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WILDFIRE AND FOREST MANAGEMENT

OVERSIGHT HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS
AND ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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OVERSIGHT HEARING ON "WILDFIRE AND FOREST MANAGEMENT"

Thursday, July 11, 2013
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, D.C.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:05 a.m., in room 1334, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Rob Bishop [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Bishop, Lamborn, McClintock, Tipton, Labrador, Amodei, Daines; Grijalva, DeFazio, Tsongas, Shea-Porter, and Garcia.

Also Present: Representatives Hastings, Gosar; and Kirkpatrick.

Mr. BISHOP. All right, we welcome you here. We are still waiting for a couple of Members to join us. And it is one of those areas where parliamentary games on the Floor will actually maybe help us get this hearing rolling along. So I hope they continue what they are doing.

But we welcome all of you who are here. This hearing today is going to explore how we implement something that I consider needs to be a paradigm shift of how we handle the issue of wildfires and the management of our Federal lands.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. ROB BISHOP, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF UTAH

Mr. BISHOP. Last year's fire season we saw the third most acres burned since 1960. And the recent tragic events in Arizona and the catastrophic fires that were almost record-setting in Colorado simply teach us the painful lesson that the status quo is simply not acceptable. We have to come up with a different way of doing what we are doing.

To me, decades of failed policies, the kinds of hands-off management that we have had, have left our forests in what I consider to be an unnatural and definitely an unhealthy state. And they have become a threat to those who are forced to be neighbors of our Federal lands.

So, we are adding volumes of material to our forests at the rate of 30 percent each year. That is easily complicating the problems that we have, and will complicate the debate and discussion we have on the issue. The equation is actually very simple. We can't control the weather, we can't control sparks that fly here and there, but what we can control are the fuel loads that are now doubling every 3 years on public lands, on Federal lands.

We are going to hear from witnesses today about what they are doing right in trying to minimize the risk of catastrophic wildfire, and what the Federal Government should be doing to achieve those same kinds of results. We are going to be hearing that Tribes and

local governments are able to sustain and manage their lands and create a healthy forest, as well as creating jobs, and that is the business that we should be able to get back into. We should return to the policies of what the Forest Service had when it was originally established.

We need to thin our forests, we need to have a sustainable response, we need to protect our wildlife habitat and our watersheds, put people back to work to sustain local economies, and we can do that at the same time that we protect our environment. This is not anti-environment, it is simply a common-sense approach that is needed. If we don't do it, Mother Nature will. And I think we found out that Mother Nature is not always as rational as mankind is.

So, we need to look to the future. We need to, in some respects, think outside the box to come up with new ways of handling a problem, which apparently continues to exacerbate. We have to find a solution to this, and we have to find a solution very, very quickly.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bishop follows:]

Statement of The Honorable Rob Bishop, Chairman, Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation

This hearing today continues to explore how we can implement—something I've been focusing on for quite a while now—a paradigm shift in federal lands management. Last year's fire season saw the third most acres burned since 1960, and this year's season has so far brought more than enough tragedy, particularly with the events last week in Arizona and the record-setting fires in Colorado. This painful status quo is simply unacceptable.

Decades of failed policies and hands-off management of our federal forests have left these lands in an unnatural, and unhealthy state. The federal government has not only become an absentee landlord, but has allowed the federal estate to become a threat to those forced to be its neighbor.

Our national forests are currently adding volume at a rate of 30% each year. While some try to complicate this debate to justify a lock-it-up-and-throw-away-the-key approach to managing our federal lands, the equation is actually very simple—we cannot control the weather, and we cannot control the next stray spark that will ignite a fire, but we can control the fuel loads that are currently doubling every three years.

We will hear from our witnesses about what they are doing right when it comes to protecting themselves from the risk of catastrophic wildfire and what the federal government should be doing to achieve the same results. As past hearings in this subcommittee have highlighted, states, tribes, and local governments are able to sustainably manage their lands, have healthy forests, and create jobs. That's the business that we should also be getting back to, and the purposes for which our national forests were established.

Again, this is not a new issue, and not a new solution. We need to thin the forests, and we can do so in a manner that is sustainable, responsible, protects wildlife habitat and watersheds, and puts people to work and supports local economies at the same time. It is not anti-environment to do so, it is commonsense. If we do not, Mother Nature will only continue to remove fuel on her own, with the same disastrous results that we are witnessing now.

I thank our witnesses for joining us today and I look forward to their testimony. I now turn to our Ranking Member for his opening statement.

Mr. BISHOP. With that, I will yield to the Ranking Member for any opening statement he has, and then to our good Chairman for an opening statement, as well.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. RAÚL M. GRIJALVA, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ARIZONA

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate it. And welcome to our colleague—singular, at this point—for being here, and to the witnesses later.

It has been less than 2 weeks since we lost 19 heroic firefights in Arizona. These brave responders from the Granite Mountain Hotshots were only laid to rest 2 days ago. And the tragedy of their loss is still in the minds of their families, friends, and the communities in Arizona, and, frankly, across the Nation. I attended a previous vigil for these firefighters last week, and my thoughts and prayers continue to go to their families, who are, honestly, the people most affected by this loss.

While wildfire and forest management are issues that this Committee has an obligation to address, I would ask for a delay of this hearing, and didn't want the lost lives of these brave men to become part of a kind of tired and predictable debate we are going to have regarding the role of logging and wildland fire prevention and assorted topics. The hearing was not postponed. And reading some of the testimony, I think we are still going to deal with some of the politicized and polarized issues that I had hoped we would have more time to get to and allow the tragedy to settle in.

Forest management is a volatile issue, even without this tragic loss of life or terrible fire seasons. It gets even more volatile when you combine the state of our forests with the state of the Congress. We have failed miserably to address this issue and provide the agencies with resource and tools they need to address this critical issue.

Next week I will meet with a delegation from Arizona State Parks to discuss—that was one of the agenda items they asked to talk about—the lack of Federal funding for fire suppression, mitigation, and the main challenges that they face during wildfire season. We can't starve Federal and State agencies of resources they need and expect them to complete all the work that needs to be done, and provide a safe balance. If thinning is the issue, projects are backlogged, the resources are not there, cooperative agreements with communities are done, but can't be executed.

We also cannot ignore the role of climate change in prolonging and intensifying the fire season. Increased heat, less rain, more frequent extreme weather events added 2 months to the fire season in the Southwest.

Despite universal agreement at the beginning of this year that wildfire prevention would be a top priority for this new Congress, we have yet to move legislation. Oversight hearings held this Congress and last Congress identified two tools that agencies needed to address wildland fire risk: stewardship contracting and good neighbor authority. We hope that, as a consequence of this hearing, Mr. Chairman, those items will once again have an opportunity to be fully discussed by the Committee and an opportunity to move forward.

We might never reach agreement on broader forest management policy, but certainly we can find common ground on these two issues, and then move forward. As we sit here today and talk about the work that needs to be done in the forest and all the failures

of Federal land managers, and all the harassing lawsuits by renegade environmental groups, we need to think about what we have failed to do to find a bipartisan answer to move forward. With the forest restoration initiative in Arizona, Federal and State agencies, conservation groups, timber companies, and other local stakeholders have found a collaborative way to move forward. This is the sort of model we need to explore, not a blanket waiver of environmental review and oversight.

I am encouraged by the common ground that has been found in those four Federal forests, and I hope that we can continue to hold up that progress as we continue this important discussion.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Grijalva follows:]

Statement of The Honorable Raúl M. Grijalva, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation

It's been less than two weeks since we lost 19 heroic firefighters in Arizona. These brave servicemen from the Granite Mountain Hotshots were only laid to rest two days ago, and the tragedy of their loss is still raw in the minds of their families, friends, and in communities around Arizona and across the nation.

I attended a vigil for these firefighters last week and my thoughts and prayers continue to go out to their loved ones.

While wildfire and forest Management are issues that this committee has an obligation to address, I asked to delay today's hearing. I do not want the lost lives of these brave men to become part of a tired and predictable debate regarding the role of logging in wildland fire prevention.

The hearing was obviously not postponed, and based on some of the testimony presented to the committee, my concern was legitimate—the issue remains as politicized and polarized as ever.

Forest management is a volatile issue even without the tragic loss of life or terrible fire seasons.

It gets even more volatile when you combine the state of our forests with the state of Congress.

We have failed miserably to address this issue and provide the agencies with the resources and tools they need to address the issue.

I met with a delegation from Arizona State Parks, and they told me that lack of federal funding for fire suppression and mitigation is the main challenge they face during wildfire season.

We can't starve federal and state agencies of the resources they need, and expect them to complete all of the work that needs to get done.

We also cannot ignore the role of climate change in prolonging and intensifying the fire season. Increased heat, less rain, and more frequent extreme weather events added two months to the fire season in the Southwest.

Despite universal agreement at the beginning of the year that wildfire prevention should be the top priority in the new Congress, this Committee has failed to move legislation.

Oversight hearings held this Congress and last Congress identified two tools the agencies need to address wildland fire risk—stewardship contracting and good neighbor authority.

We have tried repeatedly to get these two things through this committee and have failed.

We might never reach agreement on broader forest management policy, but certainly we can find common ground on these two issues and move them forward.

As we all sit here today and talk about all the work that needs to be done in the forests, and all the failures of federal land managers, and all of the harassing lawsuits by renegade environmental groups—we need to think about what we have failed to do—on a bipartisan basis.

With the Four Forest Restorative Initiative in Arizona, federal and state agencies, conservation groups, timber companies, and other local stake holders have found a collaborative way to move forward. This is the sort of model we need to explore, not blanket waivers of environmental review and oversight. I'm encouraged by the common ground that's been found on those 4 federal forests, and I hope we can continue to hold up that progress as we continue this important discussion.

With that, I thank the witnesses and yield back my time.

Mr. GRIJALVA. With that, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And thank you and I yield back.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you. We are happy to have the Chairman of the full Committee with us. We will turn to Chairman Hastings for an opening statement, and then perhaps an introduction.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. DOC HASTINGS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

The CHAIRMAN. I will do that. Thank you very much. And, Mr. Chairman, thank you for having this hearing.

This Subcommittee will hear testimony on an issue that is of utmost importance to communities across the Nation, including those in the Central Washington district that I have the honor to represent. Each year, wildfires in our Nation's Federal forests damage or destroy millions of acres across the United States. Catastrophic wildfire is a growing problem. Last year, a senior Forest Service official testified before our Committee that 65 million acres of forest lands are at "high risk of wildfire." Unfortunately, their response to that has been, in my view, inadequate. Already this year, we've seen record-breaking fires in Colorado, the tragic deaths of 24 firefighters, and hundreds of homes lost.

Now, we know there will always be drought, there will always be heat spells, and there will always be a fire that is out of our control. While our hearts are with the families and communities affected by wildfire and those who put themselves in harm's way to protect us from it, an ounce of cure is worth a pound of prevention. And what must be cured are the overgrown and unhealthy forests that are in many cases providing the fuel for these fires.

Common sense management to remove excess forest growth can be implemented effectively and responsibly. And a side benefit is that it would create jobs, it would protect communities. And unfortunately, the Federal entities are simply not doing that.

And let me give you an example in my home State of Washington. The Washington State Department of Natural Resources has already harvested more than 10 million board feet of salvage timber from lands that burned in last year's fire season. And the total acreage that was burned in Washington State was 68,000 acres. So they got 10 million board feet of salvage from 68,000 acres. In contrast, the U.S. Forest Service in Washington State has never conducted salvage on any of the 300,000 acres that burned in Washington State.

Much of this Federal inaction is caused by the Forest Service's fear of lawsuits by environmental groups, using the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA, to block local, State and Federal timber fuels reduction and thinning projects.

Our forests, communities, and species deserve better than being placed at continual and increasing risk of catastrophic wildfires and this Committee and this Subcommittee will continue working toward policies that force Federal land managers to follow their statutory responsibilities to improve forest health to protect these lands and local economies.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hastings follows:]

Statement of The Honorable Doc Hastings, Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources

Today, this Subcommittee will hear testimony on an issue that is of utmost importance to communities across this nation, including those in the Central Washington state district that I have the honor to represent. Each year, wildfires in our nation's federal forests damage or destroy millions of acres across the United States.

Catastrophic wildfire is a growing problem. Last year, a senior Forest Service official testified before our Committee that 65 million acres of Forest Service lands are at "high risk of wildfire." Their response has been woefully inadequate. Already this year, we've seen record-breaking fires in Colorado, the tragic deaths of 20 firefighters, and hundreds of homes lost.

There will always be drought, there will always be heat spells, and there will always be fire that is out of our control. While our hearts are with the families and communities affected by wildfire and those who put themselves in harm's way to protect us from it, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and what must be cured are the overgrown and unhealthy forests that are in many cases providing the fuel for these fires.

Common sense management to remove excess forest growth can be implemented effectively and responsibly, while creating jobs, protecting communities, and reducing the soaring costs of wildfire suppression. Many non-federal entities are doing just that.

For example, the Washington Department of Natural Resources already harvested more than 10 million board feet of salvage timber from lands that were burned in last year's fire season, and continues to produce timber from its state trust lands. In contrast, the U.S. Forest Service in Washington state never conducted salvage on any of the 300,000 acres of burned land that it manages.

Much of this federal inaction is caused by the Forest Service's fear of lawsuits by environmental groups, using the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act to block local, state and federal timber fuels reduction and thinning projects.

Our forests, communities, and species deserve better than being placed at continual and increasing risk of catastrophic wildfires and this Committee will continue working toward policies that force federal land managers to follow their statutory responsibilities to improve forest health to protect these lands and local economies.

I welcome Phil Rigdon, who is with us today to testify on behalf of the Yakama Nation and also on the recently-released, third report from the Indian Forest Management Assessment Team. The Yakama manage one of the few remaining saw mills in the State of Washington and manage over 400,000 acres of timber on their 1.3 million acre reservation. For comparison and an illustration of the current problem, the 400,000 acres under the care of the Yakama is twice the total amount of acres that the Forest Service harvests nationwide in a year.

As Deputy Director of the Yakama Department of Natural Resources, Phil Rigdon oversees responsible and sustainable management that keeps their forests healthy and reduces the risk of fire. It's a lesson that our federal land management agencies can, and should, learn from.

I thank Phil for making the long trip from Washington, as well as our other witnesses for being here today and I look forward to their testimony on how we can protect our forests from the growing threat of catastrophic wildfire.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, Mr. Chairman, on the second panel you will have Mr. Phil Rigdon, who is with us here to testify on behalf of the Yakama Nation in my district, and also on the recently released, third report from the Indian Forest Management Assessment Team.

By way of background, the Yakamas manage one of the few remaining forest mills, or saw mills, in the State of Washington. And they manage over 400,000 acres of timber on their 1.3 million acre reservation. Another comparison. That 400,000 acres that is under the care of the Yakamas is twice the amount of acres that the Forest Service harvests nationwide.

Mr. Rigdon is the Deputy Director of the Yakama Department of Natural Resources, and he has the responsibility to oversee sustainable management that keeps his forests healthy and so forth.

So, I want to thank, ahead of the panel two that will be here, Mr. Rigdon for coming across the country. And, obviously, the Committee looks forward to his testimony.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, I will yield back.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate that. I appreciate your witness for being here, and for the introduction.

Our first panel—Ms. Kirkpatrick, you may feel like you are alone down there, but you are not. There are other Members, they are just not sitting by you. Nothing personal. But we have other Members who are on here.

Mr. Lamborn has asked to testify. He is also chairing another meeting at this moment. So I would like to ask him to go first, his testimony. And then, obviously, if you have to leave us for a secondary committee, fine—that you happen to chair—fine, you can do that, we will understand.

Mr. Lamborn, you are recognized.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. DOUG LAMBORN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF COLORADO

Mr. LAMBORN. Thanks for your understanding, and I will be back as soon as I can. And thank you for your indulgence, and thank you for calling this important hearing to examine the need for increased forest management to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires.

It is clear that our national forests are in an unhealthy and dangerous state that poses an extreme risk to public safety, water supply, and wildlife, resulting in larger and more intense wildfires. This year marks the second consecutive year that my home State of Colorado and my congressional district has experienced record-setting fires in terms of property lost in a single wildfire.

Last year, the Waldo Canyon fire destroyed 347 homes and killed 2 people. This year the Black Forest fire tragically claimed about 500 homes and 2 lives. I could see the fire, the smoke, from my house. And you could tell when it was burning wood, because it was white smoke, and you can tell when a house was going up in flames because it would be black smoke. A tragedy.

Since the beginning of the year, there have been more than—however, the community has really come together, and I think that is one silver lining on the cloud. Since the beginning of the year there have been more than 25,000 fires across the country. Currently, 22 active large fires are burning across 11 States. These have burned a total of 1.9 million acres. Last year's fire season burned a total of 9.3 million acres, the third worst fire season on record for acreage.

Colorado and other States cannot afford to continue absorbing the enormous costs associated with these fires. Most, though not all, of which have burned on Federal land, primarily in areas where trees are far too old and dense, and often have been affected by insects or disease.

Poor forest condition is one of the primary factors that have led to destructive wildfires and catastrophic insect and disease outbreaks. It is widely recognized that management of our forest resources has not kept pace with the ever-increasing need for restoration. Decades of failed policies with respect to active forest manage-

ment have created unhealthy and overstocked forest conditions, placing 73 million acres of national forest land and 397 million acres of forest land nationwide at risk to severe wildfire.

The soaring annual Federal budget—Federal cost of managing catastrophic wildfires comes at the expense of land management activities that create jobs, the funding for rural schools, and the improvement of forest health. Currently, the Forest Service, an agency that once managed millions of acres and averaged over $1 billion in revenues annually, now spends $2 for every $1 it produces, and spends half of its appropriated budget on wildfire suppression. A great deal of research, including research conducted by the Forest Service, indicates that active management, which produces valuable timber, can help reduce fire threats, while meeting a wide variety of restoration goals.

Active forest management and timber harvest have been shown to have multiple long-term benefits. Despite these findings, one of the main reasons for the declining health of our forests is a lack of long-term and affordable timber harvest access caused by litigation. This is in large part due to preservationist organizations using Federal statutes like the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act as tools to litigate and prevent timber harvesting. Further, the Forest Service's own research highlights that the Agency is only able to access less than 25 percent of the suitable timber base for forest management and fuels treatment, due to regulatory and legal constraints.

Nationally, approximately 80 million acres of trees are projected to be at risk of severe mortality due to insect and disease. Instead of addressing these problems, the Administration has proposed cutting hazardous fuels reduction funding by 37 percent—that is a $115 million decrease—while proposing to increase land acquisition funding by 10 percent.

Finally, the Administration requested a 27 percent increase in suppression funding, making it clear that its preference is to continue fighting catastrophic wildfires and adding to the Federal estate, instead of reducing the risk of fire on lands it already owns. State and local governments, Federal land management agencies, and this Congress must do more to better manage our Nation's forests and to provide the resources necessary to fight wildfires when they happen.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for holding this critical hearing. And I yield back.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you, Representative Lamborn, and we will excuse you to your committee.

We have four Members who wish to be part of this panel. Let's stick with the Colorado version first.

I will turn next to Mr. Tipton for a comment, and then we have representatives from Arizona who have requested to speak.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. SCOTT R. TIPTON, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF COLORADO

Mr. TIPTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate your holding this hearing.

Prevention: a simple idea with profound implications for the future of western forests and communities. Right now, fires are burn-

ing thousands of acres in Colorado, Arizona, and in many areas throughout the Western United States. The incident commanders in charge of suppression on a 110,000 acre fire in the West Fork burning in my district, which has threatened entire communities, told me that the behavior of the fire is unprecedented. Because of all of the beetle-killed timber and dry conditions, the fire has acted in a way that defies computer models, and has been incredibly devastating.

The environmental effects of this fire will continue to impact our communities for years after the fire is out. The most tragic part of this is that the occurrence of these forest fires could be reduced, if not outright prevented, with common-sense forest management. By taking action such as removing hazardous fuels like beetle-killed timber and unnaturally dense undergrowth, we would not only be able to allow our forests to thrive in a healthy natural states, but to be able to prevent future loss of life and destruction of property, safeguard water supplies, species habitat, air quality, and promote a healthy, natural environment overall.

The President spends a fair amount of his time speaking about the need to reduce carbon emissions, and just the other week announced his latest fiat to move forward with a significant back-door energy tax that will further restrict responsible energy development in this country and stunt job growth. If the President is truly interested in reducing carbon emissions without handcuffing our Nation's economy, his Administration should take meaningful action to prevent the catastrophic wildfires that are burning in California, Arizona and other parts of the West.

According to a 2012 presentation from NASA, carbon dioxide emissions from wildfires have more than doubled, up 2.4 times, since the 1980's. The amount of carbon emissions from wildfires has grown from an average of 8.8 million tons per year from 1984 to 1995 to more than 22 million tons from 1996 to 2008.

Wildfire can often emit more carbon in a few weeks than all of the cars in that State do in a year. This was the case with the Hayman Fire in Colorado, and likely will be the case with the West Fork Complex Fire.

In addition, according to a 2007 study published by the NIH, wildfires can be primary contributors to individual States' total carbon emissions. In Idaho in 2006, wildfire produced 1.6 times more CO_2 than all other fossil fuel sources. In 2006 wildfire emissions also accounted for 47 and 42 percent of CO_2 emissions in Montana and Washington, respectively. And according to a report from researchers with the Forest Service, Auburn University, and George Mason University, wildfire CO_2 emissions are expected to increase by 50 percent by the year 2050.

When trees are growing they absorb carbon. But when the trees die, like thousands of acres of dead bark beetle trees that cover our hillsides, it starts to release carbon slowly as it decomposes, or rapidly when it burns. The failure to address responsible forest management for the health of the natural environment and for the safety of our communities simply defies logic.

If we proactively manage our forests we can remove dead trees and restore forest areas with healthy trees that will once again ab-

sorb carbon, restore our environment to a healthy state, and protect people and communities from catastrophic wildfire.

When developing a plan to improve conditions throughout the Western United States' vast expanses of forest, it should be common sense to include the input of those who live in the region and have a boots-on-the-ground view of the urgent challenges facing forest management. To that end, I have proposed a comprehensive, all-hands-on-deck approach to restoring forest health.

The Healthy Forest Management and Wildfire Prevention Act, H.R. 818, would give States and affected counties and Tribes the authority to designate high-risk areas on the National Forest System land and lands under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management, as well as the authority to be able to provide for the development of proposed emergency hazardous fuels reduction projects for these high-risk areas. With increased local control, States can better protect their communities, species' habitats, water supplies, and natural areas with preventative action to control conditions fueling devastating wildfires.

In addition to the environmental benefits of this legislation, it would provide incredible long-term cost savings by investing in prevention. The cost of proactive, healthy forest management is far less than the cost of wildfire suppression. According to the Forest Service, the Agency spent $296 million on hazardous fuel reduction treatments nationwide in 2012, while spending $1.77 billion on wildfire suppression during the same time.

That is what this legislation and today's hearing is important, and what it is about: getting ahead of this problem by investing greater resources toward prevention so we can make a more proactive approach to restoring our forests' health to a natural state, and preventing intense wildfires that have caused so much damage throughout the West.

I look forward today's hearing and the testimony from the Committee. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you. I appreciate your testimony and your time here.

Mrs. Kirkpatrick, you have been sitting here long enough. I apologize for that. We welcome you to this Committee, and we would like to give you the time now if you have a comment to make.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. ANN KIRKPATRICK, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ARIZONA

Mrs. KIRKPATRICK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for having this important hearing today. And thank you, Ranking Member Grijalva, for your participation. I want to extend a special thanks to my Arizona colleague, Congressman Paul Gosar, for extending a very kind and courteous hand to me during the week of the Yarnell fire, allowing me to attend briefings, participate in the memorial service, visit the fire site. It was a fire that had a personal impact on my family. Thank you, Congressman, very much, for that.

The issues of forest health and management are important. But they carry a special significance right now, as folks across Arizona mourn the heartbreaking loss of 19 firefighters. These 19 men were

bravely battling the Yarnell fire in Congressman Gosar's district when they died—this tragedy and our Nation's worst loss of first responders since 9/11. Unfortunately, Arizona has a long history of devastating wildfires, and it is important that we learn from them, and create smarter policies that protect our forests, our citizens, and our firefighters.

In my Arizona district, we have millions of acres of national forest land and State land. We have suffered from several major fires in recent years. In 2011, the Walla fire was started by an abandoned campfire. It affected Apache, Greenlee, Graham, and Navajo Counties; 6,000 people were evacuated. It burned for 41 days before it was contained, and it burned about 538,000 acres, 840 square miles, making it the largest fire recorded in Arizona. The estimated cost was $109 million.

In 2010 the Schultz fire near my home in Flagstaff burned in Northern Arizona and was ignited by an abandoned campfire. It burned more than 15,000 acres of pristine forest in about 10 days, and it forced the evacuation of more than 700 properties. The financial impact of the Schultz fire and its subsequent flooding reached more $130 million. Research found that the impact would have been lessened had the forest been thinned before the fire broke out.

In 2002 the Rodeo-Chediski fire ravaged communities in my district, forcing the evacuation of 30,000 people from places like Sholo, Pinetop, Lakeside, and Heber-Overgaard; 468,000 acres burned, and 400 homes were destroyed. It took 20 days to contain this fire, which was started, again, by humans.

Today's hearing occurs during the current wildfire season. Fires are raging right now in Arizona and other areas of the West. So we need to treat the issue of forest health and management with urgency. So, allow me to share with you one example of something that can work.

The Four Forest Restoration Initiative in Arizona is a collaboration of many diverse stakeholders. This project, known as 4FRI took root several years ago, and has come a long way since my previous term in Congress. We brought together the timber industry, conservationists, the Forest Service, and local communities from across district one. We worked on a plan to help our forests while strengthening rural economies at minimal cost to the taxpayer. The overall goal of 4FRI is to restore the structure, pattern, and composition of the historic fire adapted ecosystems. This will reduce ground fuels, it will aid forest health, wildlife, and plant diversity, and it has the support of the business sector.

The business sector plays a key role in 4FRI by harvesting, processing, and selling wood products from the forest work. 4FRI will create over 600 jobs and begin the restoration of 2.4 million acres of forest land. It will help revitalize our region's timber industry, it will greatly reduce the threat of wildfires. 4FRI offers a model for helping our forests and our local economies.

Mr. Chairman, again, thank you for this opportunity to discuss the need for real action. Let's do all we can to ensure our forests are healthy and to protect our communities and our first responders. Thank you.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you very much. As with many of our guests, if you would like to stay and join us as part of the panel, you are welcome to come up on the dais, as well. If you have other business, I understand how that actually happens.

Mrs. KIRKPATRICK. I would like to stay for a while. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you very much.

The last Member who has asked to speak in this first panel is the other representative from Arizona, Mr. Gosar. In a previous meeting I actually introduced you ahead of time. So this time I got the names correct. I know who Gosar now is, you are not——

Dr. GOSAR. That is him, right?

Mr. BISHOP. Yes, you are——

Dr. GOSAR. I am Tipton.

Mr. BISHOP. You both look so much alike. Anyway, Representative Gosar, you would be recognized for a statement.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. PAUL A. GOSAR, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ARIZONA

Dr. GOSAR. Thank you. Before I get started, I would like to say my thoughts and prayers continue to go out to the people who have suffered from the terrible tragedy of the Yarnell fire. I would also like to take the time to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to all the men and women working around the clock to protect lives and property across this country.

In my short 3 years in Congress, I have represented nearly all of rural Arizona, as a result of redistricting. Over that time, my constituents have become recurring victims of multiple wildfires each year. In my first year, the Waldo fire, now the largest fire in Arizona history, ravaged 800-plus square miles of our treasured Ponderosa Pine country in just a few short weeks. Last year, over 900 fires charred over nearly 6,000 square miles in Western States. Over 50,000 of those acres are in Arizona alone, as a result of the Sunflower, Gladiator, Poco, Bull Flat fires, and this year, our State was struck with the loss of 19 firefighters in the Yarnell Hill fire. That fire was one of four fires to strike rural Arizona just so far in this fire season.

Each of these fires has their unique circumstances. Some were by an Act of God, some human-caused. Some were on federally administered land, others were a combination of Federal, State, and private lands. Some are difficult to avoid and contain. The Yarnell Hill fire, for example, was started by lightning and ravaged brush on State and private land in Yavapai County before extending into public lands. Monsoon lands rapidly changed the direction of the fire, causing it to spread and change direction uncontrollably.

But the fate of many of these fires can be changed. We can facilitate conditions that minimize the chance that they will start, and reduce their size and intensity once they burn. Today I would like to briefly touch on the experience that I have had in my State, and share what I believe Congress must do to address this crisis in rural communities. We owe it all to our brave men and women working in public safety, including our firefighters, who do everything they can to reduce the frequency and intensity of fires we

send them into year after year. Our public safety officials can and will succeed.

Funding. Without a doubt, we need to ensure proper forest health and firefighting programs are adequately funded. The House has actually led in this fight, putting forth robust funding hazardous fuel reductions, and other programs in our budgets. While the Administration and the Senate, particularly in their 2014 budget, proposed cuts. But we have to do more than just spend money. We have to do it smarter.

The current Federal system continues to prioritize fighting fires. Although the need to suppress fires is never going to go away, we must shift to a proactive management of our public lands. If we don't, we are going to go bankrupt, both our Federal and local governments. We are going to lose natural treasures many of us hold dear, cause a rural way of life to go extinct, and imperil more of our public safety personnel.

I would like to submit for the record Northern Arizona University's Ecological Restoration Institute report titled, "The Efficacy of Hazardous Fuel Treatments" for the record. And it underscores this point. In short, it concludes that by proactively treating a significant portion of the Schultz fire imprint with an investment of $15 million, we could have greatly reduced the cost of the Schultz past fire, and avoid the damage and loss of life associated with the fire and post-fire flooding that is now conservatively estimated between $133 and $147 million. In other words, it is 10 times more expensive to suppress and recover from a fire than it is to prevent it.

In the wildfire, we spent millions to put it out, and lost over $2.5 billion worth of assets. And this just talks about dollar signs. It is impossible to look at what the cost of the Mexican Spotted Owl nests that exist in the world; 20 percent were lost in that fire. Or even worse, how do we quantify the loss of 19 brave firefighters? We can't do that. But what we can do is prevent fires by implementing common sense solutions and applying them.

Congress must give our land management agencies the tools they need to reduce forest fires and fuels, and restore the ecological balance of our Nation's national forests and grasslands. Two of the most important steps Congress could take is the extension and reform—and result—the stewardship contracting, and the expansion of the policy known as the Good Neighbor Authority.

The Good Neighbor Authority is a tool that allows the Feds to partner with State foresters to treat our forests. Since 2000, Colorado has used this for 40 projects. Utah used it to carry out 15 projects on 2,800 acres. The pilot study has been a success. It works. Expand it to all States.

NEPA relief. The National Environmental Policy Act has become the third rail in natural resources. Any time any Member of Congress tries to amend the Act or streamline it, the proposal becomes dead on arrival. But nearly every expert in the field will tell you that you have to cut red tape if we are going to seriously address our forest health.

These are just a few major items I believe Congress must do to make it work. We can and we must do this together. Congress can focus on this issue, but the time to work is now. We must build some type of consensus and navigate some type of these solutions.

I have my legislation, The Catastrophic Wildfire Prevention Act, which accomplishes many of these items I have put forward today. So do many of the other Members with their bills.

What I would like to leave with is let's figure out what we can all support and get it done. We have an obligation to provide relief to our rural communities. I want to remind people "no" isn't an answer, particularly from the environmental communities. If not, there will be consequences.

I look forward to hearing from the community and from the experts today, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you. I appreciate all the Members who have taken the time to speak in this first panel. I appreciate very much your efforts and the words you have shared.

I ask, without objection, the information that Mr. Gosar wished to place in the record will be placed in the record.

[The Northern Arizona University Ecological Restoration Institute report titled "The Efficiency of Hazardous Fuel Treatments" is available online at: http://blogs.missouristate.edu/gpfirescience/files/2013/05/DOI_Efficacy-of-Fuel-Treatments_final.pdf.]

Mr. BISHOP. Without objection, any other Member that wishes to have an opening statement placed in the record, if they present it to staff, to the office of the clerk, by the close of business today, it will also be included.

And for Ms. Kirkpatrick, even though you are here officially, I need to have a vote on that. Without objection, we would ask Ms. Kirkpatrick and any other member of the full Committee who may be here, to be able to join us on the dais.

[No response.]

Mr. BISHOP. OK, we have covered that.

I would now like to introduce the second panel and ask them to come and take their places. We have Mr. Jim Hubbard, who is the Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry, for the U.S. Forest Service; James Douglas, who is the Acting Director, Office of Wildland Fire, and Senior Advisor, Public Safety, Resource Protection, and Emergency Services in the U.S. Department of the Interior—you must have two doors to get all that stuff on there.

[Laughter.]

Mr. BISHOP. Mr. Phil Rigdon, who is the Deputy Director of the Yakama Nation Department of Natural Resources, who has already been introduced by Chairman Hastings; Joe Duda, who is the Deputy Forester from the Colorado State Forest Service at Colorado State University; Christopher Topik, who is the Director of Restoring America's Forests, North America Region; and Chuck Roady, who is the Vice President and General Manager of F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber Company. I hope the name Roady is correctly pronounced.

Mr. ROADY. Yes, sir.

Mr. BISHOP. And I understand you are also from Montana and a constituent of Mr. Daines. I would like to turn to Mr. Daines for just a second to introduce Mr. Roady to the panel.

Mr. DAINES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is my honor to introduce Mr. Chuck Roady here this morning, a fellow Montanan. This is a critical issue for one of my constituents, Mr. Roady, as well as myself, and it is why I am grateful he is here today.

Let me tell you a little about Chuck. He manages Stoltze Lumber. This is a lumber mill located in the beautiful Flathead Valley in the northwest corner of our State. We talk a lot about endangered species on this Committee. The lumber mills in Montana are an endangered species. We used to have 30 of them; we are down to 8 over the course of time. We are going to talk more about why that is the case.

When I was visiting Chuck's mill up in Northwest Montana here recently he gave me something that is in my office. It is a coaster. And I think this illustrates what is going on and why we need responsible forest management. What you have here is a cross-section of two different trees, both the same diameter. If you remember from your high school biology days, you count rings of trees to determine age, one ring per year. On one side is a tree that is 56 years old. You flip it over, there is another tree that is 9 years old. Why the difference? This tree that is 9 years old had responsible forest management and thinning techniques. Like anybody knows who manages forests, this side did not. And it is 56 years old. So we are going to hear more about why it is important to responsibly manage our forests. Because, guess what? Trees grow faster, and we reduce fire risk.

And speaking of fire, let me just say this. We lost a Montana firefighter in that Yarnell fire last week. A young man, Dustin DeFord, from Ekalaka, Montana, the pride of that community, one of nine children. His older brother, a staff Marine sergeant in Afghanistan, is coming home for the memorial service. He was a true prize, and we extend our condolences to the DeFord family of Ekalaka, Montana.

Mr. Stoltze's mill has survived the worst recession in history. He has survived the decline of the timber industry in my State, and saw the most devastating wildfires that we have seen in Montana last year since 1910. Today Stoltze sustains thousands of acres of timberland. They have always been the cutting edge of technology, as well as good forest stewardship, and his organization is committed to the land, and is here today to testify to their challenges.

And let me say this. In Montana, land use is critical to our way of life, not only for our jobs—we have to start with having a job so we can stay in the State—but also for what we like to do on the weekends. And to show the balance that Mr. Roady has, he not only, in his day job here, is involved with Stoltze, but he also serves on the board of directors for the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. There is a classic example of somebody who works where he also likes to play. And that captures, I think, the way that most Montanans feel, that we can have both responsible forest management and a great place to take our kids hunting and fishing.

Responsible stewardship on forest lands by companies like Stoltze continues to be held back by frivolous litigation by fringe environmental groups. We will talk more about that. The folks who are stopping this are not the folks who are collaborating at the table right now; it is the folks who aren't there who file these lawsuits and stop responsible forest management. It is overwhelmingly evident that reforms are needed to protect the health of our forests, the safety of our communities, our watersheds, and the strength of

our timber industry, which is jobs. It is of great importance to Montana's economy.

Thanks for being here, Chuck.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you, Congressman Daines. I am glad counting the rings only deals with trees and not me. I was able to get that same girth—never mind.

Mr. DAINES. I yield back my time, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you. You cut me off at the right time.

[Laughter.]

Mr. BISHOP. We look forward to the panel's testimony.

For those of you who have not been here before, your written testimony is part of the record already. This is an oral addition to the testimony, so it doesn't need to be replicative of what you have already given us in written form.

In front of you is the timer there. When your 5 minutes starts, the green light will go on. When the yellow light comes on you have a minute left, so that is when you have to speed up. And when it turns red again we wish you would stop in mid-sentence, if possible.

So, we will turn, first of all, to Deputy Chief Hubbard, if you would, from the Forest Service. I appreciate having you here. You are recognized for 5 minutes for an oral statement.

STATEMENT OF JAMES HUBBARD, DEPUTY CHIEF, STATE AND PRIVATE FORESTRY, U.S. FOREST SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Mr. HUBBARD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Grijalva. The Forest Service, too, would like to express its condolences to the families and for the firefighters that lost their lives, the Granite Mountain Hotshot crew.

Our forest conditions, combined with our weather, continue to be dangerous. We don't see that changing for the foreseeable future. We have fires starting earlier in the season, and the season lasting longer than it has before, the fires are burning hotter, and there is more in the way, in terms of value, especially homes and people.

This fire season has—already tragic. It didn't materialize much in the East, but it is in the West. And our forecasts tell us that we will continue to have problems, especially in California and Oregon. Montana and Idaho, to some extent.

We in the Forest Service certainly agree that restoration and hazardous fuels reduction are important to dealing with this situation. So far, currently, we are able to treat 4 million acres a year in restoration and hazardous fuels treatments. And, as this panel will tell you, that is going to be an even more important thing as we move into the future with the kinds of conditions that we face.

And as Mr. Grijalva and Mr. Gosar have already said, stewardship contracting and Good Neighbor Authorities are tools that do help. And those—an extension of those tools would be very useful.

The key to all of this, as far as the Forest Service is concerned, is a collaborative approach across the boundaries. That forest condition is certainly on the National Forest System lands, but it doesn't stop there. And so it is the Federal agencies, it is the Tribes, it is the States, it is the local governments, it is the homeowners that have to all work together on any incident, any situa-

tion that we face, if we are going to be successful in protecting those values.

It is the fuels, it is the forest condition, it is the development, it is the fire-adapted communities, all of that within an ecosystem that depends on the fire. And, as you stated in your opening remarks, Mr. Chairman, it is about a sustainable response which we struggle with. It is about protecting those communities. And it is about restoring the landscapes. If we put all that together, we have some chance of success. That has been difficult to achieve.

And we would like to offer the Forest Service would continue to work with this Committee to find solutions. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hubbard follows:]

Statement of James Hubbard, Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to provide the status of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service's wildland fire and forest management program. I first would like to offer my condolences and the condolences of the Chief on behalf of the Forest Service to the families of the members of the Granite Mountain Interagency Hotshot Crew.

Secretary Vilsack and the Forest Service recognize the importance of increasing the pace and scale of forest restoration in our National Forests while at the same time preventing and responding to wildland fires. We must manage and restore more acres to reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire, to address insects and disease, and to restore the ecological health of forests for the benefit of all Americans. We address the need to restore ecosystems through two strategies: the Accelerated Restoration Strategy and the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Strategy.

According to the Drought Monitor, more than 44 percent of the contiguous United States is in a moderate or more severe stage of drought—in many portions of the country 2012 was among the driest years on record. In addition, insects and disease have weakened the resilience of America's forests. Nationally, approximately 80 million acres of trees are projected to be at risk of severe mortality due to insect and disease. Over the past 10 years in the West, approximately 45 million acres across all land ownerships have been affected by 20 different species of bark beetles. It is estimated that there are between 65 and 82 million acres of National Forest System (NFS) lands in need of restoration because of high and very high risk of fire.

Facing these threats, we've recognized for some time the importance of increasing our restoration efforts. We continue to explore new and existing tools to become more efficient. In February 2012, the FS outlined a strategy for increasing restoration activities across large landscapes through more efficient implementation of existing programs and policies, as well as pursuing new initiatives. This strategy will allow the Forest Service to increase the number of acres and watersheds restored across the National Forest System, while supporting existing infrastructure and jobs. Through these efforts, in FY 2012, the FS attained 2.6 billion board feet (BBF) volume sold and exceeded a number of restoration targets.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

It is widely recognized that management of our forest resources has not kept pace with the ever increasing need for restoration. Organizations such as the National Forest Foundation, American Forest Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, the National Association of State Foresters, the Wilderness Society, the U.S. Endowment for Forests and Communities, the Intertribal Timber Council, and the Western Governors Association have embraced an agenda to actively restore the resiliency of landscapes and provide for community vitality. The Forest Service is striving to increase the number of acres that are restored by a variety of treatments annually.

The Forest Service recognizes the need for a strong forest industry to help accomplish forest restoration work. The best opportunity for reducing the cost of these restoration treatments is through forest management using timber and stewardship contracts. We have worked with sister USDA agencies to implement the Department's Wood to Energy Initiative. In FY 2012, our joint efforts resulted in private and public investments potentially exceeding $1 billion in wood energy. For exam-

ple, funding provided by this Initiative is being used to construct is an 11.5 megawatt power plant in Gypsum, Colorado.

The forest products industry workforce is larger than either the automotive or chemical industries, currently employing nearly 900,000 workers. Encouragingly, there have been recent upturns in the housing market and lumber prices, resulting in higher demand and prices for sawtimber. The capacity exists within the current industry infrastructure to meet this increased demand for lumber through adding extra shifts, reopening mills, and achieving efficiency gains. The higher demand and prices for timber will enable the Forest Service to complete more restoration treatments. In spite of flat budgets in the past few years, the Forest Service increased the timber volume sold from 2.38 BBF in 2008 to 2.64 BBF in 2012. However, even though we will continue to search for efficiencies, due to increased budget cuts in 2013 and projected cuts in 2014, we project a slight decline in restoration treatments in both years.

To accomplish effective vegetation management, the Forest Service is fostering a more efficient National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process by focusing on improving agency policy, learning, and technology. These NEPA process improvements will increase decision-making efficiencies, resulting in more on-the-ground restoration work getting done more quickly and across a larger landscape. Specifically, we are looking at expanding the use of focused Environmental Assessments (EAs), expanding categories of actions that may be excluded from documentation in an EA or an environmental impact statement (EIS), and applying an adaptive management framework to NEPA.

Our landscape-scale NEPA projects will also increase efficiencies. For example, our Mountain Pine Beetle Response Project on the Black Hills National Forest is implementing a landscape-scale adaptive approach for treating current and future pine beetle outbreaks within a 200,000 acre area. Since signing the decision of the project last December, the Forest has already completed one timber sale and has two others planned for this fiscal year. Sales for next fiscal year have been identified, along with plans to treat existing and newly infested areas in subsequent years. This project has given the Forest greater flexibility in treating existing and new infestations in a timely and strategic manner.

All of these efforts are aimed at becoming more proactive and efficient in protecting the Nation's natural resources, while providing jobs to the American people.

COLLABORATIVE FOREST LANDSCAPE RESTORATION AND STEWARDSHIP CONTRACTING

The 23 Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration (CFLR) projects emphasize restoration across large scale landscapes. In addition to finding efficiencies in planning and treating larger landscapes, CFLR emphasizes collaboration. Collaboration with our partners and stakeholders from all interest areas is one of the tools to becoming more efficient through shared development and understanding of the desired condition, objectives, and issues at the outset of projects. In 2012, these projects exceeded the targets for the majority of performance measures.

In Arizona, the Four Forest Restoration Initiative project is contributing to healthier ecosystems and safer communities, and supporting rural communities. In addition to a range of other restoration activities, this project has treated hazardous fuels on more than 171,900 acres, produced more than 168 MMBF of timber and more than 878,817 green tons of bioenergy since 2010.

Colorado has two CFLR projects which are having a measurable impact on rural economies. The Uncompahgre Plateau project as well as projects on other lands administered by the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests will play a key role in support of the newly opened lumber mill in Montrose. To date, the Uncompahgre project has generated 12 MMBF of timber and reduced hazardous fuels on more than 11,500 acres. As part of the Colorado Front Range project, Denver Water contributed more than $1,000,000 in 2012 for restoration efforts. Since FY 2010, the Front Range project has reduced hazardous fuels on more than 17,000 acres, and generated more than 17 MMBF of timber.

Three CFLR projects are underway in Idaho, creating measurable shifts in ecosystem resilience and supporting local economies. The Selway-Middle Fork project has sold more than 13 MMBF of timber and harvested more than 2,000 green tons of biomass. The Weiser-Little Salmon Headwaters project, selected for funding in FY 2012, has already maintained or generated 136 direct full or part-time jobs. The project plans to generate 50,000 green tons of biomass annually and approximately 25 MMBF of saw timber annually. In FY 2012 the Forest completed a major NEPA analysis that approved vegetative treatments on more than 25,000 acres. The Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative, also selected for funding in FY 2012, will treat

39,430 acres mechanically over 10 years. The project generated more than 10 MMBF of timber and produced more than 2,700 green tons of bioenergy.

Stewardship contracting is a critical tool to allow the Forest Service to more efficiently complete restoration activities, along with continuing to use timber sales to accomplish our restoration efforts. Permanently reauthorizing stewardship contracting and expanding the use of this tool is crucial to our ability to collaboratively restore landscapes at a reduced cost to the government by offsetting the value of the services received with the value of forest products removed. In FY 2012, 25 percent of all timber volume sold was under a stewardship contract. Stewardship contracting authorities allow the Agency to fund watershed and wildlife habitat improvement projects, invasive species removal, road decommissioning, and hazardous fuels reduction activities.

WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT

At the same time the Forest Service undertakes these restoration efforts, wildland fires continue to impact our nation's forests and the agency.

In 2012, over 9.3 million acres burned in the United States. The fires of 2012 were massive in size, with 51 fires exceeding 40,000 acres. Of these large fires, 14 exceeded 100,000 acres (NICC 2012). The increase in large fires in the west coincides with an increase in temperatures and early snow melt in recent years. This means longer fire seasons. The length of the fire season has increased by over two months since the 1970s (Westerling, 2006).

We estimate that 65 to 82 million acres of National Forest System lands are in need of fuels and forest health treatments—up to 42 percent of the entire system. Part of the problem is severe drought, resulting in extreme fire weather and very large fires. At the same time that landscapes are becoming more susceptible to fire impacts, more and more Americans are choosing to build their home in wild lands. The number of housing units within half a mile of a national forest grew from 484,000 in 1940 to 1.8 million in 2000. In 2000, nearly a third of U.S. homes (37 million) were located in the Wildland Urban Interface (Radeloff and others, 2005).

NATIONAL COHESIVE WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

In 2009, Congress passed the Federal Land Assistance, Management, and Enhancement (FLAME) Act calling on federal land managers to develop a joint wildland fire management strategy. Working together with the Department of the Interior, we took the opportunity to involve the entire wildland fire community in developing a long-term National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy. Our strategy has three components:

1. **Restoring fire-adapted ecosystems.** Hundreds of post-fire assessments show that fuels and forest health treatments are effective in reducing wildfire severity. Accordingly, our fuels treatments have grown. From FY 2001 to FY 2011, the Forest Service treated about 27.6 million acres. We focus our treatments on high-priority areas in the Wildland Urban Interface, particularly communities that are taking steps to become safer from wildfire.
2. **Building fire-adapted human communities.** With more communities in the Wildland Urban Interface at risk from wildfire, the Forest Service is working through cross-jurisdictional partnerships to help communities become safer from wildfires in part by developing community wildfire protection plans. Through the Firewise program, the number of designated Firewise communities—communities that have implemented actions to help prevent the potential for home ignitions from wildfire using techniques in home siting and development, home construction, and home landscaping and maintenance—rose from 400 in 2008 to more than 700 in FY 2012.
3. **Responding appropriately to wildfire.** Most of America's landscapes are adapted to fire; wildland fire plays a natural and beneficial role in many forest types. Where suppression is needed to protect homes, property and resources, we focus on deploying the right resources in the right place, at the right time. Using improved decision support tools, fire managers are making risk-based assessments to decide when and where to suppress a fire—and when and where to use fire to achieve management goals for long-term ecosystem health and resilience.

RESTORING ECOSYSTEMS

The Forest Service is restoring the ability of forest and grassland ecosystems to resist climate-related stresses, recover from climate-related disturbances, and continue to deliver important values and benefits. By restoration, we mean restoring the functions and processes characteristic of healthier, more resistant, more resilient ecosystems, even if they are not exactly the same systems as before. Restoring and maintaining fire resilient landscapes is critical and essential to our stewardship re-

sponsibilities for the national forests. Factors including human activities and land development, loss of indigenous burning practices, and fire suppression have all led to changes in forests that historically had frequent fires. Some forests have experienced a buildup of trees and brush due to a lack of fire. In some areas fuel loads on the forest floor have increased where low intensity fires were historically the norm. These forest types are now seeing high severity fires under even moderate weather conditions.

Approaches to restoring vegetation closer to an historic range of variability within fire-adapted ecosystems often require treatment or removal of excess fuels (e.g., through mechanical thinning, prescribed fire, or a combination of the two), reducing tree densities in uncharacteristically crowded forests, and application of fire to promote the growth of native plants and reestablish desired vegetation and fuel conditions. Excess fuels are those that support higher intensity fires than those under which the ecosystem evolved, and can include leaf litter and debris on the forest floor as well as the branches and foliage of small trees that provide ladder fuels allowing surface fires to transition to crown fires.

When a wildfire starts within or burns into a fuel treatment area, an assessment is conducted to evaluate the resulting impacts on fire behavior and fire suppression actions. Over 1,600 assessments have been conducted to date, of which over 90% of the fuel treatments were found to be effective in changing fire behavior or helping with control of the wildfire (USFS, Fuels Treatment Effectiveness Database).

In Fiscal 2012, the Forest Service accomplished over 1.2 million acres of prescribed fire, over 600 thousand acres of mechanical treatment to reduce hazardous fuels, and over 140 thousand acres of managed wildfires to benefit natural resources as well as reduce hazardous fuels for a total accomplishment of 2 million acres. The Wildland Urban Interface remains the highest priority and approximately 1.2 million of the total treated acres were in the WUI. Of these treatments, 93 percent of the acres accomplished were identified as a treatment priority in a community wildfire protection plan or an equivalent collaborative plan. Hazardous fuels treatments also produced 2.8 million green tons used for energy and 900 thousand CCF of wood products. In FY 2012, 20 biomass grant awards from the Woody Biomass Utilization Grant program totaling approximately $3 million were made to small business and community groups across the country. The Woody Biomass Utilization Grant program has contributed to the treatment of over 500,000 acres and removed and utilized nearly 5 million green tons of biomass at an average cost of just $66 per acre. Grantees also reported a combined 1,470 jobs created or retained as a result of our grant awards.

FIRE ADAPTED COMMUNITIES

The spread of homes and communities into areas prone to wildfire is an increasing management challenge. From 2000 to 2030, we expect to see substantial increases in housing density on 44 million acres of private forest land nationwide, an area larger than North and South Carolina combined (USDA Forest Service. 2005. Forests on the Edge: Housing Development on America's Private Forests. PNW–GTR–636. Portland, OR: Pacific Northwest Research Station). Currently, more than 70,000 communities are now at risk from wildfire, and less than 15,000 have a community wildfire protection plan or an equivalent plan. (USDA Forest Service. 2012. National Fire Plan Operations and Reporting System.) Federal engagement with State and local fire agencies and other partners is central to our collective success in assisting communities at risk from wildfires. Wildfires know no boundaries, and we must work within an all-lands context to prevent human caused fires, mitigate risk to communities, and manage for and respond to wildfires. According to studies cited in the 2013 USDA Forest Service General Technical Report (RMRS–GTR–299), more than one-third of all housing units in the continental U.S. are located within the wildland urban interface, and the trends suggest that these numbers will continue to grow.

To help address the risk faced by communities in the WUI, the Forest Service began developing the Fire Adapted Communities program in 2009, with a 2012 launch (including the website www.fireadapted.org and an Ad Council national public awareness campaign). This program assists communities in becoming fire adapted and is critical to protecting residents, firefighters, property, infrastructure, natural resources, and cultural values from wildfires. The strategy emphasizes that mitigation is a shared responsibility by federal, state, local, and private stakeholders and that pre-fire mitigation is part of the solution to escalating wildfire suppression costs in the WUI.

The Forest Service's Fire Adapted Communities effort brings together a wide array of government and non-government partners to educate the public about the full suite of mitigation tools that can help communities adapt to wildfire. Fire

Adapted Communities messaging is delivered by partners including the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Ad Council, National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC), and the National Association of State Foresters (NASF) who leverage federal dollars with their own program dollars for maximum effect. Fire Adapted Communities create a safer place for firefighters, give response teams more decision space, reduce the need for additional suppression in the community, and reduce large fire suppression costs.

FIREFIGHTING RESOURCES

The agency has the capability to protect life, property, and natural resources while assuring an appropriate, risk-informed, and effective response to wildfires that is consistent with land and resource management objectives. We do this through not only the resources of the Federal Government, but also with employees from States, tribal governments, and local governments, contract crews, and emergency/temporary hires. Firefighter and public safety are the primary considerations for all operations. The agency continues to suppress about 98 percent of the fires on initial attack. However, the few fires that escape initial attack tend to grow quickly.

Wildland fire response requirements are unpredictable. This requires a workforce management strategy that can increase and decrease based on fire activity levels. The FS employs both permanent firefighting assets, which also conduct fuels treatments, and seasonal assets to support suppression activities during peak fire season. Call When Needed (CWN) assets are important in meeting fire response requirements when activities exceed our standard asset capability. Firefighting assets are employed in a cost effective way when they are justified within our preparedness and suppression strategies. We evaluate each asset's cost effectiveness relative to the need they meet.

Under the President's budget for FY14, suppression capability will be comparable to previous years. However, we recognize that given limited budgets, maintaining this capability will present challenges. With greater mobility and with agreement to focus assets on high risk areas, it is likely that high levels of initial attack success will continue. For the 2013 fire season, the available firefighting forces—firefighters, equipment, and aircraft—are slightly reduced when compared to those available in 2012 due to sequestration. Nonetheless, we will have close to 13,000 firefighters available from the Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior with approximately 70% coming from the Forest Service. The reduction resulted in fewer firefighters and engines, but the level of highly-trained smokejumpers, Type 1 national interagency incident management teams (the most experienced and skilled teams) available for complex fires or incidents, and Type 2 incident management teams available for geographical or national incidents, are comparable to those available in 2012. Depending on how the 2013 fire season develops, we are prepared to bring on additional CWN resources (engines and aircraft) to offset the reduction in firefighters and engines. However these additional resources will increase suppression costs since the cost of CWN resources averages 1.5 to 2 times the cost of exclusive use resources.

Additionally, the federal wildland firefighting community works with State and local fire departments, which serve a critical role in our initial attack and, in many cases, our extended attack success. The Forest Service uses its authority to provide State Fire Assistance funds to State partners to support State fire management capacity. We could not achieve the successes we have without these key partners.

Nationally, the wildland firefighting agencies continue to employ a mix of fixed and rotor wing aircraft. The number of these aircraft may fluctuate depending on contractual and other agreements. Key components of the Forest Service 2013 aviation resources include:

- Up to 26 contracted large air tankers;
- 420 helicopters;
- 15 leased Aerial Supervision fixed-wing aircraft;
- Up to 12 Smokejumper aircraft;
- 2 heat detecting infrared aircraft;
- 3 water scoopers including 1 CL–415.

An additional key component is the organized network of 295 federal, state, and local government dispatch and coordination centers which provide tactical, logistical, and decision support to the federal wildland fire agencies.

CHALLENGES

We face a number of challenges to implement our Restoration Strategy. At the completion of fiscal year 2012, we were on a trajectory to increase treatment acres,

along with timber harvest. In 2013, at a time when lumber prices are increasing and the additional value can help pay for other restoration work, we received a reduced budget with the same reduction projected for 2014. We have had to decrease the amount of acres we could treat, along with timber volume to reflect these budget reductions. In addition to declining budgets, we are facing another active fire year. Costs of wildland fire management have increased to consume nearly half of the entire FS budget. In FY 1991, fire activities accounted for about 13 percent of the total agency budget; in FY 2012, it was over 40 percent.

Post-wildfire rehabilitation costs *can exceed* the costs of suppression by 2 to 30 times, as shown in the "The True Cost of Wildfire in the Western U.S. (Western Forestry Leadership Coalition 2010). Over the last two fiscal years the FS Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) program spent almost $94 million in emergency stabilization efforts on NFS lands immediately after fires to help with erosion, flooding, and other threats to human health and safety, and threats to resources. Treatments were as diverse as hillside stabilization, road protection, hazardous material stabilization, and hazard tree removal, as well as myriad other treatments, and this does not include the long-term costs of reforestation and monitoring.

Staffing within the Agency has also shifted to reflect an increased focus on fire. Since 1998 fire staffing within the FS has increased 110 percent from over 5,700 in 1998 to over 12,000 in 2012. Over the same time period, staffing levels for those dedicated to managing NFS lands have decreased by 35 percent from over 17,000 in 1998 to over 11,000 in 2012. In particular, Forest Management staffing has decreased by 49 percent from over 6,000 in 1998 to just over 3,200 in 2012.

Fire transfers occur when the agency has exhausted all available fire resources from the Suppression and FLAME accounts. From FY 2002 to FY 2012, the Forest Service made fire transfers from discretionary, mandatory, and permanent accounts to pay for fire suppression costs six times, ranging from $100,000,000 in FY 2007 to $999,000,000 in FY 2002, and totaling approximately $2.7 billion. Of that total, $2.3 billion was eventually repaid but still led to disruptions within all Forest Service programs. In FY 2012, the Forest Service transferred $440 million to the fire suppression account for emergency fire suppression due to severe burning conditions and increasing fire suppression costs. Projects at all levels of the organization were deferred or canceled as a result of the transfers.

When transfers are necessary, we attempt to reduce the impacts on our operations and public services. Still, each time the agency transfers money out of accounts to pay for fire suppression there are significant and lasting impacts across the entire Forest Service. Not only do these impacts affect the ability of the Forest Service to conduct stewardship and restoration work on national forests, they also affect our partners, local governments and Tribes.

ISSUES FOR THE FUTURE

The largest issue is how we adapt our management to anticipate climate change impacts and begin to mitigate their potential effects. Additionally, the Agency needs to continue to advance the Cohesive Strategy and treatment of landscapes collaboratively through our Accelerated Restoration Strategy to increase the number of acres and watersheds restored across the system, while supporting jobs and increasing annual forest products sales. Finally, we must discuss and find ways to fund fire programs while minimizing the effect on all Forest Service operations, including restoration efforts.

Despite these challenges, we remain optimistic that through collaboration with our many interest groups and officials the FS can improve accomplishment of our restoration objectives. I want to thank the Committee for its interest, leadership, and commitment to our national forests and their surrounding communities. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you very much.

Mr. Douglas.

STATEMENT OF JAMES DOUGLAS, ACTING DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF WILDLAND FIRE, SENIOR ADVISER, PUBLIC SAFETY, RESOURCES PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY SERVICES, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Mr. DOUGLAS. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Grijalva. I am joined today by Linda Boody, the Division Chief for

Forests, Rangeland, Riparian, and Plant Conservation in the BLM, along with myself, today.

I too join members of the Committee, members of the community, the Forest Service, in grieving the loss of the 19 firefighters in Arizona. It is a time of sadness for the community. And it reminds us, as has been said before, this isn't just a Federal issue. Those were not Federal employees, they were not working on Federal ground. This is a national problem that we face. And it is going to require national solutions, everybody working together.

A few words about the 2013 fire season. We are well into it, as has been expressed already today. As Jim Hubbard has said, the outlook is primarily dire along the West Coast, California, up into Oregon. But as we saw in Colorado with severe fires there this summer, just because the outlook doesn't say that is a high fire danger area doesn't mean that we are not going to have fires. So it helps us predict where, when, and how to preposition our resources, but it certainly doesn't predict when and where fires will occur.

A few words about our 2013 fire preparedness. Like all agencies, we had to absorb some reductions due to the sequester. We are down about 100 fire seasonal positions. We are down about 250 overall positions. We have cut back on non-essential travel, training, equipment, that sort of thing, and focused our preparedness on this fire season and readiness for this fire season.

That is getting us through this year. I will point out, though, that does have long-term consequences. The fewer people we hire now, the fewer people we have for the workforce of the future, going into our leadership ranks. If we postpone training, we reduce our capabilities for the future. When we postpone replacement of equipment and technologies, we fall further behind. So we are mindful of the long-term consequences of continuing to reduce and looking for efficiencies and effective ways to improve our capabilities.

I join Mr. Hubbard and the Forest Service in our commitment to inter-agency collaboration. It is not just between the Federal agencies, it is with State agencies, local agencies, tribal agencies, private citizens, to meet the three goals of our national cohesive strategy for resilient restoring and maintaining resilient landscapes for building fire-adapted communities and for having safe and resilient—or, I am sorry, for having safe and effective response capabilities. That requires a mixture of activities, it requires a good preparedness workforce, it requires good response.

But it also requires us to work effectively prior to fires, treating fuels where they pose dangers to the landscape, to the communities, and to our firefighters. And, along with the Forest Service, we are committed to continuing to place treatments on the ground. We treat an average of a little over a million—probably a million-three acres a year in the Department of the Interior. We will continue to do that in the most effective and high-priority areas.

I will point out there are two large forces that have been mentioned, at least in passing, already this morning that we are dealing with. One is the continued settlement into wildland areas as our population grows, our communities grow, we have more and more interface with wildland areas, presenting more and more op-

portunities for conflict between human settlement and fire. And that is a reality that we all have to deal with, in terms of how we hardscape our communities, how we treat our landscapes, how we manage.

And the second is—again, as Jim Hubbard mentioned, we are getting longer fire seasons, we are getting higher temperatures, we are getting changing precipitation patterns, we are getting increased fire severity on those fires, larger fires, longer fires.

Those are our challenges that, collectively, we need to look at our training, we need to look at our equipment, we need to look at our response protocols, and we need to look at what we can do to mitigate those measures ahead of time with appropriate fuels treatments in the right places.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Douglas follows:]

Statement of Jim Douglas, Acting Director, Office of Wildland Fire, U.S. Department of the Interior

Introduction

Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the Department of the Interior's readiness for the 2013 wildland fire season. The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), along with the Forest Service within U.S. Department of Agriculture, is prepared for the 2013 wildland fire season with our available resources.

2012 Wildfire Season

For the Department, the 2012 wildfire season was an active year. The fire season was especially notable because about 9.3 million acres burned across the United States (all jurisdictions) one of the largest fire seasons in terms of annual acreage burned, based on the reporting of fire statistics from 1960 to present. Fifty-one fires exceeded 40,000 acres in 2012, ten more than in 2011. Over 4,200 structures were reported destroyed by wildfires, including over 2,200 residences, nearly 2,000 outbuildings, and approximately 70 commercial structures. This is well above the annual average of 1,400 residences, 1,300 outbuildings, and 50 commercial structures (data from 1999 through 2012, NICC).

More than twenty percent of the United States (510 million acres) is managed or held in trust by the Department's bureaus with fire management responsibilities. Those lands stretch from Florida to Alaska, from Maine to California. DOI has achieved a high success rate in suppressing unwanted fires during the initial attack stage, and uses fire where appropriate to achieve management goals for long-term ecosystem health and resilience.

2013 Fire Season

Since January our nation has suffered the loss of 24 wildland firefighters in the line of duty. The last 19 were members of an elite firefighting crew—the Granite Mountain Interagency Hotshots from the state of Arizona. These men perished in the course of their duties on the Yarnell Fire in Arizona on June 30—just two days after the fire was started by lightning, when the weather changed, and the fire behavior intensified. This tragedy represents the worst in Arizona's history and the worst loss of wildland firefighters for our country since 1933. Federal wildland fire assets responded at the onset of the Yarnell Fire; and we continue to support the incident today. A Type 1 Incident Management Team and a National Incident Management Organization team were dispatched immediately after the tragedy to manage the fire operation and provide support to the incident by dealing with the issues surrounding the fatalities. Together with our partners at the U.S. Forest Service and from the U.S. Military, we have federal crews, engines, aviation assets, and other large firefighting equipment deployed to provide assistance. Our hearts go out to the families, friends, and co-workers of these fine men.

We are expecting the remainder of 2013 fire season to be similar to last year's. The National Wildfire Potential Outlook for the period of July through September predicts:

July

Long-term drought across the West coupled with hot, dry weather in early July, will raise fire potential across portions of Oregon, Idaho, Nevada, and northern California;

Southern California, southern Utah, Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado will continue to experience extremely dry conditions and be at significant risk for significant fires throughout July;

August

Heat and normal summer precipitation in the West will keep above-normal fire potential across most of California and Oregon, and parts of Washington, Idaho, and Montana during August;

September

For September, above-normal significant fire potential will continue for much of the coastal and interior California while returning to normal by October over the Sierras, Oregon, and parts of Idaho and Nevada.

Wildland fire behavior and the Department's response are influenced by complex environmental and social factors as discussed in the 2009 Quadrennial Fire Review (QFR), the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy, and other strategic foundational documents used to guide the Wildland Fire Management program. The impacts of climate change, cumulative drought effects, increasing risk in and around communities, and escalating emergency response continue to impact wildland fire management and wildfire response operations. Drought is forecasted to persist or worsen across much of the western United States and parts of Alaska and Hawaii.

Since the beginning of the year, more than 25,000 fires have burned over 740,000 acres, predominantly in the Southwest and Western states.

Effects of Sequestration

Much like other Departments across the federal government, programs within Interior have felt the impact from sequestration. As we developed our sequestration implementation plan, we made every effort to prioritize preparedness for the upcoming fire season and to absorb the cuts in a way that would not compromise our ability to respond to fires this season. Therefore, we focused cuts to the wildland fire management program in areas such as travel, training, contracted services, and operating supplies first. Overall, the sequestration resulted in a $37.5 million cut to Interior's fire program and resulted in a reduction of approximately 7 percent of the Department's firefighter seasonal workforce, with reduced lengths of employment for those hired.

Exceptions from the DOI-wide hiring freeze were granted for seasonal firefighters; and I believe that, in the short term, we have the necessary resources to respond. The long-term impacts of sequestration are impossible to avoid. We have had to make difficult choices that will reduce our overall capacity in the longer term, such as not filling permanent staff vacancies, reducing seasonal firefighter employment periods, and reducing the number of hazardous fuels crews. In addition, other reductions in seasonal hiring across Interior will have a residual impact on the overall numbers of firefighters available for dispatch, since many of these hires, while being non-fire positions, are "red-carded" or trained to fight fire when needed.

Expected Available Fire Resources

Among its bureaus, the Department will deploy just over 3,400 firefighters, including 135 smokejumpers, 17 Type-1 crews; 750 engines; more than 200 other pieces of heavy equipment (dozers, tenders, etc.); and about 1,300 support personnel (incident management teams, dispatchers, fire cache, etc.); totaling nearly 5,000 personnel.

In aviation, this year, Interior has 27 single-engine airtankers or SEATS on exclusive use contracts—double the number we have had in the past, and an additional 42 on call-when-needed contracts. The Department made a conscious decision to double the number of SEATs on exclusive use contracts in order to be prepared for the 2013 season and to reduce the overall costs to the program. SEATs are a good fit for the types of fires that the Interior agencies experience. Many of these fires usually burn at lower elevations, in sparser fuels, on flatter terrain. We also have small and large helicopters and water scoopers available. We will utilize Forest Service contracted heavy airtankers and, if necessary, Modular Airborne Fire-Fighting System (MAFFS) aircraft from the Military. Agreements are in place to acquire supplemental aircraft from our state and international partners, if necessary.

Department of Defense Assistance

Over the past year, officials from the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture have worked with officials from Northern Command (NorthCom), in Colorado, to develop a new approach for obtaining support from the Department of Defense (DoD) should their assistance be needed during the 2013 fire season and into the future.

Previously, the DoD provided ground forces configured as battalions—550 soldiers each. Future requests for support will now include approximately ten 20-person crews from regionally based installations, within a reasonable distance from the incident. This ability will provide flexibility in the use of DoD resources as well as providing the anticipated numbers needed based on historical use. Our staffs are in the process of developing options for training that will include a smaller training cadre and include qualified DoD personnel. An Incident Awareness Assessment is also being conducted to identify potential gaps and areas where DoD may be able to provide specialized and/or surge capability in imagery products for use on wildfire incidents.

Fiscal Year 2014 Budget

The President's FY 2014 budget proposes a total of $776.9 million to support the fire preparedness, suppression, fuels reduction, and burned area rehabilitation needs of the Department. The budget fully funds the inflation-adjusted 10-year average of suppression expenditures of $377.9 million, with the funding split between $285.9 million in the regular suppression account and $92.0 million in the Federal Land Assistance, Management, and Enhancement (FLAME) Fund. This represents a program increase of $205.1 million over the 2012 enacted level, because the full 10-year average was not appropriated in 2012 and the program relied on available balances from prior years. Consistent with the FLAME Act, the regular suppression account will fund the initial attack and predictable firefighting costs, while the FLAME Fund will fund the costs of large, catastrophic-type fires and also serve as a reserve when funds available in the regular suppression account are exhausted. While the budget provides funding to cover anticipated preparedness and suppression needs, the Department recognizes the need to invest not just in firefighting related activities, but also hazardous fuels reduction, community assistance, and rehabilitation of burned areas. Interior has made significant improvements to management information tools to provide program leadership information on determining where funds may best be directed. The Department will continue to pursue efficiencies and reforms that reduce project cost, increase performance, ensure the greatest value from invested resources, all while strengthening the accountability and transparency of the way in which taxpayer dollars are being spent.

Hazardous Fuels Reduction Program

The 2014 budget requests $95.9 million for the Department's Hazardous Fuels Reduction (HFR) program, a reduction of $88.9 million from 2012 and $49.4 million from 2013. The increase in complexity and intensity of fires over the last ten years presents enormous budgetary challenges for the wildland fire program. With today's fiscal climate, and competition for limited resources, we are being asked to make tough choices. The reduction to the fuels budget is one of those tough choices. This presents an opportunity to re-evaluate and recalibrate the focus of the HFR program to align and support the direction in the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy and the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy. Affirming a commitment to the intergovernmental goals of the Cohesive Strategy, HFR program activities will be planned and implemented to mitigate risks posed by wildfire. The program uses a risk-based prioritization process to ensure activities are implemented in the areas of greatest risk from wildfire, and will foster closer alignment and integration of the program into the bureaus' broader natural resource management programs. To encourage this, the 2014 program includes $2 million to conduct additional research on the effectiveness of hazardous fuels treatments. As a result, the Department will take a serious look at how we can make the most difference on the ground with what we have. The program will continue to focus fuels reduction on the highest priority projects in the highest priority areas resulting in the mitigation of risks to communities and their values.

BLM Forest Management

The BLM manages about 60 million acres of forests or woodlands, including 2.2 million acres of O&C forest lands. The BLM manages forests to restore and maintain forest ecosystems, reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire, and generate a sustainable flow of forest products that can be sold through commercial and salvage timber sales and personal use permits that support rural communities. Resilient forests store and filter water for aquifers and reservoirs, offer opportunities for recre-

ation, provide habitat for thousands of species, store carbon, provide clean air, support timber and other jobs, and provide millions of board feet of lumber and thousands of tons of biomass for alternative energy. According to the Department of the Interior's 2011 Economic Impact Report, timber harvested from BLM forests supported $659 million in economic activity in 2011, and biomass from BLM forests has become part of the feedstock that meets various State and Federal renewable energy portfolio standards. BLM forests also support local businesses dependent on tourism and outdoor recreation. Additionally, the value of forests for biological carbon storage is being increasingly studied and understood and can help the United States toward a better carbon balance.

Extreme drought, wildfires, pests, and invasive species infestations have plagued much of the West over the past decade, causing significant impacts to both forest health and local economies. The BLM has worked collaboratively with Federal, State, and other partners to develop strategies for addressing forestry issues such as the mountain pine beetle outbreak and whitebark pine tree decline. In 2012 fire affected over 287,000 acres of BLM forests and a cumulative 1.7 million acres of BLM forest mortality have been attributed to bark beetles, other insect attacks, and pathogens. Overall, the BLM estimates that about 14 million acres of BLM-managed forests are at elevated risk of insect and disease attacks or catastrophic wildfire. In 2012, as part of the Bureau's hazardous fuels reduction program, the BLM conducted restoration and hazardous fuels reduction treatments, including thinning, salvage, and prescribed burns, on more than 465,000 acres of BLM-managed forests, woodlands and rangelands.

Because potential threats to forest health often cross jurisdictional boundaries, the BLM has increasingly adopted a landscape approach to resource conservation and treatments to reduce the buildup of hazardous fuels. The BLM has begun developing vegetation management policies that consider entire landscapes, through integrating a number of programs—including forestry, rangeland management, riparian management, plant conservation, invasive weeds, and fire rehabilitation. This integration should result in more coordinated policies. The BLM also offered over 242 million board feet of timber and other forest products for sale and used timber sales to treat over 20,000 acres of vegetation in fiscal year 2012. In addition, the BLM routinely works with partner agencies, organizations, and landowners to engage in land and watershed restoration and hazardous fuels reduction activities on Federal, state, and private lands, and the BLM has used the pilot Good Neighbor Authority in Colorado on projects where small parcels of federal lands were interspersed with state and private lands.

Stewardship contracts, timber sales, and service contracts are tools that the BLM uses to manage our forested lands. Stewardship contracting authority allows the BLM to award contracts for forest health and restoration treatments, including hazardous fuels reductions, for a period of up to ten years and to use the value of timber or other forest products removed as an offset against the cost of services received. The BLM has enjoyed many successes in using stewardship contracting authority, thereby achieving goals for forest and woodland restoration, and conducting both hazardous fuels reduction and habitat restoration treatments. In addition, stewardship contracts create jobs and revenue growth for local communities, and protect local communities from wildland fire. From 2003 through 2012, the BLM entered into over 400 stewardship contracts on approximately 108,000 acres of BLM-managed lands. This important authority expires in September 2013, and the President's Budget for FY 2014 proposes to make the authority permanent.

Partnerships

The realities of today's federal funding challenges, such as the reduction to the hazardous fuels program, highlights the importance of working together across landscapes, and with our partners to achieve our goals.

The federal government wildland fire agencies are working with tribal, state, and local government partners to prevent and reduce the effects of large, unwanted fires through preparedness activities like risk assessment, prevention and mitigation efforts, mutual aid agreements, firefighter training, acquisition of equipment and aircraft, and dispatching; community assistance and hazardous fuels reduction. These actions demonstrate Interior's continued commitment to the goals of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (restore and maintain resilient landscapes, create fire-adapted communities, and response to wildfire).

Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy

The Department will also continue to take full advantage of the current Implementation Guidelines for the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy. Our unwavering commitment to firefighter and public safety in managing wildfire is the

foundation of the wildland fire management program within each DOI bureau. We will continue to respond quickly and effectively to control unwanted wildland fires. Initial action on human-caused wildfire will continue to suppress the wildfire at the lowest risk to firefighter and public safety. When appropriate, we will also allow fire managers to manage a wildfire for multiple objectives and increase managers' flexibility to respond to changing incident conditions and firefighting capability, while strengthening strategic and tactical decision implementation supporting public safety and resource management objectives.

Actions by wildland fire managers will be supported by the best available science and decision support systems such as the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS). These tools afford our wildland fire managers an enhanced ability to analyze wildfire conditions and develop risk informed strategies and tactics, which result in the reduced exposure to unnecessary risk during a sequester-impacted wildfire season.

Long-Term Programmatic Challenges

There are several longer-term programmatic challenges facing the Department's wildland fire management program including the need to re-align the overall program to better integrate with land and resource management activities We must continue to develop strategies to deal with the long-term effects of declining budgets, the changing climate, evolving workforce, and the continued need to develop technologies and decision support tools to better inform our wildland fire managers of the future.

The Department of the Interior is prepared to meet the wildland firefighting challenges of today and tomorrow with the most efficient use of its available resources. DOI will maintain operational capabilities and continue to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the wildland fire management programs. These efforts are coupled with other strategic efforts and operational protocols to improve oversight and use of the latest research and technology in order to ensure wildland fire management resources are appropriately focused. Specific actions include:

- Continued reduction of hazardous fuels in priority areas, where there is the greatest opportunity to reduce the risk of severe wildfires;
- Continued improvement in decision-making on wildland fires by leveraging the Wildland Fire Decision Support System's capabilities to predict what may happen during a wildfire, to safeguard lives, protect communities, and enhance natural resource ecosystem health;
- Continued enhancement to wildfire response that comes from efficient use of national shared resources, pre-positioning of firefighting resources, and improvements in aviation management;
- Continued review of wildfire incidents to apply lessons learned and best practices to policy and operations; and
- Continued strategic planning in collaboration with the Forest Service and our tribal, state, and local government partners to develop meaningful performance measures and implementation plans to address the challenges posed by wildfires in the nation.

Conclusion

The Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture (USDA) work collaboratively in all aspects of wildland fire management, along with our other federal, tribal, state and local partners. Together, with all our available resources, we will provide a safe, effective wildland fire management program. We will continue to improve effectiveness, cost efficiency, safety, and community and resource protection with all our available resources.

This concludes my statement. Thank you for your interest in the Department's wildland fire management program and for the opportunity to testify before this Committee. I welcome any questions you may have and appreciate your continued support.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you. Thank you.

Mr. Rigdon from the Yakama Nation. Can you make sure that is turned on and right by your mouth?

STATEMENT OF PHIL RIGDON, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, YAKAMA INDIAN NATION DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. RIGDON. OK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee. I am Phil Rigdon. I oversee the Department of Nat-

ural Resources for the Yakama Nation. I am a member of the Yakama Nation. I am also the President of the Intertribal Timber Council. I want to thank you for this opportunity for the Intertribal Timber Council to present a tribal perspective on wildfire and forest management.

Nationally, 18.6 million acres of forest and woodlands are held in trust by the United States and managed for the benefits of the Indians. Pursuant to both tribal direction, Federal law, our forests must be sustainably managed. With our BIA partners, we actively operate modern, innovative, comprehensive, natural resource programs, premised on a connectedness among land, resources, and our people. This approach is holistic, striving to simultaneously sustain economic, ecological, and cultural values, a triple bottom line is our goal.

Unlike the Forest Service and BLM forests, Indian forests and their management require review by an independent science panel every 10 years. Just last month, Indian Forest Management Assessment team, IFMA, released its third report to Congress and the Administration. It finds Tribes have been able to make significant improvements in forest management through innovation, creativity, and partnership-building. We actively manage our forests to sustain benefits for generations to come, and we do this with far less funding than other Federal land managers.

But we could do far more if chronic underfunding and staffing shortfalls are corrected. Funding discrepancies between Indian trust forests and the Forest Service are shocking. Using my own reservation as an example, the Yakama Nation receives $.57 per acre a year for fire preparedness, while adjacent Gifford Pinchot National Forest receives $1.18; the Mt. Hood National Forest, $2.11; and the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area, $2.83.

In trying to do more with less, local flexibility is a key element. We aren't hamstrung by blind adherence to policies. We understand that policies need to be interpreted with the flexibility and prudently applied. One-size-fit-all policy is not appropriate or acceptable everywhere, all the time. As Tribes, we respond proactively to local conditions, evaluating the resources and values at risk, the source and nature of threats to forest health, and options for addressing them.

At Yakama, we responded to the budworm infestation, prioritizing timber sales to tree areas that were most severely affected by epidemic that peaked in 2000, when the budworm defoliated approximately 206,000 acres on our lands. Between 1999 and 2003, we treated 20,000 acres of infected forest a year; 97,000 acres were also treated with the biological control agent between 1999 and 2001 to control tree mortality. As a result of our proactive treatment, budworm defoliation decreased dramatically. In 2002, only 1,207 acres were defoliated, a reduction of over 99 percent.

We recover significant economic value from dead and dying trees. And the reduction in forest density promoted forest health and resilience. While such forest health treatments are common on tribal lands, it would be a challenge to find similar speed, scope, and effectiveness on Federal lands. Here is a photo of Mescalero, and the land that they treat that is adjacent to Forest Service land. As you

can see, reducing the risk of fire and insect and disease is a priority all across Indian country.

Tribes are also responding to fires more effectively and efficiently than the Forest Service. The average size of a fire on BIA-managed land is three times smaller than the Forest Service. Suppression costs on a per-acre basis are five times lower on tribal lands. After fire, Tribes are able to quickly respond to recover economic value and begin the rehabilitation process.

For example, the 2002 Rodeo-Chediski fire in Arizona burned 467,000 acres of tribal and Federal land, including significant portions of timber on the Fort Apache. While significant damage was done to tribal forests, the intensity of the fire was dramatically reduced because, since 1945, the White Mountain Apache Tribe had conducted commercial thinning followed by prescribed burn on over 30,000 acres per year. Timber salvaged forest restoration began within months after the Rodeo-Chediski fire, removing up to 500,000 board feet of killed timber a day. In contrast, the Forest Service faced litigation and delayed salvage operations, reducing its value and increasing its cost. As Tribes, our interest in the health and landscape go beyond the reservations, and those go on to the Forest Service lands, too.

At this time I would just like to thank you for this opportunity to speak.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Rigdon follows:]

Statement of Phil Rigdon, President, Intertribal Timber Council, and Natural Resource Deputy Director, Yakama Nation

Good morning Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee. I am Phil Rigdon, President of the Intertribal Timber Council—or ITC—and Natural Resource Deputy Director for the Yakama Nation in Washington state. Thank you for this opportunity for the ITC to present a tribal perspective on wildfire and forest management.

Nationally, 18.6 million acres of forests and woodlands are held in trust by the United States and managed for the benefit of Indians. Pursuant to both tribal direction and federal law, our forests must be sustainably managed. With our BIA partners, we actively operate modern, innovative and comprehensive natural resource programs premised on connectedness among the land, resources, and people. Our approach is holistic, striving to simultaneously sustain economic, ecological, and cultural values, the so-called "triple bottom line."

Unlike Forest Service and BLM forests, Indian forests and their management require review by an independent scientific panel every ten years. Just last month, the Indian Forest Management Assessment Team (IFMAT) released its third report to Congress and the Administration. It finds tribes have been able to make significant improvements in forest management through innovation, creativity, and partnership building. We actively manage our forests to sustain benefits for generations to come, and we do this with far less funding than other federal land managers. But we could do far more if chronic underfunding and staffing shortfalls are corrected.

Funding discrepancies between Indian trust forests and the Forest Service are shocking. Using my own Reservation as an example, the Yakama Nation receives $0.57 per acre per year for fire preparedness, while the adjacent Gifford-Pinchot National Forest receives $1.18, the Mount Hood National Forest $2.11; and the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area $2.83.

In trying to do more with less, local flexibility is a key element. We aren't hamstrung by blind adherence to policies. We understand that policies be interpreted with flexibility and prudently applied. A one-size fits all policy is not appropriate or acceptable everywhere all the time. As Tribes, we respond proactively to local conditions, evaluating the resources and values at risk, the source and nature of threats to forest health and options for addressing them.

At Yakama, we responded to budworm infestation by prioritizing timber sales to treat areas that were most severely affected. The epidemic peaked in 2000 when the

budworm defoliated trees on 206,000 acres. Between 1999 and 2003, we treated 20,000 acres of infected forest per year. 97,000 acres were treated with a biological control agent between 1999 and 2001 to control tree mortality.

As a result of our proactive treatments, budworm defoliation decreased dramatically. In 2002, only 1,207 acres were defoliated—a reduction of over 99%. We recovered significant economic value from dead and dying trees, and the reduction in forest density promoted forest health and resiliency. While such forest health treatments are common on tribal lands, it would be a challenge to find similar speed, scope and effectiveness on federal forests.

Tribes also respond to fires more effectively and efficiently than the Forest Service. The average size of a fire on BIA-managed lands is three times smaller than on Forest Service land. Suppression costs, on a per-acre basis, are five times lower on tribal lands.

After fires, tribes are able to quickly respond to recover economic value and begin the rehabilitation process. For example, the 2002 Rodeo-Chediski fire in Arizona burned 467,000 acres of tribal and federal land, including a significant portion of the timber on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation. While significant damage was done to tribal forests, the intensity of the fire was dramatically reduced because, since 1945, the White Mountain Apache Tribe had conducted commercial thinning followed by prescribed burns on 30,000 acres per year.

Tribal salvage and reforestation began within months of the Rodeo-Chediski fire—removing up to 500,000 board feet of fire-killed timber a day. In contrast, the Forest Service faced litigation that delayed salvage operations, reducing its value and increasing its cost.

As Tribes, our interests in the health of the landscape go beyond reservation boundaries. Many tribes have off-reservation treaty rights on lands that are now National Forests. We are negatively impacted by catastrophic wildfire, disease and insect infestations on these lands. Even with effective treatments on our own lands, conditions on nearby federal lands can and do inflict significant damage and economic and social costs to tribal forests and communities.

Congress recognized this when it passed the Tribal Forest Protection Act in 2004 (TFPA). The TFPA was intended to enable tribes to propose and conduct projects on adjacent Forest Service and BLM lands in order to protect tribal trust rights, lands, and resources.

The TFPA has not met expectations on the ground. Since 2004, only six TFPA projects have been effectively implemented on Forest Service lands. The Forest Service and the ITC recently completed a formal review of the TFPA and identified several recommendations to better accomplish its intended outcomes. ITC would like to work with this Committee and the Congress to explore ways to improve TFPA implementation.

Finally, the loss of forest products infrastructure—both private and tribal—threatens the ability to maintain economically and ecologically functional forests on the landscape. The ITC supports a legislative concept called "Anchor Forests." We have a pilot project underway with the Forest Service in Eastern Washington State. The goal of the project is to coordinate management across ownerships to support the local harvesting, transportation, and processing infrastructure needed to provide income and jobs, and to help defray costs of forest health treatments.

In summary, we believe the nation would benefit by looking to Indian forestry as models of sustainability. The ITC would like to work with this Committee to expand collaborative approaches to forest management on a larger scale, and I invite you to visit reservations to see how Tribes are actively managing our forests to maintain healthy, resilient landscapes.

Thank you.

Response to Questions Submitted for the Record by Phil Rigdon, President, Intertribal Timber

August 8, 2013

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Chairman
Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation
Natural Resources Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
1017 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Question for Phil Rigdon—Tribal Forest Protection Act Utilization

Dear Chairman Bishop:

The Intertribal Timber Council (ITC) appreciates your interest in the Tribal Forest Protection Act (TFPA—PL 108–278) and its potential to address forest health and risk on neighboring federal lands. This spring, the ITC produced a report on a joint ITC/Bureau of Indian Affairs/Forest Service review of the TFPA which addresses the Committee's question as to why only 6 TFPA projects had been implemented since the TFPA was passed in 2004. The major impediments to more extensive use of the TFPA noted in the report include:

1. Tribes, the BIA and FS have differing perceptions and understanding of the TFPA authority.
2. The Forest Service has not provided guidance or incentives to encourage use of the TFPA as a high-priority. The decentralized nature of Forest Service operations and lack of agency-wide direction regarding the TFPA has resulted in highly variable knowledge and interest in utilization of the TFPA authority.
3. Administrative processes employed by the Forest Service can extend project analysis for years and subject proposed TFPA projects to protracted and costly litigation. Tribes are reluctant to invest scarce resources to prepare TFPA proposals that require long term and complex planning processes without greater assurances that projects will be approved and implemented. As evidenced by the example appended to Volume I of the ITC's TFPA Report, the Tule River Tribe still awaits approval of their 2005 request to address conditions that threaten the Giant Sequoias that are central to its culture. Tribes are concerned over becoming embroiled in costly and protracted Forest Service administrative processes that are fraught with uncertainties and cast doubt on timely implementation (e.g., funding availability, environmental clearances, impacts of restrictions to protect species listed under the Endangered Species Act, Wilderness designations, Roadless classifications, and litigation). The Warm Springs Tribes, for instance, stopped pursuing a TFPA project that it had worked on for several years when it became apparent that lengthy litigation was imminent. classifications, and litigation). The Warm Springs Tribes, for instance, stopped pursuing a TFPA project that it had worked on for several years when it became apparent that lengthy litigation was imminent
4. The Forest Service does not provide specific funding to support the development and implementation of TFPA projects. Congressional appropriations are increasingly being devoted to wildfire suppression; the limited resources available for forest health projects are largely consumed by planning and analysis with little left over for on-the-ground preventative treatments and implementation.
5. The Forest Service lacks consistent understanding of, and appreciation for, federal trust responsibilities toward Tribes and the value of collaboration through government-to-government relationships.
6. Frequent turnover of leadership and staff, particularly with Forest Service personnel, hampers the development and maintenance of long-term, working relationships at the local level between Tribes and the FS.

The ITC's report "Fulfilling the Promise of the Tribal Forest Protection Act of 2004" consists of two volumes. Volume I (attached) contains a summary of findings and recommendations for improving utilization of the TFPA. Volume II provides detailed data, site visit reports, success stories, an implementation plan, and training modules which may be of interest to the Committee. The Forest Service's response to our TFPA Report is attached.

Our report's recommendations are largely focused on increasing the ability of tribal management capabilities and approaches to provide balanced, sustainable management to neighboring federal lands:

1. **Improve understanding of the TFPA, government-to-government relationships and trust responsibilities** by conducting joint training and providing post-training technical support.
2. **Strengthen the vision and partnership between the Forest Service and Tribes through effective consultation to develop formal agreements** that institutionalize working relationships, forums, exchanges, collaborative project planning, engagement in national forest plan revisions, coordinated federal hazard fuel funding, and collaborative efforts to maintain viable infrastructure for utilization of forest products.
3. **Promote the use of TFPA**. Encourage Forest Service use of TFPA through performance incentives and accountability measures, budget direction, monitoring, reviews, and development of direction and guidance.

4. **The ITC and Tribes should identify ways to amend TFPA** or other authorities to expedite consideration, approval, and implementation of TFPA projects by addressing environmental compliance categorical exclusions, alternative dispute resolution processes, and allowing for a greater range of management alternatives in special designation areas. One such example is the recent amendment passed by the House Resources Committee that prioritizes and expedites TFPA projects.

The ITC and its member tribes are extremely concerned over the threats to Indian lands and communities from hazardous conditions on federal lands that are conducive to large-scale incidents of wildfire and infestations by insects and disease. We recognize that the management, harvesting, transportation, and processing infrastructure needed to sustain economically and ecologically functional forests on the landscape is rapidly disappearing. We understand full well that means to help defray treatment costs will be needed to treat the millions of acres of forestlands that are rapidly deteriorating. The ITC has embarked on a pilot project with the Forest Service called "Anchor Forests" to explore opportunities to develop and sustain critical infrastructure.

We urge the Committee to support extension of the stewardship contracting authority and allow for greater certainty for the availability of long-term wood supplies for investment in infrastructure. Investments will be needed to provide the means to enable the land help pay the costs of reducing overstocked fuels and for creating fire adapted communities, safe response to fire, healthy rural economies, and sustainable ecosystems.

The TFPA and Good Neighbor authority can be valuable tools that can be used to improve the health of federal forests and dependent communities. The current wildfire strategy dominated by suppression is not working; proactive treatment is the only lasting solution. Tribes have demonstrated their ability to effectively manage the land and their capacity to bridge chasms between diverse stakeholders that have stymied sound, active forest management.

Sincerely.

Phil Rigdon
President
Intertribal Timber

Mr. BISHOP. I appreciate that very much. I am going to have to do a break here. They have had another procedural vote called on the Floor. One of the reasons why we should never have Floor time in the mornings, when we have Committee time.

So, this is only one vote. I am going to suspend for a second, allow everyone to go take that vote, and then invite you to come right back. I am assuming you are going to have to cool your heels for about 10 minutes, maybe 15 at the most. We will try and pick this up right away.

So, I apologize for the interruption. Please just enjoy yourselves for a few minutes, while we go take care of a vote.

[Recess.]

Mr. BISHOP. Hello, there I am. I still apologize for that wait and that delay. That is the joy of sometimes having procedural motions in the middle of a Floor debate.

So, we will pick it up back up where we were. And I am sure that other Members will be joining us as they return from their vote.

Mr. Duda—is that pronounced correctly? Thank you for being here with us. I apologize for making you wait. Same rules. The oral part, 5 minutes. We would ask you to go ahead.

STATEMENT OF JOSEPH A. DUDA, DEPUTY STATE FORESTER, COLORADO STATE FOREST SERVICE, COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

Mr. DUDA. Thank you, Chairman Bishop, members of the Committee. I just want to start off by reminding us what we knew in 1992 from the Rocky Mountain Region Annual Report of the U.S. Forest Service. It stated that, after decades of fire suppression, and in the absence of management, the next most likely events were catastrophic loss to insect, disease, and fire. So we fast-forward 20 years to today. We are doing half the amount of forest management in Colorado that we did in 1992, and we have suffered exactly what the Forest Service told us would happen.

I don't want to belabor where we have been in the past. I want to talk about the path forward. The State of Colorado, we are doing our part. Since 1997 to this year, the Colorado Legislature has made $15 million available for fuel mitigation and forest management projects. And when you tie that together with the match from private citizens, that is $30 million of impact on the landscape.

And the Governor has also recently called together a wildfire task force. With our projected growth in the wildland-urban interface to be 300 percent from 2005 to 2030, it is clear we need to take a look at a different approach to how people live in the wildland-urban interface, and what requirements there may be when they move there.

A couple things, at the direction of Congress, the national cohesive strategy brought together State, Federal, NGO's to get collective expertise on wildland fire. And the three key issues they identified were to create fire-adapted communities, to improve wildfire response. And those two deal with the effects of wildland fire. The last one, restore and maintain landscapes, gets at the cause of fire. The western cohesive strategy also talks about using fire where allowable, and safely extinguishing fires, but it also talks about the need to manage our natural resources. And that is supported by the U.S. Forest Service restoration strategy that talks about a need for and a pathway to increasing the pace and scale of restoration.

Clearly, we can't afford to stay on the same path we have been in. It is unacceptable to citizens of Colorado and to everybody who enjoys national forests. The potential for loss of life, property, and damage to natural resources is unacceptable.

Additionally, the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition study on the true cost of wildfire in the U.S. showed that for the Hayman fire that damaged the Denver watershed and for the Missionary Ridge fire, suppression was only 20 and 25 percent, respectively, of the cost of those fires.

So, the path forward is we need to fully fund fire suppression, and not at the expense of other programs that can make a difference and reduce the need for fire suppression. We need to fund forest management and fuel reduction programs to get more work done on the landscape. We need to aggressively implement existing authorities where applicable, including things we can do through the Healthy Forest Restoration Act.

We should make permanent and expand the use of Good Neighbor Authority and stewardship contracting. We would like to see it permanent, not just 3 or 5-year reauthorization.

And then, finally, take a comprehensive look at all the laws, policies, and regulations that govern land management to increase the effective application of management on the landscape. In my career I have managed corporate forest lands, and over the last 10 years I have managed our State trust land program in Colorado. We give adequate and appropriate consideration for environmental considerations, we look at best management practices, but we also balance those with the needs of social and economic considerations.

Clearly, the States have an outcome-based system, and we can achieve results on the landscape. The Federal process needs to move in that same direction. Thank you, Chairman and Members.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Duda follows:]

Statement of Joseph A. Duda, Deputy State Forester, Colorado State Forest Service, on Behalf of the State of Colorado

Thank you, Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva, and members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to provide written and public testimony on challenges and opportunities related to wildfire and forest management. I also want to thank Colorado Representatives Lamborn and Tipton, and the other members of the Colorado congressional delegation for the time they have devoted to addressing important natural resources issues in Colorado.

My name is Joseph Duda and I am the Deputy State Forester for the Colorado State Forest Service at Colorado State University.

The Colorado State Forest Service is a service, outreach and technical assistance agency within the Warner College of Natural Resources at Colorado State University; we also provide staff support to the Division of Forestry in the Colorado Department of Natural Resources.

With more than 37 years of forestry experience, I have extensive knowledge of forest management, National Forest management, the forest products industry, and the U.S. Forest Service land management planning process.

A Firsthand Look at the Impacts of Unwanted Wildfire

Sixty-eight percent of Colorado's 24.4 million acres of forestland are in federal ownership, and the majority is U.S. Forest Service land. Colorado's national forests are being negatively impacted by bark beetle epidemics and catastrophic forest fires. Over 6.6 million acres of forestland have been severely impacted by bark beetles since 1996. Drought and climate change have contributed to this scenario, but the condition of the forests is the primary underlying factor, with nearly homogenous landscapes of mature, single-age stands that are overly dense and stressed from competing for nutrients and water. In other words, they are ripe for insect attacks and destructive wildfires.

The West Fork Complex Fire that is currently burning in south central Colorado is an example of what can occur as a result of these conditions.

As of July 8, the West Fork Complex Fire had burned more than 110,000 acres and was only 25 percent contained. The burn area of the West Fork Complex lies predominantly in the Rio Grande watershed. In one area, the fire burned within a few feet of the Rio Grande River. The watershed—along with wildlife and people—will be impacted by this fire for decades to come. The fire started on the west side of the continental divide, jumped over the divide, and made a seven-mile run in high-elevation spruce/fir timber in one day, forcing the evacuation of the entire town of South Fork.

Unfortunately, this story is similar to other stories that Coloradans have heard many times over the past decade. This year marks the second consecutive year that Colorado has experienced record-setting fires in terms of property lost in a single wildfire. Last year, the Waldo Canyon Fire destroyed 347 homes and killed two people; this year, the Black Forest Fire claimed 511 homes and two lives.

I also have firsthand experience with the disruptive impacts of wildfires, as my family and I were recently evacuated from our home in South Fork during the West Fork Fire.

A Predictable Scenario

The scenario in Colorado described earlier was predicted, as the following statement from the 1992 U.S. Forest Service Rocky Mountain Region Annual Report illustrates:

"Following decades of suppressed natural fire, many forested ecosystems—their age, density, and species composition—have reached a mature stage where insect infestation and catastrophic fire are the next likely events. Timber harvest offers a controllable alternative to this succession while providing a source of needed wood products. Where appropriate, harvesting can improve long term health and productivity of the forest, simultaneously contributing to other multiple-uses and forest values."

Poor forest condition is one of the primary factors that have led to destructive wildfires and catastrophic insect and disease outbreaks. The response has been to deal with the impacts (i.e. unwanted wildland fire), rather than improve the health of our forests through thinning and other management activities. For example, this year, we will remove less than one-half of the biomass in the form of forest products than we did in 1990. Without adequate resources and an efficient process for thinning our forests to achieve age class and species diversity, the U.S. Forest Service, and Coloradans, will continue to lose ground in our collective attempts to address the mountain of dead timber and declining forest health. In simple terms, we are managing the disturbance, rather than addressing the entire system, which is the only real solution to our current situation.

Comprehensive Forest Management is Essential

As I watched news coverage of the Black Forest Fire, I considered what level of forest management has been accomplished in the past to promote forest health and address wildfire, and what needs to be done in the future. Clearly, defensible space around homes is important and the Colorado State Forest Service is actively engaged in implementing several programs and grants to help landowners implement fuels reduction projects, including defensible space. These programs include several U.S. Forest Service cooperative grant programs, such as State and Private Forestry Redesign, State Fire Assistance, and Volunteer Fire Assistance grants. The Colorado State Forest Service also is the state lead for the Firewise Communities/USA and Fire Adapted Communities programs. Finally, the State of Colorado has funded a Forest Restoration Grant Program at $1 million annually since 2007, and in 2013 authorized and funded the Wildfire Risk Reduction Grant Program at $9.6 million. With the match these grants require of participants, these programs will result in approximately $29 million of management on the ground.

The materials used in home construction also are an important component in our efforts to reduce wildfire risk. However, after watching the damage caused by wildfire in Colorado over the past several years, it is clear that the issue is much broader than home construction and clearing the vegetation 100 feet around the home. Managing the broader landscape is critical to reducing the impacts of wildfire on communities and resources. When wildfires travel several miles in one burning period and throw embers that start spot fires a mile ahead of the fire, it is clear that we need a different management approach. In 2013, the Ecological Restoration Institute stated that "WUI [wildland-urban interface]-only treatments result in areas of unchanged crown fire potential across the untreated landscape, therefore leaving it vulnerable to large, severe, and expensive (mega) landscape-scale fire".

Social, Environmental, and Economic Values

Over the past several decades, management activity on federal lands in Colorado has declined. Currently, more than twice as much tree volume on U.S. Forest Service lands in Colorado is lost to insects, disease, and fire as is removed through forest management activities. This has resulted in a significant decrease in our forest products infrastructure.

Colorado has a small but diversified forest products infrastructure, which depends on a steady, predictable supply of sawlog-quality timber generated from forest management activities on federal lands that can be economically processed into marketable finished products. Forest product markets are essential if we are to economically manage state and private forestlands. However, we cannot produce enough forest products from state and private land to sustain an industry without a contribution from federal lands. These forest products companies are vitally important to many small communities in rural Colorado, and to Colorado's economy.

Decreasing levels of forest management has resulted in reduced markets for forest products, less resilient forest conditions, and increased risk of insects, disease, and fire. Additionally, a Colorado State University study, Wood Use at the Turn of the Century (Lynch and Mackes) in 2001 showed that more than 90 percent of the forest products Coloradans use comes from other states, as well as Canada and Mexico. We have the opportunity to improve our forest age-class diversity and resilience, provide the forest outcomes that Coloradans expect, including first class recreation opportunities and clean water, and produce forest products for use in Colorado. This

represents a balanced approach to the social, environmental, and economic values of forest management.

Clearly, this trend in declining forest health and increased wildfire risk demands that we take immediate action to determine how to most effectively implement the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy. The strategy identifies three primary factors that present the greatest challenges and opportunities for addressing wildland fire—restore and maintain landscapes, create fire adapted communities, and improve wildfire response. We support restoring and maintaining landscapes as goal one because proactively managing our forests will provide the greatest benefit to our forest ecosystems. Similarly, the U.S. Forest Service Restoration Strategy outlines the need for, and a pathway to, increasing the pace and scale of restoration.

A Colorado State University study released in 2007 projected that the wildland-urban interface in Colorado will increase from 715,000 acres in 2005 to 2.1 million acres in 2030. Creating fire-adapted communities and improving wildfire response are important components of the Cohesive Strategy. However, the single component that will provide the greatest long-term benefit is to restore and maintain landscapes. Active forest management in Colorado has been sorely lacking over the past several decades. We must significantly increase the pace of landscape-scale restoration if we want to have a meaningful impact on improving forest health and increasing resilience to insects, disease, and wildfire.

In addition to the three primary factors identified in the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy, the Western Cohesive Strategy has adopted the following vision for this century: *"Safely and effectively extinguish fire, when needed; use fire where allowable; manage our natural resources; and as a Nation, live with wildland fire."* Realizing this vision will take the collective will of public land managers, private landowners, industry, and many others.

In Colorado, the U.S. Forest Service, Colorado State Forest Service, Colorado Department of Natural Resources, place-based forestry collaboratives, and other stakeholders are working together to determine how best to implement forest management projects in areas identified as being at high risk to wildfire—both on public and private land. Guiding these efforts is the Colorado Forest Action Plan, which states that "a comprehensive approach to forest management that capitalizes on our collective knowledge and resources is imperative to ensure that Colorado's forests remain productive and resilient for present and future generations." The plan will provide the state with a roadmap for implementing forest management in Colorado over the next decade to conserve working forest landscapes, protect forests from harm, and enhance public benefit from Colorado's trees and forests.

Using all the Tools in the Toolbox

Colorado now has more than 200 Community Wildfire Protection Plans, which are being used to identify opportunities to implement large-scale, cross-boundary projects that will help reduce wildfire risk to communities and restore forest health. However, lack of adequate funding and commitment on the part of individual landowners can be barriers to comprehensive and successful implementation of these plans.

Many communities have successfully competed for federal grants that help fund fuels treatments. As noted earlier, the Colorado General Assembly and Governor Hickenlooper have passed legislation making millions of dollars in state funding available through a competitive grant process for forest restoration projects that demonstrate a community-based approach. In addition, legislation was passed this year that will make additional funds available on a competitive basis for fuels reduction projects on state and private land through the Wildfire Risk Reduction Grant Program.

These programs and several others, such as the Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership, which was formed after the devastating fire season of 2002, have resulted in treatment on thousands of acres of land, reducing wildfire risk to communities and important natural resources. Despite these efforts, more resources are needed to implement management projects on a scale that will allow us to get ahead of the next insect epidemic, disease outbreak, or wildfire that threatens not only human lives and communities, but the watersheds that supply drinking water to Colorado and 17 other states.

Another tool that has been effective on a somewhat limited basis in Colorado is the Good Neighbor Authority, which will expire on September 30, 2013. We strongly urge reauthorization and use of the Good Neighbor Authority on a broader scale in Colorado.

Region 2 of the U.S. Forest Service continues to focus much of its work on restoring and maintaining landscapes, but new approaches and additional resources are

critical if we are to be successful in creating forests that are resilient and provide all the benefits Coloradans and visitors to our magnificent state have come to expect. Failure to achieve this outcome will result in further loss of lives, communities, critical watersheds and other natural resources, as well as revenue. It also will result in further damage and losses to our iconic western forests—forests that are renowned throughout the world for their scenic beauty and recreational opportunities. Loss of such opportunities will have lasting and devastating effects on Colorado and the West.

The 2002 Hayman Fire, the largest in Colorado history in terms of acres burned, demonstrated the potential impacts of fire on the Colorado's water supply. That fire dumped thousands of cubic yards of sediment and debris into Strontia Springs Reservoir, which has cost Denver Water millions of dollars to restore over several years. In addition, the 2012 High Park Fire west of Fort Collins resulted in mud slides on a major highway and dumped ash into the Poudre River, which supplies drinking water to several Front Range cities. More recently, heavy rain over the Waldo Canyon burn area in Colorado Springs resulted in a mudslide that destroyed or damaged several homes and businesses in Manitou Springs.

In 2010, the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition published "The True Cost of Wildfire in the Western U.S." While enormous, the suppression costs of the two fires examined in the report—the Hayman and Missionary Ridge fires—constituted only 20 percent and 25 percent, respectively, of the total costs associated with the fire. The remaining costs were associated with recovery and rehabilitation of lands and water supply infrastructure.

Colorado and other states cannot afford to continue absorbing the enormous costs associated with these fires, most of which have burned on federal land, primarily in areas where trees are far too old and dense, and often have been affected by insects or disease.

Conclusion

From a Colorado perspective, we must explore all options to improve forest conditions across Colorado. These include full funding for fire suppression so the U.S. Forest Service is not required to disrupt ongoing programs to fund fire. Forest management funding also should be increased to allow treatment on more lands. In addition, we must utilize and expand use of the Good Neighbor Authority in Colorado to assist in management where practical. We also must take a comprehensive look at all opportunities and authorities necessary to reduce U.S. Forest Service costs, including the use of existing authorities such as the Healthy Forests Restoration Act, which should be aggressively implemented. More effective management of Colorado's forested lands will set a course for more resilient future forests that provide the benefits and outcomes we expect.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I look forward to working with our partners to develop an approach to forest management in Colorado that integrates social, environmental, and economic values. It is our best hope for a future that includes healthy and productive forests for present and future generations.

Response to Questions Submitted for the Record by Joseph A. Duda, Deputy State Forester, Colorado State Forest Service:

1. In your testimony, you said that the wildland-urban interface in Colorado will triple by 2030. At the same time, fire risk is predicted to grow as the climate becomes hotter and drier, with less snowpack. Is Colorado taking action to responsibly manage development in these high-risk areas?

Response:

Colorado has been and continues to work on issues associated with increasing development in the wildland-urban interface and the risk from wildfire. The issue is complex, requiring land management agencies, elected officials, private landowners, insurance companies, and others to work together toward effective solutions.

In 1972, the Colorado Legislature passed SB 72–0035 that required counties to establish development rules for subdivisions with lots less than 35 acres. One of the requirements was to allow the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) to comment on proposed subdivisions from a wildfire hazard and mitigation standpoint. Many counties have defensible-space and land-use planning regulations designed to reduce wildfire hazards. Road standards have improved access for firefighting equipment. Shake shingles have been banned in areas and construction materials have improved. Fire codes have improved in many areas. These new regulations apply to new construction or when a property owner rebuilds. CSFS completed State of Colo-

rado Wildfire Mitigation Plans in 1990, 1995, and 2001 (updated in 2002) following large fire years. All of these plans had recommendations for new construction, public awareness, defensible space, fuel modification, land use planning and a lengthy list of recommendations.

Following the severe fire season of 2002, the Colorado State Forester and U.S. Forest Service Rocky Mountain Regional Forester created the Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership to develop a cohesive approach to on-the-ground treatment aimed at reducing hazardous fuels. They also brought together a broad coalition of partners to form the Front Range Roundtable. Through a consensus process, this group identified the lands in critical need of forest management (fuels mitigation) on Colorado's Front Range.

In 2004 and 2005, insurance companies, specifically State Farm, expressed interest in reducing risk for homeowners. The Colorado State Forest Service provided training to State Farm representatives on proper application of defensible-space work around homes and important infrastructure.

In 2008, the Colorado Legislature passed a law to help support mitigation efforts, allowing the formation of Special Districts to collect revenue for use in implementing fuels mitigation. In addition, since 2007, the Colorado State Legislature has provided $18 million in funding for fuels mitigation. With the required match, more than $25 million has been made available to communities and private citizens to mitigate hazardous fuels through forest management projects.

Additionally, with the projected growth in Colorado's wildland-urban interface and the record-setting fire year of 2012, Governor John Hickenlooper issued an Executive Order to assemble the Wildfire Insurance and Forest Health Task Force. Water providers; insurance companies; local, county, state, and federal agencies; non-governmental conservation organizations; banking and mortgage industries; and home builders are represented on the Task Force.

The Task Force is taking a comprehensive look at options to mitigate the increasing threat of wildfire to lives, property, and critical infrastructure. The Task Force will complete its work and submit its recommendations to the Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the President of the Senate by September 30, 2013. Among the recommendations currently being considered is a tax increase for those living in the WUI, with a possible tax reduction if defensible-space work has been conducted by the property owner. State laws and local ordinances also are being considered for anyone who builds or rebuilds in the wildland-urban interface.

The issues associated with the wildland-urban interface are too complex for a single entity alone to address. The Colorado State Forest Service will continue to work with our partners to identify and help implement pro-active solutions to address these critical issues, which impact public safety and the ability of our iconic forests to provide the wide range of benefits on which Coloradans rely.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you, and we appreciate your testimony.

Mr. Topik, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF CHRISTOPHER TOPIK, PH.D., DIRECTOR, RESTORING AMERICA'S FORESTS, THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

Dr. TOPIK. First, I want to join the tributes in solemn memory of the Granite Mountain Hotshots. Mr. Chairman, may I submit for the record a statement from our Arizona Nature Conservancy chapter?

Mr. BISHOP. Without objection.

[The statement submitted by Mr. Topik for the record follows:]

Statement submitted for the record by Patrick Graham, State Director, The Nature Conservancy in Arizona

Chairman Bishop, ranking member Grijalva and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. My name is Patrick Graham and I am the state director for The Nature Conservancy in Arizona. When tragedy struck the afternoon of June 30 resulting in the loss of 19 elite wildland fire fighters, we were stunned. Our thoughts continue to be with the families of the fallen firefighters lost protecting people, property and lands we cherish.

We are all too familiar with the impact of fire in Arizona. While fire has always played an important role in maintaining our forests, today's fires are more devastating in their scale and intensity. We have lost over one quarter of our Ponderosa

pine forests in a decade and millions of acres remain at risk. There is no one solution or one responsible party. It requires many tools, approaches, programs, and partnerships. Like a campfire left unattended, it will continue to leave a trail of devastation and the costs will be tremendous to our water supplies, communities, economy and wildlife habitat.

We appreciate the leadership of our delegation—in particular, Representatives Gosar and Kirkpatrick, whose districts have borne the brunt of the fires this past decade. They continue to champion the tools and resources needed to make a difference. Arizona is in a unique position to demonstrate the changes needed to accelerate forest thinning and reduce fuel loads, both essential to protect communities and healthy water supplies. We need to work together to innovate and accelerate action or continue to spend hundreds of millions of dollars fighting fires, restoring the damage done, and helping communities recover from the needless loss of property and life. Taking action to reduce fuel loads will improve the health of our forests and begin to break the unsustainable cycle of reacting to large fires.

The circumstances of the Yarnell fire illustrate there is no single action or response to the range of conditions that exist. A fire in chaparral burns hot and is hard to control. When living close to these conditions the best action is to create a defensible space that provides a chance to slow or stop a fire. Often, mixed land ownerships mean no one person or agency is responsible. It takes a partnership by federal and state agencies, communities and homeowners. The Firewise Community Program plays an important role. We also support coalition efforts, such as the fire-adapted communities (fireadapted.org) to help educate individuals and communities on their roles at reducing fire risk. Creating additional incentives to participate in these community efforts is important because these types of forests seldom have enough economic value to attract private investment, thus shifting the costs to landowners and governments.

Pine forests present an entirely different opportunity. Here, partnerships take on a different role in the West since most of the forests are on public lands. You are certainly familiar with the challenges of land management on these lands. It surprises many to learn the nation's largest contiguous Ponderosa forest stretches from Northern Arizona to central New Mexico. Here we have launched the nation's first and two largest forest stewardship contracts. The most recent is referred to as the Four Forest initiative. A total of 900,000 acres will be offered in contracts to attract private investment by wood products businesses; the first contract for 300,000 acres is currently underway.

Three elements were critical to get this project off the ground. 1) Creation of the federal stewardship contracting authority allowed for ten-year contracts to provide the assured wood supply necessary to attract business investment. 2) Funding the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) is providing financial support essential for completion of the large-scale NEPA analysis over 900,000 acres and 3) flexibility in the NEPA process.

Without these federal actions and more, the effort would have stalled. It is anticipated these public investments will result in well over $250 million in private investments, profits, and returns.

There also needs to be a sense of urgency. During the planning process of the Four Forest analysis, over 500,000 acres in eastern Arizona were lost to the Wallow fire at a cost of over $190 million, not including the loss of property, impacts to local economies and water supplies. We understand the dilemma facing Congress and the federal agencies. However, until we invest enough in reducing fuel loads, we will be forced to pay the heavy price of fighting fires and the los of forests and lives.

In some situations the cost of reducing fuel loads exceeds the economic return yet the risk of doing nothing is very high. Cragin Reservoir is such a site. It has higher costs of treatments. Steep, forested slopes surround the reservoir. When they burn mudflows will fill the reservoir. The town of Payson is constructing a pipeline over many miles to utilize the water for their drinking supply. Such situations will require investments to close the financial gap to where wood products businesses can justify harvesting the wood.

Investments alone will not solve the problem. There needs to partnerships and continued innovation and evolution of policies, processes, and approaches. Traditional methods are too costly and slow to match today's needs. To reduce fuel loads the focus is on harvesting lower value, smaller diameter wood. Today's operators must move quickly and efficiently to stay in business and compete in a world marketplace. In addition to proposed administrative changes in the planning rule and NEPA, we need to redesign how monitoring is conducted and how results can be used to continually improve business practices.

Effective monitoring is essential in maintaining the public support needed to act. The Four Forest Initiative has developed a set of prescriptions for woodcutters to

follow under different circumstances. These can be complex and the pressure is on operators to decide quickly which tree to cut and which to leave. The current system of monitoring is costly, slow and ineffective. We are working to redesign this system.

The Conservancy in Arizona is investing our resources and working with woodcutters to bring new technology to redesign the monitoring process. Using tablet computers and GPS units mounted in the feller-bunchers used to cut trees, we are providing technology that helps the operator be more effective while providing more timely and accurate data for monitoring. This information can then be conveyed more rapidly to decision makers and the public to maintain public confidence in these large-scale operations. This allows treatments to occur at a faster pace and larger scale.

Congress has an important role in solving these problems. Reauthorizing stewardship contracting, funding CFLRP, providing adequate funding for fuels reduction, and supporting innovation and administrative changes in the planning rules and NEPA to create the flexibility to rapidly accelerate the pace and scale of forest thinning and fuel reduction.

Thank you.

Dr. TOPIK. Thank you for inviting me today. The Nature Conservancy is a global conservation group with over 50 years of experience with hands-on fire. The forest and fire issues are urgent, but they are solvable. They have been called wicked problems. And this means we have to examine the issues from various perspectives, and have many different solutions that fit local perspectives. But the national government has a key role in all of this. I urge the Congress to work together and focus on your agreements, which are substantial.

The Nature Conservancy is deeply involved in nearly every State on this issue. Our participation in the Fire Learning Network, the Land Fire Science Team, and other efforts, teaches us that solutions require learning, listening, and the ability of citizens and public land managers to work together.

I have had the good fortune to visit exciting, collaborative efforts all around the country. And it is not just a Western issue; we all need to learn to live with fire under our terms. We all understand that restored forests are safer from fire danger, and they are more productive of many critical values that we all need: water, wildlife, wood, recreation, and scenery.

So, how do we do it? I am going to focus on three things: science-based collaboration works; second, we agree proactive, hands-on forest management is required; and, third, I want to talk about a need for a new wildfire emergency suppression funding system.

So, collaboration and science really do work. Science illustrates potential results of various management schemes, so citizens and land managers can weigh potential results of action and inaction with social and community needs. We monitor activities and adapt strategies, based on the results. The collaborative forest landscape restoration program is a great example of how a bit of Federal funding can spawn new hope for action. The Congress needs to support more efforts like this. And we also need to help States and communities build local capacity to do forestry work, leveraging a tremendous amount of efforts.

Second, proactive forest management works. We have many examples where appropriate forest thinning and subsequent controlled burning have reduced the intensity and scope of wildfires. So the Conservancy is very disappointed at the lack of recent Federal support for hazardous fuels reduction activities. The Presi-

dent's new budget request for both Forest Service and the Interior Department are just not acceptable. We hope you reject it.

Small investments and appropriate forestry yield many benefits besides reducing fire danger. A restored forest is more productive for wildlife, plants, recreation, and water. So we need to remember that much of North America consists of fire-driven ecosystems. So we need to learn to live with fire. We also have to work with air quality managers and communities, so they understand that many of our forests will burn. But it is better for our health to have the fire on our terms, rather than during catastrophic, uncontrolled fires.

I hope the Committee will support coalition efforts such as the fire-adapted communities initiative, that bring many sectors of society together. The Committee also needs to extend the authorization of successful legislative tools, especially stewardship contracting and good neighbors.

We do not believe that NEPA is the problem here. New ways of using NEPA are needed to make it more flexible. But, in fact, I believe it is critical to maintain the public participation and full public disclosure that the NEPA requires. Better Federal actions result when they are out in the open and benefit from input by many interested stakeholders.

And, last, we need to change the way Federal wildland fire suppression is funded. We recognize the need for robust, proactive, Federal and State firefighting. But the suppression costs are now trumping the government's investment in vital management and conservation purposes for which the Forest Service and the Interior bureaus were even established. Suppression costs soar. Paying for this results in fire borrowing. And even the threat of fire borrowing has a chilling effect on the ability of land managers to plan activities and obtain skilled contractors. The Flame Act of 2009 was a bipartisan effort to change this, but it hasn't worked.

So, Mr. Chairman, we must move beyond this harmful and disruptive cycle of underfunding suppression needs and then robbing from other critical programs to fill the gap. If the Congress can't make the flame accounts work, you need a new solution. Critical life and safety of fire suppression needs to be guaranteed, but this should not come at the expense of these other vital conservation, public service, and science activities.

One option to consider is establishing a disaster prevention fund that could be utilized to support vital Federal fire suppression actions during emergencies, just like the disaster relief fund is utilized to help communities recover after disasters. Fire suppression is different from other disasters, though, because Federal response is needed most acutely during the actual event. We and others stand ready to work with you and the Administration to help create a solution.

And I conclude by reminding the Committee that climate change is making the fire problem worse. Our forests are becoming warmer, drier, and subject to more extreme weather events and longer fire seasons. Time is of the essence. We need to shift our Nation's approach to wildfire from an emphasis on costly emergency response to a more balanced approach that stresses prevention and

restoration. This will provide the ongoing benefits to society and nature.

Thank you much, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Topik follows:]

Statement of Christopher Topik, Ph.D., Director, Restoring America's Forests, The Nature Conservancy

Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to participate in this important conversation about the role of fire in our nation's forests and communities. My name is Christopher Topik and I am the Director of The Nature Conservancy's *Restoring America's Forests* Program. The Nature Conservancy is an international, non-profit conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for people and nature. Our mission is to conserve the lands and waters upon which all life depends.

The Conservancy's work across North America is guided by an ambitious vision that involves developing nature-based solutions to some of humanity's most pressing global challenges. Among our primary North American priorities is our *Restoring America's Forests* program, through which we aim to foster a dramatic increase in the proactive, science-based restoration of our nation's federal forests, thereby reducing the tremendous human and environmental costs associated with unnaturally large and damaging megafires.

The tragic loss of 19 wildland firefighters in Arizona last week brought into sharp focus the unacceptable and unbearable level to which these costs can rise. We must collectively and immediately dedicate ourselves to finding a way to effectively support both essential emergency wildfire preparedness and response AND the proactive fuels reduction and forest restoration that are needed to reduce the demand for emergency expenditures in the future. Our current approach to wildland fire and forest management creates a false choice, pitting the viability of one against the other. In reality, we cannot afford to short-change either. The potential costs are too great.

Outlined below are five principles that we believe are crucial to a successful national wildland fire and forest management strategy. They include:

- Collaboration
- Proactive management
- Sufficient funding for emergency response
- Community engagement
- Innovation to increase the pace of success

The values at stake in our forests are enormous and serve to underline the important role forested landscapes play in our essential quality of life. Forests cover more than a third of our nation; they store and filter half our nation's water supply; provide jobs to nearly a million forest product workers; absorb 13% of our nation's carbon emissions; generate more than $13 billion in recreation and other related economic activity on Forest Service lands alone; and, of course, provide habitat to thousands of American wildlife and plant species. These are not benefits restricted to rural or forest-dependent communities; rather they are integral to the well-being of every single American.

The new reality of ever larger and more frequent megafires is stretching the capacity of our emergency response infrastructure to respond; of our forests to sustainably provide a full-range of benefits and services; and of our public coffers to provide the funding to address wildfire suppression and post-fire recovery needs. Time is of the essence in shifting our nation's approach to wildfire from an emphasis on costly and reactive emergency response to a more balanced approach that includes significant investment in proactively restoring and maintaining resilient landscapes and creating truly fire adapted communities. The U.S. Forest Service's 2012 Report on *Increasing the Pace of Restoration and Job Creation on Our National Forests* [1] estimates that there are as many as 65 million acres of National Forest System land at high or very high risk of catastrophic wildfires. These numbers are further magnified when the condition and management needs on other federal and non-federal lands are considered.

The societal, environmental and fiscal costs of fire in our nation's forests continue their precipitous climb. During the 2012 wildfire season, alone, a relatively small 68,000 fires burned across nearly 10 million acres and resulted in a $1.9 billion bill for federal wildfire suppression (on top of the nearly $1.5 billion required to staff

[1] http://www.fs.fed.us/publications/restoration/restoration.pdf.

the federal fire programs). The cost of wildfire management currently consumes more than 40% of the U.S. Forest Service budget, leaving an ever smaller pool of funds to support hazardous fuels reduction, timber management, wildlife habitat improvement, recreational access, watershed protection and the wide variety of other important services that the American people value and expect.

Climate change is exacerbating the fire problem as our forests are becoming warmer, dryer and subject to both more extreme weather events and longer fire seasons. The Forest Service itself expects severe fires to double by 2050.[2] Last year was the third biggest fire year since 1960, with 9.3 million acres burned—the Forest Service is estimating 20 million acres to burn annually by 2050. We are already seeing these impacts: the Four Corners region has documented temperature increases of 1.5–2 degrees Fahrenheit over the last 60 years.[3]

The *National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy* (Cohesive Strategy) establishes a helpful framework for guiding us toward a more balanced approach to fire, forests and communities, but it will take more than a document to enact the kind of fundamental and swift change that is needed. We must also collectively put our time, money and resources behind our words—and we must do it now.

During this time of tight federal budgets and pressing forest restoration needs, it is essential that we invest the limited resources we have both strategically and proactively in order to reduce our exposure to the unbearable and unacceptable costs of catastrophic wildfire and to maximize both current and future benefits for people, water and wildlife.

In short, we are convinced that science-based collaboration and open, public processes can foster community and economic conditions that create the social license allowing more forest treatments to be done, with locally based goals and benefits to local communities, water, and wildlife. And, by creating a new method of funding emergency fire suppression, we can avoid the current situation in which important restoration and fire risk reduction projects and other vital conservation projects are held-up at the mercy of mega-fires. By broadly investing in fire risk prevention, we can get additional sectors of society to share in the preparation and benefits of being fire adapted communities.

Below are additional details on the five principles we feel must be addressed as we pursue this important course of action.

1. Collaboration is a Foundation for Success

The scale and complexity of the situation facing our nation's forests and communities means that we must find ways to forge agreement among diverse interests about the "where, when and how" of forest management and then focus our resources on those landscapes that are poised for success. Collaboration, once considered "innovative" and "new," has become an essential tool in the tool box of those hoping to reduce wildfire risks, increase forest restoration and contribute to the sustainability of local economies. By bringing together county commissioners, local mill owners, water and utility managers, fire protection officials, conservation groups, scientists and others, collaborative groups can identify mutually beneficial solutions to forest health challenges and, sometimes by enduring a few bumps and bruises, pave the way for smooth and successful projects on the ground.

Although effective collaboration takes many forms, the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration (CFLR) Program has been a valuable vehicle for prioritizing and testing a variety of collaborative, science-based approaches to forest restoration that both reduce wildfire risks and contribute to local jobs and economic opportunities.

In just three short years since its inception, the CFLR Program has provided support to 20 projects in 14 states, with an additional 3 high priority restoration projects receiving support from non-CFLR funds. Through these projects, the CFLR Program is demonstrating that collaboratively-developed forest restoration plans can be implemented at a large scale with benefits for people and the forests. From fiscal year 2010—fiscal year 2012, the cumulative outputs generated by the funded projects already total: 94.1 million cubic feet of timber; 7,949 jobs created or maintained; $290 million in labor income; 383,000 acres of hazardous fuels reduction to protect communities; 229,000 acres of fire prone forest restoration; and 6,000 miles of improved road conditions to reduce sediment in waterways.

Equally important is the long-term commitment these projects have fostered to both community sustainability and forest resilience.

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[2] http://www.globalchange.gov/what-we-do/assessment/nca-overview;
http://www.denverpost.com/breakingnews/ci_22943189/feds-project-climate-change-will-double-wildfire-risk?source=email.

[3] Managing Changing Landscapes in the Southwestern United States, Center for Science and Public Policy, 2011, find here: http://azconservation.org/downloads/category/southwest_regional.

We must continue to fully fund the CFLR Program, including the matching funds and monitoring requirements, as well as the project planning and preparation activities that facilitate implementation success, over the ten year life span of the projects. We must also increase our emphasis on and support for collaboration as a fundamental aspect of successful forest restoration planning and implementation. This should involve applying lessons learned through the CFLR Program to improve National Forest management throughout the system as collaborative, large-scale projects are created and new land management plans are developed under the new forest planning rule.

2. Proactive Management is a Responsible Investment

Across the nation, communities and land managers are struggling with how to address tens of millions of acres of National Forest, and several million acres of other federal and non-federal lands, in need of treatment to reduce the risk of unnaturally large or damaging wildfires. In the absence of large-scale restoration management, the federal government spends up to $2 billion annually on emergency fire suppression to minimize loss of lives, property, community infrastructure and vital natural resources. Hundreds of millions more are spent by local, state and federal governments, as well as private citizens, to address the devastating and often long-lasting impacts left in the wake of wildfires.

Strategic, proactive hazardous fuels treatments have proven to be a safe and cost-effective way to reduce risks to communities and forests by removing overgrown brush and trees, leaving forests in a more natural condition resilient to wildfires. A recent meta-analysis of 32 fuels treatment effectiveness studies, conducted on behalf of the Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP), confirmed that when implemented strategically, fuels treatments can make a crucial difference in the size, spread and severity of wildfires.[4] These treatments can improve the safety and effectiveness of firefighters and provide protection for a community or essential watershed that might otherwise see extensive loss.

Many of these hazardous fuels reduction projects are also providing jobs and other economic benefits to rural communities. For example, a recent economic assessment of forest restoration in Oregon revealed that "an investment in forest health restoration has the potential to save millions of dollars in state and federal funds by avoiding costs associated with fire suppression, social service programs and unemployment benefits."[5] In addition, for every $1 million invested in hazardous fuels treatments, approximately 16 full-time equivalent jobs are created or maintained, along with more than half a million in wages and over $2 million in overall economic activity.[6]

It is absolutely essential that we maintain federal investments and skilled capacity in reducing hazardous fuels. The Ecological Restoration Institute's (ERI) valuable new study on the efficacy of hazardous fuels treatments joins the JFSP analysis referenced above in building a growing body of literature documenting the many instances in which on-the-ground actions have modified wildfire behavior, thereby allowing firefighters to safely engage in protecting infrastructure and landscapes.[7] Rather than repeat those references, I will described a couple of instances where I personally witnessed the role strategic fuels reduction treatments can play in enabling an entire community to survive a horrific wildfire.

I refer first to the Esperanza Fire, arson caused blaze which tragically cost the lives of five firefighters in California's San Bernardino National Forest in October 2006. The Esperanza Fire also destroyed 30 homes, but the entire town of Idyllwild may well have been destroyed if not for the extensive hazard reduction activities that were implemented in the area thanks to funding from the U.S. Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service. During an official oversight trip for my previous job with the House Appropriations Committee, I toured the entire Idyllwild area the day before the fire, and then witnessed the fire's progression from a distance. Defensible space treatments implemented along the main roads into and

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[4] Martinson, E.J.; Omi, P.N. 2013. Fuel treatments and fire severity: A meta-analysis. Res. Pap.
RMRS–RP–103WWW. Fort Collins, CO: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station. 35 p.

[5] National Forest Health Restoration: An Economic Assessment of Forest Restoration on Oregon's Eastside National Forests. Prepared for Governor John Kitzhaber and Oregon's Legislative Leaders. November 26, 2012. Quote on page (iv). http://www.oregon.gov/odf/BOARD/docs/2013_January/BOFATTCH_20130109_08_03.pdf.

[6] The Employment and Economic Impacts of Forest and Watershed Restoration in Oregon. Max Nielsen-Pincus and Cassandra Moseley, Institute for Sustainable Environment, University of Oregon. Spring 2010, page 1.

[7] http://library.eri.nau.edu/gsdl/collect/erilibra/index/assoc/D2013004.dir/doc.pdf.

out of Idyllwild fostered the safe passage of citizens and firefighters; areas where strategic thinning had reduced overly dense stands of trees served to modify the potential for crown fire; and reduced brush in proximity of structures helped to slow fire spread.

The post-fire assessment of Arizona's record-setting 2011 Wallow Fire also clearly demonstrated that homes and forest were saved in and around the town of Alpine by management treatments applied in tandem with FireSafe practices near structures. I had the good fortune of flying with Project Lighthawk last summer over the entire Wallow Fire burn site. The fire area was huge, over half a million acres, and a very complicated and complex burn pattern occurred. It was clear that the extensive tree thinning treatments around the town of Alpine caused the fire to calm down so that firefighters, including the Conservancy's own Southern Rockies Wildland Fire Module, could protect extensive infrastructure.

My informal case studies, along with those that have been more formally documented, provide further evidence that proactive forest management pays. But it is also clear that the scale and pace of this proactive forest management must increase and that treatments must be balanced between both developed and wildland areas.

We also point out that near the end of the protracted fiscal year 2013 federal appropriations process, the House Appropriations Committee offered a higher funding level for USDA Forest Service wildland fire management than was eventually agreed to by the Senate and signed into law. Those funds could have been used during the current fiscal year to bolster risk reduction projects, such as hazardous fuels reduction, as well as aid fire suppression preparedness. We hope that the House and Senate can find a way to support vital forest treatment actions as they are about to mark-up the FY 2014 appropriations bills.

The Nature Conservancy was very disappointed to see that the President's FY 2014 Budget proposes devastating cuts to the Hazardous Fuels Reduction programs for both the U.S. Forest Service and the Department of the Interior. The nation has experienced a 57% increase in acres burned this past decade; the National Interagency Fire Center predicted extreme fire potential for most of the West this summer and that prediction is, unfortunately, bearing out as the season progresses.[8] It does not make sense to reduce the nation's investment in one of the few proven federal programs that get us ahead of the problem.

We are also concerned to see that the President's FY 2014 Budget emphasizes protecting structures nearly to the exclusion of natural areas that support life and livelihood. The Conservancy agrees that funding is urgently needed to create community protection buffer zones that can limit the damage from wildfire. Fighting fires will remain costly until such buffers are in place and people feel safe.

But shifting too much funding away from undeveloped forest areas where fires have been excluded for a century, and conditions remain overly dense and susceptible to unnaturally damaging wildfire, will have a long-term negative impact on forest health and resiliency. The Nature Conservancy urges a balanced allocation of funding between treatments in wildland and developed areas.

Strategic mechanical fuels reduction in wildlands, combined with controlled burning to reduce fuels across large areas, can significantly reduce the chance that megafires will adversely impact the water supply, utility infrastructure, recreational areas and rural economic opportunities on which communities depend.

We hope that this Committee will work with the Appropriations Committee, the Administration and others to foster funding that facilitates proactive management and hazardous fuels reduction, including the use of fire as a safe and cost-effective management tool, at a meaningful scale. We also encourage sustained investment in applied research, such as the Joint Fire Science Program, that develop both information and tools that enable land managers to maximize the effectiveness and ecological benefit of fuels treatments.

3. Provide Sufficient Funding for Emergency Wildfire Response

The Nature Conservancy recognizes that even with a robust, proactive approach to land management, federal fire preparedness and suppression resources will still need to be maintained at an effective level to protect life, property and natural resources. But emergency preparedness and response resources must be provided through a mechanism that does not compromise the viability of the forest management activities that can actually serve to reduce risks to life and property and mitigate the demand for emergency response in the future. The current system of funding fire preparedness and suppression at the expense of hazardous fuels and other key programs threatens to undermine—and eventually overtake—the vital manage-

[8] http://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov/outlooks/outlooks.htm.

ment and conservation purposes for which the USDA Forest Service and Department of the Interior bureaus were established.

The dramatic increase of homes near natural areas that are prone to frequent and unnaturally damaging fire has added significantly to the cost of fire suppression. In the past, paying for this tremendous cost often resulted in "borrowing" or outright transfer of funding from critical land management and conservation programs into fire suppression accounts. Fire borrowing, and the threat of fire borrowing, has a chilling effect on the ability of land managers to plan the complex activities that modern forestry requires and retain skilled contractors and workforce. Previous hearings and GAO work documented the tremendous adverse impacts of this fire borrowing helping to generate the public outcry and Congressional action that led to the FLAME Act.[9]

The FLAME Act of 2009[10] was signed into law as part of a bipartisan effort to change the funding mechanism for wildfire suppression by establishing two emergency wildfire accounts funded above annual suppression. The original version of this Act passed the House of Representatives in March 2009 with a vote of 412–3. These FLAME reserve accounts were intended to serve as a safeguard against harmful fire borrowing and should have represented an important change in the funding mechanism for wildfire suppression.

One of the cornerstones of the FLAME Act was the establishment of two FLAME wildfire suppression reserve accounts, one each for the Forest Service and the Interior Department. In passing the FLAME Act, Congress intended to fully fund federal wildfire suppression needs, while avoiding the need to transfer monies from other agency programs to fund emergency wildfire suppression expenses. Annual suppression was to be calculated using an improved predictive modeling that included the ten-year average and other indicators. The FLAME reserve accounts were to be funded at levels beyond average annual suppression expenditures and not at the expense of other agency programs. Additionally, any balances remaining in the FLAME accounts were to carry-over into future years so that funds retained in years when we have less than average expenditures could be held over for the inevitable, high cost years.

Disappointingly, the implementation of the FLAME Act has not proceeded as intended. Due to several factors, last year the Administration again transferred hundreds of millions of dollars from the agencies' non-suppression programs into emergency response accounts before the end of FY 2012.

Forecasts for the fiscal year 2013 wildfire season suggest another costly year ahead and strongly indicate that funds will again be transferred from non-suppression accounts, resulting in severe disruption of agency programs, including the hazardous fuel reduction and other forest management programs that would help to reduce wildfire suppression costs in the future.

If and when fire and funding projections suggest that federal wildland fire suppression funds will be exhausted within a month, we strongly encourage the Congress to provide emergency supplemental funding in a timely manner. This would give fire suppression and our first responders the same treatment as occurs regularly for the FEMA Disaster Relief Fund.

In order to move beyond this harmful and disruptive cycle of underfunding suppression needs and then robbing from other critical programs to fill the gaps, we recommend that the FLAME Accounts be fully funded as intended, separately from and above the ten-year average used to calculate annual wildfire suppression needs. We also recommend that annual suppression needs be fully funded using the ten-year average along with more predictive modeling based on current weather conditions, fuel loads and other data that contribute to wildfire risk. Finally, we ask that any remaining balance in the FLAME accounts at the end of FY 2013 carry over into FY 2014.

The Nature Conservancy further recommends that an expert panel be commissioned to provide options for a more effective and sustainable approach to federal emergency wildfire suppression funding. The critical life and safety mission associated with wildfire suppression should be guaranteed adequate funding, with oversight and efficiency safeguards, but this funding should not come at the expense of the other vital conservation, public service and science activities for which the federal land management agencies, and other agencies and bureaus which share the same federal funding source, were established.

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[9] Wildfire Suppression Funding Transfers Cause Project Cancellations and Delays, Strained Relationships, and Management Disruptions GAO–04–612, June 2004.

[10] Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement Act of 2009. Title V of Division A of 123 STAT. 2904 PUBLIC LAW 111–88—OCT. 30, 2009.

The Conservancy recommends that a new, separate federal funding source be established so vital fire suppression activities are funded distinct from existing land management requirements. One option the Committee might consider is the establishment of a "Disaster Prevention Fund" that could be utilized to support vital federal fire suppression actions during emergencies just as the Disaster Relief Fund is utilized to help communities recover after disasters. Fire suppression is different from other natural disasters, since the federal response is needed most acutely during the actual event. Such support should complement prevention and risk reduction activities discussed earlier, and post-fire recovery and restoration actions.

4. Communities Must Be Part of the Solution

Federal agencies alone cannot prevent the loss of homes, infrastructure and other values in the wildland-urban interface (WUI). Individuals and communities living in the WUI must meaningfully invest in preparing for and reducing their own risk from fire. Post-fire studies repeatedly show that using fire resistant building materials and reducing flammable fuels in and around the home ignition zone are the most effective ways to reduce the likelihood that a home will burn.[11] Similarly, community investments in improved ingress and egress routes, clear evacuation strategies, strategic fuel breaks and increased firefighting capacity can go a long way toward enabling the community to successfully weather a wildfire event.

Many communities across the nation are already deeply engaged in trying to proactively address their role within fire driven forest ecosystems, but this engagement must be both sustained and increased. For more than 10 years, the Nature Conservancy has worked cooperatively with the U.S. Forest Service and the Department of the Interior to foster the Fire Learning Network (FLN) that brings communities together and helps them build collaborative, science-based strategies that protect both people and ecosystems. The FLN supports public-private landscape partnerships that engage in collaborative planning and implementation, and provides a means for sharing the tools and innovations that help them scale up. Locally, the FLN helps federal land managers to: convene collaborative planning efforts; build trust and understanding among stakeholders; improve community capacity to live with fire; access training that helps fire professionals work with local communities; and address climate change and other emerging threats.

Community commitment is also necessary to effectively shift our national approach to wildfire from a costly emphasis on disaster response to a balanced and proactive strategy with multiple benefits. Research increasingly shows that rising wildfire suppression costs are directly linked to the growing presence of homes and related infrastructure in the wildland-urban interface.[12] A corresponding analysis by Headwaters Economics revealed that 84% of the WUI is still undeveloped, so there is tremendous potential for the costs associated with wildfire protection to exponentially increase.[13] According to the same study, if just half of the WUI is developed in the future, annual firefighting costs could explode to between $2.3 and $4.3 billion. By comparison, the U.S. Forest Service's total average annual budget is $5.5 billion.

Given the potential for devastating increases in both values lost and public expense, a diverse range of agencies and organizations (including The Nature Conservancy) have begun promoting the concept of "fire-adapted communities." The U.S. Forest Service defines a fire-adapted community as a knowledgeable and engaged community in which the awareness and actions of residents regarding infrastructure, buildings, landscaping, and the surrounding ecosystem lessen the need for extensive protection actions and enables the community to safely accept fire as a part of the surrounding landscape.[14]

The U.S. Forest Service and other members of the Fire Adapted Communities Coalition are working to get communities the information and resources they need to successfully live with fire. The web site www.fireadapted.org provides access to a wide variety of educational materials and tools in support of community wildfire protection planning and action. Coalition members are also working to develop local, grassroots leaders and partnerships. These partnerships are essential for engaging all relevant stakeholders to assess and continually mitigate a community's wildfire risk.

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[11] See, for example, Four Mile Canyon Fire Findings. Graham, et al. Pages 64–69. http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/rmrs_gtr289.pdf.

[12] Wildfire, Wildlands and People: Understanding and Preparing for Wildfire in the Wildland Urban Interface. Stein, et al. Page 7. http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/rmrs_gtr299.pdf.

[13] http://headwaterseconomics.org/wildfire/fire-research-summary/.

[14] http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/prev_ed/index.html.

This level of individual and community preparedness goes beyond just developing a plan and begins to make the fundamental shift that must occur if we are going to get beyond our current wildfire suppression burden and toward restoring resilience to our nation's forests.

Programs such as State and Volunteer Fire Assistance provide important resources to help states and local communities develop and sustain community wildfire protection capacity. We encourage both the federal land management agencies and this Committee to prioritize programs that foster the development of fire-adapted communities and, specifically, to allocate other federal resources in a way that rewards communities for proactive actions that collectively result in national benefit. Building local community capacity to learn to live with fire is the most cost effective way of reducing harmful impacts to society, while also allowing for enhanced, safe and controlled use of fire to restore wildlands as appropriate.

5. Efficiency and Innovation to Increase the Pace of Success

The Nature Conservancy strongly supports the Administration's goal of accelerating restoration in our Nation's forests as described in the February 2012 report, *Increasing the Pace of Restoration and Job Creation on Our National Forests.* In this report, the agency acknowledges that the pace and scale of restoration must dramatically increase if we're going to get ahead of the growing threats facing our forest ecosystems, watersheds and forest-dependent communities. In order to facilitate this accelerated rate of treatment, we must make effective use of all available management tools and explore opportunities to increase the efficiency of planning and implementation processes.

Stewardship contracting, for example, is an innovative and critical tool that allows the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to implement projects that restore and maintain healthy forest ecosystems, foster collaboration and provide business opportunities and local employment. Stewardship contracts are the only administrative tool that can ensure up to 10 year supplies of timber, a level of certainty that encourages job creation and long-term industry investment. Without Congressional action, Stewardship Contracting authority will sunset on September 30, 2013. Permanent reauthorization is urgently needed to provide surety for contractors and communities and to ensure that the USFS and BLM retain this important proactive tool to address our daunting forest restoration needs.

The beneficial use of fire as a tool for resource management is another area where greater forest restoration efficiency and effectiveness could be achieved. By increasing the use of both controlled burns and naturally ignited wildland fires to accomplish resource benefit, land managers can accomplish both ecological and community protection goals on a larger scale and at reduced cost. In fact, some states annually reduce fuels on more than 100,000 acres in wildlands with fire treatments. The Nature Conservancy recommends that both Congress and the Administration make it clear that the safe and effective use of fire is a priority for land management agencies, and provide the necessary funding, training and leadership support needed to foster increased fire use where appropriate.

The Conservancy also stresses how important it is to maintain regular use of fire as a habitat and restoration tool for our Nation's public lands, including National Forests, Parks, Refuges, and BLM lands, as well as support for our Native American trust lands.

We were pleased to see the emphasis on collaborative, science-based and adaptive management contained in the new National Forest System Land Management Planning Rule and draft Directives. We hope that, once finalized, this new framework will be promptly implemented and will guide a new round of forest planning that is both more meaningful *and* more efficient, and sets the stage for timely implementation of projects that achieve multiple benefits on the ground. Clear guidance and support for the development and implementation of monitoring strategies will also be essential to the Rule's success.

Finally, while we are committed to the principles of public engagement and environmental review embodied in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), we believe there may be opportunities to significantly increase the efficiency of these processes through targeted adjustments in policy and implementation. The U.S. Forest Service is currently testing and tracking a variety of innovative NEPA strategies that hold promise for broader application. Adaptive NEPA, for example, is a relatively new approach in which the official record of decision allows sufficient leeway for some variety of subsequent federal actions, thereby greatly streamlining the analysis, allowing for more efficient project implementation, and enabling land managers to more effectively incorporate emerging science. These innovative approaches to NEPA should be expanded and additional opportunities sought for streamlining

policies and processes in a way that increases the pace and scale of implementation while holding true to the core values inherent in the Act.

Conclusion

Thank you for your attention to these important issues related to wildfire, forests and communities. We appreciate the opportunity to offer the Nature Conservancy's perspective on how we might shift our focus toward a more proactive and cost-effective management approach that provides multiple benefits to people and nature. Please let us know if we can provide any additional information or assistance to the Committee as you move forward in this arena.

Response to Questions Submitted for the Record by Christopher Topik, Ph.D., The Nature Conservancy

1. Could you explain why noncommercial thinning does not produce as much useable wood fiber as commercial harvest does? Why is noncommercial thinning important despite being unprofitable?

Many of North America's forestlands evolved as fire-driven ecosystems in which regular cycles of fire served to reduce competition, promote growth and facilitate diversity and resilience in the face of change. These natural (or characteristic) fires had a major impact on the structure and composition of our forests. In ponderosa pine and mixed conifer forests, for example, repeated, low to moderate intensity fires served to clean out the understory and keep tree stocking at levels that allowed remaining trees ample space to grow strong and become sufficiently large to avoid damage from low intensity, cleansing fires. During the 20th Century, aggressive fire suppression policies were very successful at reducing the incidence of wildfires in a great many locations across the country. Over decades, this lack of fire resulted in vast areas that are overstocked with brush and dense, small trees.

These overly dense and homogenous forest conditions pose a tremendous hazard to both people and nature because they promote unnaturally large, severe and fast-moving wildfires. It is vital that we find ways to reduce the brush and small trees that contribute to these conditions, but their removal is challenged by the fact that they hold very little traditional commercial forest products value. Faced with this challenge, a number of businesses, communities and land managers have been seeking innovative ways to realize some commercial value from these materials, including their utilization as woody biomass for energy. While they are not likely to produce a significant profit, these innovative approaches can provide jobs and other benefits to local economies while also reducing the costs of treatment overall.

Because lives and essential livelihoods are at stake, we must continue to emphasize the management of forested landscapes at high risk to uncharacteristic wildfire, whether or not the materials removed ever result in a profit. When we consider the future value of the improved forest and watershed, and the future ability of the forest to resist damage from wildfires, this is a sound investment for society. There is substantial scientific literature on these issues, some of which is reviewed in the recent paper by Martinson and Omi cited in my formal testimony.

2. In your testimony, you mentioned the importance of "strategic mechanical fuels reduction" in reducing the severity of fires. What makes fuel reduction strategic?

Strategic fuels reduction projects are those that are designed and implemented at a scale and in a location that maximizes positive impact on the forest environment after the treatment. Science-based understanding of the local forest conditions, along with relevant fire behavior and weather patterns, can guide forest managers in planning fuels reduction projects. Strategic projects will be placed so as to interfere with the potential wildfire paths suggested by the local vegetation inventory, topography, weather and climatic conditions. Strategic projects have much greater impact than just the stand that is treated; they affect processes over larger areas for longer periods and therefore are much more efficient and productive at achieving forest improvement over larger areas.

We understand that there are many millions of forest acres that have altered fire risk, in many cases due to decades of successful fire suppression and in some cases from historic harvest practices and unnatural forest regeneration. It is vital that we have thorough forest inventories, such as those developed by the LANDFIRE science team, that indicate the existing vegetation across ownership and jurisdictional boundaries. We also need science-based understanding of potential responses of various kinds of forests and vegetation to different treatments and different environments. When taken together with an understanding of local community desires for

the landscape, strategic projects can be developed that will have greater impact on reducing future fire severity. There is plentiful peer-reviewed literature that discusses this issue as well, for instance, the paper by James K. Agee and Carl N. Skinner (2005, Forest Ecology and Management, "Basic principles of forest fuel reduction treatments" and the recent paper by Mathew P. Thompson, et al. in the January 2013 issue of the Journal of Forestry (Quantifying the Potential Impacts of Fuel Treatments on Wildfire Suppression Costs).

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you.

And finally, last but not least, Mr. Roady. We are finally getting to you. Five minutes, as well.

STATEMENT OF CHARLES W. "CHUCK" ROADY, VICE PRESIDENT AND GENERAL MANAGER, F.H. STOLTZE LAND AND LUMBER COMPANY

Mr. ROADY. Mr. Chairman and Ranking Subcommittee Member, my name is Chuck Roady, and I am the Vice President and General Manager of F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber Company in Columbia Falls, Montana. Stoltze is the oldest family owned lumber company in Montana, and having recently celebrated our centennial by dedicating a new wood biomass cogeneration facility. Our company employs 120 families, 80 contractors, and we manufacture 70 million board feet each year. I also sit on the Board of Directors of the Federal Forest Resource Coalition, representing 650 member companies in 28 States.

Our mill, like many others around the country, was originally established to be located close to an abundant supply of timber growing on Federal public lands. These lands supported our local communities, not only through direct jobs, but also the sharing of the 25 percent of the gross revenues for our roads and schools in the counties of Montana.

Unfortunately, over the last 30 years, the management philosophy on our Federal lands has lost its focus, and has become increasingly passive. This three-decade decline in active management follows almost a century of very effective forest suppression efforts. Combined with the effects of insect infestation, disease, and severe overstocking and drought, our national forests have been allowed to deteriorate into an alarming forest health crisis.

Nowhere has this been more evident than in the national forests of Montana, right out our back door at Stoltze, while the local forest, the Flathead, is the backdrop for millions of visitors each year to Glacier National Park and our surrounding wilderness areas. It is experiencing the same serious forest health problems that we are witnessing in the other national forests around the country. A decline in our age classes and our species diversity, due to continuous fire suppression has left many stands more susceptible to the large catastrophic wildfires.

During the last several decades, we have seen more than 15 to 20 percent of Montana's Federal timberlands destroyed or damaged by fire. Many of these fires have burned so intensely and so hot from the over-fuel loading and over-crowded timber stands, they require the agency to replant most acres, because there are not enough remaining live trees to provide a seed source for natural regeneration.

Sadly, these intense fires are not isolated events to Montana. The pine forests of Arizona and New Mexico, which have had—for years adapted to low intensity fires, have seen increasingly common large, mega-scale fires travel very quickly. They destroy the forest canopy, and they sterilize the soil.

About 25 percent of Arizona's pine forests have seen catastrophic fires in the last decade. The types of landscapes remaining after these super-intense fires are not providing the multiple benefits that the American public expects. The lack of management we see on our Federal forests is a result of both a conscious decision to reduce the harvest as part of the revised forest management plans, as well as a result of an aggressive campaign of litigation.

The list of litigation on forest management projects on Forest Service land is extremely long, especially in region one of Montana and Idaho. A great example is our Colt Summit project in Western Montana, where many parties came together to arrive at a decision in a collaborative effort, only to be litigated by those selfish groups who refuse to play at the table. This project demonstrates that a small corps of activist groups will not only go out of their way to stop direly needed forest management, but they make a point of engaging in indiscriminate litigation. These groups continually force the Forest Service to engage in an endless, expensive analysis, even on the smallest of projects with broad community support.

Make no mistake. These serial litigants do not sue the Federal Government because they have this heartfelt love of the land or a fondness for a specific bird, fish, or wildlife. They sue because they have learned how to control, manipulate, and profit financially through the court systems. The endless litigation is what leads the Forest Service to spend over $350 million annually on their NEPA analysis, rather than on designing, implementing, and completing badly needed forest health projects. We need some form of legislated litigation relief on our national forests, and we need it to happen quick.

Routinely now, we commonly see wildfires which start and burn uncontrollably on the Federal Forest Service lands. And then, with a full wall of flames, they travel on to actively managed State and private lands. These high intensity crown fires, when hitting the managed stands of different ownerships, generally transform into a more workable, low-intensity ground fire, allowing the firefighter crews to step in and gain an upper hand in the fire. Unfortunately, when these huge wildfires escape from the unmanaged Federal lands and burn on to the adjacent ownerships, they threaten people's lives, their homes, the wildlife habitat, and municipal watersheds.

The FFRC members like myself, we value the national forests for more than just the economic benefits that they provide to our companies and our communities. We too spend time recreating in these forests, in addition to earning our living there, and believe the poor forest health conditions and the large wildfires that we are now witnessing on national forests are unacceptable to most Americans, as well.

With clear legislative direction from Congress, the Forest Service can prioritize their management actions, reduce their unit costs, and begin to address the forest health and the wildfire crisis that

plagues our national forests. Without this clarity, and an improved budgeting process, the health of our forests and our communities will continue to suffer.

I would add, members of the Committee, this is a nonpartisan, non-regional issue. It is simply a case of doing the right thing to actively manage our public forests. And if we don't, Mother Nature is going to do it for us. And when she does it, it is uncontrollable and catastrophic. Thanks. I appreciate it.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Roady follows:]

Statement of Chuck Roady, General Manager, F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber Company, on behalf of the Federal Forest Resource Coalition

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, my name is Chuck Roady, and I am the General Manager of F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber in Columbia Falls, Montana. I sit on the board of directors of the Federal Forest Resource Coalition, a national non-profit trade association representing a diverse coalition of federal timber purchasers, conservation groups, and county governments. With over 650 member companies in 28 States, FFRC members employ over 390,000 people and contribute over $19 Billion in payroll. I also sit on the board of directors of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, a national group dedicated to ensuring the future of elk, other wildlife, their habitat, and our hunting heritage.

FFRC members purchase, harvest, transport, and process timber and biomass from the National Forest System and lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management. We live and work in communities near to or surrounded by Federal public lands. Our businesses rely upon healthy, productive forests, and a sustainable and growing supply of raw materials from these lands.

Our members continue to make investments in our facilities and our communities because we believe we can be a part of a more prosperous future, both for our communities and for our National Forests. However, significant forest health problems, particularly overstocking, insect mortality, and large scale, uncharacteristic wildfires threaten not just the timber our member mills rely upon but the health of watersheds, wildlife habitat, and the recreational values millions of Americans take for granted.

These negative trends in forest health, combined with continuing drought, have lead to a "new normal" for wildland fire, with an average of over 6.4 million acres burned in each of the last 5 years. As was demonstrated just over a week ago, the consequences of this new normal include the tragic loss of life, with 19 hotshots killed on the Yarnell Hill Fire in Arizona. The thoughts and prayers of all our members go out to the families of the fallen.

We have been dismayed to see the Administration propose reductions in the very programs needed to address these threats: the forest products, hazardous fuels reduction, and capital improvement and maintenance programs of the Forest Service. These program reductions, partially due to the sequester—but proposed again for 2014—will lead to a worsening of the forest health and wildfire crisis on our Federal lands.

Extreme forest health problems plague the National Forest System:

The Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manage over 193 million acres of forest lands. By some estimates, more than 82 million acres of Forest Service lands and hundreds of millions of acres of other Federal lands are at increased risk of catastrophic wildfire.[1] Even in landscapes where fires are infrequent, fuel loads and mortality are well outside of historic norms.

These fuel problems lead to large scale forest mortality and increased occurrence of catastrophic wildfires. Last year, 9.3 million acres burned, including 2.6 million acres of Forest Service lands. These fires have cost the agency more than $2.0 billion in suppression costs, including over $400 million which was redirected from land management, research, and State and Private Forestry.

Figure 1 shows that these fires disproportionately impact the National Forest System. The Forest Service controls only about 17% of the land base, yet accounted for more than 26% of the Wildland fire acres last year.

The large fires in Idaho and Montana in 2012 forced the closures of popular campgrounds, destroyed dozens of recreational cabins, and forced cancellations of Fourth of July events at popular mountain resorts. Numerous National Forests in the

[1] http://www.fs.fed.us/publications/policy-analysis/fire-and-fuels-position-paper.pdf.

Southwest and Central Rockies are closing trails, campgrounds, and other recreational facilities due to elevated fire danger again this year. Campers, hikers, hunters, and skiers all want to visit healthy, green, and growing forests.

The Role of Harvest in Forest Restoration:

After nearly three decades of drastically reduced harvest, the National Forest System is facing an ecological and managerial crisis. Overstocked stands, drought, climate change, insects, and fire threaten to reconfigure the landscape and damage watersheds throughout the west. The large fires that result from this overstocking also threaten management on the rest of the National Forest System. Resources—money and people—are redirected away from forest management throughout the System; last year, over $400 million was redirected from forest management programs for this purpose. Non-fire prone forest, such as the Superior in Minnesota, the Ottawa in Michigan, and the Francis Marion in South Carolina, still lose the ability to manage when key staff are diverted to firefighting rather than managing the land.

And yet a great deal of research, including research conducted by the Forest Service, indicates that active management which produces valuable timber can help reduce fire threats while meeting a wide variety of restoration goals. Active forest management and timber harvest have been shown to have multiple long-term benefits, including reducing fuel loading, reducing potential for crown fires, increasing structural stage diversity, increasing age class diversity, reducing stand density and thus susceptibility to mountain pine beetles and other bark beetles, and improving wildlife habitat. Wildlife habitat can either be directly improved or indirectly improved by reducing the potential for catastrophic fires

Forest Service Researchers Ken Skog and James Barbour, for instance, found that thinning which produces sawtimber can treat more than twice as many acres as treatments which rely solely on non-commercial thinning. The thinning projects that produce timber, the researchers found, could treat 17.2 million acres, whereas non-commercial thinning could only treat 6.7 million acres. This study eliminated roadless areas and stands on steep slopes from consideration, and evaluated treatments on whether they reduce stand susceptibility to insect attack, fire, and windthrow.[2]

One of the most productive National Forests in the country, the Ouachita National Forest in Arkansas, is actively restoring significant wildlife habitat through the use of commercial timber sales, Stewardship contracts, and active support from conservation groups such as the National Wild Turkey Federation (an FFRC affiliate member) and the Nature Conservancy. While producing commercially valuable shortleaf pine timber, this forest is also creating habitat for the Red Cockaded woodpecker, prairie warbler, yellow breasted chat, and common yellowthroat. The Forest noted that red cockaded woodpeckers had increased by almost 300% due to the improved habitat. Researcher Larry Hedrick noted that "The ability to sell valuable wood products is at the very heart of restoration efforts. . . . All commercial thinning or regeneration cutting is accomplished through the use of timber sales that are advertised and sold to the highest bidder. Further . . . portions of the proceeds from these timber sales are retained to pay for most of the follow-up midstory reduction and prescribed burning needed to restore the stands."[3]

It should be noted that in many respects, the Short Leaf Pine forests in Arkansas are similar ecologically to the Ponderosa pine forests that are facing huge fire threats in the west. As fire adapted pine types, these forests need active management to maintain natural disturbance regimes, and they can be effectively managed in ways that help support the local economy.

In the case of northern goshawks, present forest conditions in the southwestern United States may be adversely affecting goshawk populations. Management of goshawk habitat focuses on creating and sustaining a patchy forest of highly interspersed structural stages ranging from regeneration to old forest throughout a goshawk territory. Managing the forest, through timber harvest and other treatments, to thin the understory, create small openings, and provide different tree sizes across

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[2] *Evaluation of Silvicultural Treatments and Biomass Use for Reducing Fire Hazard in Western States,* Kenneth E. Skog and R. James Barbour, et. al, Forest Service Research Paper FLP–RP–634, 2006.

[3] *Shortleaf Pine-Bluestem Restoration in the Ouachita National Forest,* Larry D. Hedrick et. al. Transaction of the Sixty-Second North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference, Washington, DC, 14–18 March, pp. 509–515.

the landscape will help produce and maintain desired forest conditions for goshawks and their prey.[4]

The Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee recently heard from Diane Vosick from the Ecological Restoration Institute at Northern Arizona University, who noted that research indicates that hazardous fuels treatments are effective at reducing large fire costs, protecting property, and preserving watersheds. She also noted that there is a substantial opportunity cost to delaying thinning projects, meaning that delays don't just wind up deferring costs, they increase them.[5]

Certainly not all acres of the National Forest System are suited to be managed for timber. FFRC members value wildland as much as the rest of the public, and frequently our members don't just earn their living in these remote places, but they depend on them for recreation, hunting, and family time as well. But ample research indicates that active management can produce a multitude of benefits, well beyond timber harvest.

In the current budget environment, it makes sense to look at this research and see how the value of the trees and other forest products can help pay for the management that science says need to take place.

The Forest Service continues to treat too few acres, using too much prescribed fire, foregoing treatments that are more cost effective and produce more jobs:

With a few notable exceptions, the Forest Service continues to propose projects that are not significant enough to meaningfully reduce wildfire danger on a landscape level. Of the 82 million acres at significant risk, the Forest Service has only implemented mechanical treatments on 6.8 million acres since 2001, or less than 10% of the acres at risk. Further, by the Forest Service's own accounting, only 25% of projects produce any usable wood fiber.[6]

The statistics from 2011 are illustrative in this regard (Figure 2). In 2012, the Forest Service told this committee that they "restored" some 3.7 million acres of National Forests. However, once you break down this claim by type of treatment, it become obvious that the agency is relying on both wildfires and prescribed fires to claim these large numbers. Some acres received more than one treatment, so the numbers don't total up.

Over 1 million acres were "treated" with prescribed fire; over 400,000 of these acres were "treated" by wildfires burning within prescription. This is 10% of the total, and 37% of the prescribed burn acres.

The Forest Service only harvested usable wood fiber from 195,000 acres that were commercially thinned. This means that on 3.5 million of the acres restored, the Forest Service was generating no revenue whatsoever, and on 90% of the acres restored, there was no thinning of any kind.

In other words, when Congress provides substantial funds to pay for restoration work and encourages the agency to provide jobs and usable wood fiber, it is important for Congress to know how little of the National Forest System gets treated every year. If we accept the 82 million acre figure in the Administration's "accelerated" restoration strategy, they are on pace to complete a thinning of these acres in a mere 241 years, in the unlikely event that these forests do not succumb to insects, disease, and/or wildfire before then.

Prioritize Management to Save Jobs, Preserve Forest Products Infrastructure, and Avoid Future Fire Costs:

We need to invest more resources up front to keep our forests green and healthy rather than wait until they are dead and dying, or on fire. Policies which prioritize reducing hazardous fuels loads and actively managing National Forest timberlands must be combined with budgets which invest in these activities if there is any hope of restoring our Forests in the foreseeable future.

The current model basically pits management against fire suppression annually, and when significant fires threaten communities, property, and watersheds, suppression wins that battle ever time. As noted above, the Forest Service moved more than $400 million last year from management and other accounts, primarily from accounts such as K–V and Salvage sales, to pay for suppression costs. Figure 3 demonstrates that even before these transfers, fire suppression has grown to crowd out forest management as a portion of the Forest Service budget:

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[4] *Implementing Northern Goshawk Management in Southwestern Forests: A Template for Restoring Fire-Adapted Forest Ecosystems,* James A. Youtz, Russell T. Graham, Richard T. Reynolds, and Jerry Simon; Proceedings of the 2007 National Silviculture Workshop.

[5] *The Efficacy of Hazardous Fuel Treatments:* Ecological Research Institute, May 2013.

[6] http://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/resources/reports/documents/healthyforests/2009/FY2009HFAccomplishments.pdf.

Substantial increases in National Forest Timber Management, Hazardous Fuels Reduction, and other line items which can support large, landscape scale projects that reduce fuel loads, produce merchantable wood, can help avoid future fire suppression costs and reduce unemployment, thereby lowering Federal social program costs, such as welfare, unemployment, and food stamps. Moving from the current harvest level of 2.4 billion board feet to 3 billion board feet could produce some 14,400 direct jobs, with thousands of additional indirect jobs.

Unfortunately, the sequester and the Administration's 2014 budget proposal both go in the wrong direction, proposing a smaller timber sale program and a reduced amount of hazardous fuels reduction treatments. The budget proposes to do this while increasing the amount spent on land acquisition, even while acknowledging an increase in capital improvement and maintenance backlogs from $5.3 billion in 2012 to $6 billion in 2014. This is precisely the wrong direction for an agency facing a wildfire and land management crisis.

Reduce Overhead and Project Preparation Costs to Ensure that Funding Leads to Meaningful Management.:

In addition to redirecting the budget towards management and fuels reduction, the Forest Service must reduce overhead and project preparation costs in the land management programs, particular forest products, hazardous fuels reduction, and salvage sale funds. Current overhead rates are over 50%, and in some regions, 70% of appropriated dollars go into NEPA compliance, not project design and implementation. The agency admits they spend more than $350 million annually conducting analysis required by NEPA and other laws.

There are some steps the Forest Service can take to reduce these costs on their own, such as doing larger scale NEPA analysis (the Black Hills Mountain Pine Beetle Response Project is an example of this approach), ensuring that land management projects actually meet the purpose and need statement in the NEPA, and making greater use of alternative sale administration techniques such as designation by description. We work with the Forest Service closely to identify opportunities such as these and hope we will see continued progress on these items. We also believe the agency should make greater use of existing authorities such as those available in the Healthy Forest Restoration Act.

However, as we have noted elsewhere, we believe what is ultimately needed is legislative reform which provides clarity on the land management goals on Forest Service lands. Currently, elaborate forest planning efforts lead to land use designations, including the designation of suitable for timber production. Yet after these plans are completed, the Forest Service finds it must conduct even more exhaustive analysis, even on lands with this designation and even when conducting modest land management projects.

We've noted the Colt Summit Forest Restoration Project on the 2 million acre Lolo National Forest in Montana. This 2,000 acre thinning project, widely recognized as a collaborative effort called for in the community wildfire protection plan, nonetheless required over 1,400 pages of NEPA documentation, over a year of analysis, and was still enjoined by a Judge who sided with a minor environmental group. This group chose not to participate in the collaborative and only was able to win an injunction based on speculative impacts of future, hypothetical projects.

This was not an isolated incident. Region 1 in particular is facing an onslaught of litigation, with over 30,000 acres of hazardous fuels reduction projects either appealed or litigated. The Region has more volume under injunction that any other, while mills struggle to survive and meet customer demands. Meanwhile, overstocked forests experience significant mortality and large scale fires.

Principles of Reform:

FFRC recommends that Congress enact legislation which clarifies the land management direction on the 23% of the National Forest System designated under current forest plans as suitable for timber production. Clarifying that timber management is the primary goal of these acres and reducing the required NEPA analysis, reducing appeals, and giving the Forest Service some deference in litigation is absolutely necessary to reducing the cost of management and improving forest health.

A trust mandate on these acres will provide clarity to the Forest Service's land management mission and free up substantial financial resources to conduct hazardous fuels reduction work, particularly in the Wildland urban interface, where costs are highest and the ability to harvest commercial timber is sometimes limited.

Not inconsequentially, moving to a trust model will enable the Forest Service to meet it's obligations to rural communities which has currently been met with direct payments to Counties from the U.S. Treasury, a model whose time has come and gone.

A trust approach to land management has been successfully applied in many regions of the country. Most State lands in the West are under trust management. Minnesota has Permanent School Trusts and University Trust Lands as well. The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy notes that "Unlike other categories of public lands, the vast majority of state trust lands are held in a perpetual, intergenerational trust to support a variety of beneficiaries, including public schools . . ., universities, penitentiaries, and hospitals. To fulfill this mandate, these lands are actively managed for a diverse range of uses, including: timber, grazing, mining for oil and gas and other minerals, agriculture, commercial and residential development, conservation, and recreational uses such as hunting and fishing."[7] Several large State Trust lands forestry programs have been certified under one or more forest management certification program.[8]

- Streamline NEPA analysis, ESA consultation, and judicial review for projects conducted on lands designated for timber production.
- Set clear volume and acreage treatment targets to ensure accountability.
- Clarify to the courts that timber production is the primary objective on this small portion of the National Forest System, and not one use among many.
- Focuses on timber economics in the design, operation, and management of projects on lands designated for production.

Locking in Conservation, Sustainable Timber Production while Effectively Reducing Hazardous Fuels:

A trust approach on lands designated for timber production would focus on the small portion of the National Forest System which is supposed to be producing timber. Lands which have been set aside after countless hours of public involvement, Congressional review, and official designation as wilderness would remain off-limits to commercial harvest. Agency resources, currently wasted by over-analyzing even modest timber sales or hazardous fuels projects, would be freed up to offer economic timber sales, or to fund restoration work through Stewardship contracts.

On acres designated for timber production, concrete management requirements would help spur investment in wood using industries and land management capacity. Existing mills would receive some assurance that the National Forests they depend on will produce reliable supplies of timber into the future. Economic development, currently stymied by a declining forest products sector and extreme wildfires, would be encouraged.

The American public would no longer be forced to bankroll a litigation driven analysis machine, and instead could spend the few dollars available to actually improve the condition of the National Forest System.

The current system is unsustainable, socially, economically, and ecologically. Piecemeal reforms hold little promise. The opportunity to change the management paradigm is here.

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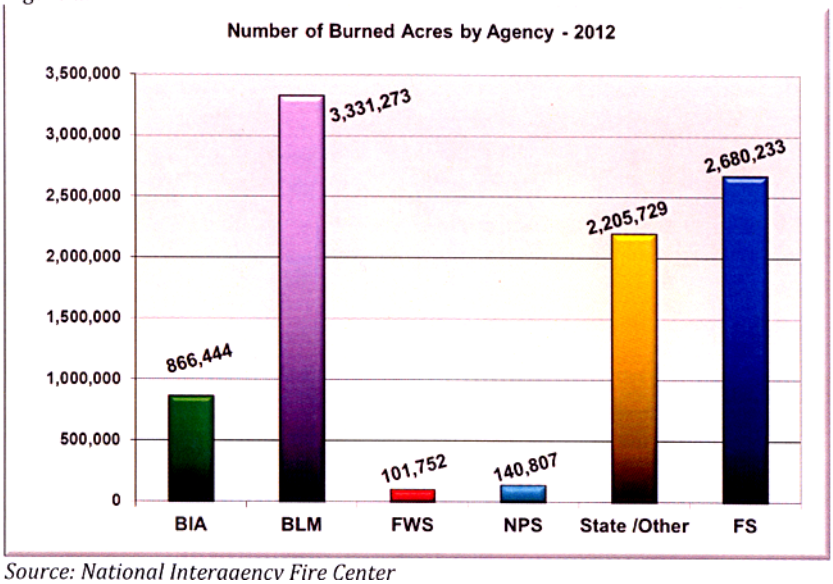
[7] *Trust Lands in the American West: A Legal Overview and Policy Assessment;* Peter W. Culp, Diane B. Conradi, & Cynthia C. Tuell, 2005, Sonoran Institute.

[8] See, for instance, WA DNR: http://www.dnr.wa.gov/Publications/frc_fsc-sfi_certification_factsheet.pdf, PA DCNR: http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/stateforest management/Certification/index.htm.

Figure 1:

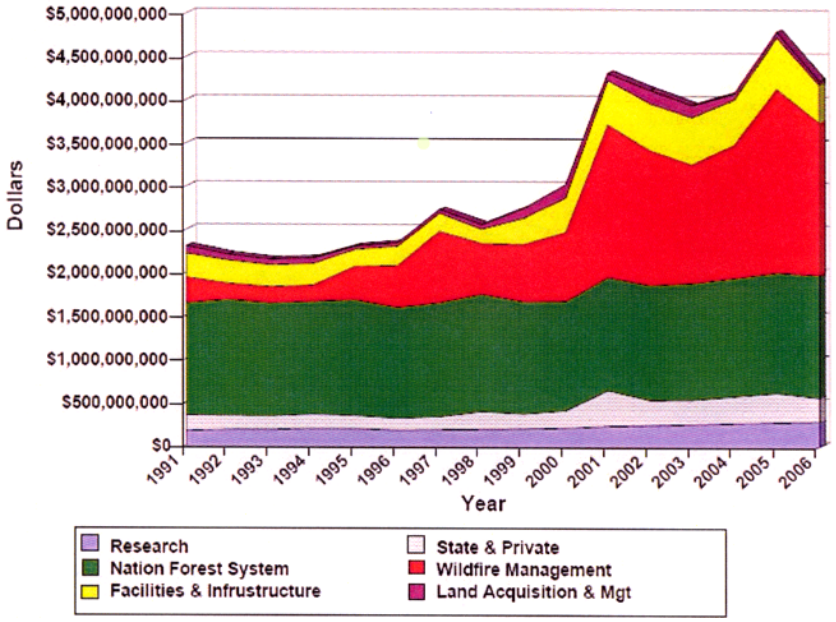


Source: National Interagency Fire Center

Figure 2:

Acres Restored by:	**Acres:**	**Percent of Total:**
Prescribed Fire:	1,081,318	29%
Lake, water & soil, noxious weed:	2,563,595	69%
Mechanically Treated:	1,136,405	30%
Pre-Commercial Thin:	145,928	3.90%
Commercially Thinned:	**195,477**	**5.20%**
Total:	3,700,000	

Figure 3:



Mr. BISHOP. Thank you. All right. We will now turn to questioning. Mr. McClintock, do you have questions? We will go there first.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Douglas, in your testimony, you say that DOI has achieved a high success rate in suppressing unwanted fires during the initial attack stage. Was the Department of the Interior involved with the Reading fire in California several years ago?

Mr. DOUGLAS. I am not familiar with that particular fire, sir.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Well, that was the fire that the Federal authorities—I believe it was the Department of the Interior—decided would be healthy to let burn, because fire is our friend. It is a cleansing thing, according to this bizarre philosophy that seems to have developed within your department. So they let it burn until it went completely out of control. All of the State and local fire services were absolutely incredulous by the decisions that were made by the Federal Government during that period. Do you have any comment on that?

Mr. DOUGLAS. I am not familiar with that particular fire. We can look into——

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. How long have you been in your position?

Mr. DOUGLAS. I have been in these kinds of positions in the Department for 15 or 20 years, but I am not familiar with that particular fire, sir. And I am happy to look into it and have an explanation about——

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Hubbard, can you shed any light on that?

Mr. HUBBARD. No, sir.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Unbelievable. I believe it was Mr. Hubbard—in your testimony you spoke of sequestration. Maybe it was Mr. Douglas. I am referring to the written presentations. I seem to recall a time when we had no problem properly managing the forests, because we harvested the excess timber, sold that timber, and those revenues went into the Federal treasury.

In my region, five, the timber harvest, as I recall, is down over 80 percent from the 1980s, and it has been down every year for the last several years. Every time we are told by the regional forest manager that we should expect—pardon me. That is Department of Agriculture, I guess, isn't it?

Mr. HUBBARD. Yes, sir.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Well, anyway, we are told that we should expect from the national forests increasing returns. We keep getting lower and lower returns, to the point where the forests are now completely overgrown. Why are we doing that?

Mr. HUBBARD. Mr. McClintock, the current direction from the Chief of the Forest Service to those regions is to accelerate the scale and the pace of restoration treatments. And that is what they intend to do within the limits of the laws that they have to abide by.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Well, the fact that the timber harvests are down so dramatically, does that bother you at all?

Mr. HUBBARD. Absolutely. We would much prefer to have more active management on the national forests.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Roady, has that been your impression?

Mr. ROADY. Congressman, I think the Forest Service would like to do something. It hasn't happened, for the same reasons we have all mentioned. We need to do something. I think Congress can help. No, it hasn't happened. There is no active management by the Forest Service. It is——

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Do you see an attitude within the Forest Service that is conducive to the sound forest management practices that served our country and served it well, served the economy well, served the environment well, while it was practiced?

Mr. ROADY. You bet. When it was working, it worked. We wouldn't be arguing about Secure Rural Schools, we wouldn't worry about where the money is coming from. When we removed products from the timber harvest, the system worked.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. And there was money flowing to the treasury by the sale of that excess timber, there was money going into the economy because of the enormous economic activity that produced, we removed the overgrowth from the forest so that we had much healthier forests, much more resistant to both fire and pestilence and disease, and we had small timber crews spread throughout the mountains, with good timber roads, meaning that if a fire started on an adjoining ridge, it was no trouble for the crew to get its equipment over there quickly and put out the fire.

And now, those crews are gone, the logging roads are disintegrating, forests are overgrown, the treasury is empty. These are the policies that have misguided our government for the past 20 years or so. They have failed. They have failed catastrophically.

And I believe that it is time for this nonsense to end, and those responsible for it to go.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you. Mr. Grijalva?

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you.

Mr. BISHOP. Do you want to get your phone, first, or——

Mr. GRIJALVA. No.

Mr. BISHOP. OK.

Mr. GRIJALVA. I can't seem to be able to turn it off.

This is a question for all the panelists. It is a quick question. To each panelist, would you support immediate consideration and enactment of stewardship contracting authority and Good Neighbor Authority, separate from a broader forest policy legislation? If you could just go down and start, thank you.

Mr. HUBBARD. Mr. Grijalva, the Forest Service does support the enactment of authorities for both those tools.

Mr. DOUGLAS. Same for the Department of the Interior.

Mr. RIGDON. The Intertribal Timber Council would support both of those things. But also, I would like to add that Tribal Forest Protection Act is a good neighbor kind of authority inside there, and I think we did a report this year, and taking some of the recommendations to enhance that would be something I would recommend.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you.

Mr. DUDA. State of Colorado supports and urges permanent authority for both of those.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you.

Dr. TOPIK. Thank you. The Nature Conservancy is in the same position, as I said in my testimony.

Mr. ROADY. Mr. Congressman, we support that in the industry as well. But we are only kidding ourselves to think those go far enough.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you for your yes or no. Dr. Topik, thank you for coming today. I appreciate the testimony you submitted on behalf of the organization. And to be honest, I was surprised and gladdened by the fact that there is overlap between what you are saying in your testimony, the agency's testimony, and the industry's testimony.

But I also want to better understand the differences, as well. Can you address the criticism that collaboration efforts, as we just heard, aren't producing enough timber? Also, can you talk about TNC's view on how we make decisions about fuel reduction outside the wildland-urban interface?

Dr. TOPIK. Thank you very much. With respect to the collaboration, not every individual collaborative effort is going to be wildly successful. But, as a whole, when we look at them—and I have had the good fortune of going out on the ground and visiting with, I believe, nine collaborative groups around the country, I have sat in on a number of collaborative meetings—I was just recently in Arkansas, for instance—this does work. It takes some time, it takes some patience, it requires people to listen. It requires a bit of capacity. You need to have somebody there with some scientific tools, with some GIS tools. But there is an awful lot that can work. It is not going to work in every instance, perfectly, but I believe it creates the social license that is the only way forward.

Mr. GRIJALVA. OK.

Dr. TOPIK. And so I am very much in believing that—on that.

With respect to the forestry cutting, we clearly need to have that kind of collaborative science vision to come up with how we want the forest to look. And so, that will include a lot of work right next to houses and right next to the wildland-urban interface. But we also need to do appropriate kinds of thinning and controlled burning. And in particular, back country areas to help break up so we don't get the mega-fires.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Rigdon, thank you for your testimony. The IFMA report concludes that the Federal Government continues to inadequately fulfill the trust obligations with regards to Indian forestry. If you can, give me some quick examples for the record of some of these failures that were pointed out in the report, including infrastructure investments. Your testimony listed, but if you wouldn't mind.

Mr. RIGDON. I think the IFMA report is very important in showing the discrepancy between them, the resources that we reserve to conduct stewardship on our lands. A good example of that we highlighted to Department of the Interior yesterday and to USDA yesterday in a briefing on this, the Tribes receive a third of the budget, so nearly $3 per acre for management on our land versus nearly $9 per acre for other Federal lands. And this discrepancy is actually, with sequestration and these other things that have hit, is putting us into a very difficult time where we are seeing a tough time on Tribes achieving their goals and objectives and land management objectives.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Well, I thank you for the suggestion that also the issue on tribal lands be integrated overall with the other collaborative efforts. I appreciate that.

Mr. Roady, you described in your testimony recent wildfires as large-scale and uncharacteristic. Recent negative trends in forest health is a new normal. And scientists agree with you, and they say these changes are caused by a warming of the climate. Given predictions of more drought and bigger fires, are you concerned about the impact of climate change on your industry?

Mr. ROADY. Certainly I am concerned. I am more concerned that we have done an excellent job of being Smokey Bear with fire suppression. And that, more than any single factor, has led to these super, overcrowded, heavily fuel-loaded forests that increase the fuels and they make our fires much more intense. I would say that is much more——

Mr. GRIJALVA. I can surmise by your comments that climate change is then second to the other statement that you are making now.

Mr. ROADY. It certainly is right now.

Mr. BISHOP. All right. Thank you. I will turn to Mr. Tipton for questions.

Mr. TIPTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the panel for taking the time to be here today.

Mr. Duda, great to be able to see a fellow Coloradan here. Always appreciate you making the trip. You talked about active forest management. Can you describe that a little bit for us? What entails active forest management?

Mr. DUDA. Thank you, Mr. Tipton. Active forest management includes everything from the application of prescribed fire on the landscape to fuel mitigation activities to removal of timber, both in the wildland-urban interface and, as equally important, across the landscape.

Mr. TIPTON. Great. In your experience, do you believe that this active forest management should also include implementing authorities similar to those in Healthy Forest Management and Wildfire Act of 2013?

Mr. DUDA. Absolutely.

Mr. TIPTON. I appreciate that answer. We have to be able to get our folks actively involved.

Mr. Hubbard, you are a former Coloradan, and I appreciate having the opportunity to be able to visit with you. You had noted in your testimony that you can only manage 4 million acres, and we have 65 to 82 million acres of our land that is currently at risk from wildfires. Is that correct?

Mr. HUBBARD. That is correct.

Mr. TIPTON. That is correct. Mr. Chairman, I would like to—and if we can pull it up, we have the graph displayed up here. We are seeing right now—we had about 4 billion board feet that started to be burned in 1983 to 1985. It has now increased to better than 9 billion board feet that are burning. If we look at the graph bars that are showing there, we see as our timber harvesting has gone down, the actual threat of wildfire is increasing.

So, would it be a sensible policy for us to be able to get in, actively manage that, to be able to open the door for our timber industry to be able to harvest those trees and help create forests, healthy forests?

Mr. HUBBARD. We, the Forest Service, would like to see more active management, without a doubt. We know that scale and pace needs to be accelerated to restore those landscapes. And while we are behind like this, it becomes increasingly important that we pick our priorities right to protect those communities, and that means engaging with the Tribes, the States, and the local governments in deciding where we place those——

Mr. TIPTON. So is the Forest Service—because I know in your written testimony you had spoken to the one timber mill that we now have in Colorado. One, one timber mill in Colorado, down in Montrose. They would like to be able to operate 24 hours a day. We have a lot of smaller ones, as well. Are you willing to make that commitment, to be able to open those forests up for responsible harvesting of that?

Mr. HUBBARD. What commitment I can make is that I know that the Forest Service did assist the region in making more resources available to help the Montrose mill with supply.

Mr. TIPTON. And to be able to keep that going through. Would it be a sensible approach from the Forest Service, when we are talking about the inability to be able to manage these forests—right now, in the budget that was presented by Chief Tidwell, they are proposing to spend $60 million on acquisition of more land when we are saying we can't actively manage the land we currently have. Wouldn't it be a better use of that money to be able to go in and treat forests?

Mr. HUBBARD. I believe that those proposals, those budget proposals, have differences of opinion in them. And it is a process. We are early in that process, and we hope to have more engagement in the dialog.

Mr. TIPTON. Well, and I hope—we seem to have unanimity of opinion that our forests are at risk. It is hurting our watersheds, it is hurting our environment, it is hurting endangered species. And we are saying let's acquire more land that we can't manage, too. Let's take those resources and put them to actually help address the threat to human life and habitat. Wouldn't that be sensible?

Mr. HUBBARD. Yes, it would be sensible.

Mr. TIPTON. I agree.

Mr. HUBBARD. And we would welcome the dialog.

Mr. TIPTON. Great. I would like to talk a little bit about the importance—we have a lot of discussions here, and mothers, fathers, grandparents that are here, we all care about our children. And an important component for us, Mr. Duda, in Colorado—you mentioned about managing the State trust lands as being able to fund Secure Rural Schools. A lot of that is off of timber harvesting. Mr. Roady had mentioned that, as well.

If we could give some advice to the Federal Government, shouldn't it be to have responsible timber management to be able to help support education, to be able to educate our children, and to be able to create a healthy environment?

Mr. DUDA. Yes.

Dr. TOPIK. I appreciate that. Mr. Roady, do you have a comment on that?

Mr. ROADY. It is a proven fact the school trust system is a working system all throughout the Western States. Absolutely.

Mr. TIPTON. Well, thank you. With that I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you. Mr. DeFazio.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It has been about 11 or 12 years since I had a major fire burning in my district. And they had had those years of Rodeo fire, and I sat here and watched what the normal debates are here, which become very partisan, and I kind of blew up. And after that, George Miller, John Shadegg, McInnis from Colorado, and a few of us got together on a bipartisan basis. And we came up with the concept that ultimately, after a number of ups and downs, became HFRA.

I don't think we are utilizing HFRA to its full extent. Is there anybody there who thinks that the Hazardous Fuels Reduction budgets are adequate? Anyone want to volunteer that? Anybody think it is adequate? Anyone want to tell me the last year you think it was adequate? I have been on this Committee 26½ years. I remember asking the first chief in the first budget hearing back in those days, "Is there enough money in this budget for fire suppression and for fuel reduction?" And he gave a candid answer. "No."

It's been like that for 26½ years. Republican Administrations, Democratic Administrations. You get these trolls down at OMB that don't think that hazardous fuel treatment works. Well, they don't live in the West, they have probably never been to the West.

Now, we have dramatic evidence from a collaborative forest landscape restoration program on the Deschutes Forest with results. This is a very, very high fire-prone area. I have a cabin in that area. It is in Greg Walden's district. It works. We know it works. They have had fires start and they haven't become the conflagrations that we potentially expect on that side of the mountains.

This is going to be a really bad year, and there are just tens of thousands of acres that are pleading for this similar hazardous fuel reduction, and it is not happening. The money isn't there. I have the map for Oregon this year. There is a few little tiny dots on it showing what we are going to do in the coming year. I mean I wish I had it to put it up there. And when you compare it to the needs, it is ridiculous.

So, I would say the number one task here is to get some more money in there, fully utilize the tools of HFRA, fully utilize the collaborative process, which we do have. I do think that we—and I direct this to the Forest Service—I have been with Mark Ray and now with this Administration—no, actually, I started with Jim Lyons, through Mark Ray and this Administration, saying we need 20-year stewardship contracts. You will only do 10. We need 20.

If we are going to get people to invest in an area, a huge timbershed, if you have it, that needs fuel reduction. We have them in Oregon, I know other guys have them in their States. If someone is going to make an investment for a biomass plant or whatever in that area, they need more time to amortize that investment. But what it does for you is you can get someone who will charge less per acre to do the work because they are getting some economic value out of that crummy dead lodge pole that isn't worth anything to anybody else, because they are turning it into a usable product, electricity.

Can we get to 20-year stewardship contracts? I mean right now we are about to see stewardship contracts go away if this Committee doesn't act. But do you think 20-year contracts to get that kind of investment, at least in targeted areas where we have high need in very large areas for fuel reduction, could work?

Mr. HUBBARD. We constantly hear from the industry that the longer term is required for the investment that they would have to make in carrying out the projects that we propose. But can we get it? That is another question.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Have you asked for it? Have you asked? Has the Administration sent down a request to us to—I mean we are looking at stewardship reauthorization.

Mr. HUBBARD. Currently we have asked for reauthorization of stewardship.

Mr. DEFAZIO. OK. But you would be fully amenable if we were to augment that by giving you the flexibility to do 20-year contracts, given local conditions and need for those sorts of investments to deal with those local——

Mr. HUBBARD. We would very much welcome working with you.

Mr. DEFAZIO. OK. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I hope we can move down that path. I think it would be an improvement. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you. Mr. Amodei.

Mr. AMODEI. I am with Mr. DeFazio. I mean I have never said that before, but——

[Laughter.]

Mr. DEFAZIO. John Shadegg said that same thing 12 years ago.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you. Your time has expired. Mr.——

[Laughter.]

Mr. AMODEI. Can I give you a couple more minutes, before I get kicked off the Committee? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Regaining what is left of my composure, this is an oversight hearing on wildfire and forest management. And at least that is what the Chairman said it is, and I think he is telling the truth. And I know some of you, and I know most of you are messengers, so please don't take this personally. But when I look at fuels reduction budgeting, the unmistakable message that I should come away with is, "What?"

I mean I look at this stuff, and I am glad that, Jim, you are here on behalf of the whole Department of the Interior, because I represent a State that is north of 80 percent federally owned. So it is our yard work that we are talking about. Now, some of it is the Forest Service's. And some people are talking about school funds and other stuff, and many of us here represent States that are looking at a sage hen listing, and the Fish and Wildlife Service is under the Department of the Interior. And I look at this and people talk about regulatory systems to manage that habitat. And in our State, 86 percent of the threat is wildland fire.

And so, you sit there and you say, "We are going to manage the ag guys, we are going to manage the recreation folks, we are going to manage the"—although we don't have wild horses in the State for purposes of range management and that is not your fault, although some of it is funding—but it is like, "We are going to manage all these things, and then we are going to go to that agency in the Department of the Interior called Fish and Wildlife Service and say, 'Don't list it because we have addressed 15 percent of the threat to that habitat.'"

And I say, "Well, guess what? I don't know of a school where 15 percent is a passing grade. You are going to get listed if you continue to ignore wildland fire." And when you say, "We are going to manage it," with all due respect, you guys know better than I do you get to days where you have catastrophic fuel buildup, you have minimal moisture, and you have a lot of wind—and with all due respect to the profession, it is like, guess what? It is going to burn until something changes. I mean we experienced that just 15 miles outside of my home. Largest fire ever in the range, 25,000 acres, 6 days. Kind of went until it—you know, no disrespect to those people working on it.

And then we sit there and we talk about wildland fire, and you talk in a bipartisan fashion that says, "You know what? Maybe what you did before the fire can be as important as anything else." And I look at this stuff—and I know you didn't make the decision—I look at this stuff that says, well, we cut it in half from 2012, and then we took another half out of it in 2013. It is like, wow, amazing. And I haven't heard anybody say, "That fuels management stuff is BS."

And so, I mean for purposes of oversight and further Committee work, I assume—it is like please tell me the message I am supposed to take away on those budget requests from these two agencies. I am not accusing you of making them, but it is like what is the unmistakable—what am I supposed to do as the takeaway on fuels management in the context of wildland fire in the West? Please jump in, whoever feels strongly.

Mr. DOUGLAS. Clearly, we think fuels management is an important tool. We haven't done enough. We need to do much, much more. We were faced with a number of hard choices that had to be made in the budgets that were sent forward, and the budgets that were sent forward are what they are. I think we are actively working between our two agencies right now——

Mr. AMODEI. No, and I appreciate that. I mean I read your statement. I get that.

Mr. DOUGLAS. Yes.

Mr. AMODEI. But, I mean, I don't know if anybody up here is saying that is a dumb thing to be spending the money on. And when you look at Mr. Tipton's chart that says—and forest stuff, I know a lot of folks don't think there are trees in Nevada, but there are. I just go, "Wow."

I guess all I can say is that I am going to yield back some time. But I am just absolutely stunned that you can say this is a very important management tool we have, maybe what we do before the fire is the most important thing, but, by God, we are cutting it. And, by the way, please, with all due respect to sequester, I don't want to hear about single-digit stuff in the face of these cuts.

Mr. HUBBARD. I believe another factor here is that we do have to respond to wildfire. We do have to cover our suppression costs. And that is becoming increasingly difficult when you formulate a budget under constraint. And that may be something we need to look at.

Mr. DOUGLAS. And I would just add, Mr. Amodei, that irrespective of fuels—extremely important, and I don't disagree with you on that—our suppression folks are very actively working on the habitat issue, as well. The engines have the maps, they know where all the high-priority areas are. They are very sensitive to that. So, when there is fire, which does happen, we are very cognizant of response actions that are sensitive to the need to protect that habitat.

Mr. BISHOP. All right, thank you.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you, I——

Mr. BISHOP. We have votes that are taking place. I intend to go through some more questions here. So, Mr. Daines, go ahead.

Mr. DAINES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I represent an entire State, the State of Montana, so I spend a lot of time in a pick-up truck, driving around, when I am back home. And as I have driven around the State, spending time at the saw mills—and I tell you, I appreciate the gentleman from Oregon's comments, as well. I think as Westerners we stare at this problem of these trees waiting to be cut, the forest fires in the summertime. My son plays high school football. We canceled football games last fall because of air quality.

And yet, I go to a mill, another mill, I was at Chuck Roady's mill and I went down the south central part of our State to the RY mill outside of Livingston, Montana. They had some trees going through that they were cutting at that time, because they took them off a forest fire that burned up Pine Creek last summer that was on private land. And so they were able to get some burned trees to cut in their mill. They are very concerned, after they got done with that contract, that they were going to run out of logs.

And we stare at all these Federal lands that we can't get in and harvest the logs, and then they burn in the summer time. And we are pulling our hair out, looking at this and saying—in fact, this mill down in South Central Montana would immediately hire another 100 employees for the mill and another 100 loggers if we could get access to more logs. And so, the question I always ask is, why is it? What is the barrier stopping this?

And I, too, am a little bit of a skeptic when I hear the word "sequestration" is the problem. I don't buy it. I spent 28 years in the private sector. We just can't keep throwing money and saying it is going to solve the problem. We have to look at how the money is currently being spent, and spend it more wisely. And I was struck by Chuck Roady's comment of the dollars, $350 million, that was spent in terms of NEPA and so forth. I think part of it is getting ready for lawsuits.

I had my staff go through and look at region one, which is Montana and there in Idaho. In Fiscal Year 2012 and 2013—we ran a spreadsheet here, looking at all the timber contracts, 124 projects. Forty percent have been appealed or litigated.

Here is the other problem. And I am a big proponent of collaboration, and I have spent a lot of time with our logging guys now, and with our wilderness groups. They are kind of tired of collaboration, because it is not generating the results, because the people—as I think Mr. Roady mentioned—the people who are at the table collaborating aren't the people who are then filing these lawsuits later on, after the fact, and stopping progress.

Let me say this. Of the projects that were in collaborative agreements right now in region one in Fiscal Year 2012 and 2013, six of those seven—there were seven collaborative agreements—six of those seven are ones that are currently being appealed and litigated. That is a problem.

The Colt Summit project that Chuck mentioned, I was in the mill, down there at Seeley Lake, the day after that ruling came down. Listen to this. This project, they had it already—it was a stewardship contract. A local extremist group, the Alliance for the Wild Rockies, files a lawsuit, and there were 14 counts. Thirteen were dismissed, but the judge issued an injunction on the fourteenth count and stopped it.

My question is, what role do these lawsuits play, in terms of being a barrier to healthy forest management? I will start and go down the line.

Mr. HUBBARD. In your part of the country, South Central Montana in particular, a huge role. It has virtually shut things down in the national forests. And so, environmental clearance there, collaboratives or not, has been difficult. And we continue to try to figure out how to work through NEPA to get that kind of clearance

and get a judge's opinion that allows us to proceed. Particularly where you are talking about——

Mr. DAINES. And I think there is a cause and effect there, because we are in the ninth circuit court would be my added comment to that. Thank you.

Other comments on litigation, particularly in region one?

Mr. DOUGLAS. I am not sure that we have the same issues the Forest Service does, to the same degree and scale, but we have the same need to work through and find acceptable solutions for everybody, and it is one of the challenges that we have, obviously.

Mr. DAINES. Sure. Chuck, what is your thought on that?

Mr. ROADY. Our company alone, we participate in four different collaborative groups. And I do feel that it is a plus. But it is becoming extremely frustrating. We spend a lot of time—and it is those people that don't play in the sandbox. I mean I have heard the chief many times and the leadership in the Forest Service stress collaborative. But that only goes so far. If you get shot out of the saddle after you have collaborated, you get pretty tired and frustrated with that. And that is where we are at in Montana and Idaho. It is pretty sad.

Mr. BISHOP. All right. Thank you. We have 8 minutes left on this procedural motion. I had an intention of going to Mr. Gosar next before votes—well, first of all, there is 8 minutes left, but 300 people haven't voted yet, so we got some time. I intend to stay here through this vote series, if anyone else wishes to. Apparently, there is still 10 minutes of time left on the rule for the Floor, so voting will happen on a series of votes after that, this one, is over. But I am going to miss this one so we can finish this and let these people go. And if we adjourn by one vote, I will apologize to leadership.

So, however you want to handle yourselves, that is what I intend to do. Mr. Gosar, we have plenty of time for your 5 minutes of questions, though.

Dr. GOSAR. Well, thank you. Mr. Rigdon, I want to go back to success models, I mean, because we are burning our wheels over and over again. And there is something that the Tribes emulate that I think we need to get back to. Do you have any less respect for the environment than any of the environmental groups?

Mr. RIGDON. Actually, I think the Tribes live on the land that we manage, and so I think we have a more vested interest in what is going on on our lands. And inside of that, we take more—a lot better time evaluating and doing management practices that we do.

Dr. GOSAR. So you have a real stewardship, always been part of your culture, right?

Mr. RIGDON. Yes.

Dr. GOSAR. So let's go back. And in your testimony you talked about the Yakama's success in regards to the budworm infestation. How were you successful?

Mr. RIGDON. The first thing that happened is we came together, our tribal council declared a state of emergency. We were watching our forest all fall apart. It was dying right before our eyes. And our leadership then gave direction to the Bureau of Indian Affairs and to the Natural Resource Department at our agency, to tackle this problem, to bring back a solution that reduces the loss that we were seeing from our forest due to those things.

With that direction, we streamlined and fast-tracked through the Natural Environmental Protection Act. We met with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on spotted owls and ESA consultation. And that was the thing. It was the priority of the Tribe and our leadership, taking the steps to make sure that we were centered and moving forward with these things.

Our Natural Resource Departments came together and we evaluated and took on the challenge to make sure that we did the forest management that was necessary, but we also respected those resources that we have values for across our land, also.

Dr. GOSAR. But I mean I want to highlight, because I have a bill sitting here, and you said the magic words along my lines. It is emergency declaration, going through the proper management.

But you are missing a piece here, if I am not mistaken, and that is the litigation aspect from environmental groups. They don't have the same standing in tribal lands, if I am not mistaken, as they do in the rest of the world. Do they?

Mr. RIGDON. No, they don't. Environmental groups, they have to have standing to appeal a decision within the reservation. And so, in most instances, it would have to be a tribal member within our community. And then there are certain aspects of that that lie out with them. They would have to fund a certain aspect to cover the timber sales that would be lost if they appealed those decisions, and those kind of things.

Dr. GOSAR. And I want to bring—we are coming full circle here. I mean I had the Waldo fire in my district in 2011, and the largest fire in—you are aware of what the White Mountain Apache had done through the Rodeo-Chediski, or the thinning process.

Mr. RIGDON. Right. I have been there several times, actually, and I have seen the activities there. They do a great job.

Dr. GOSAR. So why did the fire stop when it started coming in to tribal land?

Mr. RIGDON. Well, I think the active management, the reduction of fuel loads, reduction of forest canopy, the fire dropped to the ground and you had fires that were there, historically, that were driven by our Indian people, by the Apache people that probably before managed the land. I think you see that all across Indian country. If it is the same up in Montana to what we do on our reservation.

Dr. GOSAR. It is a model that works, right?

Mr. RIGDON. Yes.

Dr. GOSAR. A model that works. Imagine that. A model that works.

You know, let me ask you a question, Mr. Hubbard and Mr. Douglas. If we took Equal Access to Justice findings, and instead of giving it to claimants, put it through mitigation of our forest, that would give you some access to some dollars, wouldn't it? I mean I am kind of aware that it is somewhere around $1 billion per year. I mean the Justice Department won't give us those numbers, but wouldn't that be interesting, that if we actually put it to use, other than constant litigation, actually put skin in the game?

Mr. HUBBARD. It would make a difference, I believe.

Dr. GOSAR. Thank you. You know, the next person I want to talk to is Chris. Chris, I want to tell you thank you very, very much

for trying to come back to common solutions that Phil brought forward. There is a lot of things we could be doing, is there not, in regards to these collaborative management processes?

One of the things I want to throw out is that one of the successes in energy are these PMAs in which we have these power management authorizations. What if we were to create some of these forest management authorities that goes back to local authority, that works with joint ventures, that actually puts these collaborative aspects—mitigation from Federal funding, but also some of these timber sales—imagine that, that we are actually working collaboratively—would that be something of interest to you?

Dr. TOPIK. Yes. Thank you very much. I think things like that are very much of interest. I think it is very important for this Committee and the leadership here to also reach out to a whole bunch of other sectors of society and the economy, with respect to tourism, with respect to water, utilities. There is a whole lot of folks that need to be brought into this who are heavily impacted by these issues. And so I think there is a lot of ways forward on those kind of fronts.

Dr. GOSAR. Thank you for your insights. Thank you.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you. Mr. Gosar, you still have 2, almost 3 minutes on the vote, and there are 200 that haven't voted yet. So decide what you need to do there.

Let me ask a couple of questions on my own, if I could. Mr. Hubbard, let me start with you. In the documents, you said that the goal for the Forest Service was to increase the number of acres being treated and increase forest products to 3 billion board feet. Yet, unfortunately, the Administration's budget request proposes a 15 percent reduction in that timber target. Is the Administration's goal still to reach 3 billion board feet?

Mr. HUBBARD. We will continue to ask our regions to increase their restoration efforts. Our projection is we will probably be at closer to 2.6 billion board feet.

Mr. BISHOP. All right. So that kind of comes up to the other one. You talked about the Forest Service treating 4 million acres this year, 27 million over the past 10 years. What that really means is the options of treating means either cutting something or burning something.

So, how many acres of those that were treated were commercially thinned?

Mr. HUBBARD. Of the 27 million I think it is close to 10 million acres were mechanically treated. The rest was prescribed fire.

Mr. BISHOP. By mechanically, is that commercially?

Mr. HUBBARD. Not necessarily, but mostly.

Mr. BISHOP. But mostly. All right. Let me talk to you about tankers for just a quick second, if I could. I understand you have awarded contracts for seven Next Generation air tankers. How many of those aircraft are flying in this fire season?

Mr. HUBBARD. Well, all those vendors had 60 days to put their planes in the air, to pass the test, and to tank them and go through the process. We expect them to do that. So by the end of the season, at least, we hope all seven are flying. Currently, three are flying.

Mr. BISHOP. OK. You got three right now, you expect the other four within the next 2 months at some time. I guess that is the questions there.

Mr. Douglas, I have a problem also with the one other mention of the word "sequestration," simply because the Administration's budget request has reduced hazardous fuel funding by more than 30 percent. So how does the Administration then blame sequestration for these impacts, when their budget is much deeper, much more devastating in a reduction proposal?

Mr. DOUGLAS. So two things. The mention of sequestration was just to note that, in fact, we have somewhat fewer resources this summer to deal with the current fire season and we are prioritizing our resources to do that. I think the issue about the amount of funding for fuels is certainly more than the sequestration issue, and it is a more fundamental problem——

Mr. BISHOP. All right. So what you were talking with sequestration is the manpower and the training you can provide?

Mr. DOUGLAS. That is our principal concern for this fire——

Mr. BISHOP. But the budget is still down by 30 percent, as proposed——

Mr. DOUGLAS. Correct.

Mr. BISHOP [continuing]. By the Administration. At the same time—let me go back to Mr. Hubbard on this one, instead.

The Secretary of Agriculture has proposed $40 million for forest land acquisition. Now, I understand at times in the past, when we have asked that question about wouldn't it be wiser to spend that on actually being able to fight wildfires, we were told that those funds can't be transferred back and forth. Is that still the basic problem we have?

Mr. HUBBARD. Yes, sir.

Mr. BISHOP. So what we really need is, first of all, the authorization in legislation to allow you to make those transfers. And, if not, it is what a couple of other people have mentioned. Even if we are actually using money for acquisition and acquiring more land, all we are doing is exacerbating the potential problem that is out there. But what you really need is you can't do that until there is something that allows you to make that kind of a transfer.

Mr. HUBBARD. Correct.

Mr. BISHOP. All right. Well, I hope some day we can get there with that.

Mr. Rigdon, if I can try and hustle with these questions, you talked about the Yakama success in addressing the budworm infestation, and said it wouldn't be a challenge to find similar speed, scope, and effectiveness—I am sorry, it would be a challenge to find the similar speed, scope, and effectiveness on Federal forests. Shy?

Mr. RIGDON. I think there are a couple important parts—is the process of the Forest Service seems to take a lot longer, and it is not—we joined the forest collaborative, the Tapash Forest collaborative, in 2007. We have the last mill in the region, in our region. And we would like to get our saw mill going again. And just the process, we still have not gotten any small diameter wood that would be coming off that would meet the objective of what we are trying to achieve off of Forest Service land as of yet. And we con-

tinue to go down that path, and we continue to try to reach those goals.

And I just think the part of the NEPA, there is more concern about other stakeholders and those type of things that it slows down the process, the litigation thing.

Mr. BISHOP. OK, thank you. I have to call me out of order here.

I have some more questions. But first, Mr. DeFazio, do you have some additional questions?

Mr. DEFAZIO. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To Dr. Topik, toward the end of your testimony you say, "Finally, while we are committed to the principles of public engagement and environmental review in NEPA, we believe there may be opportunities to significantly increase the efficiency of these processes through targeted adjustments in policy and implementation." Would you please be specific, or expand on that for me?

Dr. TOPIK. Thanks very much. Let me give you a real specific example. Just recently I was in Arkansas on the Ozark National Forest, participating in a collaborative group meeting, and then a 2-day field trip. And the way the NEPA planning projects work there is just remarkable. It is so different from some of these other areas that I have been. For instance, on the Deschutes, I have been out on that process also with a collaborative group. They are able to do a very large area, to have it under a NEPA plan that explains all the kind of activities they want to do, but doesn't get tied down to one acre or another acre.

It ties very much down into the description of the sites and the description of the treatments and expectation of the treatments. And so they are able to do large areas, and the forests just look wonderful. They are doing terrific projects across ownerships in a common way. It is an exciting kind of example.

I think there are a number of other examples around the country where they are able to use NEPA and to get more innovative. I think it is something we all need to work together to figure out more ways of making it faster and larger scale, where appropriate, get more of the public involved quickly.

Mr. DEFAZIO. So basically, people agreed on what they wanted it to look like when they were done.

Dr. TOPIK. Yes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Right? In terms of, OK, we have proper spacing now, if we remove this—why doesn't—I mean, we have given you some tools—HFRA, we had talked about that a little bit earlier. What he is talking about there, why can't we do that in other areas, and do it more, so that we can expedite these larger-scale projects? Some kind of programmatic EIS or something that covers a large area?

Mr. HUBBARD. Mr. DeFazio, that is something the Forest Service is pursuing. Now——

Mr. DEFAZIO. What do you need to more successfully and more quickly pursue it? Do you need more staff? Do we need to make adjustments to HFRA or other laws? What do you need to use it more broadly, more quickly, so we aren't spending 10 times as much to suppress a fire as opposed to prevent it?

Mr. HUBBARD. I am not sure that we do need anything at the moment. Just do it. This large landscape approach has shown

promise, especially in the East. We moved it to the Black Hills, we want to try it in other places, as well.

Mr. DEFAZIO. OK. Well, I would invite you to try it in particularly Eastside Oregon, where I think we have had some collaborative process, and where there is widespread agreement about the risk, the fire risk.

I would like to turn to something the Chairman raised. And I am concerned about the tankers. I mean, I think it was 15 or more years ago we were talking about the decrepit state of the tanker fleet. And since then things got a lot worse, and then we grounded the whole thing a couple of years ago. This doesn't look like a process that is unfolding very quickly, in terms of reinforcing our tanker fleet. I saw a demonstration of this massive dump that could be adjusted out of an evergreen plane. I think it is either a DC–10 or a 747.

I mean what—are there things out there that we could be using this year you could contract for? And also, what do you need to do to move ahead more quickly with acquisition of an adequate fleet?

Mr. HUBBARD. Several things, sir. We are—our original tanker fleet, which is——

Mr. DEFAZIO. I know all about the original tanker fleet.

Mr. HUBBARD. Yes, it is——

Mr. DEFAZIO. World War II, right? OK.

Mr. HUBBARD. Correct. That is diminished to the point that we only have seven of those airplanes left. They are under what we call a legacy contract for the next 5 years. The Next Generation contract is seven more planes, and we are testing out new models. Our specifications were that they fly faster and they carry more of a load. And so the planes that bid and were successful under that are going to be doing it. And we will see those in flight, I say, this summer.

The other part of that is in this mix it becomes important that the government owns some of these planes, we believe. So, government-owned, contractor-operated. Currently, the best option for that is the C–27's from the military.

Mr. DEFAZIO. OK. I mean you had this study from Rand that said that you use scoopers, and you decided that was a bad idea. I think the biggest scooper I have seen, I think, is actually a Russian model. I mean I am not advocating buying Russian planes, but I am just saying scoopers can't work, or—what is the deal?

Mr. HUBBARD. Scoopers are like helicopters. They are water delivery and not retardant delivery. They are effective.

Mr. DEFAZIO. OK, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you. I appreciate the fact that your constituents have heard you actually propose Communist buys here. That is really great.

Thank you. Mr. McClintock, do you have an additional question or two?

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Thank you. I want to talk to Mr. Douglas, again, regarding the Reading fire. Let me try and refresh his memory. And I am incredulous that the Acting Director of the Office of Wildland Fire in the Department of the Interior was not even aware of this fire. It was started on July 23, 2012 by lightning strikes at the Lassen Volcanic National Park in California. The

Park Service allowed this fire to burn for what they called "ecosystem benefits." CalFire and the local fire companies begged the Department of the Interior to put it out while it was still controllable. They warned the Department over and over that the conditions were extremely dangerous. This was in the middle of the summer—and that this fire posed a tremendous hazard to life and property throughout the region. These warnings fell on deaf ears.

On August 6th, the fire blew up into an uncontrolled wildfire. It grew from 200 acres to 1,300 acres on the first day. It ultimately burned for 2 solid weeks, sent up a plume of smoke 30,000 feet high. It destroyed 28,000 acres of forest, including 17,000 acres on National Park Service land, an additional 11,000 acres on U.S. Forest Service land. It cost $15 million. The excuse given at the time was that the overall result was beneficial, it reflected the testimony we heard earlier that we have to learn to live with fires, that philosophy.

Congressman Herger conducted a public meeting on this subject last year, which I attended. It was also attended by Bill Kaage, who is the Wildland Fire Branch Chief for the National Park Service. Darlene Koontz attended. She is the last park superintendent. We were promised a full and complete review of these policies. And you can't even recall the incident?

Mr. DOUGLAS. Sir, I recall that there was that fire. I am sorry if I was incorrect in that. I don't know the specifics. That was the National Park Service's management responsibility.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Well, aren't they under the Department of the Interior?

Mr. DOUGLAS. They are, but they have the responsibility——

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Aren't you the Acting Director of the Office of Wildland Fire?

Mr. DOUGLAS. I am. My——

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Were you acting in that capacity last year?

Mr. DOUGLAS. I was not.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Who was?

Mr. DOUGLAS. We had a director of that office. Our office——

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. What were you doing in that period?

Mr. DOUGLAS. I was in a position——

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Has—go ahead, I am sorry.

Mr. DOUGLAS. I am sorry. I was the senior advisor to our Deputy Assistant Secretary working on other projects at that time.

Let me clarify that the——

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Well, you are the Acting Director of Wildland Fire now. Can you tell me if a complete review of this fire was conducted, and what was the outcome of that review?

Mr. DOUGLAS. I don't know what the outcome of that review is. I am happy to find that out and get back to you on that.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Were the decisions made to allow this fire to burn out of control consistent with Department policy?

Mr. DOUGLAS. Those decisions are made at the park level by the local managers.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Were they consistent with Department policy?

Mr. DOUGLAS. We have Department policy that says that local managers make appropriate decisions based on the information they have at hand. I am not familiar with the particular decisions

that were made. You made reference to the hearing that Mr. Herger had in which the decisionmakers explained themselves. I don't know the details of those——

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Does the Department adhere to the philosophy we heard from another witness that we just have to learn to live with fires?

Mr. DOUGLAS. The Department believes that fire is a part of our natural world, and it is going to be out there. We have to work with it at the appropriated time. When it challenges structures and other values at risk——

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. You were warned—your Department was warned repeatedly that it was an imminent danger, under catastrophic conditions, and those warnings were ignored. Some would say blissfully ignored.

Mr. DOUGLAS. Again, I am not familiar with the specifics of the decisions that were made on that fire at the time.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Hubbard, I want to go for one more moment to finances in my remaining minute—seconds. I am told that 4.5 billion board feet grows every year on the national forests within California. Seven percent of that is now all that is harvested for commercial purposes. How much money would be coming into the treasury, available for the Department, if the Department was simply keeping pace with the growth in board feet in the national forests?

Mr. HUBBARD. More than now. And I can get you a specific figure, if you would like.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Billions of dollars?

Mr. HUBBARD. I don't believe billions, but more than now.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. More than the sequester cuts that you were complaining about?

Mr. HUBBARD. Yes, sir.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Well, then, why don't you do it? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BISHOP. You don't have to answer that last one. Mr. Gosar? I think we have time for a couple more questions if you have some.

Dr. GOSAR. Yes, I do. Well, first of all, Mr. Hubbard, thank you very much. I have a vested interest in the 4FRI initiative, and I know a lot of it is following through. Part of that problem is trust, isn't it?

Mr. HUBBARD. Part of getting it established is trust. It is my impression that 4FRI was successful, though, in moving forward, and that the land treatments are occurring. I think there are problems with the financials for utilization of the products. But the treatments are occurring.

Dr. GOSAR. Well, in Arizona, no. The 4FRI is looking at the large-scale test model, which still has not gotten off the ground. Because we can mitigate all we want around buildings and structures, but we have to go to the larger diameter, up to the 16 inches, which we made agreements in the 4FRI. We haven't gotten that off. And part of that is trust, trust from the Department, trust from the logging industry, trust from the environmental groups. True?

Mr. HUBBARD. True. But once again, I do believe 4FRI is prepared to move forward on those——

Dr. GOSAR. Well, I beg to differ. We are ready, we have been saying we are ready, I know the Chief has gone through heroic aspects to get even the RFP done, and I think we can all agree with that. But the problem is it is not done. We are sitting in catastrophic environments. "No" isn't an answer any more. We have to be doing something to mitigate.

Let me ask you—and I pitched this once before. Particularly in streamlining EIS and NEPAs, we have a tool sitting at our disposal that actually can build trust, because when you see things actively being managed and done, it actually helps build trust, because it actually—you see templates actually in real time.

We have these small, unmanned aerials that we can actually use—infrared, we can actually do templates, we can actually use GPS in collaboration with that, so that we can actually propose these templates, actually see them done in real time. It speeds it up for the logging industry. It also streamlines the NEPA and NEPA EIS. But it also allows all the partners in that environment to see it actively being done, so that you can twist and torque and change the parameters as it is done in real time.

That is what I am after. That is what Arizonans are wanting right now. They want to see something being done that is working with everybody on the table. And I hope that is an opportunity to do this. I can't look at these 19 families in my district any other way. We have to put this on the table. It can't be tomorrow, it can't be a month from now, it can't be a year from now. It has got to be now. And we have to show a demonstration project of these large-scale things to put it on the table.

I know that Mr. DeFazio made comments about 20-year scales. Yes, well, we can get that, but we have to show it being done.

And I want to compliment the Nature Conservancy, because they have actively said, "We have to have skin in the game, we actually have to have something done. We actually have to show the process working."

And it goes to this gentleman from Montana with the logging industry. They are stewards. You don't have an industry if you aren't a steward of it. And that is why I kept coming back to you, sir. The Tribes have shown us, "Here is the way." It has been sitting there in front of our face all the time. The problem is—I am a science guy. I am built on science. And science sets you free. Facts set you free. But when we start deliberating this on technicalities and philosophies and poetry, I can't deal with that, and neither can the American people. We are at catastrophic reasons.

And I see, when I look up at those things that—the charts that Mr. Tipton showed, it is remarkable. You can do all the stuff that you want, but you have to have an industry to promote this. It has to be a joint venture, because there is not enough money in the treasury. It is not going to happen. We got to go back to having that trust. I would hope that you would invest and start looking at some of these aerials. They actually do work. And I would like to see that template get off the ground now, not later.

Mr. HUBBARD. Mr. Gosar, we share the now with you, especially with what you have just been through. We would like to follow up.

Dr. GOSAR. Yes. I think part of that reason is there are some problems within the bureaucracy of the Forest Service. I think you

will agree, and I think that the Chief will agree with that. And we have to have a streamlined process. But I think what we can do is when willing hands come to the table to work together, and we can utilize our tribal members to actually show us the way, I mean, it does work.

But we have reached a catastrophic breaking point. We can't have this happen again. Thank you.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you, Mr. Gosar. Let me ask a couple of what I hope may be the final questions here.

Mr. Roady, for example, you mentioned in your testimony—you talked about crown fires. Can you just explain what that term means?

Mr. ROADY. A crown fire is when it gets up into the tops of the trees and spreads. When the fuel loading builds up in a forest, and that fire starts, whether it is man-caused or lightning, and it can travel up those ladder fuels when we haven't done any mechanical thinning, we haven't done any management, and those get into the crowns of the trees, that fire spreads. It gets up into the wind, and——

Mr. BISHOP. So has this phenomenon not historically been the pattern in Montana?

Mr. ROADY. No, because we had—just as Phil explained, historically we had low-intensity ground fires. It took away those fuels.

Mr. BISHOP. OK. And in your property that you own in Flathead Valley——

Mr. ROADY. Yes?

Mr. BISHOP [continuing]. Are you experiencing this, or is that——

Mr. ROADY. No.

Mr. BISHOP. Do you have catastrophic fires on the property you have?

Mr. ROADY. No. The only catastrophic fire we have had is in an isolated 160 acres that were surrounded by Forest Service land that wasn't managed.

Mr. BISHOP. And the thinning process, you say, is one of the benefits?

Mr. ROADY. When you mechanically thin, you lower the intensity of those fires.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you. Mr. Duda, can you just simply talk to me briefly—very briefly—about the process and the timeframe that Colorado uses to implement a fuel reduction program, and maybe vis a vis what the Federal Government is doing on the similar property?

Mr. DUDA. Chairman Bishop, on our State trust lands we do a forest management plan. We look at all the environmental implications of the project. We get approval from the State Board of Land Commissioners, and we implement—from the start of the management planning to implementation would be a year or less.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you very much. And, Mr. Rigdon, I am amazed at the numbers you threw out of the costs that you have. Why is the cost for both maintaining the tribal land forest, as well as the cost for fire suppression so much lower on your tribal land forest than it seems to be on the Federal forest?

Mr. RIGDON. To me that is a good question. I think Tribes are forced to deal with the budgets that we get through the Department of the Interior. And at times we don't get priorities toward the trust and fiduciary responsibility.

The thing that I will say is that—but we do take our mission seriously, and we are able to accomplish and use creative and innovative ways to reach our objectives. And the Indian Forest Management Assessment Team did the analysis just recently, and it really does showcase that discrepancy that we are seeing between those things, but also the innovation that Tribes are able to, you know, complete the task that we have.

Mr. BISHOP. All right, I appreciate that. And in response to—I think it was to Mr. Grijalva's question, if I understand this right, you have a forest on tribal lands. You also have Federal forest land which you use. So when you were responding to his question, it is on different types of land.

Mr. RIGDON. So we retain treaty rights on Forest Service, BLM, and other lands.

Mr. BISHOP. All right. So they are two different kinds of property we are talking about here.

Mr. RIGDON. And so when we approach the Forest Service or BLM or any of these things, we are trying to see active management to protect those resources that we have treaty rights for, if that is wild fish, if it is deer and elk, or foods that our people gather, or places that have spiritual importance to our community.

Mr. BISHOP. I appreciate that. You also mentioned one thing in your testimony, that there are only six projects that have been implemented under the authority granted by the Tribal Forest Protection Act. Does there need to be greater direction for the Forest Service and BLM to allow the Tribe to do projects on Federal lands?

Mr. RIGDON. I think that is one of the biggest parts, is that there is no accountability with this piece of the law. It is a "you may," instead of "you shall," and I think that has a direct consequence, where they don't take the full effort into—there is no incentive for the district rangers or those folks to work with Tribes on these projects.

Mr. BISHOP. I appreciate that. I thank you very much. Is there anything else, Mr. McClintock, Mr. Gosar?

[No response.]

Mr. BISHOP. Look, I want to thank you all for being here. Some of you have come great distances to give testimony. I think it has been a marvelous hearing. We have had a lot of great ideas that have come from the Administration and some ideas that have come from the private sector, as well as from the State and tribal governments.

You obviously noted, from the number of people and the number of questions, as well as the intensity of some of the questions, this is a significant topic of which we have a great deal of concern, as you do, as well. So I appreciate that. What I hope is that we can come up with some solutions, maybe looking outside what we have done traditionally in the past, and finding a new way of making sure that the resources are available. And maybe some partnerships are available so we can do things in a much more effective

and a cheaper manner than we have done before, with the idea of not only being able to deal with fire suppression, but also doing that which would limit the amount of fires that take place in the first place.

So, I want to thank you for being here. I want to let you know that there may be some questions from Members who are not here that still have to come. They may come to you in writing. We would ask you if you would respond to those in writing, as well.

Unless there is anything else, we appreciate you being here. Especially we appreciate you being here. And this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:38 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

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