen fleet involves a large financial commitment with no guarantee of return for commercial operators. Although I have concerns about the Next Gen plan as announced, the agency is clearly advancing on the RFP for Next Gen air takers. How will the Forest Service foster industry faith that is commitment to modernizing the fleet matches the commitment of the private sector?

Answer. The Forest Service has held annual Airtanker Forums to maintain open communication and stay engaged with private industry as we began the next generation contract process. During these meetings, private industry has said they realize the investment in next generation aircraft is a larger financial commitment and risk than they are used to, but they were and are willing to make the commitment. The contract length for the next generation airtanker will be extended to 10 total years (five base plus five one year options) to spread out the financial risk at private industry's request.

The next generation proposals are evaluated by a Technical Evaluation Board (TEB) composed of Forest Service pilots, airworthiness inspectors, an aeronautical engineer, aviation safety managers, aviation operations managers, and one National Aeronautics and Space Administration engineer. This panel follows the requirements in the contract solicitation and includes the aircraft, Federal Aviation Administration certifications, airworthiness, retardant tank testing and evaluation, and other parameters including technology. The proposed cost of the aircraft is not part of the TEB's evaluation. Prior to the close of the solicitation, the Forest Service conducted a conference with all interested parties to answer questions about the solicitation, process, and technical aspects of the bid proposal. Based on feedback, the Forest Service extended the close of the solicitation by two weeks.

Two to seven next generation large airtanker contracts are expected to be awarded in the near future, demonstrating our commitment to modernizing the airtanker fleet.

NEXT GEN DATA AND ANALYSIS

Question 5. The "Large Airtanker Modernization Strategy" concludes that "between 18 and 28 aircraft are needed." Please precisely explain the data relied upon to support that conclusion. Additionally, given the Agency's willingness to consider government owned aircraft, I would like to better understand any differences between evaluating the cost/benefits analysis of contractors owned and government owned. Are government owned aircraft subject to the same accounting rules (for metrics such as daily availability rates, etc.) as contractor owned? How can I best compare the cost data from a government owned aircraft (say the C-130J) and the cost data from a contractor owned aircraft?

Answer. In the Large Airtanker Modernization Strategy, the conclusion that 18 to 28 aircraft are needed is based on several analyses, past and current use, and collaboration with the Department of the Interior. The requirements for large airtankers have been derived from the National Interagency Aviation Council Phase III Report, dated December 7, 2007, which noted the need for up to 25 large airtankers. Increased effectiveness and improved speed and quantity of retardant impacts the need for planes. In 2009 and 2010 the Forest Service successfully operated with 18 planes. The Forest Service will continue to monitor fire risk and plane capability to determine the most effective fleet size.

Acquisition of aircraft is subject to a business case analysis required by the Office of Management and Budget Circular A-11. Instructions are located at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/a11_current_year/aircraft_funding.pdf. The analysis includes initial acquisition costs and life-cycle costs over the 20 year life of the aircraft. Additionally, the analysis includes a requirements analysis, risk plan, alternatives analysis and an acquisition plan. These documents are generated for submission by the Forest Service, to the Department of Agriculture for review by OMB prior to any acquisition. OMB Circular A-94 provides guidelines and discount rates for benefit-cost analysis of federal programs.

The analysis compares contractor owned with government owned using similar metrics. For example, the daily availability for a contractor owned aircraft is called fixed costs for a government owned aircraft. The same analysis rules apply for both ownership models.

RESPONSES OF TOM TIDWELL TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR CANTWELL

INTEGRATED RESOURCE RESTORATION (IRR)

I know that you share the commitments to promoting both watersheds and efficiency within the Forest Service. While I appreciate your efforts to find savings and administrative efficiencies, I have some concerns about the proposed Integrated Resource Restoration (IRR) program in the President's request. Because the IRR pilot project was just approved a few months ago, I do not understand the rush to expand the program nationwide.

Question 1a. Why has the Administration asked to expand this program nationally, when we have not had a chance to see if the pilot delivers on its promised results? Could you please outline the reasons why this pilot program is being fast-tracked?

Answer. Restoration and management of the national forests and grasslands are critically needed to address a variety of threats to the health of our forest ecosystems, watersheds, and forest-dependent communities including; fire, impacts of a changing climate, insect and disease outbreaks such as Bark Beetle. Increasing the pace of restoration and management activities is beneficial to national forests

and grasslands and creates or maintains local jobs. One important tool to achieve restoration on a national scale is the expansion of IRR to a nation-wide authority.

In the FY 2010 Budget Justification the Forest Service recognized a need to improve the business rules for accomplishment reporting. This reform advanced performance and accountability, shifting focus from a highly functionalized approach to one that aligns other programs and partner organizations to achieve multiple goals. For example, timber sales are often used to meet wildlife habitat requirements, restore watersheds, and reduce wildfire risk to communities as well as to meet timber sale projections.

The FY 2011 Budget Justification went further to support the Secretary's vision of implementing an all lands restoration framework and introduced the Integrated Resource Restoration (IRR) budget line item (BLI). The proposed new BLI combined Forest Products, Vegetation and Watershed Management, and Wildlife and Fisheries Management items from FY 2010. Managers were then encouraged to plan and implement resource work to ensure fullest value per Federal expenditure.

The FY 2012 Consolidated Appropriations Act funded a proof of concept and authorization for the Forest Service to implement an Integrated Restoration Resource (IRR) pilot program in Regions 1, 3, and 4. The appropriations bill provided funding up to $146,350,000 for the program in FY 2012. Program direction included an emphasis on program integration whose outcomes will be measured using traditional targets such as timber targets, miles of road decommissioned, and miles of stream habitat restored while also including new measures related to the watershed condition framework. A national report of the IRR Pilot Authority summarizing accomplishments from Regions 1, 3, and 4 implementations will be completed no later than November 30, 2012.

The FY 2013 President's Budget proposes $793,124,000 as single budget line—Integrated Resource Restoration (IRR) budget line item (BLI). By realigning funding, IRR focuses agency resources on integrated ecosystem restoration projects. Activities emphasized under IRR include those necessary to maintain, enhance, or restore watersheds at the landscape level, and statutory activities needed for sound resource management. The President's Budget for FY 2013 includes budget structure changes to increase efficient delivery of many programs throughout the Nation, including with IRR proposed agency wide.

Working through the IRR Pilot program approved for FY 2012, the Forest Service will be positioned to integrate watershed protection and increase the pace of restoration in all aspects of management of national forests and grasslands to create or maintain local economic opportunities, jobs, and to strengthen our partnerships. Our budget request continues to emphasize IRR as the leading approach to accomplish on the ground restoration on a national scale and we need the expanded nation-wide authority to fully realize efficiencies from IRR.

Question 1b. Based on what I have been told by your agency, it will take several years to get the pilot program running to full capacity. Is this true? If not, what is the expected time frame necessary to reach full capacity?

Answer. A national report of the IRR Pilot Authority summarizing accomplishments from Regions 1, 3, and 4 will be completed no later than November 30, 2012, after which we will be able to better assess capacity achieved under the pilot authority. The Forest Service has been operating in an integrated fashion over the past few years to accomplish restoration objectives on the ground. Implementation of the IRR pilot in FY 2012 gives us the opportunity to work through and address issues prior to full implementation. In FY 2013 the Forest Service has requested full authority to implement IRR nationally. Regions 1, 3, and 4 will be implementing the IRR pilot program in FY 2012 and we thank you for providing us with the authority to consolidate budget line items, which is leading to further program integration in the three Regions. However, the efficiencies intended by IRR can only be fully realized with full, nation-wide IRR authority as requested in the FY 13 President's Budget.

LEGACY ROADS

Between 2008-2011, the Legacy Roads and Trails program decommissioned 4,284 miles of obsolete roads, maintained or improved 10,478 miles of needed roads, constructed or reconstructed 298 bridges, replaced or repaired 1,224 culverts to improve fish passage, and maintained or improved 2,334 miles of recreational trails. The President's Budget proposes to make this incredibly successful program disappear by absorbing it into a national Integrated Resources Restoration (IRR) program.

Question 2a. How will you provide accountability to ensure the critical work performed under Legacy Roads & Trails continues to be done?

Question 2b. While I applaud the aggressive road decommissioning target in IRR, how can we be assured that road decommissioning and stream habitat restoration is focused on those roads that are causing the most serious water quality problems or the highest value (e.g., municipal water supplies) regardless of whether they are in a place where other integrated management activities are needed?

Answer. In FY 2012, the Forest Service began implementing our recently developed Watershed Condition Framework (WCF) which establishes a consistent, comparable, and credible process for characterizing, prioritizing, improving, and tracking the health of watersheds on national forests and grasslands. The WCF lays out a process to allow data from local assessments to be collected, analyzed and evaluated to better understand existing conditions and the specific needs for restoration and maintenance at the national level; including informing our road decommissioning targets and ensuring accountability. The Framework builds added accountability and transparency into Integrated Resource Restoration for outcomes such as watershed improvements as well as traditional outputs including road decommissioning.

Our primary outcome-based accomplishment measure associated with IRR work is the number of watersheds moved to an improved conditions class. We will also track four more traditional output-based measures to gauge our progress including: total acres treated annually to sustain or restore watershed function and resilience; volume of timber sold; miles of roads decommissioned; miles of stream habitat restored or enhanced. The five accomplishment measures assigned to IRR are outcome or output based. The number of watersheds moved to an improved condition class and total acres treated annually to sustain or restore watershed function and resilience are cumulative program accomplishments.

Question 2c. What is the current maintenance backlog for forest service roads? How many years would it take to clear this backlog if funding levels continued at the President's Request for FY 2013?

Answer. The current backlog of deferred maintenance on our passenger car road system is estimated to be $3.3 billion. At current funding levels, the agency would find it difficult to clear this backlog, but that is true at any foreseeable funding level. We create travel analysis plans to inform the size of our road system and to inform the creation of motor vehicle use maps, which guide the use of our road system. The President's Budget request provides sufficient resources to maintain critical access to the National Forests, and for Travel Analysis Plans that will allow us to right size our road system and work to bring down the road deferred maintenance backlog.

RESPONSES OF TOM TIDWELL TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR MURKOWSKI

Question 1. Chief Tidwell, in the Energy and Natural Resource Committee hearing on the President's proposed budget you said the Tongass has an 80 million board feet timber sale target. But last week a Regional Ten Forest Service employee met with the Timber Industry in Southeast and said the following: The region has sold 1.6 million board feet of timber thus far in FY 2012 and plans to sell an additional 6.8 million board feet during the second half of FY 2012.

Can you help me understand what sales, how much volume in those sales, and where those sales will be located to meet the remaining 71.6 million board feet that you spoke of at the March 6th, 2012 hearing?

Answer. The information given to industry at the Alaska Forest Association meeting was based upon the Periodic Timber Sale Announcement issued October 2011 and did not include volume from projects where the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process was not complete. The report will be updated in late April 2012 and will include additional volume, which has become available after completion of the NEPA planning cycle. Based upon information contained in the Draft 5-Year Forest Timber Sale Schedule and Integrated Service Timber Contract Plan, the Tongass will offer small sales ranging in size from .016 to 1.20 million board feet (MMBF) for a total FY 2012 offer of 10.8 MMBF to meet the needs of small mill operators; Tonka Timber Sale in total of 39.6 MMBF of sawtimber and utility (see response to question 2). Additional volume could be available from the Navy Environmental Impact Statement (up to 18 MMBF), but at the moment the project is appraising deficit, and appropriations language prohibits deficit sales to be offered in Alaska. If conditions change, the Forest Service will offer all portions of the Navy sale that are economical. For the purposes of responses to later questions, Navy will be shown as a FY 2013 offer.

Question 2. In a meeting last month with the Alaska Forest Association was told that the Tonka timber sales Record of Decision would be signed in April and imple-

mented 105 days later (early August). Yet that sale volume (estimated to be 32 million board feet) did not mentioned as part of the FY 2012 offer target.

Will you commit to offer the Tonka Timber Sale by the end of the first week of August this summer?

Answer. The Tonka Timber Sale was not shown on the above mentioned periodic sale announcement because of the tentative nature of the NEPA process completion date. The Tongass has worked to streamline the sale preparation process and thus the Tongass is now ahead of schedule on the completion of NEPA. Both the Tongass and Alaska Region are committed to having all of the available volume in Tonka offered in FY 2012. Pending appeals and potential litigation, the award of the Tonka sale is targeted for August 2012.

Question 3. The Timber industry in Alaska was also informed that the Tongass expects to expend $3.5 million on road reconstruction on the forest, but that they also plan to expend $3.3 million to close roads on the forest.

Can you help me understand why it is you are closing the very roads you will likely need to produce the 2nd growth sales that you want to transition to?

Answer. The region received approximately $588,000 of Legacy roads funding in FY 2012 for the Tongass National Forest with an assigned target of 20-miles of road decommissioning. Beginning in FY 2008, the Tongass began to use Legacy Roads funding to begin implementation of the Tongass Access and Travel Management Plan. The Tongass has aggressively pursued road closure actions of Maintenance Level 1 roads (ML1) to meet future maintenance capabilities based on projected funding. From FY 2008 through FY 2012, $5,266,963 (average of $10,000/mile) has been spent to convert Maintenance Level 2 (ML2) open roads to ML1, closed roads across the forest, resulting in approximately 450 miles closed from FY 2008 through FY 2012. An additional 100 miles of previously closed ML1 roads received additional work to preserve infrastructure investment.

The Tongass has a road system that is in excess of needs and is difficult to maintain, open for use in a safe and maintainable condition. When second-growth sales become available for harvest over the next several decades, ML1 roads may be reopened for use to accommodate the needed transportation linkages.

It is important to clarify terminology with respect to the difference between decommissioning a road and closing a road to vehicular traffic. Road decommissioning is performed to stabilize, restore, and re-vegetate unneeded roads to a more natural state to protect and enhance National Forest System lands.

Closing a road to vehicular traffic is classified as ML1. This is performed to keep damage to adjacent resources to an acceptable level as well as the government's investment in the road to ensure it will be available for future resource management needs. Emphasis is normally given to maintaining drainage facilities and runoff patterns. Planned road deterioration may occur at this level. The closure period for a ML1 road typically exceeds one-year and basic custodial maintenance is provided during the duration of the road closure. However, while being maintained at ML1, they are closed to vehicular traffic, but may be open and suitable for nonmotorized uses.

Over the last 10-years a total of 48 miles, equaling 50 roads on the Tongass have been decommissioned.

In FY 2012 the Tongass will spend $3.62 million on reconditioning approximately 31.5 miles of existing timber haul roads, development of a five-acre log sort yard and reconstruction of one Log Transfer Facility. These five projects will support up to 159 MMBF of identified future timber sale volume within the next 5-10 years.

Question 4. Would you have your staff identify for me every road that has been closed in the last 10 years and is expected to be closed this year and how many acres of second growth timber is being isolated by the road closure?

Answer. Approximately 578 miles of system roads have been placed into Maintenance Level 1, or stored, during the 10 year period. During the same period, an additional 311 miles of previously stored roads were scheduled to receive stabilization and maintenance activities to minimize potential resource damage. Since long term access to harvest units is unchanged when a road is placed into intermittent storage, no second growth timber is isolated by these road closures.

Decommissioning of roads does impact the access to second growth timber. The acreage of second growth affected has been assessed based on the proximity of the road system to the harvested units; specifically those units that intersect, or are within a quarter mile distance, of a road. The second growth timber readily identifiable in the mapping exercise totals approximately 3,300 acres affected by decommissioned roads.

Question 5. During the same meeting the Forest Service told the Alaska Forest Association members it planned to sell 143 mmbf in FY 2013 but only mentioned 135 mmbf worth of sales including Big Thorne; Traitors; Scott Peak and Navy. Will

you provide me with a detailed list of where the other volume is expected to come from and where you will find additional timber to offer if any of the estimates made fall short?

Answer. The following table shows the Draft 5-Year Timber Sale Schedule and Integrated Service Timber Contract Plan (including the total expected volume from Navy):

Sale or EIS Name	Volume (MMBF)
Traitor's Cove reoffer	10.523
Scott Peak Reoffer	8.459
Overlook	3.802
Navy (assuming positive appraisal)	18.000
Big Thorne	110.000
Small Sales (currently planned)	1.200
Estimated Total Offer in FY-13	151.984

Question 6. Finally, the Alaska Forest Association was told there will be 170 mmbf offered in FY 2014, 39 in FY 2015 and 63 mmbf in 2016. Can you explain the planned reductions in FY 2015 and FY 2016?

Answer. Planning teams on the Tongass are currently fully engaged in completing large analysis projects for FY 2012, 2013 and 2014 timber sale offers and have not yet begun the analysis of areas for FY 2015 and 2016. Additional areas are being evaluated for future projects and the Draft Timber Sale and Integrated Service Timber Contract schedule will be updated to reflect those additions.

TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST TIMBER SALE PROGRAM

Question 7. Chief, last year I asked you if it would be possible to find sufficient timber to permit a small mill to open in Wrangell. I was told that would be possible. In the past year has there been any progress made in producing sufficient timber in a longer-term contract length to permit that small mill to open, or to allow another proposed wood shake mill to open at Coffman Cove on Prince of Wales Island?

Answer. The Tongass is currently planning the Wrangell Island 10-Year contract at an estimated potential volume of approximately 91 MMBF. While bidding on timber sales is a competitive process with no guarantees for a new operator, the Wrangell Island 10-Year contract should provide a potential mill operator in Wrangell the opportunity to secure a supply of raw material at the outset of operations. The Agency is unaware of any special efforts being made to supply a potential shake mill in Coffman Cove, however there is approximately 6 MMBF of small sale offers planned from the Diesel EIS in FY 2012 that a potential operator could bid in addition to small sales planned from the Big Thorne EIS effort.

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MANUFACTURING JOBS VERSUS GOVERNMENT JOBS IN SE ALASKA

Recently I spent most of a week on Southeast Alaska and while there attended a presentation by the Forest Service that focused almost exclusively on recreation. Several times over the last two years I have read or heard of the Forest Service line offices on the Tongass suggesting that recreation jobs can replace the prosperity that the timber industry supplied our communities in the past year. I am wondering if you have actually spent time in Southeast Alaska during the part of the year when tourists refuse to come to visit or to spend money in our communities due to weather? We're not talking about an insignificant part of the year, by the way. For roughly half of the year, every year, tourism in Southeast essentially comes to a halt.

Question 8a. Can you provide me the data that suggests to your line offices that a tourism and recreation based economy can support the communities in Southeast Alaska from October through April each year?

Answer. The Forest Service is aware communities in southeast Alaska are struggling economically due to declining timber harvests, increasing energy costs, and the recent economic recession, among other reasons. Rural communities in southeast Alaska rely significantly on natural resources for employment, subsistence and recreation. As the primary land manager in the region, the Forest Service is committed to helping improve community health and creating local jobs through investments in four important economic sectors: forest products, ocean products, visitor services, and renewable energy.

The Forest Service is not aware of any studies, which conclude that southeast Alaska communities can thrive solely on a tourism based economy. Recreation and tourism will play an important role in the overall economic health of the region, but it is only one contribution to economic health. The Forest Service recently released an Economic Investment Strategy (http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5352925.pdf), which highlights the importance of sustainable resource management to support community health. The Agency's investment in the economic cluster initiative is intended to provide even greater support to the communities of southeast Alaska.

The Southeast Alaska Asset Map report serves as a current reference on job numbers and the overall economic impact of various sectors in southeast Alaska (http://jedc.org/assetmapping-seakregionalassetmap.php). There are over 36,000 annual jobs on average in southeast Alaska. The government sector is an important part of the economy with about 13,000 annual jobs on average. However, in recent years, State and Federal government employment has declined. Major economic sectors that bring money into southeast Alaska (basic industries) include commercial fishing, tourism, mining, and timber. Manufacturing is also considered a basic industry and is made up mostly of businesses that process fish and timber products. Over 10,000 people were employed in the fishing industry in southeast Alaska in 2009 and about 215 were employed in the timber industry. Visitor services provide over 4,000 year-round equivalent jobs per year.

Communities of southeast Alaska have been adjusting to the loss of the large sawmills and the pulp mills in the 1990's. Not unlike the Pacific Northwest, the transition from a large timber industry to a small one did not occur without significant consequence. Studies have shown that communities with diverse economies did the best through such a transition. The growth of the tourism industry in Southeast Alaska has clearly benefited most communities in southeast. Alaska's economy as a whole is highly seasonal. While tourism has the most economic impact in the summer months, many industries in southeast Alaska are seasonal by nature, including fishing and timber-related jobs, partly because of the region's remoteness and the seasonally harsh weather.

Question 8b. Will you provide me with data on the average wage of an employee in the tourism based businesses in Southeast Alaska versus the average wage of the timber industry based jobs versus the average incomes of your employees that work year-round on the Tongass?

Answer. The average annual wage of a year-round employee of the Tongass National Forest is $66,792. The average annual wage from 2007 to 2010 for sawmilling is $34,755, and for logging it is $55,269 (Alaska Dept. of Labor—http://almis.labor.state.ak.us). The leisure and hospitality industry is used as a proxy for recreation and tourism as there is no government data set specific to recreation and tourism employment and wages. Leisure and hospitality is part of what people think of as recreation and tourism, but certainly not all of it. According to A. Shanks (2011, Alaska Trends magazine—http://laborstats.alaska.gov/trends/jun11art1.pdf) the average annual wage of an employee in the leisure and hospitality industry is $19,789. Shanks says the seasonality of the leisure and hospitality industry contributes to its low average annual earnings, but not all of these jobs are low-paying. Lodging managers, in 2009 for example, earned about $51,460 in Alaska. Accommodation jobs pay an average of $24,340 per year. The lowest sectors are food service and drinking place workers ($17,752) and jobs in arts, entertainment, and recreation ($16,830). Natural resources and mining (including oil and gas) are the highest paid private industry jobs in Alaska, with average annual wages of $111,302. According to the State of Alaska Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, the average monthly income for employment in fishing was $5,079 per month for the first 3 quarters of 2011 (http://labor.alaska.gov/research/qcew/qcew.htm)

The National Visitor Use Monitoring Survey, used by the U.S. Forest Service to report an annual visitation estimate for each national forest, gives an estimate for the Tongass National Forest in 2010 of 1,885,513 visits. A supplemental survey designed to capture additional visitation via boat and plane revised the estimate to 2,337, 981 visits to the Tongass annually.

FOREST SERVICE OUTPUTS

Question 9. Recently, in a meeting with my staff, you indicated that in your view things are better right now for the Forest Service than at any other time over the last decade. That, not surprisingly, sent my staff to your past budget justifications to try and understand how you could come to that conclusion. Could you articulate for me why you think things are better now than at any time in the last ten years?

Question 10. I am going to ask you to speak to three areas:

a) In FY 2011, the agency reported undertaking only 33 Land Management Plan Amendments compared to an annual average of 43 amendments for the decade of FY 2002—FY 2011 with a high water mark of 50 amendments in FY 2006. So how is it that the FY 2011 result is viewed as better than any time in the last decade?

Answer. The number of amendments underway at any point in time is a function of need, available resources, regional and local capacity and purpose or type of amendments. The planned number is generally estimated based on field data which is then adjusted based on the funds available. All of these factors affect accomplishment levels. A larger number underway during any fiscal year is not necessarily better and could be a result of the number of issues being addressed in each individual amendment which affects the amount of work needed (i.e., time and money).

b) Until FY 2005, the agency reported the number of approved Timber Sale NEPA Documents through Appeal and Litigation. Since then, the agency has stopped doing that. Now we have no ability to understand how many documents have been through the process, and therefore what the likely timber sale program might be the next year. Is that an improvement?

Answer. All planned and signed NEPA documents including, those associated with vegetation management decisions, are tracked through the agency's Planning, Appeal, and Litigation System, which is updated quarterly on the Forest Service Schedule of Proposed Actions (http://www.fs.fed.us.sopa). The timber sale program target is reflected through the President's Proposed Budget with an estimated output of 2,800 MMBF in FY 2013.

c) Each year your budget justification shows how many Grazing Allotments with signed Decision Notices has been completed. On average, over the last decade, the Forest Service annually completed 377 decisions each year. In FY 2006 the agency completed 670 Decision Notices, but last year the number fell to only 194. Is that because there are no other permit holders seeking to renew their grazing permits? Do you think the ranchers who are desperate to get their permits renewed think things are better today than any other time in the last decade?

Answer. The number of grazing allotments with signed decision notices results from the completion of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) work on those allotments. Also, from 2005-2008 the Forest Service was granted authority to use a Congressional categorical exclusion (CE) for NEPA on grazing allotments that met certain conditions. In 2006 we accomplished 452 NEPA decisions signed; the Forest Service utilized 185 CEs to meet this accomplishment.

Grazing permit renewal or reissuance is not directly linked to the signing of NEPA grazing allotment decisions. Where an allotment is NEPA sufficient, permits are issued after consultation with the permittee. Where there is insufficient NEPA, the allotment is placed on a schedule for NEPA completion, per the Rescissions Act of 1995, and a permit issued with the same terms and conditions as the expired permit.

FOREST SERVICE WILDLAND FIRE AVIATION

That strategy document makes cost comparisons between the potential Next Generation aircraft that appear to favor the selection of the C-130J. I am told that if the C-130J were subject to the same cost accounting rules as the industry candidate aircraft, it would have a daily availability rate close to $100,000 a day.

Question 11a. Can you check with the vendors who currently provide you firefighting aircraft and others and check on this claim? If you find it to be accurate will you reissue an early February large air-tanker modernization strategy document with accurate cost data?

Question 11b. Do you believe that commercial operators can supply the Forest Service with reliable and airworthy tanker aircraft that will meet your agency's requirements?

Answer. The Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management staff consulted the aviation industry and the Department of Defense to compare and validate all of the costs and we concluded that daily availability rates were not close to $100K. The daily fixed operating cost in the Large Airtanker Modernization Strategy of $13,740 was calculated using the Forest Service's Working Capital Fund (WCF), which calculates fixed costs for 365 days per year for the 20 year life-cycle of the aircraft. This method produced similar results to what was described by the Department of Defense and aviation strategy. However, commercial contract aircraft are not under

contract for 365 days. Typically, the Forest Service enters into exclusive use contracts for 140 to 180 days depending on the contract requirements.

The Forest Service has engaged with private industry throughout the next generation contract process going back several years to gauge their ability to provide next generation aircraft and technology. Since 2002, only one next generation large airtanker has been offered by private industry. However, based on the response to the next generation Request for Information, the Forest Service is optimistic that private industry will be able to deliver reliable and airworthy next generation large airtankers. These are unproven airtankers, some with new design retardant delivery systems, which will take time to evaluate and modify to fully meet the requirements.

Question 11c. The commercial operators have to make a very large financial commitment up front with no guarantee of success. Is the Forest Service equally committed to fielding an all Next General tanker fleet?

Answer. The Forest Service has held annual Airtanker Forums to maintain open communication and stay engaged with private industry as we began the next generation contract process. During these meetings, the private industry has said that they realize the investment in next generation aircraft is a larger financial commitment and risk than they are used to, but they were and are willing to make the commitment. The contract length for the next generation airtanker will be extended to 10 total years (five base plus five one year options) to spread out the financial risk at private industry's request.

Question 12. There were more than 40 large air-tankers under contract 10 years ago. How did the strategy arrive at 26 as the right number for the future?

Answer. In the Large Airtanker Modernization Strategy, the conclusion that 18 to 28 aircraft are needed is based on several analyses, past and current use, and collaboration with the Department of the Interior. The requirements for large airtankers have been derived from the National Interagency Aviation Council Phase III Report, dated December 7, 2007, which noted the need for up to 25 large airtankers. Increased effectiveness and improved speed and quantity of retardant impacts the need for planes. In 2009 and 2010 the Forest Service successfully operated with 18 planes. The Forest Service will continue to monitor fire risk and plane capability to determine the most effective fleet size.

Question 13. You heard what I had to say in my opening statement concerning a viable strategy for replacing the legacy fire air-tankers. I do want to recognize that you have included a request for $24 million for air-tanker modernization and I commend you for including that. If it does get funded, how will those funds be expended?

Answer. The funding will pay for contract costs associated with additional next generation aircraft in accordance with our modernization strategy.

Question 14. Several weeks ago Senators Feinstein, Wyden and I sent Secretary Vilsack a letter about the diversification of your firefighting air-tanker fleet. When will I have an answer from the Department to that letter?

Answer. The letter addressing the Forest Service's wildland fire aviation program was signed by Secretary Vilsack and mailed to you, Senator Feinstein and Senator Wyden on March 29, 2012.

Question 15. Last August, you issued a Request For Information to help in your efforts to further diversify your aerial firefighting fleet with fixed-wing water scooping aircraft. The state forester of Alaska relies on water-scooping aircraft as an essential and effective fire suppression asset. Could you give us an update on this effort and provide the number of this type of aircraft that are likely to be included in an RFP?

Answer. The Forest Service is collaborating with the Department of the Interior on their existing water scooper contract. The contract will add additional days to the contract to facilitate bringing the scoopers down to the lower-48 as the fire season moderates in Alaska. Also in cooperation with the Department of the Interior, there will be a solicitation for turbine water scoopers which could add two to eight more scoopers to the aerial firefighting fleet.

Question 16a. How many Very Large Air-Tankers are likely to be included in the mix of aircraft types that your agency will attempt to find funding for?

Answer. Similar to previous years, there will be one (1) very large airtanker (VLAT) available in 2012. The VLAT is funded through a Call-When-Needed (CWN) contract. The decision to contract the very large airtanker on a CWN contract maintains the availability of the aircraft during periods of moderate to high demand, without committing the Forest Service to paying for a very expensive aircraft when there is no demand.

WALLOW FIRE AND RECOVERY AND REHABILITATION

As you know, last year's fire season was etched in history by the Wallow Fire in eastern Arizona that burned 538,000 acres in the scenic White Mountains, making it the largest fire on record in the entire southwestern region of the United States. Chief Tidwell, stated that the response to this fire must be immediate and sustained. He promised Arizonans that the Forest Service would be fully committed to the recovery and rehabilitation mission in the post-fire environment. An independent assessment team from the Forest Service identified approximately $100 million worth of needed rehabilitation projects in the Wallow Fire burned area through FY 2018.

The current budget proposes to move Rehabilitation and Restoration line-item to the National Forest System appropriation and continue these activities as part of Integrated Resource Restoration. It is also my understanding that there are other line items that typically were used to accomplish recovery activities that are also now under this IRR making it very difficult to even determine if the Forest Service plans to do anything in FY 2013 with regard to recovery from this historic fire.

Question 16b. What can you tell us about the recovery effort and this budget to help reassure the Committee that the Forest Service is truly committed to that immediate and sustained recovery you talked about during the fire?

Answer. The Southwestern Region considers Wallow Fire recovery, along with other large fire recovery, to be a major regional project and is allocating additional funding to the specific fire recovery projects. The Southwestern Region and the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest are highly committed to the recovery of the Wallow Fire area. The Regional Leadership Team included large fire rehabilitation and recovery as a major regional project in the FY 2011 budget allocation process and was able to partially fund the recovery needs of Wallow and other large FY 2011 fires utilizing IRR in FY 2012. The Forest Service has moved to a boundary-less organization to accommodate priority work related to recovery of the fire area. Resources from all five Ranger Districts have been allocated to support range re-stocking, the Wallow West Salvage project, a trails damage assessment, repair, and maintenance, and other critical work in the fire area.

Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) work was essentially completed within three months of the fire. In an attempt to minimize anticipated post-fire damages, over $28,000,000 was spent to seed and mulch about 34,000 acres of the most severely burned areas and to seed an additional 47,000 acres. Hundreds of miles of roads and channels were stabilized against flood damages and dangerous hazard trees were removed along roads. An additional $3,000,000 was spent last fall to perform priority rehabilitation work to support range livestock restocking, road and trail safety, and wildlife habitat recovery.

In FY 2012, the Forest will spend over $2,000,000 to perform critical work. Current FY 2012 work plans include repair and reconstruction of priority high-use trails, reconstruction of burned pasture and allotment fences, installation of beetle pheromone packets to protect burned areas from beetle invasion in Mexican spotted owl Protected Activity Centers (PACs) and developed campgrounds, wildlife surveys to support salvage, and other recovery work.

Additional temporary personnel are being hired in the areas of wildlife biology, range management, and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance to assist with recovery projects. The Forest Service is hiring a two-year term volunteer coordinator to manage partnerships and volunteers interested in recovery work in the fire area, as well as an Apache Trout Coordinator, in partnership with Arizona Game and Fish, to focus on recovery of that species.

The Forest has completed National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Section 18 reviews in several areas allocated to the White Mountain Stewardship Contract that were burned in the fire. The purpose of Section 18 review is to determine if changed conditions warrant additional analysis.

Region 3 is currently planning the program of work for Fiscal Year 2013, including a significant number of fire recovery projects for the Wallow Fire as well as other 2011 fires. Fire recovery and rehabilitation continues to be a high priority in the Region. The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest is continuing to monitor completed work on the Wallow Fire as well as to assess work still needed, and is fine-tuning projects to be completed in FY 2013. Environmental analysis for the Wallow West project is nearing completion, which will outline specific actions for the FY 2013 program of work.

WALLOW FIRE NEPA—ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

Recovery after a fire of this magnitude requires resources and skill sets above and beyond what the Apache Sitgreaves National Forests has readily available. An area

of particular concern that can cause significant delays to getting needed work accomplished is environmental compliance requirements. As you know, compliance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) can be time consuming, expensive and difficult under the best of circumstances, but after a 500,000+ acre fire it can be nearly impossible. Already the NEPA is complicating the response and causing significant delays in getting work accomplished on the ground.

The Arizona delegation wrote to you in July of last year urging you to request that CEQ grant alternative arrangements for compliance with NEPA for the activities needed to respond to this fire.

Question 17a. Why hasn't CEQ been asked to assist this Forest with NEPA?

Question 17b. Would you please outline the costs, recourses and timelines for the NEPA compliance that will be necessary for the recovery projects needed to restore the Wallow Fire Area?

Answer. Typically CEQ gets involved on a large post-fire NEPA evaluation to determine whether Alternative Arrangements (40 CFR Section 1506.11) (36 CFR Section 220.4) would apply to any proposed projects. The Forest held discussions with CEQ, and based on the Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) work completed, the recommendations from the Rapid Assessment Team (RAT), and other actions being undertaken, we believe that Alternative Arrangements are not appropriate at this time. We will continue to work with CEQ to determine whether alternative arrangements are appropriate for future recovery projects.

The Forest has begun planning on the Wallow West project. This will provide the NEPA compliance for a large portion of the fire area. A decision is expected in June 2012, with implementation anticipated to begin in the summer of 2012. Funding levels support the use of existing personnel to undertake the primary analysis of the Wallow West project. Planning for the Wallow West Salvage is projected to cost approximately $300,000.

SALVAGE WORK/WMSC

The recovery effort after the Wallow Fire must include economic recovery. There are tremendous opportunities and needs to remove dead and dying trees across the Wallow Fire Area. If the Forest Service moves quickly, while these trees still have value, this work can be accomplished at no cost to the Forest Service and can provide a needed boost to industry. The Chief testified before this committee that we have only a short window of opportunity to get the economic value out of these dead trees and that you would be doing everything possible to capture this value. In addition, the 49,000 acres of treatments accomplished through the White Mountain Stewardship Contract (WMSC) are credited with saving many of the affected Wallow Fire communities, yet we are wondering why more hasn't been done to use this contract to accomplish salvage work and other needed work in the green acres going forward. This fire has a huge economic impact on the WMSC contractors, the local businesses that rely on wood from the contract and the regional economy at large.

Question 18. Please explain what has been done with respect to salvage beyond the hazard tree removal along roadways that occurred this past fall.

Answer. Planning for the Wallow West salvage area has been on-going since November 2011 and is scheduled for decision in June 2012. The Forest has completed Section 18 NEPA reviews in areas committed to the White Mountain Stewardship Contract (WMSC) that were burned in the Wallow Fire. The purpose of Section 18 review is to determine if changed conditions warrant additional analysis. Treatments are occurring only in areas where conditions did not necessitate new analysis.

Subsequently, we have awarded three Task Orders to the WMSC for approximately 3,000 acres of salvage in these areas. We are currently preparing a fourth task order for 2,900 acres. We are also removing additional salvage in proximity of dispersed recreation sites and along open roads. Upon completion of the Wallow West environmental analysis, the Forest Service plans to begin an analysis of another large area for salvage around the communities of Alpine and Nutrioso, Arizona.

Question 19. How does the WMSC fit into the Wallow Fire Recovery effort and the salvage work specifically?

Answer. The WMSC has entered into an agreement to treat the fire salvage trees at zero cost to the Government in a goods-for-services framework. The work to be done includes removal of burned trees in a manner consistent with restoration of this vegetation type, and redistribution of course woody debris to reduce erosion and other potential watershed impacts from the loss of ground cover. Traditional costs of WMSC treating "green" trees generally range upward of $450— $500 per acre. Approximately 287 miles of roadside hazard trees have already been sold competitively, and an additional 250 miles of roadside hazard tree salvage are left to sell.

Task Orders, with Section 18 NEPA, have been issued to WMSC for approximately 5,900 acres of burned over land. The Forest Service will make an anticipated 15,500 acres in Wallow West Project Salvage available to WMSC. Additional salvage within the Wallow Fire, outside the Wallow West area, will be open to competition for bids.

Question 20. What is the Forest Service doing to help communities in the Wallow fire-area recover economically?

Answer. The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest is working diligently to support communities that rely on the Forest for economic livelihood. Roadside salvage sales are supporting local industry and markets in both northeastern Arizona and some communities in nearby New Mexico. Current additional planned salvage will also support local industries in the White Mountains communities.

The Forest reopened popular recreation areas such as Big Lake and Crescent Lake that draw tourists who contribute to local businesses. We worked with Arizona Game and Fish Department shortly after the fire to ensure safe access for hunting within the fire perimeter to support local outfitter and guides.

The Forest made personal use firewood available at $5/cord, reduced from the normal $10 to $20/cord. The Forest Service has completed a damage assessment for trails within the fire perimeter; as a result, we are prioritizing trail repair and maintenance work to accommodate the local users and outfitter guides so popular areas are accessible when the season starts.

Range livestock restocking will occur within the fire area dependent upon resource conditions. The Forest has completed an assessment of all range allotments affected by the fire and is working closely with permittees on appropriate restocking levels that will support the viability of their livestock operations while allowing recovery of the moderate to high severity burned areas. The Forest Service has also purchased and is allocating fencing materials to permittees to assist in the replacement of critical infrastructure required for restocking.

RECREATION FEE PROGRAM

Question 21. The Forest Service has authority from Congress under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act to collect and retain recreation fees from the American public, subject to specific requirements and restrictions. For example, your agency must accept federal interagency passes, including lifetime senior and disable passes, at places where a standard amenity fee is charges.

When your agency contracts with a private concessionaire to manage a federally owned recreation facility, do you require the concessionaire to accept the same federal passes and meet the other requirements that Congress has established?

Answer. Concessionaires are required to honor senior and access passes for a 50 percent discount on camping. This has been a requirement in concession policy for many years and is addressed in Forest Service Directives at 2344.31. It has also been a requirement in prospectuses that offer these campgrounds for concession management. Concessionaires are not required to honor passes for free admission. The Department of Labor deems such a requirement as disqualifying a permit from the Service Contract Act exemption. The concession program relies on the exemption for economic viability.

Further, the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act exempts activities authorized by other statutes from its requirements (16 U.S.C. sec 6813(e)). As campground and related recreation facility concessions are authorized under the Granger-Thye Act they are exempted from the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act.

Question 22. Is it true that some Forest Service concessionaires are being allowed to issue their own private passes to use federal facilities, while refusing to accept federally-issued passes?

What would you say to senior and disabled constituents who say their lifetime passes are not being honored according to the terms they were promised?

Answer. Yes, some concessionaires have issued their own passes, but this practice is not common. Concessionaires are authorized under the Granger-Thye Act. When a potential concessionaire applies for a permit, they submit a proposal that includes their proposed customer charges. This may include various pricing strategies. Since Concessioners are not required to honor passes for free use, a pass proposal would be considered.

AGENCY RUN CAMPGROUNDS

Question 23. Congress granted the Forest Service the authority to retain campground fees so that you could operate these campgrounds using retained revenues. Many constituents tell the Committee they prefer to see federal facilities run by agency employees.

Why aren't you doing that?

Answer. The Forest Service campground concession program is 30 years old. It predates Fee Demonstration and the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act. It began as an experiment to provide services to the public using private concessionaires due to limited agency staff funding budgets. It has grown into a successful industry and the agency no longer maintains the level of staffing to provide these services by the government.

Additionally, when Fee Demonstration started, Congress passed several appropriation provisions that prevented the Forest Service from removing successful business opportunities from the concession program.

Permit fees to be paid to the federal government and the fees charged to the public are two criteria evaluated when concessions compete to be issued a special use permit. Fees typically range between 5 percent and 15 percent of gross revenue, depending on the competitiveness of the facilities offered. Because campground concessions are authorized under the Granger-Thye Act, fees can be and are reinvested in maintenance of the facility improvements.

NINTH CIRCUIT COURT RULING

Question 24. A recent ruling by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals found that the Forest Service has exceeded its authority by requiring fees from people who simply park their vehicle and go for a hike, or who camp in undeveloped parts of a National Forest. The ruling concerned a case on the Coronado National Forest, but you are charging the same kind of fees at hundreds, maybe thousands, of other places too. Based upon statements from the Forest Service that have recently appeared in the press, it appears that the agency has decided that this ruling is not universally applicable throughout the National Forest system and won't be applied everywhere. How can the agency make such a claim in light of the absolutely clear direction provided by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals?

Answer. The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals reversed and remanded the decision of the Arizona District Court. The agency is waiting for the order from the District court.

The Forest Service is taking the Court's opinion very seriously and, prior to the Court's decision, had already been working to improve implementation of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, especially as it pertains to large recreation fee areas, known as high impact recreation areas.

The Forest Service reviewed all large recreation fee areas and in January, prior to the court's decision made preliminary proposals on their future status. Under these proposals, over 75 percent of the current large forest standard amenity recreation fee areas will be eliminated. All of these changes are in line with the Court's decision. Sites will be officially removed from the program following public involvement, including review and recommendation by the local Recreation Resource Advisory Committees, as required by the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act. The remaining 25 percent of the fee areas will be reviewed again in light of the Court's decision.

FOREST PLANNING

Question 25. The forest planning rule preferred alternative asks for permanent buffer zones on ephemeral/intermittent streams. This is of particular concern in a state like Arizona, where seasonal rains create countless temporary streams.

Has the agency considered the potential economic impact to those parties who have permits within these areas?

Answer. Most existing permits for activities within riparian areas already include direction for protection of riparian and water resources.

The Planning Rule does not directly affect any ongoing projects or activities. It establishes a framework for the development, amendment and revision of land management plans. As land management plans are revised using the new planning rule, those activities will be reviewed to ensure that they are consistent with the new plan and to determine whether any changes need to be made to the management activities or to the permit. It is only at that time that economic effect to parties, which have permits within specific areas, could be evaluated.

Question 26. How will the Forest Service enforce these buffer zones?

And what will it cost the agency to provide proper signage to identify the buffer zones?

Answer. The 1982 Planning Rule has been used to develop, amend or revise all land management plans to date and included a very similar requirement to the one in the new Planning Rule. As a result all existing land management plans include direction for protecting or restoring these buffer zone areas. Enforcement under the new rule will be similar to past practices. The Forest Service will ensure that plans

include appropriate direction to meet the intent of the planning rule. Activities on National Forest System lands will be designed to be consistent with the direction included in plans, and monitoring will be conducted to ensure that projects are implemented as they were designed.

The agency does not expect to sign riparian zones unless there is a site specific reason, such as a rare resource or a unique site. The riparian management zones are not an exclusion zone, so signing them would not be a high priority for limited signage funds.

GRAZING PROGRAMS

Question 27. Just last year Congress decided to increase the range/grazing management budget. Would the administration propose to cut that budget by $15 million—reducing it to well below FY 2011 levels?

Answer. The FY 2013 President's Budget proposes $40,380,000 for Grazing Management; a program decrease of $14,976,000 from the FY 2012 enacted appropriation. This budget proposal balances the projected workloads with the need to reduce the national deficit. Funding the Grazing Management Program supports two primary activities: administering livestock grazing use on approximately 90 million acres of National Forest System lands and approximately 10 million acres of private land within grazing allotments; and completing National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis on grazing allotments in accordance with the NEPA schedule established under the provisions of the Rescissions Act of 1995 (P.L. 104-19, section 504). In FY 2013, the administration of permits will be emphasized.

Question 28. How do you propose to keep pace with permit renewals given the NEPA backlog, or deal with ever-increasing litigation costs, while cutting the range budget?

Won't more missed deadlines, due to lack of resources, lead to more litigation—thereby creating a self-perpetuating, vicious cycle?

Answer. The renewal or reissuance of grazing permits is not directly linked to the completion of NEPA process. Permits will be renewed or reissued as quickly as possible. Where an allotment is NEPA sufficient, permits are issued after consultation with the permittee. Where there is insufficient NEPA, the allotment is placed on a schedule for NEPA completion, per the Rescissions Act of 1995, and a permit is issued with the same terms and conditions as the expired permit.

The 1995 Rescissions Act required the Forest Service to establish and adhere to a schedule in order to complete decisions on grazing allotments which require NEPA analysis. In 1996, a schedule was established for 1995 through 2010 which included 6,886 allotments.

In the FY 2004 Appropriations Act, Congress authorized the Secretary to use discretion to set the priority and timing for completing grazing NEPA analysis, the Rescissions schedule notwithstanding. The Rescissions Act does not expire; however, the Rescissions schedule was updated in 2008 and 2010 to ensure that all allotments requiring NEPA process are scheduled. In 2010, the grazing NEPA schedule was updated to incorporate all allotments needing NEPA, including both those allotments that were listed and were not listed on the 1995 schedule. The updated schedule covers the years 2011-2019, with annual review and update as necessary.

LAND ACQUISITION

Question 29. The President has proposed millions of dollars in decreases to programs that provide economic benefits to the country, while simultaneously proposing a $70 million increase to a fund (the Land Water Conservation Fund) to grow the federal estate—$5.4 million for the Forest Service alone.

How does your agency intend to juxtapose an increase in land ownership while keeping pace with management responsibilities? How would you rate your ability to keep up with current land management duties, such as catastrophic wildfire control and grazing permit renewals?

Answer. Land acquisition can reduce management costs by consolidating landownership, avoiding further fragmented development within forest boundaries which can exacerbate fire, insect, and disease management challenges. Land acquisitions sought by the Forest Service have broad support by stakeholders at the local level and ensure water quality, recreational access, wildlife habitat, and other public benefits, including the benefits these acquisitions have on local and regional economies. Land acquisition is one land adjustment tool we have to promote the long-term health and sustainability of the national forests and grasslands and thereby protect taxpayer investments in National Forest System lands.

We continue to have sufficient capacity to keep up with land management duties for grazing permit renewals. In FY 2013, Grazing Management program will em-

phasize administration of permits. Economic conditions for livestock producers continues to rapidly improve due to increases to near record prices for meat, which may create increased demand for grazing use. However, there is very little grazing available for further permitting on National Forest System lands. Forest Service grazing allotments are utilized to the optimum/maximum levels; or in the case of vacant allotments, associated permittee management costs make those allotments uneconomical to use, due to their remote locations and difficult access.

We also continue to have sufficient funds for wildland fire management. In the FY 2013 budget we requested funding in Suppression and FLAME to fully fund the 10-year average of wildfire suppression costs. We have also requested a level of Preparedness funding that fully reflects the cost of readiness resources and program management, including an additional $24 million to pay for the increased costs of modernizing the firefighting large airtanker fleet.

TIMBER MANAGEMENT

Question 30. In a report, "Increasing the Pace of Restoration and Job Creation on the National Forest," you cite 12.5 million acres as needing mechanical treatments, with an increased acreage to 212,000 acres of mechanical treatments in FY 2012. At that pace, it will take 59 years to treat just the 12.5 acres you cite in you in your own report.

Question 31. Is that an acceptable pace, given how far behind the Forest Service is with issues like pine beetles in the Rocky Mountains, drought in Texas, and aspen management in the Lake States?

Answer. Restoration and management of national forests and grasslands are critically needed to address a variety of threats to the health of our forest ecosystems, watersheds, and forest-dependent communities including; fire, effects of a changing climate, insect and disease outbreaks such as Bark Beetle. Increasing the pace restoration and management activities is beneficial to national forests and grasslands and creates or maintains local economies.

The FY 2013 President's Budget proposes $793,124,000 as a single Integrated Resource Restoration (IRR) budget line item (BLI). By realigning funding, IRR focuses agency resources on integrated ecosystem restoration projects. A variety of activities are emphasized under IRR include those necessary to maintain, enhance, or restore watersheds at the landscape level, and statutory activities needed for sound resource management. Working through the IRR Pilot approved for FY 2012, the Forest Service will be positioned to integrate watershed conservation and to increase the pace of restoration of national forests and grasslands creating or maintaining local economic opportunities, jobs, and strengthen partnerships.

The Forest Service is focused on active management and is striving to implement existing programs as well as pursuing a number of agency actions that will increase restoration and resilience of national forest and grasslands though active management. These actions include but are not limited to:

- Expanding Collaboration Landscape Partnerships
- Finalizing and Implementing the Proposed Planning Rule
- Implementing the Watershed Condition Framework
- Implementing Integrated Resource Restoration Budget Line Item
- Improving the Efficiency of the NEPA Process for Restoration
- Implementation of the Agency's Bark Beetle Strategy
- Expanding the use of Stewardship contracting
- Ensuring Improvement of Implementation and Efficiency of Timber and Stewardship Contracts
- Expanding Markets for Forest Products including Woody Biomass Utilization and Green-Building Materials.

In addition to these actions, over the next three years the Forest Service is committed to increasing the number of acres being mechanically treated by 20 percent. This increase would allow the Forest Service to increase the number of acres and watersheds restored, while supporting jobs and increasing annual forest product sales to 3 billion board feet.

Question 32. How will the proposed $75 million reduction in Hazardous Fuels funding affect the pace of restoration?

Answer. The $75 million represents the amount of hazardous fuels program funding proposed to shift to Integrated Resource Restoration (IRR) in FY 2013. These are hazardous fuel funds that have traditionally been spent outside the wildland urban interface (WUI) and for restoration in previous years. These funds are proposed to be shifted into IRR to support integrated restoration and accomplish landscape scale ecosystem restoration, which includes hazardous fuel reduction. The

$241 million requested in the hazardous fuels program will be focused on the Wildland Urban Interface and other high priority areas which also includes restoration work.

Question 33. What steps are you taking to track and then reduce unit costs for the timber sale program?

Answer. Timber sale unit costs are determined by the level of funding appropriated to the forest management program and the timber volume sold in the same fiscal year. The President's FY 2013 proposal for IRR includes funding for forest management and other restoration, enhancement, and maintenance activities. The expected timber volume sold target is 2,800 MMBF. This funding and output level could result in a decrease in forest management unit cost for FY 2013.

Question 34. Do you envision that restoration replacing the goals and objectives in the forest plans that are currently in place?

Answer. The Forest Service's Restoration Policy detailed in the Forest Service Manual chapter 2020 does not replace the Land Management Plans. Land Management Plans (LMPs) guide the management of National Forest System lands so that they are ecologically sustainable and contribute to social and economic sustainability, with resilient ecosystems and watersheds, diverse plant and animal communities, and the capacity to provide people and communities with a range of uses including, timber, grazing, minerals and energy as well as hunting and fishing, recreation, wilderness, and cultural uses.

The goals and objectives of LMPs will include an emphasis on restoration, public involvement, and sustainable management to provide benefits and services both today and for future generations while sustaining the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands.

Restoration and management of the national forests and grasslands are critically needed to address a variety of threats including fire, a changing climate, insects and disease outbreaks like the bark beetle epidemic. The aim of these efforts is to move beyond the functional area resource management towards a shared vision that allows conservationists, the forest industry, local communities and other interests to work together to provide healthier forests, safer communities, and more vibrant local economies.

The direction in the Forest Service Manual 2020 Ecological Restoration and Resilience establishes a comprehensive policy to guide achievement of sustainable management of National Forest System lands in order to continue providing a broad range of ecosystem services.

- Healthy and resilient landscapes have greater capacity to survive natural disturbances and large scale threats to sustainability, especially under changing and uncertain future environmental conditions, such as those driven by climate change and increasing human uses.
- The directive articulates foundational policy for restoration of National Forest System lands and associated resources.

This directive provides the agency additional tools to more effectively address new and existing issues such as adaptation to climate change and increasing threats from wildfires, insects, pathogens, and invasive species.

Question 35. If there are 65-82 million acres of NFS lands in need of restoration, and only 12.5 million of those acres require mechanical treatments, how do you expect to achieve restoration objectives on the acres where mechanical treatment is not required?

Answer. The emphasis of active management in the form of restoration, maintenance, and enhancement of landscapes includes various activities associated with IRR: forest management, range management, wildlife & fisheries habitat management, vegetation & watershed management, hazardous fuels management in non-Wildland Urban Interface (non-WUI) areas, road decommissioning, and activities previously accomplished under the Legacy Roads and Trails and Rehabilitation and Restoration programs. Many of the restoration and management activities involve non-mechanical treatment including reforestation, rangeland improvements, invasive species treatments, terrestrial habitat improved for wildlife, soil and water resource improvements, and non-Wildland Urban Interface fuel treatments.

Question 36. Why not prioritize the acres that need mechanical treatment, and give a lower priority to restoration where mechanical treatments cannot be used?

Answer. The appropriate resource tool either mechanical or non-mechanical can best be used, in a wide variety of circumstances, to achieve the desired resource objectives and will therefore receive prioritization. The Secretary of Agriculture's vision for active forest management advances the role of healthy forests to protect and enhance water resources and to maintain landscape resilience in response to impacts of a changing climate and other stressors. The Integrated Resource Restora-

tion program focuses on landscape scale activities that promote watershed resilience. Active management of national forests and grasslands is critical in addressing threats to health and safety of forest-dependent communities and watersheds. Integrated Resource Restoration enhances the capacity of the agency to increase the pace and scale of restoration activities nation-wide.

Question 37. Chief, does the Forest Service consider acres burned as part of Wildland Fire Use fires to the acres treated under the Hazardous Fuels Reduction Program?

Answer. After the updated "Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy" was approved in February of 2009, the Forest Service issued direction that revised our approach to wildland fire policy implementation. That direction eliminated the "Wildland Fire Use" category of wildland fires.

This change enabled the Forest Service to track acres burned by wildfire, even fires being actively suppressed, that accomplished fuel treatment objectives and met desired conditions described in the applicable land management plan. Acres burned from unplanned natural ignition are assessed to determine if the vegetation and other ecosystem components moved closer to desired conditions described in the Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

If it is determined that the acres burned from naturally-ignited wildfires met the desired conditions in the Forest Land and Resource Management Plan then only through this assessment are the acres allowed to be counted as "acres treated" under the Hazardous Fuels Reduction Program. Human caused wildfires are not considered "acres treated."

Question 38. How many Wildland Fire Use Fires have subsequently become Type 1 incidents in the last 10 years? In other words, are fires that you are letting burn to accomplish resource objectives subsequently endangering communities?

Answer. We have not collected information on the number of "Wildland Fire Use" fires that converted to Type 1 incidents in the past and we are not able to readily produce this information. While a formal data collection system is not in place to track the information requested, we do monitor the occurrence of undesirable outcomes related to the practice of managing certain wildfires for resource benefit, regardless of the Type of the incident, in order to learn from those incidents and improve future performance.

Due to the implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy in 2009 the "Wildland Fire Use" category of wildland fires was abolished. The Forest Service now manages all wildfires with a singular approach where we first establish a protection strategy for those values at risk. Incident objectives, strategies, and tactics can change as the fire spreads across the landscape, due to changes in environmental conditions (weather, vegetation, topography), human influence, land ownership/jurisdiction, planning unit objectives, perceived threats to human safety, predicted threats to property and natural resources, opportunities to achieve resource benefits, and availability of firefighting resources to accomplish the work. Responses to wildfire are also coordinated across levels of government, regardless of the jurisdiction at the ignition.

The agency puts firefighter and public safety as the first priority in every fire management activity and never intentionally endangers communities for the sake of achieving resource benefits. No natural or cultural resource, home, or item of property is worth a human life. All strategies and tactics seek to mitigate the risk to firefighters and the public. We do however, recognize that a policy of full suppression of all wildfires does not eliminate risk, it results in accumulation of hazardous fuels and transfers the risk of damage from wildfires and deteriorated forest conditions to future generations. That said, after all strategies, tactics and objectives are established and risks have been identified and mitigated, undesirable outcomes sometimes still occur when managing wildfires as it is not within our ability to predict every possible weather scenario that could occur over the weeks or months that a fire may be managed. The agency is committed to completing reviews after wildfire incidents to learn from our successes and our failures in the spirit of continuous improvement.

STEWARDSHIP CONTRACTING

Your focus on collaboration is commendable. However, I'm concerned that a continued focus on Collaborative management, IRR and Stewardship is a consequence of a continued de-emphasis on commercial timber sales.

Question 39. Do you agree that commercial timber sales can be just as important and effective at accomplishing resource objectives?

Answer. Forest land managed through timber harvest will continue to play a critical role in restoration, maintenance, and enhancement of national forests and

grasslands. The proposed FY 2013 President Budget proposes to achieve an output of 2,800 MMBF of volume sold and to treat forest lands through timber sale as part of the agency's goal to treat forested land to increase watershed function and resilience.

Question 40. Do you agree on the importance of maintaining the forest products industry infrastructure in the US, as a means for you to accomplish land management objectives and for the jobs and economic contributions in rural communities?

Answer. The Forest Products Industry is important and has the capability and skills that are needed to perform many of the restoration, enhancement, and maintenance resource activities needed which provide jobs and economic benefits to local communities.

Question 41. When you look at all of the funding being brought to the table in CFLRA projects what is your average cost per acre in accomplishing there projects?

Answer. The FY 2013 President's Budget proposes $40,000,000 for the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP). In FY 2011 and FY 2012 this program was funded at $24,950,000 ($14,970,000 from NFS and $9,980,000 from WFM) and $39,936,000, respectively.

These appropriated funds and other funds can be matched with appropriated, permanent and trust, or partnership funds, in-kind contributions, and restoration treatments funded through timber value within a stewardship contract. The CFLRP funds may be used to pay up to 50 percent of the cost of carrying out and monitoring ecological restoration treatments that occur on National Forest System (NFS) lands.

The first projects accomplished were reported nationally in FY 2011 and included the activities listed below. Project implementation and accomplishments are expected to increase in FY 2012 as project analyses are completed. Projects accomplishment types vary from acres improved to stream miles enhanced, and are presented below.

Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Accomplishments

Performance Measure	FY 2011 Actual
Acres of Forest Vegetation established	5,537
Acres of Forest Vegetation improved	20,561
Acres of noxious weed and invasive plants treated	11,393
Miles of stream habitat restored or enhanced	38
Acres of terrestrial habitat enhanced	167,263
Volume of timber sold (MMBF)	121.3
Number of green tons and/or volume of biomass	267,890
Acres of wildland interface (WUI) high priority	77,133
Acres hazardous fuels treated outside (WUI)	45,884
Miles of roads decommissioned	50
Miles of passenger car system reconstruction capital improvement	25
Miles of high clearance system road reconstruction and capital improvement	40

Question 42. What would it cost to treat all 12.5 million acres of Forest Service land you say needs mechanical treatment?

Answer. The FY 2013 President's Budget proposes a wide variety of management activities associated with Integration Resource Restoration including those necessary to maintain, enhance, or restore watersheds at the landscape level, and meet statutory requirements needed for sound resource management. Many of these activities involve non-mechanical treatment including reforestation, rangeland improvements, invasive species treatments, terrestrial habitat improved for wildlife, soil and water resource improvements, and non-Wildland Urban Interface fuel treatments. Also, under the current budget proposal mechanical treatments will play a critical role in accomplishing a variety of resource objectives. However, mechanically treating the 12.5 million as stated in Increasing the Pace of Restoration and Job Creation on Our National Forest would require the equivalent level of funding as proposed for IRR in FY 2013, with the appropriate inflation adjustments, for a minimum of 60 years.

Question 43a. Can you become more efficient as you expand treatment to additional acres? Or would it be more efficient, at least in some cases, to treat acres using commercial timber sales?

Answer. The Forest Service is focused on active management and is striving to implement existing programs as well as pursuing a number of agency actions that will increase restoration and resilience of national forest and grasslands though active management. These actions include but are not limited to:

- Expanding Collaboration Landscape Partnerships
- Finalizing and Implementing the Proposed Planning Rule
- Implementing the Watershed Condition Framework
- Implementing Integrated Resource Restoration Budget Line Item
- Improving the Efficiency of the NEPA Process for Restoration
- Implementation of the Agency's Bark Beetle Strategy
- Expanding Stewardship
- Ensuring Improvement Implementation and Efficiency of Timber and Stewardship Contracts
- Expand Markets for Forest Products including Woody Biomass Utilization and Green-Building Materials.

In addition to these actions, over the next three years the Forest Service is committed to increasing the number of acres being mechanically treated by 20 percent. This increase would allow the Forest Service to increase the number of acres and watersheds restored, while supporting jobs and increasing annual forest products sales.

The Forest Service uses the most cost effective treatment depending on the area involved, the complexities of the project, and whether the treated acres have commercial timber of sufficient value to help offset the cost. Commercial timber sales are an option in some cases while in others stewardship contracting is a better tool.

BIOENERGY

Question 43b. It's my understanding that USDA has a Biobased Marketing Program, called Biopreferred that excludes most forest products from the program. Even while most US forest products are excluded, foreign competitors like bamboo plywood and paneling are included in the program. Given the current state of the US Forest products industry, which has seen over 322,000 jobs lost since 2005, what impact do you think the White House's recent announcement to dramatically increase the use of biobased products, including these foreign products, will have on the US forest products industry and the ability of your forest managers to keep forests healthy?

Answer. Consistent with the intent of its authorizing legislation, the BioPreferred program focuses on new and emerging markets with respect to forest products. The USDA Forest Products Lab—which helps develop innovative ways to use our forests to make new consumer products—works closely with the BioPerferred program to evaluate existing wood-based products for the BioPreferred label. As the supply of large-diameter trees has diminished, more and more engineered wood products (most of which meet the criteria for the BioPreferred program) have been developed to take their place. Such products include cross-laminated timber, finger jointed studs, laminated strand lumber, and structural insulated panels. The President's initiative, Driving Innovation and Creating Jobs in Rural America through Biobased and Sustainable Product Procurement, will spur further use of biobased products, including forestry products.

However, USDA cannot control the subsidies other countries provide for their forest industries. Foreign competition from China, Canada and Scandinavia is an increasing issue for U.S. producers as foreign-based companies are receiving substantial amounts of public funding for new and innovative product platform development that is not being matched in the U.S. This influx of public funding for new product platforms in foreign countries is putting U.S. producers as a disadvantage in the marketplace.

Question 44. Don't you think this will result in further job losses and fewer markets?

Answer. Biomass removals for energy and biobased products provide numerous benefits including improved forest health and productivity as well as economic opportunities for the forest products and other industries. Creating demand for forest biomass results in new revenue opportunities and also reduces fire risk to communities, restores healthy forest landscapes, and can provide new income streams for forest landowners.

In January 2011, the Forest Service Strategic Energy Framework was completed, setting direction and proactive goals to play a significant and long-term role in resolving challenges to energy resources. In FY 2013, sustainable management and utilization options, systems, and practices will continue to be developed to effectively

integrate biomass production into forest management activities. Funding is specifically targeted for programs that encourage market development for biomass materials and the use of forest biomass for energy.

In FY 2013, we will work to develop and implement best management practices for sustainable expanded biomass removal; research new woody crops varieties that are fast growing, stress-resistant, and resource-use efficient; develop and disseminate the best science and technology for short rotation woody cropping systems; improve harvest, collection, handing, and transportation systems; and develop strategies to integrate trees for biomass uses into agricultural landscapes.

- The President's FY 2013 Budget Proposal includes a national target of 2.7 million green tons of biomass and a continued commitment to the woody biomass utilization feedstock supply study.
- The Woody Biomass Grant Utilization Program has harvested and utilized over 3.4 million green tons since 2005.
- The Forest Service uses an IMPLAN database and modeling system (IMpact analysis for PLANning) to carry out regional economic studies of the consequences of Agency decisions and proposed actions. For every 2,000 green tons harvested and utilized, approximately 1 job is created or retained; based on IMPLAN. Over 7 years, the Woody Biomass Grant Utilization Program has created or retained approximately 1,700 jobs.
- We expect that creating demand and utilization for forests biomass will continue to result in new revenue opportunities and also reduce fire risks to communities, restore healthy forest landscapes, and can provide job opportunities in local communities.

FOREST SERVICE BUDGET LINE ITEM ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORTS

Forest Research

In FY 2005 the BLI for Forest Research program shifted from number of products produced to a customer satisfaction based BLI that has range for a high of 78 percent in FY 2005 down to 72 percent.

Question 45. Can you help the Committee understand why the change was made?

Answer. The 2005 estimate of customer satisfaction was a percentage rating and the result of an initial effort based on responses to reader comment cards that were inserted into publications disseminated during the fiscal year, and the percentage was calculated as a simple ratio of responses indicating satisfactory or better to the total of returned comment cards. This was only used for FY 2005.

It was subsequently replaced with the national American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), which is based on a survey of over 10,000 customers across all of FS R&D units and all products and services. The ACSI was developed at the University of Michigan in 1994 and is the leading national indicator of customer satisfaction with U.S. products and services. This proprietary survey employs a patented, proven methodology to measure customer satisfaction. The ACSI scores are reported on a scale of 1—100, with an overall average for industry around 75. The aggregate federal government ACSI score was 69.4 in 2009, 64.6 in 2010, and 66.9 in 2011. ACSI scores for industry and government sectors can be viewed at www.theacsi.org. The FY 2013 target score is 75 in line with the industry average

Question 46. Can you provide documentation of user surveys that support the relatively constant 72 to 75 percent satisfaction numbers reported each year? Can you describe steps that have been taken or are being taken to increase customer satisfaction from the B- range to the B+ or A range?

Answer. We conduct the ACSI survey every three years, beginning in FY 2006, and report the most recent result annually as an index score not a percentage. In the FY 2006 survey, we received an ASCI score of 72, better than the average for Federal agencies of 71. Two actions were identified as having the greatest potential for improving customer satisfaction with Forest Service R&D: (1) focusing on simplifying applications of research results to make them more useful by lay people; and (2) making results more available over the internet. Forest Service R&D has worked to make improvement in both areas, for example, in the period following 2006, Research Stations established science applications leadership positions to focus on improving the effectiveness of technology transfer, and the Forest Inventory and Analysis program improved their on-line information accessible to the public. A user can access datasets and use online data tools through the FIA Spatial Data Services Center, and such use has been made easier and more customer friendly since 2008, leading to increases in retrievals by fourfold over 2007 by 2010. Forest Service R&D began funding a comprehensive eResearch initiative in 2007 which included devel-

opment of web publication retrieval (Treesearch), and data archiving and sharing capability for all research information from data sets to full text.

In FY 2009, we resurveyed our customers, and increased our score to 75. Planning is underway for the 2012 ACSI survey. We will continue to improve mechanisms for our scientists to communicate with customers on a regular basis to fully understand their needs, to improve delivery of our science through enhanced web tools, and to increase the extent and effectiveness of transferring of our technologies and applications.

STATE AND PRIVATE PROGRAMS

Question 47a. Have also undergone a number of changes over the last decade on what data is reported and how that date is reported.

FOREST HEALTH SURVEYS

Question 47b. Both federal land and private land forest health surveys were dropped from the BLI accomplishment reports in FY 2005. Can you explain why this BLI was dropped from the annual Budget Justification documents?

Answer. The Forest Health Management annual output measures in the Budget Justification were changed in FY 2006 to reflect more meaningful measures in addition to streamlining the number of measures being reported on. The acres reported for forest health surveys did not have a high level of accuracy and were not sensitive to budget changes. Thus, regardless of overall funding levels, a similar amount of acres were surveyed from year to year. Funding for surveys are part of the base funding provided to Forest Service field units as well as State partners to support a number of activities including technical assistance and surveys. On average, funding for these activities has remained relatively stable over the last few years. The five-year average or acres surveyed is only three percent less than the 10-year average. The difference can be generally explained by the need (the intent is not to survey all forested areas every year), weather, and logistics.

Question 48. While it appears that the acres surveyed on federal lands were increasing from FY 2002—FY 2004, the number of private land surveys was dropping; can you explain both of those two trend lines and provide the Committee with an estimate of the number of acres surveyed in both categories in FY 2011?

Answer. As reported in the Budget Justification, acres surveyed from FY2002-2004 have generally increased on federal lands while decreasing on cooperative lands. It is difficult to establish a trend line based upon three-years of data due to the focus of the surveys (both specific areas and extent) and the amount of uncertainty in these types of surveys which can affect the number of acres surveyed. Annual surveys are not conducted over all areas every year, but focus specifically on areas where previous damage was noted or suspected of a new pest outbreak. Additionally, some areas of interest are not surveyed in a given year due to unforeseen events such as weather conditions or fires. The number of acres surveyed in 2004 as compared to 2002 was 2.76 percent less (14 million acres), well within the margin of uncertainty. Additionally, the number of acres surveyed in 2003 increased from 2002, but decreased again in 2004 illustrating the variability in the number of acres surveyed from year to year. If plotted on a graph, this data would not indicate either an upward or downward trend.

The Forest Service estimated the number of acres surveyed in 2011 for cooperative lands (State and private) was 392,178,888 acres and for federal lands was 198,228,627 acres. These figures only include aerially surveyed acres and do not include other types of surveys such as trapping or ground surveys.

Question 49. The number of acres of forest health acres protected on Cooperative lands (private and State) has fallen from a high of 1,566,845 acres in FY 2004 to only 625,714 in FY 2011 an average more that 865,207 per year for the decade; what has caused this drop in production?

Answer. There was an error in reporting the 2004 actual accomplishments in the 2006 Budget Justification Overview section on Activity/Output Measures (page F-1). The detailed sections in the document show that 712,165 acres were treated on cooperative lands using Forest Health Management funds (National Fire Plan accomplishments are listed separately) (page 6-9). Comparing 2004 to 2011 treated acres, the difference is 85,451 acres (12 percent fewer acres treated in 2011 than in 2004). The difference was due to treating different pests and using different treatment methods, which can vary from year-to-year.

Question 50. Over the last decade discretionary appropriations for the Forest Service has ranged from $4.8 million to $6.1 million; can you explain why the FY 2011 acres protected is only 40 percent of the decade high and only 72 percent of the decadal average accomplishment for this line item?

Answer. Treated acres using Forest Health Management funds on cooperative lands have been cyclic over the last 10-years. Acres treated peaked in 2002 and again in 2008 due to increases in pest populations, in particular the European gypsy moth. In addition, specific treatment types vary from year to year with corresponding variation in costs and acres treated.

STATE FIRE ASSISTANCE

Question 51. The number of communities receiving State fire assistance has fallen from 16,658 in FY 2007 to only 3,843 communities in FY 2011, yet your recent budget requests have been for less funding rather than more. Why are you not requesting increased communities deserve assistance?

Answer. Although only 3,843 communities were assisted in FY 2011 with regular State Fire Assistance funding, an additional 10,881 communities were assisted in FY 2011 with National Fire Plan State Fire Assistance funding for a total of 14,224 communities assisted.

The level of State Fire Assistance funding requested for FY 2013 will allow State forestry agencies and the Forest Service to continue to provide initial attack capabilities for wildland fires while assisting as many communities as possible with planning and hazardous fuels mitigation projects. State forestry agencies distribute funding to priority areas and projects so that those communities at substantial risk from wildland fire are assisted.

There are numerous communities considered to be at high risk of damage from wildland fire and are primarily located within the Wildland Urban Interface. As a result of funding provided by the State Fire Assistance program, these communities are better able to prepare for, and survive a catastrophic wildland fire. State forestry agencies distribute funding to priority areas and projects. Each State Forester determines the priority areas and projects for funding each year. As such, the number of communities assisted fluctuates from year to year depending on the types of projects selected as priorities. The number of communities assisted will vary based on factors such as the per-acre cost of treatment, number of acres treated per project and type of treatment or planning that is provided. In addition, State Fire Assistance funds can be used for capacity building, fire prevention education, and preparedness activities to help ensure State and local governments continue to reduce fire risk in their communities, and to support firefighting capacity within each State. The level of State Fire Assistance funding requested for FY 2013 will allow State forestry agencies to continue to provide initial attack capabilities for wildland fires while assisting as many communities as possible with planning and hazardous fuels mitigation projects to reduce their risk from wildland fire.

DROPPED BLI'S IN THE ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT

Question 52. The following budget line items were dropped from the annual accomplishment report in the annual budget justifications; please describe why for each of the following: 1) Acres of Stewardship incentive plans accomplished on NIPF lands; 2) forest legacy acres acquired; 3) Urban and Community Forestry number or communities assisted; 4) Economic Action Plans number of communities assisted; and 5) number of Pacific Northwest Economic Community Action plans completed.

Answer. 1) The Forest Service no longer reports on the acres of Stewardship Incentive Plans accomplished on NIPF lands because the Stewardship Incentive Program was not reauthorized in the 2002 Farm Bill. The agency does report on the acres of nonindustrial private forest land that are being managed sustainably under forest stewardship management plans as part of the Forest Stewardship Program.

2) The wording of this measure was changed to be more accurate since the Forest Legacy Program is focused on protecting environmentally important forests threatened by land conversion. This is done not only through fee-simple purchase, but also conservation easement. The measure now reported—"acres of environmentally important forests and grasslands protected from conversion (number of acres added annually)"—is comparable to "forest legacy acres acquired" from prior years.

3) This measure was refined to be more outcome-based by focusing not just on communities simply receiving assistance, but those communities using that assistance to develop or retain established urban and community forest programs as a result of assistance from the Forest Service.

4) The Forest Service no longer reports on this measure because the Economic Action Program is no longer funded.

5) The Forest Service no longer reports on this measure because the Pacific Northwest Assistance Program is no longer funded.

INTERNATIONAL FORESTRY

Question 53. From FY 2002—FY 2006, International Forestry reported 130,000 acres of projects each year; will you provide the Committee with the documentation to show how or why that number never varied? And will you provide the reason that there is no longer a BLI accomplishment reported for International Forestry?

Answer. We believe that the estimate of 130,000 acres of projects per year for International Programs was an estimate made for a single year (presumably FY 2002) that was erroneously carried over to the following fiscal years without being recalculated. This is not a number that we currently track, although we could survey each of our projects to obtain an estimate. Other potential measures of program success include number of countries with active projects, number of organizations and individuals participating in our projects, number of individuals trained number of training days, and status of the natural resources that are the targets of our projects. For example, a major function of our migratory species program is to prevent U.S. breeding species from being listed and to help recover endangered species. To date, none of our targeted species has been listed, and the endangered species upon which we focus the most resources— Kirtland's Warbler— has increased 80 percent in population from 2001 to 2011.

LAND MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Question 54. The number of land management plan revisions and amendments underway in FY 2011 is half or less than the decadal high number and significantly lower than the average number accomplished in the last decade; can you explain why?

a)Similarly, the number of monitoring reports has fallen off to 55 percent of the decadal high and 87 percent of the decadal average, yet funding for the forest planning item has been more constant than the accomplishments would suggest; please explain the reductions and reasons for the reductions.

Answer. All revisions completed during the last decade were done using the 1982 Planning Rule. This was accomplished while new planning rules were being developed for implementation in 2000, 2005 and 2008. Implementation of each of these new planning rules was difficult as a result of litigation. Attempts to transition revisions underway as well as to initiate new revisions resulted in many aborted or delayed planning efforts.

The agency's inventory and monitoring budget funds land management plan monitoring and the reporting of monitoring results. While National Forests and Grasslands are required to report annually on the number of monitoring reports completed, the agency no longer provides this number as part of our budget request. The number of monitoring requirements has been tailored in recent years to better reflect the amount of monitoring work that can be accomplished with a given budget. The number of monitoring requirements that can be addressed in any fiscal year is a function of available funding and the timing requirements for specific monitoring, because not all monitoring is needed on an annual basis. The total number of monitoring requirements can also change as units amend or revise their monitoring plans. These factors have contributed to a reduction in these activities.

LAND MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Question 55. Over the last decade, the following BLI accomplishments have been dropped from the annual Budget Explanatory Notes: 1) number of watershed assessments completed; 2) number of broad scale assessments underway; 3) number of quarter quadrangle completed: please provide justifications for having dropped each of these BLI accomplishment reports.

Answer. The performance measures used in the agency's Budget Justification represent meaningful program activities, outputs and outcomes that support agency goals and objectives. Another desired attribute is that these measures are sensitive to changes in funding. The total amount planned and accomplished will change in response to available funding. The agency periodically evaluates these performance measures to ensure that they meet these objectives and reflect recent changes in policy and program direction.

The two assessment measures referenced above were used to describe two scales of assessments that could be conducted for a variety of purposes. These measures were redefined to reflect the requirements in the 2005 planning rule that emphasized two specific purposes for assessments that could be done at a number of scales: Land Management Plan (LMP) Development Assessments and LMP Implementation Assessments. These two purpose-driven measures were then combined into the current single measure of Assessments Underway which kept the combined

definition but was more reflective of the allocations that did not differentiate between the two purposes. Further refinement of this measure is expected as the agency implements the 2012 Planning Rule.

The agency used the measure "quarter quadrangles" for several years early in the last decade when an emphasis was being placed on improving our geographic information systems (GIS). That objective was met and continued use of that measure was no longer necessary. Geospatial work is now included in the measures for inventories and monitoring.

RECREATION VISITORS

Question 56. The number of visitors to recreational areas maintained to standard has fallen from 112,135,085 in FY 2003 to only 85,575,330 in FY 2011, yet funding for recreation programs have increased over the last decade; can you explain this significant fall off in visitation?

Answer. Visitation to recreation sites has remained fairly constant over the last decade. What has declined is the number of sites maintained to standard. The deferred maintenance backlog for recreation facilities increased from $90 million in 2007 to $115 million in 2010. In 2011, there was a significant deferred maintenance reduction to $109 million due largely to American Recovery and Reinvestment Act investments. However, the trend of increasing deferred maintenance backlogs will continue upward as facilities age.

VISITOR DAYS

Question 57. In FY 2006 the agency stopped reporting in the BLI accomplishment report on the number of visitor days of use in the general forest area that were administered to standard, why? Could you provide an estimate of the number of visitor days of use in the general forest area in FY 2011?

Answer. Past reports on this metric (visitor days to general forest areas maintained to standard) were only approximations. The agency has started to focus on actual inventory (recreation sites) that can be measured.

In FY 2010, general forest area visitation was more than 106 million visits. The FY 2011 visitation results will be released by the end of April.

WILDERNESS AREAS ADMINISTERED TO STANDARD

Question 58. In FY 2011 the agency reported that 220 Wilderness Areas were administered to standard. That is 240 percent above average and nearly double the previous high for the decade. 1) How many wilderness areas does the Forest Service administer? 2) How was this magnificent increase in production accomplished? 3) Were the standards changed to accomplishment and if so how?

Answer. 1) The Forest Service currently administers 439 wilderness areas.

2) In FY 2003, the Chief and National Leadership Team approved the 10-Year Wilderness Stewardship Challenge, with the stated goal of having all wildernesses in existence at that time meet the minimum stewardship level by 2014, to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act. The Challenge consists of ten elements of importance to wilderness stewardship and with broad applicability across the nation— including the identification and treatment of invasive plants, the management of recreation impacts, and development and implementation of wilderness education plans.

Since the official start of the Challenge in FY 2005, the Forest Service has steadily improved the number of wilderness areas meeting standard; increasing from 48 Wilderness areas in FY 2005 to 220 in FY 2011.?

FISCAL YEAR	# OF WILDERNESS AREAS	# OF WILDERNESS AREAS MEETING STANDARD	% OF WILDERNESS AREASMEETING STANDARD
2011	439	220	50.1%
2010	439	176	40.1%
2009	419	128	30.5%
2008	418	102	24.4%
2007	407	67	16.5%
2006	406	61	15.0%
2005	406	48	11.8%

The FY 2011 accomplishment of managing 220 wilderness areas to standard is 91 percent above the seven year average of 115 wildernesses and is a 25 percent improvement over the previous high of 176 wilderness areas in FY 2010.

Accomplishment reporting prior to FY 2005 and the start of the Challenge is not reliable due to the number of refinements that were made to the performance measure during that time as it was being pilot-tested.

This significant improvement has been accomplished over the past seven years through the concerted and focused effort of many people, including:

- Improved skill base enhanced through training sessions and "toolboxes" on the Internet for sharing examples of plans;
- Additional national funding provided to the Regions and National Forests for making progress on the Challenge, totaling $1.52 million in FY 2011 and $2.92 million in FY 2012;
- An energized and focused volunteer community, funded in part by stewardship grants provided by the National Forest Foundation; and
- Increased attention of Regional Foresters, Forest Supervisors and District Rangers on the goals of the Challenge.

(3) Other than minor changes in terminology, the elements and scoring instructions have not changed appreciably since the start of the Challenge in FY 2005. The only substantive change occurred in FY 2008 when the element tracking Baseline Workforce was expanded to consider the contribution from volunteers and other partner groups.

GRAZING ALLOTMENTS ADMINISTERED TO STANDARD

Question 59. The number of grazing allotments administered to standard has fallen to 55 percent of the decadal high and only 75 percent of the decadal average, yet you have requested a funding cut in the grazing line item, why?

Answer. The FY 2013 President's Budget proposes $40,380,000 for Grazing Management and will place greater emphasis on the administration and monitoring of existing grazing permits. By focusing on administration and monitoring of allotments, we are able to recognize and proactively address those areas where resource management concerns are developing, which will help to alleviate administrative actions after the fact. The proposal includes the administration of 27,000,000 acres to 100 percent of standard, a decrease of 2,845,420 acres from the FY 2012 budget estimate.

The Allotment Acres Administered to 100 percent of Forest Plan Standards performance measure reflects the level of permit administration effort relative to implementing all grazing management direction prescribed in land management plans, project level NEPA decisions, grazing permits or agreements, and other relevant documents. Administering allotments to standard assures that management decisions identified during the NEPA process are implemented and desired outcomes are achieved, or are adjusted if initial actions are not effective. Although all grazing allotments are administered, priority is placed on administering allotments with known critical resource issues, such as management of habitat for endangered species.

THE NUMBER OF GRAZING ALLOTMENT DECISION

Question 60. Signed in FY 2011, it is an all-time low. The FY 2011 level is only 29 percent of the highest accomplishment level in the last decade. Is this because the agency has worked through its backlog of grazing permits needing to be updated? Please provide a compelling reason to reduce the grazing budget for FY 2013 in light of this accomplishment report.

Answer. The FY 2013 President's Budget proposes $40,380,000 for the overall grazing program, and places a greater emphasis on the administration and monitoring of existing grazing permits. The proposal includes the completion of grazing NEPA analysis and decisions for 125 grazing allotments, a reduction of 88 from the target of 213 allotments for FY 2012. The planned accomplishment level reflects an anticipated increase in NEPA analysis unit costs, due to many controversial and complex allotments in need of NEPA and other analysis for allotments that remain on the Rescissions Act Schedule. Effective NEPA analysis and decisions ensure that livestock grazing strategies are designed to provide for the restoration and long-term sustainability of rangeland vegetation and dependent resources while continuing to provide essential goods and ecosystem services. The provisions of the Rescissions Act of 1995 (P.L. 104-19, section 504) provide the agency with the ability to quickly renew, reissue, and issue new grazing permits without breaks in the permitting of grazing.

NUMBER OF TIMBER SALE NEPA DOCUMENTS

Question 61. Until FY 2005, the agency reported on the number of timber sale NEPA documents through appeals and litigation. 1) Why was that metric eliminated from the BLI reports? 2) How many timber sale NEPA Documents that went through the appeals and litigation gauntlet were signed in FY 2011?

Answer. We constantly evaluate our measures and make changes as appropriate to better track our accomplishments and outputs, as described in our answer to question #55 above. The agency decided in 2005 that it was no longer necessary to track and report on this metric. The number of timber sale NEPA documents appealed in FY 2011 was 45, or 17 percent of the 268 decision documents signed. A total of 4 of these project decisions have been litigated to-date.

MINING OPERATIONS

Question 62. The number of mineral operations administered to standard was only 80 percent of the decadal high in FY 2011; likewise the number of mineral operations where the permit requested was completed was only 66 percent of the decadal high and finally, the number of geological reports completed was only 34 percent of the decadal average accomplishment in FY 2011. Can you explain why the production levels are falling off and why the President's budget request doesn't increase funding for these programs?

Answer. The actual number of active operations and applications we receive each year can vary significantly due to market influences and variable demand for mineral resources from NFS lands. Similarly, the scope, urgency, and competing priorities such as wildfires can result in significant variations in the number of geologic reports we complete each year.

We must be efficient and effective in meeting our mission and delivering services to the American people. The Forest Service has pursued efficiencies and cost controls to ensure funding is directed to land management activities on the ground and to public services. The agency is responsive to guidance to promote efficient spending, cut waste, improve processes, and control costs in order to operate in a reduced budget environment.

With our requested FY 2013 funding we will emphasize environmental review of proposed operations, including processing the backlog of oil and gas lease applications. Other priorities will include inspection and monitoring of ongoing mineral operations, providing professional expertise to ensure watershed health and public safety, and managing significant geologic resources.

WILDLAND FIRE PREPAREDNESS—CHAINS FOR FIRE LINE BUILT PER HOUR

Question 63. Up until four years ago, both the budget request and the BLI accomplishment report indicated how many chains (distance) of fire line could be built given the proposed budget and how many were constructed given the Congressional funding in past years.

Why did the agency stop reporting this accomplishment?

Answer. Past years reporting on Firefighting Production Capability (FFPC) represents the total fireline building capability of all planned resources (personnel and equipment) if they are all deployed at one time, which is an extremely rare event. The agency now reports the number of total resources, by type, available to the agency to support national suppression operations throughout the fiscal year, not the amount of fireline that can be produced. Fireline production is dependent on several fire event specific factors to include location, topography, and weather which can cause fireline production capacity to vary significantly. This new approach eliminates the variability and provides more useful information and measurement to evaluate sustained national capability.

Question 64. How many chains of fire line construction will the FY 2013 budget request accomplish if the request is fully funded?

Answer. As discussed previously, FFPC is not an accurate or meaningful measure of the agency's capability to sustain national operations throughout the fiscal year. There is tremendous variability in the production of any given resource since it is dependent on weather, terrain, and actual fire conditions. Establishing generalities for these factors further reduces the meaning of this measure.

The Forest Service does however maintain an estimate of FFPC for FY 2013 of 15,300 chains of fireline.

FIRE SUPPRESSION—GROSS COST PER ACRE

Question 65. In FY 2007, the agency stopped reporting on the gross cost of fire suppression per acre. Why was that reporting stopped? Please provide that data for

FY 2008—2013 in actual costs for FY 2008—2011 and estimated for FY 2012 and FY 2013.

Answer. The Forest Service's suppression performance measures are now program outcome and efficiency measures that focus on reducing fire risk. To help analyze suppression costs the agency uses an efficiency measure that compares actual costs to expected suppression costs via a stratified cost index (SCI).

SCI is a set of predictive models based on spatially explicit historical large fire data from 1995-2004. SCI determines expected suppression costs for each fire utilizing several factors found to influence suppression costs. Fires with costs more than one standard deviation higher or lower than expected are considered outside the range of expected SCI costs. In real time, the SCI provides a comparison of a fire's expenditures to historical fires with similar characteristics (including fuel type, slope, elevation, and total housing value), increasing cost awareness and providing a basis for fire incident budgeting. SCI is also used to monitor mid- and long-term suppression expenditure trends.

The following data for FY 2008 through FY 2011, assumes that gross cost per acre is based on only acres burned that is owned or protected by the USFS. Estimates for FY 2012 and FY 2013 are based on acres and costs maintaining their rolling 10 year average.

Year	Gross Cost Per Acre
2008	$654
2009	$1,222
2010	$3,869
2011	$1,375
2012	$792 estimate
2013	$720 estimate

TIMBER SALVAGE SALE TRUST FUND

Question 66. Up until FY 2002, the Forest Service regularly reported on both the number of timber sales offered within this program and the amount of volume harvested by this program.

The agency stopped reporting the harvests from the timber salvage sale trust fund in FY 2003, information that helps the public understand how much of the sold material was still commercial by the time the sale was offered. Can you help the Committee understand why this was stopped and provide suggested Appropriations language to ensure the Forest Service provides this information in the future?

Answer. The Forest Service tracks the amount of volume that is sold through salvage sales in the Timber Salvage Sales Trust Fund. This information is available in the FY 2013 Budget Justification in the Permanent Appropriations section and in the Periodic Timber Sale Accomplishment Report which contains information on timber volumes by years (http://www.fs.fed.us/forestmanagement/documents/ptsar/2012/Q1_2012_PTSAR_SW.pdf).

BUDGETS AND NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

Question 67. From FY 2002 through FY 2012 the highest total budget (discretionary, mandatory, and emergency supplemental, including ARRA funding) was $7.0 billion. The lowest was in FY 2002 at $.47 billion and the ten year average was $6.0 billion. During that same time the number of Full Time Equivalents ranged from a high of 36,740 in FY 2010 to a low of only 33, 203 in FY 2003.

If your overall budget in FY 2012 was only 79 percent of the highest budget in FY2010, why is the agency number of full time equivalents fully 92 percent in FY2012 compared to FY 2012?

Answer. The overall budget level in FY 2012 is $5,584,586 as shown in the FY 2013 Budget Justification. This is approximately 91 percent of the total budget in FY 2010 which was $6,113,658. Full-time equivalents (FTE) for FY 2012 are 33,824 which are approximately 95 percent of the FTE level in FY 2010 which was 35,639. The decline in FTE levels between FY 2010 and FY 2012 is consistent with the decline in budget between these years.

Question 68. How is it that the agency supported 36,704 full time equivalents in FY 2002 on a total budget of only $4.7 billion, yet it can only support 33,824 FTE's on a budget of $5.58 billion in FY 2012?

Answer. Many factors contribute to the level of full-time equivalents that the budget supports in any given program and year (e.g. size of the workforce, type of work, grade level and salary, contracts, or grants and agreements). In addition, com-

paring full-time equivalents for mandatory appropriations is not entirely consistent between 2002 and 2012 due to differences in accounting for full-time equivalents for working capital funds, reimbursable and allocation accounts within appropriations. This was separated in the displays starting in the FY 2005 Budget Justification.

The discretionary fund and type of work associated with FTEs account for the largest difference between years. As shown in the table below, from FY 2002 to FY 2012, appropriation levels increased for the Forest and Rangeland Research and National Forest System appropriations, but FTE levels decreased. This is due to a number of increasing costs for personnel compensation and benefits, contracts, and fixed expenses such as rent. Over the same period, the Wildland Fire Management appropriation level increased as well as the FTEs. This is due to increased work associated with preparedness, suppression and hazardous fuels activities. All of the other appropriations and corresponding FTE levels have decreased in the 2002 to 2012 comparison.

Appropriation	2002 Levels	2002 FTEs	2012 Levels	2012 FTEs
Forest and Rangeland Research	241,304	2,494	295,300	1,975
State and Private Forestry	291,221	909	252,926	492
National Forest System	1,331,439	17,094	1,554,137	11,340
Wildland Fire Management	1,560,349	9,504	1,974,467	12,078
FLAME	0	0	315,381	0
Capital Improvement and Maintenance	546,188	4,175	394,089	2,591
Land Acquisition	151,045	109	53,701	61
Other	8,870	43	5,875	26
Total Discretionary	4,130,416	34,328	4,845,876	28,563
Mandatory	664,526	2,376	738,710	5,261
Grand Total	$4,794,942	36,704	5,584,586	33,824

Source: FY 2004 Budget Justification; and FY 2013 Budget Justification

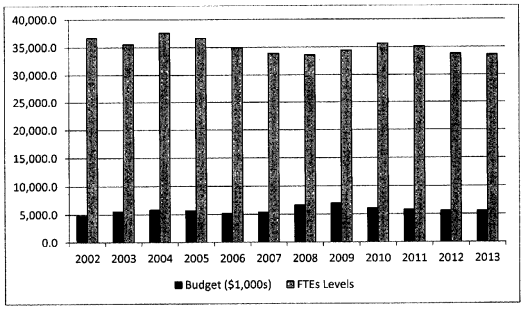
Question 69. When FY 2003 is compared with the FY 2012 budget and FTE numbers a proportion would suggest the agency's FY 2012 budget would have supported approximately 27,976 FTE's. Likewise, when the FY 2009 budget of $7.0 billion and its 34,395 FTE's is compared, it would suggest the FY 2012 FTE number would have been on 27,187 FTEs. Can you explain why the Forest Service continues to carry 33,824 FTEs in FY 2012 and is recommending 33,597 FTE for FY 2013 on a budget request of only $4.8 billion?

Answer. The Forest Service is committed to managing costs and staffing levels commensurate with the work needed in a reduced budget environment. The following table displays the overall budget totals compared to the total number of full-time equivalents since 2002.

Year	Budget	FTEs
2002	4,794,942	36,704
2003	5,532,318	35,547
2004	5,817,455	37,548
2005	5,712,070	36,631
2006	5,173,142	34,907
2007	5,418,864	33,912
2008	6,632,336	33,623
2009	7,004,432	34,395
2010	6,113,658	35,639
2011	5,858,625	35,089
2012	5,584,586	33,824
2013	5,538,442	33,597

Source: Budget Justifications FY 2004 through FY 2013, enacted levels.

As shown by the display below, although FTE levels have varied over the last ten years, the FY 2012 FTEs level (33,824) is at the lowest level since 2002. FY 2009 was relatively higher due to short-term employment associated with the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The budget levels have also varied over the last ten years. FY 2013 proposed levels are close to the same as the level in FY 2003, yet FTEs will be reduced from 35,547 in 2003 to 33,824 in 2012. The estimate for FY 2013 is based on the proposed level of appropriations and mix of activities to accomplish the program of work. FTEs would be further decreased to 33,597 in line with declining budgets.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Budget ($1,000s)
FTEs Levels

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