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THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET REQUEST FOR THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025

HEARING BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES UNITED STATES SENATE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS SECOND SESSION

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THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET REQUEST FOR THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025

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

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:00 a.m. in Room SD-366, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Joe Manchin III, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOE MANCHIN III, U.S. SENATOR FROM WEST VIRGINIA

The CHAIRMAN. The Committee will come to order. This morning we are here to discuss the President's Fiscal Year 2025 budget request for the Forest Service. I would like to begin by thanking Chief Randy Moore and the Forest Service Budget Director, Mark Lichtenstein, for being with us this morning. Thank you both. I look forward to hearing about the justification for the 6.5 percent increase requested over Fiscal Year 2024 enacted appropriations.

Although May would normally be just the start of the fire season, we have already had record-breaking wildfires, as is becoming all too common. In February, while it was still snowing, over one million acres in Texas burned, killing two people and destroying 130 homes. All signs point to a very active fire year in the U.S., and I know my colleagues from western states are on pins and needles watching for the next ignition that could devastate their communities.

Our Committee has considered several bills that would support and improve the wildfire response network, from increasing the use of technology for wildfire detection, to integrating the local communities, loggers, and volunteer firefighters into wildfire suppression efforts on federal land. In the meantime, Congress has tried to address this problem at the source by investing heavily in hazardous fuels reduction. Between the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act, the Forest Service has been given about \$12 billion on top of your annual appropriations.

Now that we are a few years into those laws, today is a good opportunity for us to take stock of how the Forest Service is implementing those historic investments, as well as the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2025. As I mentioned, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the IRA will add a significant extra boost to the Forest Service budget, around 30 percent extra, for forest management each year.

To be honest, Chief Moore, I am frustrated at how little these extra investments have moved the needle on the agency's performance metrics. I do appreciate that last year was a banner year for the Forest Service in terms of acres treated—more than 4.3 million acres. That is a million acres more than the previous year, and it sets an agency record. Some of your performance metrics were less encouraging.

For example, your timber target for last year was 3.4 billion board-feet. You missed that by about 260 million board-feet. You had a target of 16 improved watersheds, but you only managed six. You have told us before that it takes time to develop these projects and we should be patient. Instead of continuing to ramp-up in treatments, however, the agency's target is actually going down over the next two years.

So one of the issues I hope we will explore today is why the historic funding provided by those two bills—the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the IRA—are not translating better into on-the-ground action. The backdrop to our discussion beyond the impending fire season is a rash of sawmill closures this year, including six in my own home State of West Virginia.

I know that the wood products markets have been especially volatile since the pandemic. We have heard a number of reports, however, that longstanding sawmills are simply running out of nearby material and need to haul logs in from farther and farther away, which significantly cuts into their already thin margins. More consistent and reliable offerings from local federal forests would undoubtedly help these struggling operators.

What is also concerning to me about these mill closures is that the Forest Service's Wildfire Crisis Strategy is fundamentally dependent on a robust network of mills that can process the material from our nation's forests. As we recently heard at our hearing with the Wildfire Commission, revenue-generating timber harvests are critical to pay for more complex treatments, prescribed fire, and reforestation.

If done right, timber harvesting can provide a return to the federal taxpayer, increase the health of our forests, and support our critical industry partners. The Forest Service has used some innovative models in the past. For example, last year, the agency piloted a timber transport project to salvage burned timber in California and ship it to struggling sawmills in Wyoming. That makes all the sense in the world. We shouldn't just be letting salvageable timber rot. I have said this so many times in these hearings.

And in the long term, Congress can also help develop markets for the small-diameter timber that often comes from wildfire mitigation projects as we are thinning and cleaning. In fact, several of the provisions in a bill I introduced with Ranking Member Barrasso, the America's Revegetation and Carbon Sequestration Act, would do just that.

However, we simply cannot afford to lose all of our existing mill infrastructure while that market grows, and I hope that we will hear how the Forest Service can further expand on efforts like the timber transport project. Lastly, I know that fire and forestry often get the lion's share of attention, but I also want to highlight the tremendous role that our national forests play when it comes to our

outdoor recreation economy. Last year, the 159 million visitors to Forest Service lands generated billions in economic activity and supported nearly 180,000 jobs.

Unfortunately, the Forest Service has a deferred maintenance backlog of more than \$7 billion, including \$5 billion in maintenance just for the roads alone. This should concern all of us. The roads don't just provide access to our recreation lands, but are vital arteries for rural communities.

Perhaps even more concerning, a road in poor condition threatens our ability to deploy firefighters where they are needed to stop a wildfire before it grows to catastrophic size.

As we approach the expiration of the mandatory funding for facilities maintenance that we provided in the Great American Outdoors Act, it is worth asking what changes could be made to better address the next set of hurdles facing the Forest Service.

Chief Moore, I want to thank you again for being here today. I think I speak for all of us when I say that we don't just want you to succeed, we need you to succeed. I look forward to hearing your perspective on these issues and your plans for the year ahead.

And with that, I will turn to the Ranking Member and my friend, Senator Barrasso, for his opening statement.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN BARRASSO,
U.S. SENATOR FROM WYOMING**

Senator BARRASSO. Well, thanks so much, Mr. Chairman. Thanks for holding today's hearing. Chief Moore, thanks so much for coming back.

Mr. Chairman, I share your concerns. Historic investments and failure to meet the targets. I mean, that's what you pointed out. That's what people on both sides of this aisle have continued to point out year after year. Wyoming's forests, including our eight national forests, help sustain our way of life. They support our local communities. This is the case all across the west.

Our forests face many challenges, including wildfire, drought, insect and disease outbreaks. We face additional pressures, as you mentioned, Mr. Chairman, from the sawmill closures. You know, in 1976, Wyoming sawmills could process over 300 million board-feet each year. Forests were healthy, forests were productive. According to the Forest Service's latest statistics, Wyoming sawmills can now process just over 100 million board-feet. So that goes from 300 million down to 100 million. That is a two-thirds drop in our capacity.

And now the health of our national forests in Wyoming is poor. The wildfire risk is high. And if we don't make things better in a way to manage our national forests, the risks are going to keep growing and things are going to get worse. So I look forward to hearing how the Forest Service intends to hit the targets to address these critical challenges. And I am pleased with some of the priorities in the budget: funding to protect our communities from catastrophic fire, also pay raises for our wildland firefighters.

I do have concerns about the budget though, because for years the Forest Service has asked Congress for more and more money, and we have heard it from both sides of the aisle. That money has been granted. Congress has responded by giving the agency billions of dollars in additional taxpayer funds.

Since 2021, Congress has given the agency more than \$40 billion—with a B—\$40 billion. Yet the Forest Service has not treated more acres. It has not sold more timber. It has not expedited the environmental review process for forest management projects. Mr. Chairman, the question continues—where have all these taxpayer dollars gone?

Now, I acknowledge the Forest Service faces enormous challenges as it combats wildfires. Yet despite having more money than ever, the agency has not done the work on the ground to address the crisis. In fact, the agency expects to treat fewer acres this year than it did last year, and for the timber harvest levels to remain flat in Fiscal Year 2025. This is completely unacceptable.

In Wyoming, sustainable timber harvests support our local communities, they reduce wildfire risk, and they improve forest health. But year after year, we find ourselves in the same situation. Inconsistent log supplies from the national forest undermine our local sawmills. Without a dependable and affordable supply of timber from our public lands, these family-owned businesses cannot survive, and we know it all too well in Wyoming.

Just last month, Neiman Enterprises, a family business based in Hulett, Wyoming, had to announce layoffs. They hated doing it. This was a direct result of the Forest Service's decision to reduce timber harvest levels in the Black Hills National Forest. The Forest Service has upended the lives of 50 hardworking employees and their families, jeopardized jobs at nearby wood product facilities, and it has put at risk the health of the Black Hills National Forest.

The decision to reduce the timber sale program in the Black Hills will reverse years of progress. Without active management, that forest is going to return to the same condition that resulted in the wildfires and the beetle kill. This is exactly what we are trying to avoid, yet the Forest Service seems indifferent to the consequences of their own inaction.

There is broad agreement on this Committee that the Forest Service is not meeting the challenges it confronts. The Forest Service no longer safeguards and promotes forest health. It's now just managing the deterioration of our national forests. The Forest Service must change course, must start managing our forests in a serious and credible way. Look, we know what works. We know what we need to do, and the forest-product sector is willing to help get the work done.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator. And we will start with our opening statement now from Chief Moore.

**STATEMENT OF RANDY MOORE, CHIEF, U.S. FOREST SERVICE,
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE; ACCOMPANIED BY
MARK LICHTENSTEIN, DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC PLANNING,
BUDGET, AND ACCOUNTABILITY, U.S. FOREST SERVICE, U.S.
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

Mr. MOORE. Chair Manchin, Ranking Member Barrasso, and members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today, and we are grateful for your continued support.

The President's budget names three primary goals for us: to modernize wildland fire management, to sustain investments critical to

our mission, and to ensure equitable access and benefits to America. Today, I will share our progress as we put money to work to confront serious challenges. I will share how our work will continue to be a sound investment.

We directly steward 193 million acres of National Forest System lands, and we reach across boundaries to assist states, tribes, and communities, as well as private landowners to keep millions of forested acres healthy and productive. Every American benefits from these forests directly or indirectly. Together, these lands provide basic needs for life, clean air and water, and while they contribute to the energy production and they support the local economies, national forests alone contribute more than 410,000 jobs and \$44.3 billion to the gross domestic product. To sustain productivity and health, forests must be able to withstand threats posed by wildfires, climate change, drought, insects, and disease. We invested resources to act and to ensure that we do just that.

Foremost, we prioritize work to reduce wildfire risk, safeguard communities, and create resilient forests. In 2022, we launched a 10-year Wildfire Crisis Strategy, and we have moved to implement it. Annual appropriations, coupled with the historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act, provided us an extraordinary opportunity to take bold and strategic actions. We did just that.

We progressed to deliver on a promise to increase the pace and scale of our treatments. We are not just treating any acre, we are treating the right acres in the right places, and at the right scale. We focused initial efforts on 21 priority landscapes within western fireheds that are at the highest risk. They account for roughly 80 percent of the wildfire risk.

These investments are paying dividends. Experts report that roughly \$700 billion worth of housing and infrastructure are at risk within these priority landscapes, and this includes \$6.5 billion of municipal watersheds, which supply drinking water to 12 million people. In the last two years, we reduced the average wildfire risk to these assets by eight percent for infrastructure, eight percent for housing, and then we also reduced the risk to watersheds by 12 percent.

So what does that mean? It means that more than \$175 million worth of homes were at risk. In Stanislaus National Forest, 17 communities are at lower risk, including the towns of Cold Springs and Strawberry. One million socially vulnerable people are at less risk. Nearly half of the nation's forestlands in priority landscapes are now considered unlikely to burn at high intensity.

We must remain on course and build on these gains. We must also invest in our firefighters. We recognize the urgency of investing in a permanent and comprehensive pay increase to provide a more livable wage, enhance recruitment, and stabilize retention. We must also improve housing conditions and provide better care for firefighters' physical and mental health. We look forward to seeing an end to reports of firefighters living in cars with few benefits and limited mental health care.

In addition to working to address the wildfire crisis and firefighters, we continue to take actions that support access and benefits from forests. Visitor use, hunting and fishing, energy and min-

erals development, forest products, and livestock grazing generate 69 percent of the contributions to the economy.

Thanks to the Great American Outdoors Act funds, we relieved some of the pressure from the \$8.6 billion maintenance backlog. The budget requests \$58 million to maintain critical recreation services with a focus on offering welcoming and equitable opportunities. We are also making a difference in our urban environments. The Forest Service and partners are planning and maintaining trees in cities and suburbs where about 84 percent of Americans live.

Trees combat extreme heat and climate change, and it also improves access to nature. The 2025 budget returns basic funding to most programs. This includes forest products, which are vital to sustaining rural communities. This includes sustainable timber supply. We know it's a critical component and is part of a complex market-driven system. While we don't control markets, we can support industry through forest products and wood innovations, which help mills adapt and modernize.

While the current industry adapts, the agency has taken strides to support the existing industry by investing nearly \$80 million over the last three years, by directly supporting sawmills and other forest products manufacturing facilities, expanding wood baskets to the mills through the build and timber transport program, and authorizing extensions to timber sale contracts to provide relief from the decline of demand for paper products.

So in closing, we are fully committed to meeting the challenges before us with resources that Congress has provided, and the people of America deserve nothing less than to see their money put to work for the benefit of all. Thank you, and I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Moore follows:]

**Statement of Randy Moore, Chief of the USDA Forest Service
Before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Concerning the President's Fiscal Year 2025 Proposed Budget
For the USDA Forest Service
May 16, 2024, 10:00 a.m.**

Chair Manchin, Ranking Member Barrasso, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me here today to testify on the President's fiscal year (FY) 2025 Budget request for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service.

The fiscal year 2025 President's Budget for the USDA Forest Service discretionary appropriations totals \$6.5 billion for base programs and \$2.4 billion for the wildfire suppression cap adjustment (through the Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund). The fiscal year 2025 Budget focuses on three primary areas: modernizing the wildland fire management workforce; sustaining the foundational investments critical to the mission of the Forest Service; and ensuring equitable access to and benefits from the National Forest System.

America's forests provide timber, clean air and water, forage, and energy production. They support local economies through employment, trade, recreation, tourism, green jobs, and livestock grazing. They host and protect sites and landscapes of high cultural, spiritual, or recreational value. These benefits are at risk from wildfires, pests, diseases, invasive species, and drought, all of which are exacerbated by climate change. It is vital to continue to act now to mitigate these threats and protect our resources. Alongside our partners, the Forest Service will continue to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires to communities in FY 2025 through investments in the wildland fire management workforce and throughout the high-priority landscapes identified within the agency's 10-year Wildfire Crisis Strategy. The investments highlighted below reflect services the Forest Service delivers through work on National Forests, partnerships with State, Private, and Tribal landowners, and our Research and Development mission area. These investments enable the Forest Service to restore long-term forest health and resiliency across landscapes the American people rely-on while ensuring equitable access to the resources on National Forest System lands.

Recent analysis shows that in FY 2022, Forest Service programs and work contributed approximately 410,400 jobs (average of annual full-time, part-time, temporary, and seasonal) and \$44.3 billion in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Recreational visitor use, hunting and fishing, energy and minerals development, forest products, and livestock grazing generated 69 percent of the economic activity. The Forest Service continues to be a good place to invest and will maximize every dollar invested into our agency, making every dollar work for the American people. The citizens we serve deserve nothing less than to see the value of their money at work for their benefit.

The President's FY 2025 Budget Request for Specific Priorities

The following investments align with and enhance the agency's efforts to modernize and invest in our wildland fire management workforce:

- The 2025 Budget proposes \$2.6 billion for base Wildland Fire Management activities, investing in firefighter compensation, benefits, mental health, and wellbeing, and supporting the objectives of the agency's 10-year Wildfire Crisis Strategy.
 - Provides **\$216 million to implement a permanent, comprehensive pay increase** for the wildland firefighter workforce, providing a more equitable wage, enhancing recruitment, and stabilizing retention.
 - **\$136 million for additional federal firefighting capacity** (570 more permanent firefighters and continued transition to a more full-time workforce) to enable the Forest Service to more effectively meet the demands of the increasingly year-round wildfire season, while improving the work-life balance of firefighters and support personnel.
 - **\$10 million for mental health and well-being assistance** to ensure our wildfire firefighter workforce are supported in managing the mental and physical aspects of their mission.
- In addition, the Budget proposes **\$25 million to address the urgent need for suitable employee housing** through necessary maintenance and repairs of Forest Service housing units.

The 2025 Budget proposes to fund the National Forest System at \$2 billion, prioritizing recreation service delivery, climate smart land management, forest products, law enforcement, and the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program, while maintaining foundational hazardous fuels treatments to reduce wildfire risk:

- **\$207 million for Hazardous Fuels Reduction:** to return to previously enacted program levels and mitigate wildfire risk on 4.0 million acres with a focus on high-priority and high-risk fire sheds, building on hazardous fuels funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act, and in aligning with the agency's 10-Year Wildfire Crisis Strategy.
- **\$58 million for Recreation, Heritage, and Wilderness:** to provide critical recreation operations, planning, services, and improvements, with particular emphasis on creating welcoming, sustainable, and equitable recreation opportunities for all Americans with a focus towards underserved and Tribal communities.
- **\$41 million for Forest Products:** to support the foundational funding needed to maintain the Forest Service's ability to sell timber, which can be a critical component to sustaining local rural communities.
- **\$33 million for Vegetation and Watershed Management:** to provide support for healthy and resilient watersheds and landscapes, sustain the production of clean and abundant air and water, assist with meeting the Administration's climate goals, and contribute to healthy and productive communities and Tribal Nations.
- **\$34 million for Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program:** to invest in communities and regions with a collaborative, common purpose in reducing wildfire risk and improving forest health and resiliency.
- **\$21 million for Law Enforcement Operations:** to provide critical law enforcement response for the prevention, detection, and criminal investigation of violations of Federal laws and regulations for the protection of visitors to National

Forest System lands, Forest Service employees, and natural and cultural resources.

- **\$1.5 billion for National Forest System Salaries and Expenses:** to maintain the workforce needed to support the agency programs critical for forest health and resiliency, which complement the 10-Year Wildfire Crisis Strategy.

Further investments ensure that the Forest Service relies on the latest science and technology to deliver results on the ground and for the people:

- **\$470 million for Information Technology Capabilities:** continue modernization of our Information Technology systems that allow the public to better access our services, sustain emergency communication systems, and provide our workforce the tools they need to carry out our conservation mission.
- **\$316 million for Forest and Rangeland Research:** continue investments in research priorities, with a focus on climate change-related research including reforestation, carbon accounting, and fire and fuels research.

These investments continue to build on the historic investments provided by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) (P.L. 117-58) and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) (P.L. 117-169). The Forest Service will continue to strengthen our long-standing work and relationships with States, Tribes, local communities, private landowners, and other stakeholders to adapt lessons learned into a coordinated and effective program of work to improve the resiliency of landscapes and watersheds, reduce wildfire risk, protect and maintain infrastructure, support outdoor recreation, establish tree canopy in nature-deprived communities, and invest in the reforestation of America's impacted landscapes.

The Forest Service cannot succeed in this work alone, especially when addressing the fireheds highest at risk, which are typically in multiple ownerships. Through meaningful communication, expanded partnerships, and broader community support, the Forest Service will increase the use of prescribed fire and other fuel treatments and the management of unplanned ignitions to reduce long-term wildfire risks. Fortunately, we have decades of experience working through partnerships and collaboration based on common values and shared goals across shared landscapes as set out over 20 years ago in the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy.

Ensuring Equitable Access to and Benefits from the National Forest System

The Forest Service remains unwavering in its commitment to the values of equity, inclusion, and equal opportunities for its employees and the public it serves. The Forest Service maintains the intent to focus on prioritizing activities that will provide benefits to disadvantaged or underserved communities. The Forest Service vows to proactively engage in actions that ensure a safe, resilient, and harassment-free work culture where employees are treated with respect and dignity.

The Forest Service will continue to invest in actions that facilitate access to the vital resources our forests and grasslands provide. This effort is twofold. First, we must ensure that those who rely on these services and benefits can access those benefits safely. Therefore, we are committed to improving the operation and maintenance of our extensive infrastructure portfolio

that includes buildings, dams, communication sites, recreation sites, roads, trails, and bridges. Second, to carry out this work effectively, the Forest Service is committed to continued intentional internal and external engagement with Tribal Nations and communities that live by, visit, and depend on national forests. The Forest Service is committed to identifying and removing barriers to access Forest Service programs and services for historically underserved communities. This will be done by integrating equity-centered criteria in the design, funding, and prioritization of all policies, programs, and activities to center equity considerations as part of the decision process. The Forest Service will also work to remove barriers and boost economic opportunities through improved access to contracts, grants and agreements, and permits.

Leveraging Additional Funding Authorities

It is expected that by FY 2025, much of the funding from the IRA will have been invested, but along with the tools and investments proposed in the FY2025 Presidents Budget, the Forest Service will continue to leverage funding within the BIL to combat climate change and confront the wildfire crisis, create new markets and technology for wood products, and restore forest health and resiliency through partnerships and collaboration across landscapes.

The BIL provided \$1.4 billion for hazardous fuels treatments, while the Inflation Reduction Act provided an additional \$1.8 billion for hazardous fuels work within the wildland urban interface. In February, we announced \$500 million for FY 2024 to expand work on the Forest Service's strategy to reduce the risk to communities, critical infrastructure and forests from the nation's growing wildfire crisis. From 2022-2024, we have invested a combined \$1.6 billion in the 21 high-priority landscapes identified under the agency's 10-Year Wildfire Crisis Strategy as we continue moving these landscapes towards a maintenance state. These investments will help reduce the risk of wildfire to communities, Tribal lands, ecosystems, and critical infrastructure, including utility corridors and public water sources. Our work under the 10-Year Wildfire Crisis Strategy provides many values the public depends on and cares about including beginning to reduce risk to approximately 550 communities, of which 475 are underserved; 2,500 miles of power lines; and 1,800 municipal watersheds.

Through Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) (P.L. 116-152) funding, the Forest Service continues to repair and upgrade vital infrastructure and facilities in the national forests and grasslands through the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund (GAOA-LRF). In both FY 2024 and 2025, increased emphasis was given to using GAOA-LRF funding to address deferred maintenance on Forest Service-owned housing units as one step towards helping our employees confront the housing availability and affordability crisis in this country. In addition to the \$40 million Congress approved in FY 2024, we are proposing another \$30 million in housing-related GAOA-LRF projects to address this critical need. It is estimated that in FY 2025, GAOA-LRF projects at FS will contribute 3,200 jobs and \$360 million in GDP.

In closing, the President's FY 2025 Budget request for the Forest Service proposes a landmark investment that reflects the Administration's ongoing commitment to building and sustaining a robust and resilient Federal wildland fire management workforce, maintains funding priorities for risk-based wildfire reduction, and improves overall access to and utilization of our National Forests System. The FY 2025 Budget request also highlights the importance of restoring and creating resilient landscapes, improving infrastructure, and

removing barriers to access. We look forward to working with this Subcommittee to fulfill the President's goals and our key responsibilities for the long-term benefit of the Nation's forests and grasslands, and for all Americans. I will be glad to answer your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. We will start our questions now. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Moore.

Chief, your budget indicates you have increased the size of your workforce by more than 3,000 employees since 2021—3,000. I understand about a month ago, you instituted a 30-day hiring pause for non-fire staff in order to conduct a strategic assessment of your staffing and get a handle on your budget. So we would like to know what you came up with.

Mr. MOORE. Yes, Mr. Chairman, actually, we have increased our workforce by 4,000 people. And that was our plan from the beginning. We lost about 40 percent of our non-fire workforce over the last 20 years.

The CHAIRMAN. How many were hired in areas that were vacant for years, and you just filled those positions, or an area that you beefed up where it was needed?

Mr. MOORE. Well, so we did a number of things. We had to bring in a new skill set to complement the skill sets that we currently have, and we looked at the trends that are developing in this country, and it's things around working with partners, working with communities. And so we also needed to add to our skill set people that know how to work with communities, know how to bring people to the table to facilitate and convene meetings because what we ultimately want to do is share the decision space with local communities. And so we had to invest in skill sets.

The CHAIRMAN. Got it. How much of this was going to your bonuses for your present employees? I am saying the people you have on staff, did much of that percentage of the money you received go for that or for actually hiring new people?

Mr. MOORE. No. We routinely provide bonuses based on performance at the end of the year. So it was nothing extra with this money.

The CHAIRMAN. If you could give us a breakdown on what kind of employees were hired and how they are contributing to the agency's mission, that would be very helpful for this Committee.

Mr. MOORE. I would be glad to do that.

The CHAIRMAN. Second thing is, since 2020, the amount of National Forest System lands in need of manual reforestation has increased by more than 260 percent, you know, due to catastrophic wildfires. Yet the Forest Service has said that only six percent of post-wildfire planning needs are met annually. It is growing at that rate and you are not even touching it.

Mr. MOORE. Well, first, Mr. Chairman, I want to say thanks to Congress for the REPLANT Act.

The CHAIRMAN. Sure.

Mr. MOORE. Because it has given us the ability to lift the cap that we had on reforestation.

The CHAIRMAN. Is my figure wrong here? Have you done more than six percent?

Mr. MOORE. No, no. I wouldn't argue with your figures.

The CHAIRMAN. This is a pretty poor performance, sir, early on, as far as getting up to speed. Does the—

Mr. MOORE. May I respond, Mr. Chairman?

The CHAIRMAN. Let me just say this. Does the need to clear hazardous trees from burned acres increase the cost for reforestation

projects? So you have a burnt-out area. The way I understand it is, it kind of sits there until it rots away and nothing gets reforested in those areas. Can you do both simultaneously?

Mr. MOORE. No. So for context, you know, prior to the REPLANT Act, we had a cap of about \$30 million for reforestation. The problem that we have been having over the last, let us say 15 to 20 years, is that every year the number of acres burned has been increasing. And so, on average, you add in about 500,000 acres per year. And we have only been able to treat about anywhere between 100,000 to 200,000 acres based on the funding level we had.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me ask you, the one thing that bothered me more than anything is basically not salvaging the burned timber that we have that still has value to it. Why are we not able to do that?

Mr. MOORE. Well, it is an excellent question. And it is a really complex answer, at least multiple reasons that contribute to this. One is that, you know, when we try and have large timber sale projects to recoup the salvage, many times we get litigated on that. And even where we are litigated many times—

The CHAIRMAN. Who litigates it? Why would they litigate? Because you can reforest—you can basically cut and salvage and reforest at the same time.

Mr. MOORE. Mr. Chairman, with our democratic process and the fact that we are a public agency, 300 million people can—

The CHAIRMAN. Someone was upset, right?

Mr. MOORE. Yes. And so, our challenge is, as we go through the litigation to defend why we are wanting to do what we want to do, winning is not the answer. Delaying these salvage sales long enough so that they begin to lose value so that they are not worth purchasing after a period of time. And depending on where you are, blue stain sets in, which reduces the value of the wood.

The challenge we have is how to remove a lot of that timber in a really quick way. And so, our approach has been to take small pieces of that and to do what we can to remove the timber while it has value.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me ask one more question. Around 25 mills have shut down this year near our federal forests, including several in my own home State of West Virginia. I know the reasons for the shutdowns vary, but I am concerned about the impact they are going to have on rural communities as well as the impact on carrying out Forest Service management goals.

What authorities do you have to ensure a consistent supply of federal timber to give these sawmills some ability to weather the current market volatility?

Mr. MOORE. So we have been working with a lot of the sawmills, in fact, we have been looking at wood innovations, and over the last three years, we have invested \$79 million specifically to sawmills and to the industry to help them transition while this has been going on in our country. And so, we—

The CHAIRMAN. The only way they are going to transition is basically to have access to the product.

Mr. MOORE. Well, they are market-driven conditions that they are responding to, which also has an impact on whether they are interested in a lot of the timber sales from national forests. When

you look at the economy in and of itself, it is moving away from paper products. So that has a negative impact on some of the mills that produce that type of material.

When you look at small-diameter or low-value type material, most of our facilities use the large commercial saw logs. And so, a part of what we want to do is to help and work with industry to transition to have a more diversified portfolio, if you will, and look at some of the products—biofuel, biochar, nanocellulose material, cross-laminated timber. These are the types of technologies that are emerging, but our infrastructure in general is not set up to use that type material in abundance.

And so, we are trying to work with industry to transition to that. And I think that you are going to see some really interesting things come from industry sometime later this summer.

The CHAIRMAN. We hope.

Mr. MOORE. I do think that they are making the adjustment.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Barrasso.

Senator BARRASSO. Well, thanks, Mr. Chairman. Chief Moore, 63 million acres of our national forest are at high or very high risk of wildfire right now. In the past year, the agency treated fewer than four million of those 63 million acres. Your agency plans this coming year to treat even less than that. It has 63 million, last time 4 million, now less than that this year with a budget, we have got more and more money going, getting less and less. At this declining rate, it is going to take your agency about two decades just to treat all the high-risk areas within our national forests today, but trees are going to continue to grow.

Is this really a credible strategy—with all the money that has been moved to the Forest Service—a credible strategy to address this wildfire crisis that Congress is clearly behind the efforts financially to help commit to get done?

Mr. MOORE. Yes, you know, Senator Barrasso, I think that we are at a crossroads in this country. And I think a part of it is that for the last 100 years, we measured our performance on acres treated. And I think what the Wildfire Crisis Strategy has given us an opportunity to do is take a look and see, is that the right metric for performance? And when you look at how this country has changed over the last 100 years since the Forest Service's existence, the number one land use in this country is wildland-urban interface development.

And so that has had an impact on the national forests because you have a lot of communities that are sitting adjacent to and right next to national forests. And so we have to ask ourselves, and I would love to dig deeper into this, with you and this Committee, what is the appropriate performance metric? Is it acres treated or is it the right acres treated? And if our job is to protect communities from wildfires, we have to look at outcome-based reporting rather than output-based reporting, or at least a combination of the two. And so the outcome would be, did we protect the community from the risk of wildfire?

Senator BARRASSO. Well, we haven't been doing a very good job of protecting against wildfire. I mean, to me, this seems like just a complete lack of urgency by your department in dealing with all of this. If you don't like the results, then you change the metrics.

That's ridiculous. We don't like the results. We have more and more wildfires.

We had a hearing in Washington State about what was happening a number of years ago. It doesn't seem to be improving. It doesn't seem to get better at all in spite of massive additional expenditure of taxpayer money. To say we are going to change the metrics is absolutely ridiculous.

Neiman Enterprises announced layoffs and a shift reduction at its Spearfish Forest Products facility. I understand that the owner, Jim Neiman, did everything possible to avoid the layoffs. These layoffs are a direct result of reductions to the timber sale program for the Black Hills National Forest. What is the agency doing to help retain the remaining forest products infrastructure in the Black Hills?

Mr. MOORE. Yes, you know, as I indicated earlier, we have invested about \$79 million specifically to sawmills. And we have worked directly with Mr. Neiman and his facility. As a matter of fact, when we look at the Timber Transport Authority, it originated in order to help him. So we move timber from Northern California over to Wyoming to his facility. There are market-driven conditions that are not coming into play during these discussions.

And it's multiple reasons why the industry is going through a transition now. And it's not just Forest Service supply, it's market-driven conditions, it's the cost of labor that's continuing to increase, it's the of labor shortages, it's a number of things that's contributing to these facilities——

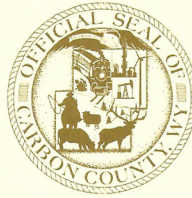
Senator BARRASSO. We are not having a labor shortage, we are having a job shortage as a result of these decisions that have been made. So I find the answer unacceptable. Another question, commissioners from Carbon County and Johnson County, Wyoming wrote to you specifically. I have copies of the letters opposing the Forest Service's plan for old growth areas on our national forests.

Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to put these in the record.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection.
[The letters referred to follow:]

BOARD OF CARBON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Sue Jones, Chairman
 R. Travis Moore, Vice Chairman
 Willing "John" Johnson
 Garrett Irene
 John Espy



P.O. Box 6, 215 Buffalo Street
 Rawlins, WY 82301
 (307) 328-2668 or 800-250-9812
 www.carbonwy.com
 E-mail: commissioners@carbonwy.com

January 18, 2024

Director, Ecosystem Management Coordination
 United States Department of Agriculture
 201 14th Street SW, Mailstop 1108
 Washington, DC 20250-1124

RE: Seeking Cooperating Agency Status for Carbon County regarding the Environmental Impact Statement Process for the Land Management Plan Direction for Old-Growth Forest Conditions Across the National Forest System

Dear Director:

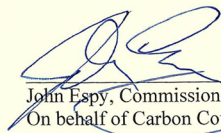
The Carbon County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) is aware that the United States Department of Agriculture (Department), Forest Service is preparing a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and accepting scoping comments for the Land Management Plan Direction for Old-Growth Forest Conditions Across the National Forest System. The Department has identified the Forest Service as the Lead Agency for this amendment, and invited State agencies and Federally recognized Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations to indicate an interest if they would like to participate as Cooperating Agencies. However, the Department has not extended the invitation to counties or conservation districts.

Carbon County is concerned that it has not been invited to participate as a Cooperating Agency during the EIS process. As identified by 40 CFR §1501.8, "(a) the purpose of this section is to emphasize agency cooperation early in the NEPA process. Upon request of the lead agency, any Federal agency with jurisdiction by law shall be a cooperating agency. In addition, upon request of the lead agency, any other Federal agency with special expertise with respect to any environmental issue may be a cooperating agency. *A State, Tribal, or local agency of similar qualifications may become a cooperating agency by agreement with the lead agency. . .*". A large portion of the Medicine Bow National Forest is located within Carbon County, and the resulting EIS may have a significant impact on Carbon County. Carbon County and our local conservation districts have extensive knowledge of the portions of the National Forest located in Carbon County and are likely to be helpful partners in information sharing and collaboration as the EIS is developed. Carbon County is responsible for the health, safety and welfare of its residents, and is regularly tasked with determining whether zoning and development requests have a deleterious effect upon the local environment. It has been incumbent upon Carbon County to balance the need for industrial growth and progress against the importance of conservation. Carbon County regularly participates as a cooperating agency with the Bureau of Land Management on the NEPA process and is certainly qualified to participate as a cooperating agency during this process.

Management on the NEPA process and is certainly qualified to participate as a cooperating agency during this process.

This letter is notice that Carbon County is requesting cooperating agency status in the Environmental Impact Statement Process for the Land Management Plan Direction for Old-Growth Forest Conditions Across the National Forest System. In addition, I would request that all notices regarding this EIS document development be sent to the attention of Kristy Rowan, Carbon County Planning and Development Coordinator, as primary contact at Carbon Building, 215 W. Buffalo, Suite 317, Rawlins, WY 82301. Ms. Rowan's email is kristyrowan@carbonwy.com and she can be reached by phone at (307) 328-2651. I would also request that all correspondence related to this document development be sent to the Carbon County Board of County Commissioners at P.O. Box 6, Rawlins, WY 82301, and email commissioners@carbonwy.com, and that we be listed as alternate point of contact. On behalf of Carbon County, I would like to thank you for your consideration of this request to be recognized as a participating cooperating agency. Please feel free to contact me at your convenience with any questions or concerns. I will look forward to hearing from you as this matter progresses.

Very truly yours,



John Espy, Commissioner
On behalf of Carbon County Commissioners

cc: Carbon County Board of County Commissioners
Gwynn Bartlett, Carbon County Clerk
Kristy Rowan, Planning & Development Coordinator
Ashley Mayfield Davis, Civil Deputy County Attorney

JOHNSON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



William J. Novotny, III

Robert Perry

Jeff Shelley

February 2, 2024

Linda Walker, Director
Ecosystem Management Coordination
United States Forest Service
201 14th Street SW
Mailstop 1108
Washington, DC 20250-1124

Re: Comments on December 20, 2023, Federal Register Notice FR 88, No. 243 88042 – 88048

Dear Director Walker,

Johnson County, Wyoming wishes to submit the following scoping comments regarding the United States Forest Service's (USFS) Federal Register Notice FR 88, No. 243 88042-88048 (Old Growth Plan Amendment). Johnson County is home to the Bighorn National Forest and utilized our cooperating agency status to participate in the forest planning process.

Based on the proposed scoping:

1. Your Old Growth Plan Amendment Notice failed to invite Johnson County to participate as a cooperating agency.
2. Your proposed timeline is not achievable and will prohibit proper engagement of cooperating agencies, forest users, and the general public.
3. The Old Growth Plan Amendment fails to consider Johnson County's Natural Resource Plan as we as the overall forest plan for the Bighorn National Forest.
4. This rule should be withdrawn and individual concerns regarding Old Growth Planning should be addressed through the local planning process.

Decisions pertaining to the Bighorn National Forest should be made on the local and reflect the unique forest needs, not guided by unrealistic edicts from Washington. If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (307) 684-7555 or bnovotny@johnsoncowy.gov.

Sincerely,

William J. Novotny, III
Chairman, Johnson County Board of Commissioners

CC: The Honorable Governor Mark Gordon
The Honorable United States Senator John Barrasso
The Honorable United States Senator Cynthia Lummis
The Honorable United States Congressman Harriet Hageman

76 North Main Street • Buffalo, WY 82834
Phone: (307) 684-7555 • Fax: (307) 684-2195

Senator BARRASSO. Both counties asked to be made a cooperating agency. These requests were made in January and February. When can they expect to receive a response?

Mr. MOORE. Well, I am not aware of specifically what you are talking about, but I will look into that Senator and get back with you on that.

Senator BARRASSO. So will you agree to make these counties a cooperating agency?

Mr. MOORE. I can't say that without looking at what they are requesting, because, you know, when you look at—what do they mean when they say a cooperating agency? And so, we would want to dig into that to see specifically what they mean by that. There's a little C and a big C.

Senator BARRASSO. Because the concern clearly is that the Forest Service is drafting the old growth plan without state input, without local input, and that is why I have a bill that would stop the disastrous proposal.

My final question, Mr. Chairman, is, Chief Moore, you talk a lot about the abundance of low- and no-value material in our national forests. The agency's own data also shows an abundance of large-diameter, high-value material in our national forests.

Since 2021, Congress has given the Forest Service a massive infusion of taxpayer dollars. How is it that timber harvest in our national forests today are below what they were six years ago in 2018?

Mr. MOORE. You know, actually, Senator, since 2002, we have seen a gradual increase in the amount of timber that is removed as well as the number of acres that are treated. So I would say—and I have a chart here that will show you the increase from 2002 all the way into 2023. And so we are seeing a slight increase over that period of time, not a decrease.

Senator BARRASSO. I am talking about the last six years, well, 2018 down to where they are now.

Mr. MOORE. I could go all the way back to the 1980s, where—

Senator BARRASSO. Go back to when America wasn't discovered. We weren't harvesting anything. And now we got all the way up, but now we are dropping down in spite of the massive amount of resources—Mr. Chairman, my time is up.

The CHAIRMAN. Are you done?

Senator BARRASSO. I am done.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Cantwell.

Senator CANTWELL. Well, Chief Moore, I think the frustration you are hearing is that if you look at this panel here, we are on the front lines, and we all see innovative opportunities to have a better response. And that's what we want to see. We know that the ponderosa pine is going to burn down. And so, we think, well, that's what the predictions are because of the dry conditions. Why not harvest that, put it into cross-laminated timber, make great economies and local communities and store carbon instead.

So I think that's something probably everybody on this panel would agree with. But as Senator Barrasso said, we are not moving fast enough to do that. And so, I think we have very historic policies that need to shift. One of those I believe that needs to shift faster is the Small Business Administration Timber Set-Aside Pro-

gram for stewardship contracts, because these smaller mills are taking these innovation risks. They are saying, we will do cross-laminated timber, we will do innovative things, but you are not giving them the supply.

So what can we do to make sure that the Small Business Timber Set-Aside Program actually works and you actually give these mills a supply and that they're not—because right now they're not getting that supply, so they're barely hanging on.

Mr. MOORE. Yes. Senator, first of all, I would support the SBA Set-Aside. I would like to point out to you that we have what I would consider a significant success on the Manti-La Sal in Utah, where you had a small logger, and we worked with him to do his own marketing for material. And while that forest had not cut a lot of timber traditionally, historically they have gone from almost no program to—this logger now went from one truck to nine trucks, they cannot keep up with—

Senator CANTWELL. Great. I only have a few minutes, so I have to get to some other things. Would you provide me with an overlay map of where we think our highest risk pine forests are going to burn down, and show me where you are willing to put set-aside small business agreements in the Pacific Northwest? I appreciate what you did in Utah, but I need to know what you will do for the Pacific Northwest. Could you provide that to us?

Mr. MOORE. Sure. Yes.

Senator CANTWELL. Okay. So Senator Cruz and I introduced a Fire Ready Nation bill to try to get more information out of NOAA because their weather service forecast information is critical. Do you think that this legislation could help you in becoming aware of what the risks are for the Forest Service with better science coordination with NOAA?

Mr. MOORE. Yes, I do. And in fact, we have a longstanding agreement with NOAA and we do include them. I would also just like to add, in looking at the fires that happened down in New Mexico, we also, in addition to the larger weather station information, we also want to be able to have local and portable weather stations because of the local weather bursts that sometimes the larger weather stations don't pick up.

And so, in that, we also need to look at some additional types of equipment that would give our on-the-ground people better information and better real-time information before they begin to do a lot of prescribed burning.

Senator CANTWELL. Well, this is what we need. We absolutely need this. We lost firefighters because in the central part of our state, they had one weather forecast, and in Seattle, just over the ridge, over the mountains, they were saying it's something else—high volatility, and we lost firefighters because we didn't have that information. We want the best information.

I need to ask you about fixed anchors in wilderness areas. These are important aspects of climbing that were there prior to designations of wilderness. Do you think that fixed anchors should be prohibited in wilderness areas?

Mr. MOORE. So Senator, there are people on both sides of that issue, and we are in the process now—

Senator CANTWELL. I am asking you. I am asking you whether you think that——

Mr. MOORE. Well, you know, I can't give you an opinion until we reach out to our public, right? We are in the process now of having draft directives being put out. We did receive comments back in January. In fact, we received about 9,000 comments. And so we are in the process of analyzing that before we move out with a final.

Senator CANTWELL. What do you want people to do in wilderness areas? Because I would like them to go hiking and climbing, but if people have installed anchors and you are spending your time, instead of helping us get a CLT bill, focusing on removing fixed anchors, that's the wrong priority. So maybe we will have to do legislation, but I believe the answer is that they belong, particularly in areas where they've already been before the wilderness designation, fixed anchors belong.

Please support the climbing industry that is benefiting from wilderness. That's why we have it, so people can go and enjoy it. Thank you very much, Chief Moore.

Senator BARRASSO [presiding]. Senator Lee.

Senator LEE. Chief Moore, I would like to begin by asking you to clarify something, a term that I am not familiar with. What do you mean by "big C" versus "little c" cooperating agency?

Mr. MOORE. Well, so you know, and it goes back to my experience from many years ago, working with the county supervisors, county commissioners, wanting to have a say in what finally happens, you know, in our documents. And there is a way to do that. And I think the way to do that is to have a collaborative process with our public, and particularly our elected officials. And so, we think that it is imperative that they be included in what's going on in their part.

Senator LEE. It doesn't answer my question in any way. Look, I have got limited time. Maybe you can respond in writing. I really do need to know what the difference is between a "big C" and a "lower c" cooperating agency. It's not defined in law. I have never heard of it before. Not in any of your guidance documents, rules, anything like that. But look, I have got to move on. Just respond to that one in writing, if you can.

Look, the draft plan for the Manti-La Sal National Forest proposes 122,780 acres of "recommended wilderness." This is really concerning to me. Congress passed the Utah Wilderness Act in 1984. It is a product of a long, protracted, hard-fought compromise made by the State of Utah, and it is something that designated wilderness in exchange for assurance—assurance that no future Utah wilderness designations would be made.

Now, the Forest Service appears to be ignoring this history and both the state and the individual county resource management plans applicable to that area. The only way we get healthy forests is by having flexibility to perform active management of the forest. It turns out, as we have learned over the last few decades, if you let the thing just go, that is terrible for forest health.

What we are dealing with throughout Utah is this patchwork—this patchwork of designated wilderness, recommended wilderness, and inventoried roadless areas that make active management a nightmare, and frankly practically unachievable. These updated

forest plans will only make the situation worse as you have them drafted.

Can you explain how these new wilderness recommendations were developed and why the state and local county's input was apparently disregarded completely in the preferred alternative?

Mr. MOORE. Yes, so the Forest Supervisor is planning to meet with the County Supervisors to cooperate on that forest plan issue.

Senator LEE. And how did that go?

Mr. MOORE. It has not taken place yet. They are scheduled to have a meeting to discuss this very issue that you are bringing up. We will be happy to let you know how that goes once the meeting takes place.

Senator LEE. Yes. After the draft plan was released, but before that, apparently it didn't happen that way. I don't know why I should have any assurance that it will go any better now.

Now, look, every single state official and county commissioner that I talk to seems to be increasingly frustrated with the way that the Forest Service manages Forest Service land. All these local officials ask for is a real seat at a real table in these important decisions that have to be made. Decisions that affect us, our local communities very directly, much more directly than they do anybody else. We all want healthy forests, and we all want to avoid catastrophic wildfires, but the consequences of bad policy hit some of us a lot more than they hit others.

For example, in both the Ashley and the Manti-La Sal proposals, the Forest Service appears willing to enter into co-management arrangements with tribes, but it refuses to incorporate state and county comments into the planning process. If the Forest Service can enter co-management arrangements with the tribes, why exactly can't it enter into similar arrangements with county governments and the state government?

Mr. MOORE. Senator, we do honor the county governments, and we do work with them the same as we work with tribes. In fact, we probably work more with the county governments than we do with tribes.

Senator LEE. With co-management, the same way you have done with the tribes?

Mr. MOORE. No, it's—

Senator LEE. It has not been my experience.

Mr. MOORE. Yes. Well, you know, tribes are sovereign nations, so we deal with them differently than—

Senator LEE. States also are sovereign. They are co-sovereigns. States are co-sovereigns and tribes also have their own elements of co-sovereignty.

Mr. MOORE. Senator, we deal with the counties and we work with the counties. They have a seat at the table. And I am not sure—I am not sure we are not doing just exactly what you are saying because—

Senator LEE. Well, I am certain that you're not. I am certain that you're not. Look, the 2001 roadless rule establishes prohibition on road construction and timber harvesting on 58.5 million acres of inventoried roadless areas on National Forest System lands. Has the 2001 roadless rule helped or hindered with wildfire mitigation efforts?

Mr. MOORE. I suppose that is going to depend on your perspective, Senator.

Senator LEE. Helped or hindered? Which one?

Mr. MOORE. Well, I don't have a say in whether it helps or hinders, you know, I have to—

Senator LEE. Well, regardless of what you do, does it? Just describe it, in your assessment, has it helped or hindered wildfire mitigation efforts?

Mr. MOORE. Well, I don't think it was designed to help wildfire mitigation, sir.

Senator LEE. Understood. Thank you.

Senator BARRASSO. Senator Heinrich.

Senator HEINRICH. Chief, welcome. A number of us on this Committee worked really hard on the Great American Outdoors Act that gave five years of extra funding to tackle the maintenance backlog at a number of public land agencies, including yours. It is fixing up places like Sandia Crest Recreation Area. It is fixing up campsites in the Jemez National Recreation area. We are now in year four of the five.

Can you walk through for me what percentage of Forest Service funds from Fiscal Year 2021 and 2022, the first two, are actually under contract now?

Mr. MOORE. Senator, can I get you that information?

Senator HEINRICH. Can you get that for the record?

Mr. MOORE. Sure.

Senator HEINRICH. Because I want to make sure, you know, we are seeing progress, but we are well into that now, and we want to make sure those funds make it to the ground because they really open up opportunities for local communities in terms of the economic opportunities that come with public land recreation.

The Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission and the GAO found that there is not enough affordable, available, and adequate housing to recruit and retain wildland firefighters, something that you referenced in your testimony. You know, these are folks that families count on to protect them from these catastrophic wildfires. Is the funding that you requested in this budget enough to clear the backlog on firefighter housing maintenance?

Mr. MOORE. No, sir. Not by a longshot.

Senator HEINRICH. How much of a dent will it make?

Mr. MOORE. So the backlog is about 350 million acres. And so, anything less than that is not going to really get at the backlog.

Senator HEINRICH. No, I am saying in terms of housing, the additional funds that you have requested, what scale of progress are you going to make in terms of making sure that our firefighters have access to adequate and well-constructed housing?

Mr. MOORE. So in the funds that we are requesting now, I think we have about \$25 million that we are planning to put toward improving the housing situation. In fact, we are looking at completely redoing one barracks and then making a lot of necessary changes to many of the other barracks and houses.

Senator HEINRICH. Can you get us a full list of those? Because it's a cart before the horse thing. If we don't have adequate housing, then we are not going to have the firefighting force to be able

to actually deal with the challenges that some of my colleagues have described.

Mr. MOORE. I would agree wholeheartedly.

Senator HEINRICH. When we last talked, the Forest Service was finalizing a contract to repair the Santa Fe National Forest fence that keeps cattle from trespassing onto the neighboring property, which is the Valles Caldera National Preserve. What is the status of that contract at this point?

Mr. MOORE. So we have agreed to put a million dollars toward the construction of the fence, and we have also agreed to go halves on maintenance of the fence once it is done.

Senator HEINRICH. And is that contract actually—not the maintenance contract, but the repair contract—has that been executed?

Mr. MOORE. Well, we have a meeting set up with the Park Service. We have an agreement in place, but we have not signed off on that agreement. But the agreement would be halves on both the actual construction of the fence and the maintenance of the fence.

Senator HEINRICH. This has been a long time coming, so I would just urge you and Director Sams to figure this thing out because it is a continual source of friction in the area.

Mr. MOORE. Yes.

Senator HEINRICH. Last week, the Lincoln National Forest shut down Sitting Bull Falls Recreation Area. It is a popular spot about an hour from Carlsbad that families enjoy over the summer in particular. Why is Sitting Bull Falls closed, and what's the Forest Service's plan to get it reopened?

Mr. MOORE. Yes, so my information says that that is not closed, even though there are some staffing challenges, but the facility is open and there are also maintenance needs for that facility. But Senator—

Senator HEINRICH. It is my understanding, at least from what I have heard from the public, that it is closed. So we need to get our staffs together on that and figure out what the plan is to make sure that, especially as we get into the summer season, when demand is particularly high, that we maximize that facility.

Mr. MOORE. And in fact, my information tells me that they are ready for Memorial Day weekend. And so I will double check that.

Senator HEINRICH. That would be a pleasant surprise. So let's work on that. Thank you, Chief.

Mr. MOORE. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN [presiding]. We have Senator Murkowski.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Chief, good to see you again. You were in front of the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee just about a month ago. You made a comment then that resonated with me. You said, "I can tell you with certainty that if we don't have a vibrant timber industry, we are not going to be able to manage our forests and make them healthy and resilient." Good statement. But it just seems contradictory to the way that the Tongass and Chugach National Forests are managed.

The Forest Service has completely shifted away from offering viable inventories of timber, and in the case of the Tongass, they really have just pulled the rug out from under the industry. You and I have talked about this a lot, but they abandoned the transition

policy that Secretary Vilsack forced on them during the Obama administration.

So we have a timber industry that is practically non-existent right now. And it kind of speaks to your statement about it being impossible to have a healthy and resilient forest without a vibrant timber industry. Well, we don't have a vibrant timber industry.

So can you share with me, other than research into end-use forest products, what is the Forest Service doing to help support the few remaining small mill operators that are located in the Tongass?

Mr. MOORE. Senator Murkowski, you know, better than anyone, just the history of timber there.

Senator MURKOWSKI. I know it all too well. I have lived it.

Mr. MOORE. And I still stand by my statement, that without a vibrant timber industry, we will not be able to manage our nation's forests.

Senator MURKOWSKI. So what do I tell our small mill operators there in Southeast? Is there a future for them, or do they need to just pack up and let their employees go elsewhere?

Mr. MOORE. Well, I certainly think there is a future there. I think what we need to do is work on how much of that is available to be harvested. And I am still committed—

Senator MURKOWSKI. Well, it is the largest National Forest in the country. There is plenty of available timber. It is the supply, as you well know, and the sales that are put up that don't result in anything for even the smallest of the small timber sawmills.

Mr. MOORE. And, you know, Senator, we are guided by a lot of policies and regulations. And so—

Senator MURKOWSKI. And the policies and regulations are such that the Tongass has been shut down effectively for timber harvesting. I mean, that's pretty much it.

Let me shift to the Southeast Alaska Sustainable Strategy, because that was Vilsack's promise. We are going to cut off timber, we are going to not be harvesting, or certainly not putting up available sales for timber there. But we are going to give you resources from the Federal Government. \$25 million was the first tranche.

And I had asked you last month about the funding that Secretary Vilsack had promised. He said, again, the \$25 million is the first tranche. I asked for an update on additional funding. You shared with me the same thing that Secretary Vilsack did, that, well, Southeast has gotten funding through IIJA and through IRA. That is true.

But as I reminded everybody, this promise on the Southeast Sustainable Strategy was well before we had even thought about IIJA or IRA. And so, in fairness, that does not count. That is not keeping the promise of Secretary Vilsack.

So you indicated that you were going to double check on the status of where we are, what Southeast might be able to expect, because right now I have got these small local mills that are thinking, well, okay, maybe that is part of our survivability strategy, is that we are going to be getting some kind of support from these additional sources of funding from this Southeast Sustainable Strategy.

Mr. MOORE. Yes. Senator, you are right. We had the \$25 million originally, and since then we have provided an additional \$50 million. But I will look to see how much of that is ILLA and how much of that is other funding, but I know that it was an additional \$50 million.

Senator MURKOWSKI. I bet I can beat you to the breakdown on that, unfortunately. One quick question here before my time is out. You know that just last week we introduced the Chugach Alaska Land Exchange Oil Spill Recovery Act. This grants Chugach ownership of approximately 65,000 acres of culturally significant, economically viable, full-estate and surface lands. This completes the promise under the Dingell Act.

This is the result of several years of groundwork by the entire Alaska delegation and working with the Department of the Interior and Forest Service. I know you have worked on that, but I am hoping that I can get your commitment that Forest Service is going to work proactively with our office so that we can advance this legislation and address this split state ownership challenge.

Mr. MOORE. Yes. We are committed to continuing to work with you on that.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Okay. We want to get it done sooner than later.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator BARRASSO [presiding]. Senator Hickenlooper.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, both of you for being here today. Mr. Moore, I always appreciate your affection for our forests and your commitment to it, which I share. I feel every time I am in the forest, I feel like I am getting better. Somehow my life resolves itself in positive ways.

I want to reiterate what Senator Cantwell talked about—the issues around fixed anchors in various parts of the National Forests. And we have got a proposal in with the Outdoor Recreation Act that allows those fixed anchors that are in place to remain in place. The House bill is coming across. We are trying to reconcile that. I think we are going to get it reconciled. So just to alert you that that is coming.

There are two sides to this, but I look at the costs and the impositions to try and go out and remove fixed anchors or make it a decision process you have got to go through in every national park. It really doesn't seem to make very much sense. And I think there is certainly a strong sentiment that way throughout the Senate.

Let me ask you a question about housing. We talked a little bit about housing for firefighters, but many of the smaller towns across the West, and to a certain extent in the East as well, are having housing issues.

And I think local communities have asked us whether we can, you know, talk to the Forest Service about doing joint venture partnerships for housing that might be for employees of the Forest Service, but also for local teachers or nurses, people that are not sufficiently compensated to be able to afford housing where they live. Is that something that is—is there an opportunity there?

Mr. MOORE. Absolutely. In fact, I think this is one of the crises facing America, and it certainly has an impact on the Forest Service. Your own state has been one of our pilot areas there on the

White River National Forest, where we are looking at working with the community to build homes in exchange for homes for our employees. That really has set a tone that is starting to be spread across the nation to be creative in how we really address this issue.

But it is all of our issues. It is all of our communities' issues. And so, I am glad to see where the communities are coming together to work with us and vice versa, trying to fix this issue. Because at the end of the day, if we do not have employees in many of these locations, we cannot do the job that you are asking us to do.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. And in the end, we are all in it together. And I think that approach—White River is an excellent example. I know there are a couple examples. You guys are working on it. I did not want to brag about Colorado again being the innovator, but such as it is.

And Mr. Lichtenstein, you have not had a chance to really hold forth. I have got a more philosophical question, not in an adversarial tone, but really, you know, I was Governor for eight years, and we had some of the worst—it was the beginning of this phase of wildfires that were immense, I mean, enormous. And they continue. I mean, people could argue back and forth, and we don't need to debate here the causes of the changing climate, but clearly wildfires are increasing. The conditions, the humidity in the air, everything is changing to make them more frequent and worse.

I was always puzzled, and I spent a lot of time on the firefighting out in the control centers. So often we would spend enormous amounts of money, and then the wind would change and our fire line would be overrun. The fire would go around. The fires are—they are so malevolent. It's almost like they have an evil spirit, that despite our best intentions, they come back in directions we can't anticipate.

How do we study that? How do we begin looking at—you know, whether you are flying over and dropping retardant mixed with water on the fire or digging trenches. I am sure you guys must be doing studies, but at least at that point, we didn't have—there was nothing I could look at that gave me comfort that the increasing—every state is now—I realize you guys are spending more money out of your budget as well, but states are doing the same thing. And I think there might be need for better study. And you probably are way ahead of me on this. Mr. Lichtenstein—I want the strategic planner here.

Mr. LICHTENSTEIN. Well, I appreciate—

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Not that you aren't both strategically planning. I did not mean that.

Mr. LICHTENSTEIN. I appreciate the question. And fire is a complex environment. Luckily, before I was at Budget, I oversaw a lot of the fire program and understand that the changing conditions we face with fire just create a situation that becomes more volatile and unpredictable.

But we have done considerable amounts of research, particularly through the Rocky Mountain Research Station, which is kind of the hub of our fire research that has really developed different thoughts around potential control points and different strategies to be able to manage these fires a little bit differently, where it's not so much about overwhelming force the entire time, but thinking

about where do I actually use the resources I have available and the actual ecological conditions and quiescent periods in weather to actually be able to take advantage of those to address the fires more effectively.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Maybe I will get our staff to reach out. I don't know, Mr. Moore, if you want to add anything to that. You don't need to add anything. I just wanted make sure if you wanted to add something to that.

Mr. MOORE. Well, the only thing I would add is, what you will see different now over the last couple of years is that part of the incident command team structure, we are allowing local people to come into the tent to share information about local conditions. There has been a lot of concern that sometimes the incident—the IC team does not have local knowledge. And so, we have responded to that by including some locals in there to share that local knowledge.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. That is good additional information. Thank you both for being here. I have got other questions on the Colorado River and some of the hydrology issues. We will put those into writing. I yield back to the Chair.

Senator BARRASSO. Senator Daines.

Senator DAINES. Chief Moore, this is a timely discussion, as fires continue to multiply across our country. Many important forest management projects that would decrease the risk of catastrophic wildfires have been halted by litigation.

In fact, in Montana alone, 300 million board-feet—in fact, more than 300 million board-feet is tied up by litigation. This stops the removal of hazardous fuels that are surrounding our communities as well as other high-risk areas.

And just the threat of legal action forces the Forest Service to spend additional time making projects bulletproof against litigation. In fact, there's a small project in Montana where the Forest Service planned to harvest just over a thousand acres, but spent 19 months from scoping to decision, and created a 183-page environmental assessment.

My bill that I have to fix the Ninth Circuit Cottonwood decision that passed this Committee last May would be crucial in preventing some of the litigation that is stopping wildfire mitigation work, and I will continue to urge its passage in the full Senate. I know it would be a huge help for what you all have to do.

But it is critical, in the meantime, that the Forest Service press forward with forest management projects and on-the-ground work.

The Forest Service treated 4.3 million acres in Fiscal Year 2023, with nearly half of those treatment acres being prescribed fire, and of those acres, nearly three quarters being done in the South. While it is good that there is necessary work being done across the country, there are crisis landscapes in Montana and across the West, where it is a bit more arid, that need focus.

The State of Montana, looking on the state efforts, more than tripled their acres treated from 2020 to 2023. At the same time, the Forest Service increased acres by about 34 percent, again, while the State of Montana tripled.

We need to see the Forest Service follow the lead we are seeing in Montana from our state, and place a greater emphasis and a

sense of urgency on increasing treated acres. My question for you, Chief Moore, is why does the Forest Service Fiscal Year 2025 budget decrease the target number of acres treated from Fiscal Year 2024?

Mr. MOORE. So here, again, Senator, there is a lot there. So I will try and respond to it in its entirety. When you look at our budget now, a lot of our budget goes toward hazardous fuel reduction, not timber production. When I look at the amount of timber that we are providing, we have seen a steady increase. I will go national, but I will come down to Montana.

We have seen an increase over the last 20 years of about 30 percent increase in timber. And so, while that perception is out there that we are not producing timber, it is not accurate when you look at what we are actually doing.

Now, more specifically to Montana, I have gone out with Governor Gianforte to visit. I think it was the Basin Creek watershed area there, where you have a community there that is threatened by wildfires. And as a result of what the state is doing, we matched that to really treat the Basin Creek watershed area there.

Montana, in and of itself, is our leader across the country in Good Neighbor Authority and using that authority. And so, we have a lot of really good work taking place in Montana. I will also tell you that Montana is our most litigious state in the country when it comes to forest products types of projects. And so, you have a lot of that coming to bear there.

But here again, I think that entire region, when I look at Montana and Idaho for that matter, they are doing some really excellent work with Good Neighbor Authority and really getting work done.

Senator DAINES. You know, and thanks for coming out to Montana too, and spending time with our Governor. I appreciate that and seeing it firsthand. The bigger question though is, why would the target decrease from 4.2 million to 4 million at a time when we need more treatment? Your target actually decreased year over year.

Mr. MOORE. No, our target is actually going up. When I look at the 2025—

Senator DAINES. Let me make sure we are talking the same numbers. At least, what my numbers show is in FY24, the target was 4.2 million acres.

Mr. MOORE. Oh, hazardous fuel.

Senator DAINES. Hazardous fuel reduction, and the FY25 target is 4 million. So it is 200,000 acres less in terms of your target. That's the question, why would it go down?

Mr. MOORE. Yes. I was thinking you meant timber production, not acres treated.

Senator DAINES. I am talking about hazardous fuel reduction.

Mr. MOORE. Yes. So one reason, the budget has gone down for hazardous fuel reduction, and so the—

Senator DAINES. And why would we take the budget down in hazardous fuel reduction?

Mr. MOORE. Well, we had a loss in—we have had a lot of increase in costs. You know, and the—

Senator DAINES. Because, you know, you think about it, if you are reducing hazardous fuels, it is a way to try to preempt catastrophic wildfires, which are very expensive to fight once they begin.

Mr. MOORE. Right. And the fundamental question that I was saying earlier that I think we really have to talk about—what is that new performance metric? Is it protecting communities and is it protecting those critical watersheds that these communities depend on?

And if it is, those acres are more expensive to treat, and where we have been measured by the number of acres achieved or treated, we have put ourselves in a position where we are doing random acts of restoration across the landscapes now because of that metric of outputs.

And while that is important, Senator, what we are finding through the Wildfire Crisis Strategy is that what's even more important is protecting communities. And if you agree with that, then perhaps we need to look at outcomes based on the work that we are doing. Also, you have a lot of steep slopes that we are trying to get to. All of that is more expensive to try and achieve. And you do less work because it takes more to work in those areas.

Senator DAINES. Yes. Well, thank you for that. I know you are balancing competing priorities in terms of costs, but it's just troubling at a time when we are seeing increasing buildups of hazardous fuels, that the target—the Forest Service actually went down year over year from 4.2 million to 4 million. I mean, you have to look at where you have to spend, where you have to target, but I just raise that as a real concern. When you think about it, that's an investment too, to try to reduce the cost to fight catastrophic wildfires. This is kind of pay me now or pay me later, and you pay a lot more later.

Mr. MOORE. Well, I will give you an example. Last year, our target was 4 million, and we actually achieved 4.3 million. And so we achieved more than what our target was. And this year, for 2025, when you look at where the budget is going, we don't have the same level of budget to do that amount of work coupled with the areas that we are working in now, which is more expensive.

Senator DAINES. Thank you. I have to respect my colleagues' time. I am over my time. Chief, thank you.

Senator BARRASSO. Senator Padilla.

Senator PADILLA. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Chief Moore, great to see you.

Mr. MOORE. Good to see you.

Senator PADILLA. Thank you for always taking my calls when we need you to say thank you for the great work that you have been doing, and obviously when we are in a pinch and dealing with some challenges that there is no shortage of in the State of California.

So I want to begin by thanking you and your entire team at the Forest Service for your work in general, but more specifically and more recently for your support in the expansion of both the Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument in Northern California, and the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument in Southern California, which includes additional acreage in the Western Angeles National Forest. It is a major accomplishment. I

appreciate the partnership and working together, and thank you for the support of Jen Eberlien, who was with us at the celebration this last Saturday.

I do want to turn to an issue that was touched on earlier in the hearing—that of federal firefighter pay. I was proud to introduce the Wildland Firefighter Paycheck Protection Act together with Senator Sinema, which would protect the pay raises secured for wildland firefighters in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

My question to you, and for the record, you know, the proposed budget for FY25 provides \$216 million to implement a permanent, comprehensive pay increase for the wildland firefighter workforce.

From you to the Committee, how will these pay increases compare to the pay raises secured in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law?

Mr. MOORE. Yes, thank you, Senator. So one of the biggest differences is that the pay raise in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law doesn't allow that increase to be carried over into retirement. And that's one of the biggest differences there.

The other big difference between the two is that our recruitment and retention improves with a permanent version of that, as opposed to that temporary version that has been extended through the continuing resolution. And by the way, we really thank and appreciate Congress for extending it.

We also know that we have a lot of nervous firefighters out there waiting to see if this is going to be permanent or not. And if by chance it is not, we probably could expect to see a lot of our firefighters leaving for better pay and better opportunities.

Senator PADILLA. I know there are general recruitment and retention issues—

Mr. MOORE. Yes.

Senator PADILLA [continuing]. Across the workforce, but I understand it is particularly acute amongst firefighters. So I think you answered my follow-up question—would it be helpful for your efforts for Congress to pass a permanent pay increase? I will assume the answer is yes.

Mr. MOORE. Yes, I think it would certainly help the federal workforce.

Senator PADILLA. On a different topic, *recreation.gov* has been in the news. It's a popular website for users to book campsites, enter hiking lotteries, or reserve vehicle passes. And with each of these transactions, a small reservation fee is charged.

Now, while many users expect that the entirety of their fees when booking on the website directly benefit the public lands that they treasure and they visit, there's some of the money that is instead funneled to the website manager, which has been reported to be about \$140 million in profits from 2018 to 2022.

So I think it's important that we use thoughtful reservation systems that balance our conservation efforts with public access. But I am concerned that there is a little bit of lack of transparency here around the fee structure for the website.

What is the status of the *recreation.gov* contract, and what is the Forest Service doing to increase transparency of lotteries and campsite applications?

Mr. MOORE. Senator Padilla, I can get you more of the specifics that I have more assurance on in terms of its accuracy, so I can provide that to you.

Senator PADILLA. Okay, I will take that as a follow-up, and include in that, please, you know, this was a topic of conversation in the Subcommittee hearing yesterday with the Park Service, where I asked them to follow up on what are the best practices that they are considering in ensuring that we design an equitable reservation system, including what they may need from Congress to help improve outcomes. You have to measure.

The point I was making yesterday is, it's one thing to build on access, right? These monument expansions, for example, every new National Park that is created provides access for the American public. We know that there is a gap in access, a nature gap, if you will, in which particularly communities of color and lower income communities visit the parks less. And I just want to make sure that when there is a reservation system online, the way it is designed, the way people interface with it, it's a tool to help close the gap.

Mr. MOORE. Yes.

Senator PADILLA. Not exacerbate that gap. So if you can include some of that information in your follow-up, I would really appreciate it, but thank you again for your service.

[Senator Padilla now presiding.]

Now I pass it over to Senator Hoeven for questions.

Senator HOEVEN. Thank you, Senator Padilla. Chief, good to have you here. Thanks to both of you gentlemen for joining us. We appreciate you and your work. And Chief, we are working on getting you out to North Dakota on the National Grasslands the week of June 24th. Does that still sound like something that you are planning to work on with us to get done?

Mr. MOORE. Yes. All I know, Senator, is that it's June, and I have agreed to it. I do not know the specific date, but I know that we were working with your staff.

Senator HOEVEN. Yeah, they told us June 24th, that week. And so, we will work with your staff and look forward, obviously, to you getting out there and seeing our cowboys and energy producers and tourism officials and everybody else. They really appreciate it. And they'll turn out to see you and have an opportunity to visit with you. So we appreciate that.

You have got a travel management plan you are working on. I think it really goes to where you are identifying all your roads and access points out in the grasslands. I guess my question there is, will you commit to consulting with all relevant stakeholders as you work on that travel management plan?

Mr. MOORE. Yes, absolutely.

Senator HOEVEN. Okay, and that is something obviously we can talk about when you are out there as well. I think it was last year that we had Deputy Chief Chris French out there. He did a great job. So he set a high bar for you.

Mr. MOORE. I know, I told him to be on standby to come with me.

Senator HOEVEN. Yeah, I don't know. I mean, he really put the pressure on. He actually did a great job. We appreciated him being

out there, and he met with our folks. But also, as a result of that effort, announced additional funding for noxious weeds, which is really important. The first \$1.7 million has been allocated, but there is a commitment of \$4.5 million. I want to know that you stand behind that and that will be something we can talk to our grazers about.

Mr. MOORE. Yes, absolutely.

Senator HOEVEN. Good. Thank you. Senator Padilla asked you about staffing needs, and do you think you are making some progress there? That is a real issue for us as well, having the staff out there.

Mr. MOORE. Yes, we are making some progress on that. Our challenge really, and it is not something that is only a Forest Service issue, it is an issue for many of our communities, but we are struggling from time to time to find the expertise to come to some locations because of the cost of living. It's a challenge.

Senator HOEVEN. It is. And so, I just want to emphasize that as well. We really need folks out there, you know, in our part of the world too. Deferred maintenance—we passed the Great American Outdoors Act, as you know, to get at a lot of things, one of which was deferred maintenance in a big way. Not only in the parks, but on the National Grasslands and other places as well.

Two things I want to go at here—one is, our state's putting money into this on a partnership basis with you all. And the next thing I am going to ask you about is our Joint Chiefs program, you know, with the NRCS, and so both are joint programs where we are trying to leverage your abilities to get stuff done out there.

And that includes a lot of things. I mean, you all are focused on a lot of the aspects that may go to tourism, some of those kinds of things. But our grazers and ranchers, cowboys out there, you know, they need some fencing, they need water lines, they need dugouts, all those things. They need enhancements on the ground, like I think both Senator Daines and Senator Padilla were maybe talking about, and Senator Hickenlooper, in terms of addressing fire, prescribed burns, all that kind of stuff. Talk to me about both the partnership with the state on those issues where we will provide money to partner with you as well as the Joint Chiefs program, which Senator Bennet and I have worked on legislatively here.

Mr. MOORE. Yes. So on the Good Neighbor Authority we have, that program has grown really significantly, working with the state and locals. We are hoping that we are seeing some language in the Farm Bill that would treat the counties and the tribes the same as the states, which would allow them to keep the revenues in the counties and in the areas where it was generated.

So I believe that is a version of the Farm Bill as we go forward. But I think that would make a large difference in the amount of work that we are able to do on the ground.

I think when you look at the other piece there, in terms of the Joint Chiefs Awards projects—we just met with NRCS and we have just approved, I think, ten projects. And so we do see a lot of value in the Joint Chiefs because it gives us an opportunity to, more than anything, work as one USDA, where we bring in a number of USDA agencies together to do work across jurisdictional bound-

aries. And so we have been seeing a lot of value in that work and in that effort.

Senator HOEVEN. Yes. And those are things, again, and I will try to get our state agriculture commissioner out there as well. And then finally, Mr. Chairman, I beg your indulgence. This is on behalf of Senator Barrasso. He had one question he wanted me to ask. So with your indulgence, I will go ahead and do that.

The EPA recently revised its standard for particulate matter to 2.5 under the Clean Air Act. And so, the concern is that this new standard will effectively prohibit prescribed fires, you know, prescribed burns in the West. That is something obviously we are very concerned about in the grasslands too, under this new standard.

So under the standard, will emissions from prescribed fires put communities in violation of the Clean Air Act?

Mr. MOORE. So how I would respond to that, Senator, is that we have to make some choices. And if we do not allow prescribed fires to take place, then wildfires are going to take place. And while we argue and debate about the amount of particulate matter, I think we really need to have a really honest conversation about what is it that we are trying to achieve, and what are the lesser evils of this issue around fire. But prescribed fire, I think, is necessary to take place.

Senator HOEVEN. Exactly. And so, does Congress need to provide an exemption for prescribed fires under the Clean Air Act, in your opinion?

Mr. MOORE. I think if Congress did provide that, we would be satisfied.

Senator HOEVEN. Okay. Thanks again for being here today and for your work. We appreciate it.

Mr. MOORE. Thank you, Senator.

Senator PADILLA. Thank you, Senator. Please pass along to Senator Barrasso that there is a bipartisan support on that concept. So I am looking forward to working with him, Chief Moore. I now turn it over to Senator Cortez Masto for her questions.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you. Chief, good to see you. Thank you for being here.

Mr. MOORE. Good to see you.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Not that you had a choice, but we appreciate you coming.

Over the past few years, the Forest Service, along with other public land management agencies have seen a considerable investment, right? The Great American Outdoors Act, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act, and Inflation Reduction Act have enabled major initiatives like the Wildfire Crisis Strategy. At the same time, the Forest Service has made a concerted effort to recruit and hire new staff to implement the work borne from these major investments. I know this, let me just give you an example.

The Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, which is mostly in Nevada, I understand has the highest staffing levels that you have had in decades. In 2022 and 2023, more permanent employees were hired than were lost to attrition, which had not been the case for many years. And last year, 64 new hires were brought on board in Nevada.

But I am curious to hear your outlook for the future, because unless Congress enacts extensions, all of these authorities have an expiration date, yet the need, as you have been talking about here today, for all of these initiatives and investments still remains.

So how do you continue the pace of work? What do you want us to know with respect to where we should be focusing our attention and what we should be doing?

Mr. MOORE. So first, I want to just acknowledge to Congress and this Committee how much we appreciate what we have been able to do with the BIL and IRA funding, because it has given us a chance to really hit the reset button in many ways. And what you mentioned on the Humboldt-Toiyabe, we had been losing steadily a lot of employees for the last 20 years.

And so, the amount of requests and amount of work continues to go up, and the number of employees has gone down. And so we have been really challenged on how we work with the public going forward.

And so, while we have created a lot of really great relationships through partners and through our community leaders, we really needed to beef up just the basic bare bones of the organization. And so, the BIL and IRA have allowed us to do that. And now that we have beefed it up, you know, our goal—we lost 40 percent of our non-fire workforce over the last 20 years—and our ideal was to bring back half of that and then leverage the other half to partnerships.

I am happy to say that last year, when we look at partner contributions to what we have been able to do, they contributed about \$970 million worth of value to the work that we do because of that leveraging. We have also been able to bring some employees back on board. And now we need to assess where we are with the number of employees, because when we look at the attrition rate, I would like to think that people are happy in the Forest Service, as they are not leaving as rapidly as they used to. But there are a lot of factors that go in there. So we don't have the attrition rate that we normally had been having.

And so, we have to do an assessment and see, okay, what kind of shifts do we need to make in the organization? And so that is where we are from an organizational standpoint, but it has been so refreshing to be able to bring new employees into the workforce with new perspectives, new ideas, and to help us move into that next generation of natural resource management on our public lands.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Well, thank you. And I have to tell you, the men and women that work in the Forest Service in Nevada that I know love their jobs and are committed and truly believe in the mission. And the biggest challenge we have is they are overworked at times and overwhelmed because there's an understaffing issue. So it's nice to see that you are focused on addressing those issues.

I am going to ask you, and you may not be able to answer it today, but if you could get back to me.

Mr. MOORE. Sure.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Last summer, storms associated with the Tropical Storm Hilary swept through southern Nevada, dam-

aging communities and infrastructure. Among the areas damaged was the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area, and it is managed by the Forest Service. The damage caused to this area by floods forced closures of many areas important for outdoor recreation.

While much of that has reopened, I understand that some sites may stay closed for the foreseeable future, either because a site can't be restored to as it was, or because not enough money is available. You may not be able to now, but at some point in time, can you speak to that and address why, or just in general, your efforts to restore that Spring Mountain area?

Mr. MOORE. I will get back with you on some specifics about that specific area. I know generally when we have these types of things happen, a lot of times—and I am not saying it happened there—but a lot of times when those facilities were designed, they probably put facilities in places that they probably should never have been. Not that this is the case.

So we will look into the specifics of that to talk about why some facilities didn't come back, but then how do we mitigate that by adding others in other locations that are more suitable.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you. I look forward to that follow-up.

Mr. MOORE. Thank you.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator PADILLA. Thank you, Senator Cortez Masto. I want to take this opportunity to thank again our two witnesses. Per Senator Cortez Masto, you really had no choice, but we do thank you for being here and for this discussion.

A little bit of housekeeping—members of the committee will have until close of business tomorrow to submit additional questions for the record.

And with that, this Committee now stands adjourned. Thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 11:25 a.m. the hearing was adjourned.]

APPENDIX MATERIAL SUBMITTED

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
May 16, 2024, Hearing: *The President's Budget Request*
for the U.S. Forest Service for Fiscal Year 2025
Questions for the Record Submitted to Chief Randy Moore

Questions from Chairman Joe Manchin III

Question 1: What percentage of the additional annual appropriations the agency received for forest health and ecosystem restoration under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act were used for implementation of projects?

Response: Outside of the required transfer of funding to the Office of the Inspector General, The Forest Service has invested all of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act and the Inflation Reduction Act expended to-date towards the program of work associated with the provision stipulated in the Acts. These funds have been expended through various mechanisms including Forest Service salaries, fleet, contracts, or agreements for the purpose the funds were intended for.

Question 2: Chief Moore, you initiated a strategic hiring assessment with the U.S. Department of Agriculture in March.

- What were the results of the assessment?

Response: Please See attachment #1 to this document.

- How does the agency propose to pay for the additional employees hired using money from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act once the funding from those laws expires?

Response: The Forest Service funds employees from the appropriated salaries and expenses budget line items and permanent, trust, reimbursable, and other supplemental sources of funds. As positions continue to be encumbered, we will continue to match employees to a funding source as appropriate to their program of work.

- Please provide the Committee with a breakdown of what employees were hired (such as job series or other general category) and how they are contributing to the agency's overall mission.

Response: Recent Forest Service hiring has resulted in capacity increases in over 100 occupational series, representing the wide variety of expertise required to deliver results across the diverse mission of the Forest Service. Seventy-one percent of the increased non-fire capacity was realized at the regional or local level. Over 80% of the hires were in project and program management, natural resources management (e.g., forestry technicians, natural resources specialists, and wildlife biologists), archaeology, realty management, and some support functions (e.g., procurement, grants and agreements management, information technology, and human resources). The increased capacity supports a wide variety of work across the National Forest System, including on lands designated as priority in the wildfire crisis strategy.

Question 3: The Consolidated Appropriations Act, Fiscal Year 2018 (Public Law 115-141) provided the Forest Service with the authority to enter into stewardship contracts of up to 20 years. How many contracts longer than 10 years have been awarded under that authority?

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Response: The Consolidated Appropriations Act, Fiscal Year 2018 was signed into law on March 23, 2018, and granted the agency authority to enter into both stewardship contracts and agreements for up to 20 years. The Forest Service has not awarded any stewardship contracts for longer than 10 years. However, since the law's enactment, the Forest Service has executed 22 master stewardship agreements longer than 10 years, working with a variety of cooperators (e.g. Mule Deer Foundation, National Wild Turkey Federation, National Forest Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, multiple other conservation groups, and county governments) on resource management projects. Many of these agreements have Supplemental Project Agreements being awarded under them for site specific forest management projects.

Question 4: Your testimony indicated that the forest health projects on the 21 priority landscapes had, to date, reduced wildfire risk by 8% for infrastructure, 8% for housing, and 12% for watersheds. Could your agency please provide for the Committee a briefing on how these values are calculated and whether similar calculations could be applied to the entire National Forest System?

Response: Yes, Senator. The Agency will be happy to arrange a briefing for you. Please have staff connect with Forest Service Legislative Affairs Director Jake Donnay to arrange the briefing. His email is jacob.donnay@usda.gov.

Question 5: The budget for Fiscal Year 2025 added a new key performance indicator: research papers published by Forest Service scientists. High-quality academic research is one component of the Forest Service's Research and Development division; supporting land managers for the National Forest System is another. Do the Forest Service's internal performance metrics provide recognition and advancement for scientists who spend more time advising their colleagues or conducting other similar work?

Response: Our current KPI for R&D - the number of R&D publications - is one measure to assess the contributions of R&D as a whole, using a standard measure to understand research productivity. Forest Service R&D focuses on research publications to inform Forest Service land management responsibilities and to advance the highest national priorities because 'best available science' usually relies on peer reviewed publications. For example, R&D supports the agency's Wildfire Crisis Strategy, including fire prediction, planning, decision support, strategic reduction of hazardous fuels, impact assessment, and recovery; invests in watershed research to sustain and improve water security in the face of increasingly frequent and extreme hydrological events from droughts to floods; sustains research in carbon measurement, monitoring, reporting and verification (MMRV); and invests in research and development of innovative wood uses, generating new products, supporting new and emerging markets, and facilitating implementation of the Wildfire Crisis Strategy. So, while our products are high-quality research, as the question notes, they are also relevant to the agency's land management mission. In addition to the formal KPI, R&D has a number of other tracked measures that help us better understand the contributions of R&D other than publications. Outside of KPIs and other tracked measures, there are mechanisms to encourage and recognize the work of individual scientists to serve the land management mission of the agency. One such mechanism is the process associated with Research Grade Evaluation Guidelines with possible scientist promotion possibilities, which recognizes consultation, including with the land management aspect of our agency's mission, as a key element of successful advancement for

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scientists. The OPM Research Grade Evaluation Guide specifically directs federal science agencies, including the Forest Service, to not give undue weight to the number of publications and to primarily consider the quality, impact, and relevance of the researcher's contributions on the scientific community or field. Recognizing the best available science is often peer reviewed and published, the Forest Service strives to produce science with impact and relevance that may also be eventually peer reviewed and published.

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Questions from Ranking Member John Barrasso

Question 1: You repeatedly mentioned spending \$79 million in an effort to help support local sawmills. Please provide the committee with a detailed breakdown of that spending, including which facilities received the \$79 million. Please also provide the committee with a detailed breakdown of the financial assistance provided to sawmills or other wood-processing facilities, including low-interest loans or loan guarantees, made available under section 40804(b)(3) of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (P.L. 117-58).

Response: For a detailed breakdown of this, please reference attachment 2. Tab 1 provides a detailed breakdown of the \$78,670,654 the Forest Service invested between 2021 and 2023 to support local sawmills. These investments were made through three key Forest Service grant programs: Wood Innovations Grant, Community Wood Grant, and Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance Grant Programs. These programs are funded through annual appropriations, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (40804(b)(3) and Division J), and the Inflation Reduction Act. Since the 2024 grants were announced 2 days after the May 16th hearing we are also sharing information on 2024 grantees on Tab 2 of the spreadsheet.

Through a collaborative effort with USDA Rural Development-Rural Business-Cooperative Service Branch, the Forest Service has established the Timber Production and Expansion Guaranteed Loan Program (TPEP). This program will provide financial assistance through loan guarantees to lenders providing loans to entities seeking to establish, reopen, expand, or improve a sawmill or other wood processing facilities, and to forest workers, including loggers and other jobs, that supply materials to these sawmills and facilities, that are in close proximity to an identified unit of National Forest System land. Approximately \$124 million will be available in loan guarantees, with loan guarantees of up to 90 percent. The program mimics the existing OneRD loan guarantee program. Approval to launch the program is pending with Office of Management and Budget and is anticipated in October 2024.

In addition to the \$79M described above, the Inflation Reduction Act, (Public Law No: 117-169 Subtitle D, Sec. 23002(a)(5) (IRA) authorized and funded \$60M to support private industry and partners in transporting hazardous fuels to utilization facilities through a program called the Hazardous Fuels Transportation Assistance (HFTA) program. The HFTA program has the goal of increasing the removal of hazardous fuels from National Forest System lands when the transportation costs are a barrier to treatment and supporting the utilization of these wood resources to make contributions to the economy. Limited forest markets and the distance from national forests to forest product facilities has been identified as a significant barrier to treating the necessary acres to reduce hazardous fuels in some areas.

In FY2023, first year the funding was made available, \$15M were awarded to 12 private industry entities to facilitate the transportation of sawlogs to mills and biomass to energy plants.

The Forest Service anticipates awarding \$25M in FY2024. The legislation requires a 50 percent match for grant recipients in the HFTA program. The Forest Service expects the official Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for FY2024 to occur in August 2024, which will initiate a 30-day application period. Once the NOFO is released, a robust communication and outreach program will ensue, including webinars for potential applicants, email and social media communications, and targeted individual entity outreach. Proposals and/or

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projects will be accepted from a diversity of applicants including manufacturing facilities, wood energy, and logging contractors.

Finally, the Forest Service is investing \$33M in FY2024 with partners to support the movement of wood material from forest health and fuels reduction projects to utilization facilities across the Western U.S.

Question 2: CEQ's regulations mandate that federal agencies prepare NEPA analyses and documentation "in cooperation with State and local governments" and other agencies. At the hearing, we discussed the requests by the Carbon and Johnson County Commissioners to be made a cooperating agency as the U.S. Forest Service develops the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to amend all 128 land management plans to "conserve and steward" old growth forest conditions. In response to my question, you said, "What do they mean when they say cooperating agency? ... There is a little "c" and a big "C." (a) Can you please differentiate the agency's interpretation of a "cooperating" agency versus a "Cooperating" agency? (b) how are the agency's various interpretations of what constitutes a cooperating agency consistent with CEQ's regulations at 40 CFR 1501.7 and 40 CFR 1501.8? (c) How many state and local government agencies have been granted cooperating agency status in the preparation of the EIS?

Response: Section 107(a)(3) of NEPA permits but does not require lead agencies to designate Federal, State, Tribal, or local agencies that have jurisdiction by law or special expertise as cooperating agencies. See 42 U.S.C. 4336a(a)(3). Thus, CEQ's NEPA regulations at 40 CFR 1501.8(a) provide that a State, Tribal, or local agency with special expertise with respect to any environmental issue may become a cooperating agency by agreement with the lead agency. The Forest Service implements NEPA consistent with the CEQ NEPA regulations. The Forest Service cooperates (little "c") informally with numerous governmental entities for nearly all of the NEPA analyses it undertakes. In addition to this informal cooperation, the Agency regularly establishes formal cooperating agency relationships (big "C") in many NEPA analyses, consistent with CEQ's NEPA requirements. As of June 17, 2024, the Forest Service has reached signed agreements establishing Cooperating Agency status with 28 governmental entities for the EIS you referenced.

Question 3: During the hearing, you said, "What is the appropriate performance level – is it acres treated, or is it the right acres treated?" (a) Can you please explain how the agency is currently undertaking "outcome-based" reporting? (b) Does the agency have plans to add additional key performance indicators or change the way it reports annual accomplishments?

Response: The agency is developing outcome-based key performance indicators to measure the effectiveness of treatments in reducing wildfire risk to communities, infrastructure, and municipal watersheds. We are developing measures that are transparent, easy to understand, replicable, and based on best available science to communicate as clearly as possible the effectiveness of the treatments implemented in reducing wildfire risk. The agency has been working on the science for several years and believes it is ready to implement. The agency plans to implement one or several new key performance indicators in FY26, and is currently testing various aspects of this new approach in FY24 and FY25.

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The agency will continue to report our current key performance indicators for the hazardous fuels program such as acres treated and acres mitigated. These measures provide an indication of the work performed each fiscal year based on appropriations. However, we are grateful for the opportunity to place much more emphasis on the development and implementation of our new outcome-based measure to reduce wildfire risk.

Question 4: At the hearing, we discussed the massive infusion of taxpayer dollars to the U.S. Forest Service from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). Combined, these laws gave the agency about \$7 billion for wildfire risk reduction efforts. (a) How much money from IIJA and IRA has the State of Wyoming received for forest management and hazardous fuel reduction? (b) Please provide the committee with a list of projects and details (location, acres treated or proposed for treatment, total cost, partners, etc.) of the \$7 billion spent for wildfire risk reduction from IIJA and IRA.

Response 4(a): Considerable work is ongoing in Wyoming under the broad umbrella of Shared Stewardship, including over \$40M in targeted investments made under annual appropriations, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL or IIJA), Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), and Wildfire Crisis Strategy. Some examples from the recent past include:

- Joint Chiefs Landscape Restoration Partnership Project, included \$4,332,032 to the state of Wyoming in fiscal years (FY) 2022 through 2024.
- BIL-funded Potential Operational Delineations (PODS) fuel breaks funding included \$3.4 million to the Medicine Bow-Routt NF.
- Under Good Neighbor Authority, more than \$7 million has been invested with the Wyoming State Forestry Division resulting in more than 40,000 ccf timber sold and several positions being funded.
- Over \$1M in Wood Innovation Grants (\$440K) and Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance (\$590K), supporting the WY wood products economy.
- Over \$1.2M in BIL funding to support the Wyoming State Forest Action Plan.
- In the last three years, through our State Fire Assistance/Capacity and Volunteer Fire Assistance/Capacity, the USFS worked with Wyoming Division of State Forestry to deliver over \$4 million in investments to support the State's wildland fire prevention, preparedness and response program, as well as support local volunteer fire departments.
- In addition, through our new BIL-funded Community Wildfire Defense Grants, the agency recently awarded close to a \$1 million for 6 WY communities to develop Community Wildfire Protection Plans and conduct fuels treatments on non-federal lands.
- Over \$1.5M in IRA-funded Urban and Community Forestry assistance, including \$750K to the State and almost \$800K to WY communities and organizations.
- In FY 2023, Wyoming received a total of \$1,037,524 for non-federal lands Hazardous Fuels reduction projects.

Response 4(b) The Agency will arrange a briefing to provide greater details on individual projects as our reporting systems don't produce the information in the form requested in this question. Please have staff connect with Forest Service Legislative Affairs Director Jake Donnay to arrange the briefing. His email is jacob.donnay@usda.gov.

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Question 5: From Fiscal Years 2019 to 2023, timber harvests in the Black Hills National Forest (BHNF) have fallen well below the timber target, with a shortfall estimated to be greater than 175,000 hundred cubic feet (CCF) or 21 million board feet.

Please provide a year-by-year breakdown of the timber volume cut and sold on the BHNF since 2018.

Response: The USDA Forest Service offers timber for sale to qualified purchasers. Once a timber purchaser is awarded a sale, the purchaser typically has a 5-year contract window to harvest the volume sold. Thus, in any given year, the volume sold does not equate to the timber volume removed from the forest. As of January 2024, timber purchasers on the BHNF had 192,349CCF under contract yet to be cut.

Timber Volume Sold and Timber Targets for FY 2018 – 2023, BHNF

Fiscal Year	Target (CCF)	Volume Sold (CCF)
2018	197,000	212,423
2019	183,000	173,136
2020	197,000	125,418
2021	N/A	141,767
2022	124,000	112,874
2023	91,000	98,725

What is the cumulative shortfall over that same period?

Response: In years when a target was assigned during this period (all years except FY 2021), the BHNF sold 722,576CCF with an assigned target of 792,000CCF and an overall shortfall of 69,424CCF sold. From FY 2018 through FY 2023, the BHNF sold 864,343CCF timber volume, averaging 144,057CCF per year. This average volume exceeds the current industry-stated needs of 120,000CCF per year.

The current Black Hills National Forest Land Management Plan establishes an Annual Sale Quantity (ASQ) of 202,000CCF per year. ASQ is the maximum amount of timber volume potentially available per decade from lands suitable for timber production.

Although ASQ is expressed as an annual figure, it establishes a 10-year cap and does not reflect a commitment or goal of the agency. Annual timber volume offered and sold varies based on existing conditions on the landscape, market conditions, and other factors.

What is the driver of this shortfall?

Response: The Forest Service acknowledges the downward trend of volume offered on the BHNF from 212,000 hundred cubic feet (CCF) in FY 2018 to 99,000 CCF in FY 2023. During the mountain pine beetle (MPB) epidemic (1998-2016), the BHNF aggressively thinned the forest to reduce spread and to harvest affected trees before they lost merchantable value. In addition, in 2000, the Jasper Fire burned 83,500 acres or 10 percent of the suitable timber base, converting forested lands to grasslands. As a result of these significant

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impacts, trees on the forest are now smaller on average and have lower volume densities than prior to the MPB epidemic and other disturbances. It now takes four times the acreage to produce the same volume compared to 20 years ago. Because of the prevalence of small-diameter trees on the BHNF, most timber sales result in the Forest Service paying contractors to treat these stands rather than having timber sales generate revenues. This work is critical to promote landscape resilience and increase availability of sawtimber in the future.

What assistance has the BHNF received from the Forest Service to address falling timber harvest levels?

Response: From fiscal year (FY) 2019 through FY 2023, the Forest Service's Rocky Mountain Region invested more than \$110 million to support land management on the Black Hills National Forest (BHNF), including timber harvest, fuels management, and related resource management activities. Much of this funding was focused on offering timber sales to promote forest resilience. In addition to financial resources made available to support the BHNF, the Forest Service National Headquarters established a team of experts to implement a timber transit pilot to explore moving timber that was not being accessed by local markets to areas needing material. Over 200 rail cars moved nearly 4 million board feet of timber that was processed at Neiman's mills—enough to build 300 houses.

What is the anticipated timber volume cut and sold in Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025?

Response: Anticipated timber volume offered for sale by the Black Hills National Forest is 63,500 ccf for FY 2024 and 66,900 ccf for FY 2025.

Question 6: At last year's budget hearing, we discussed the importance of access to safe and affordable housing for wildland firefighters. You committed to providing recommendations to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the National Housing Council (NHC) on pricing guidelines, adjustments to rental rates, and rent class determinations found in Circular A-45 R, the executive branch's housing guidance. (a) Please provide the committee with those recommendations. (b) What progress has been made with OMB and NHC to implement these recommendations?

Response: Many national forests are in desirable areas with high market values that over the past five years have seen high rental rate increases. The amount of rent charged for government civilian quarters is determined according to government policy described in Circular A-45. The bipartisan Wildfire Commission has recommended review and potential updates to these policies. We and the Office of Management and Budget are reviewing these recommendations.

Question 7: Section 8623 in the 2018 Farm Bill is a potential solution to housing shortages in rural communities and at the U.S. Forest Service. While I applaud the lease at Dillon Work Center in White River National Forest, it was the only one lease issued after nearly five years. Affordable housing shortages directly impact the Forest Service's ability to recruit, hire and retain an adequate workforce. Why has this authority not been used more?

Response: Section 8623 of the 2018 Farm Bill gives the Agency the authority to lease Forest Service administrative sites for affordable workforce housing in federally owned or privately owned facilities paid for

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partially or fully through in-kind consideration in lieu of cash payments. This is a new and useful tool in situations where private or non-profit entities or local municipalities have an interest in developing affordable workforce housing projects, but do not own and cannot afford to obtain suitable sites for those projects.

As soon as this authority went into effect, the Agency began focusing on implementing it to address recruitment and retention challenges in areas where housing availability and affordability are an issue. The Agency was fortunate to have a partner for the Dillon Work Center project that was prepared to engage in the leasing process and willing to pilot new approaches to use of the authority. The Dillon Work Center project occurred in parallel with Agency program development, including publication for public comment of a proposed directive and a standard prospectus, lease, in-kind consideration agreement, and in-kind consideration claim form, which were required to implement the new authority.

The availability of affordable, developable sites is not the only barrier to entities interested in developing affordable housing projects. Because affordable housing has a low profit margin, it may be difficult to obtain financing for these types of projects. Even for entities with sufficient resources, the average time to complete an affordable housing project is 4 to 7 years ([Local Initiatives Support Corporation, 2019](#)). The agency has been working diligently to identify additional administrative sites where this authority could be used as a solution to workforce housing needs and to pair them with partners that are interested in and technically and financially capable of successfully completing one of these projects. Future projects are in various stages of development and are being evaluated for feasibility by agency experts. Project partners must be capable of completing the construction phase in the short term and managing the project in the long term.

Question 8: The Forest Service has hired over 4,000 non-fire employees in the last two years. However, in response to reduced FY 2024 agency appropriations and “unfunded” cost of living adjustments, the agency undertook a “strategic hiring assessment.”

- Please provide the committee with the results of this strategic hiring assessment.

Response: Please see attachment #1 to this QFR.

- How many permanent employees does the U.S. Forest Service have? What is the total cost of salaries and expenses for the agency’s permanent workforce?

Response: As of early July 2024, the Forest Service had approximately 36,000 permanent employees approximately 10,500 serving in firefighting positions and wildland firefighting support and approximately 25,500 serving in non-fire positions. Over 5,100 of the 36,000 employees are categorized as permanent, seasonal employees and work for approximately half the year, after which they are placed in non-pay status. The salary and expense costs of the agency’s permanent workforce in FY 2024 is projected to be \$4.17 billion.

- Please provide the committee with a breakdown of 4,000 non-fire employees by GS level. Additionally, please provide a region-by-region breakdown of where the 4,000 non-fire employees are stationed (i.e., Region 1 – 1,200 hires, Region 2 – 50 hires, etc.).

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Response: The table below provides a breakdown in the percentage increase in the number of non-fire employees by grade level:

Grade	Percentage Increase in Number of Non-Fire Employees
2	0.7%
3	1.4%
4	9.4%
5	9.6%
6	7.8%
7	12.2%
8	1.0%
9	5.8%
10	3.0%
11	12.1%
12	19.3%
13	13.7%
14	3.2%
15	0.7%

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The table below provides a breakdown by region of the numerical and percentage increase in non-fire employees:

Region	Number of New Non-Fire Employees	Percentage Increase
Region 1, Northern Region	196	4.9%
Region 2, Rocky Mountain Region	431	10.8%
Region 3, Southwestern Region	185	4.6%
Region 4, Intermountain Region	408	10.2%
Region 5, Pacific Southwest Region	493	12.3%
Region 6, Pacific Northwest Region	263	6.6%
Region 8, Southern Region	221	5.5%
Region 9, Eastern Region	463	11.6%
Region 10, Alaska Region	164	4.1%

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- How many of the 4,000 non-fire positions were “temporary” or “term” employees?

Response: The 4,000 new non-fire employees were neither temporary nor term.

- How many of the 4,000 non-fire positions were located on national forests in Wyoming?

Response: Seventy-three (1.8%) of the 4,000 new non-fire employees were stationed in national forests entirely or partially in Wyoming. New employees were assigned to these national forests in the same proportion as employees are distributed throughout the agency.

- Were any hiring decisions in Wyoming reconsidered and/or revoked after the agency completed the strategic assessment was completed? If yes, please provide the specific position details.

Response: Yes. Three of seven tentative offers for positions in Wyoming considered during the strategic assessment were withdrawn. Two of the positions were in recreation management and the third was in engineering for a Pathways student.

Question 9: We have discussed the Green River Lakes Road within the Bridger-Teton National Forest before. I continue to hear from state and local officials that this road is poorly maintained and impedes public access. The U.S. Forest Service has been unresponsive to my concerns and the road remains in disrepair, far below adequate safety standards. What is the anticipated maintenance timeline for the Green River Lakes Road? Please provide the committee with a detailed breakdown of the deferred maintenance and estimated timeframe(s) for completion.

Response: We want to provide for great visitor experiences on the Forest and are taking number of actions to improve the road which are currently in progress:

- The Forest Service received \$850k for gravel pit development and crushing; active project management is underway.
- The Forest Service received \$880k for road work; the contracts are expected to be released in calendar year 2024. It is estimated that the contract will complete improvements on approximately 4 to 6 miles of road, starting at the forest boundary on Union Pass Road and continuing to the intersection with Green River Lakes Road, then as far up Green River Lakes Road as funds will allow.
- We are planning the next phase of Green River Lakes Road construction because the road is approximately 16 miles in length from the intersection with Union Pass Road. Preliminary estimates to implement improvements on the remainder are \$2.5 to \$3.5 million.
- Union Pass Road is 34 miles in length to where it transitions to the Shoshone National Forest. The next ten years of timber harvest are expected to come from this area. Preliminary estimates to implement improvements on this segment are \$4 to \$6 million.
- The road crew anticipated working on the Bridger-Teton National Forest during the summer of 2024. Plans included some maintenance to the road, although there is very minimal road material to work with, because grading the road consists of trying to scrape up enough sand to cover the boulders. This sand does not compact and is quickly removed by traffic. The unsuitable road base means that even after

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grading, sections of softer material settle under vehicle weight more than other sections. Without crushed rock and sand for binding, the road material can't lock together, and the road prism is lost which is also rapidly deteriorated by lack of drainage and design. On heavily-traveled roads such as this, potholes may reappear more quickly due to traffic volume.

- Available funding does not cover the costs for the roadbed materials needed to provide longer term solutions for the degradation of the road caused by regular vehicular traffic.

Question 10: At the hearing, you mentioned the impact litigation is having on the agency's timber sale and salvage programs. Please provide a breakdown by U.S. Forest Service Region of the number of decisions signed, number of lawsuits, percent of decisions litigated, and volume affected for each year since FY 2014?

Response: A total of 106 cases were filed between 2014-2023 involving timber, vegetation and/or salvage. There were approximately 3,282 timber, salvage and vegetations decisions signed between 2014-2023. A total of 3.6% of all vegetation management decisions were challenged over the last 10 years.

Please review attachment 3 to this document for a detailed breakdown.

Question 11: I understand that the U.S. Forest Service has traditionally counted personal use firewood as part of its timber sale program accomplishments. However, I'd appreciate clarification on a few points.

- Traditional timber sales require competitive bidding. Do personal use firewood permits require competitive bids?

Response: Traditional timber sales over \$10,000 in value generally require competitive bidding. Personal use firewood permits do not require competitive bidding and are typically sold at local Ranger District Offices on demand/over the counter at a fixed rate per cord, during designated times throughout the year.

- Traditional timber sales require the purchaser to provide both a performance bond and a payment bond, ensuring both that the purchaser is financially capable of operating the sale and that the government's interests are protected in the case of default or non-performance. Are personal use firewood permittees required to provide financial security in the form of a payment or performance bond?

Response: There is not a requirement to provide any type of a bond or financial security, as full payment for the firewood is done at the time the permit is purchased.

- Purchasers who buy timber sales sign a complex, multipart contract with provisions requiring specific acts intended to reduce fire risk, prevent the spread of invasive plants, and adhere to very specific timber harvesting systems, brush disposal, and road repair. Are there similar conditions imposed on personal use firewood permittees?

Response: Personal use firewood permits have specific permit provisions, some of which are standard on all permits and others which are added specifically for the individual fuelwood area. Permit provisions are used to

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ensure resource protection concerns are addressed during firewood collection. Typical permit provisions would include mitigation of fire risk (e.g. requiring spark arrestors on chainsaws), slash disposal requirements, and other site-specific resource protections which vary from site to site.

- Once a commercial timber sale is finished, Forest Service personnel perform detailed inspections of the harvest area to ensure compliance with the contract. Does the Forest Service perform this level of inspection on personal use firewood permits?

Response: Inspection of firewood cutting can vary depending on the specifics of the permit. Smaller designated firewood areas are typically inspected by Forest Service personnel on a regular basis to ensure permit provisions are being followed. On larger more dispersed firewood areas, there may be minimal direct inspections due to the dispersed nature of the firewood being collected. The size of a firewood permit area can vary by National Forest, depending on the specific availability of firewood, and this can drive the level of inspection.

- How does the agency justify including personal use firewood permits as a part of its timber sale program accomplishments given the substantial differences in program administration?

Response: Providing firewood to the public through both fee and free permits is an important service the Agency provides. In many parts of the country fuelwood has significant value for underserved communities. Accounting for the estimated volume of harvested fuelwood is critical to understanding the full benefit provided through forest products. Recent changes made to issue fuelwood at no cost to the public has resulted in our undercounting of this benefit. Beginning in FY23 the Agency began to account for all fuelwood, including both charged and free use permits to account for this benefit consistently across the Agency. Charge permits and free use permits will both follow similar processes to ensure impacts from this use follow Forest level permit requirements, protect resources, and minimize impacts to other programs, including active timber sales. The Agency recognizes the importance of supporting local communities through availability of wood products. Forests continue to work collaboratively with local industry to ensure a mix of commercial and non-commercial products are made available. We recognize the critical role industry serves in meeting land management goals across the Agency.

- Please provide the committee with a breakdown of personal use firewood harvest levels for each year since FY 2018.

Response: The table below details personal use firewood volume sold compared to the total timber volume sold for each fiscal year. From 2020-2022 free use firewood was broadly applied in response to the Covid-19 pandemic to benefit local communities and was not included in the volume sold totals (Per March 27, 2020 Letter to Regional Forester from Deputy Chief Chris French).

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Personal Use Fuelwood volume sold compared to total volume sold from 2018 – 2023.

Fiscal Year	Personal Use Fuelwood (MBF)	Total Timber Program Accomplishments (MBF)	Personal Use as Percentage of the Timber Program
2023	362,951	3,144,898	11.54%
*2022	170,012	2,932,450	5.80%
*2021	171,584	2,844,803	6.03%
*2020	188,956	3,218,527	5.87%
2019	256,420	3,271,732	7.84%
2018	238,951	3,186,663	7.50%

* These fiscal years did not include free-use fuelwood into the total timber accomplishments. Free use fuelwood was broadly applied in response to the Covid-19 pandemic to benefit local communities (per letter dated 3/27/2020).

Question 12: (a) How many board feet of sawtimber are on unreserved National Forest System lands, outside of wilderness and inventoried roadless areas? (b) What percentage of the agency's aboveground biomass is in trees greater than 11 inches in diameter? (c) What percentage is in trees over 21 inches in diameter?

Response: Using Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) data, the Forest Service estimates:

Sawtimber volume: There are 1,825,789 million board feet (mmbf), with an error rate of plus or minus 12,116 mmbf, of sawtimber volume on unreserved National Forest System lands outside of wilderness and inventoried roadless areas.

Aboveground live tree biomass: In total, there are 8,143 million tons, with an error rate of plus or minus 37 million tons, of aboveground live tree biomass on NFS lands. Seventy-five percent of this volume is in trees greater than or equal to 11 inches diameter at breast height (DBH), and 36% is in trees greater than or equal to 21 inches DBH (Note that the aboveground live biomass in trees 21 inches DBH and larger is a subset of the aboveground live biomass in trees 11 inches DBH and larger.)

Question 13: The Fiscal Responsibility Act authorized federal agencies to adopt other federal agencies' "categorical exclusions." I'm told the only categorical exclusion that the Forest Service has adopted from another agency related to the installation of charging stations for electric cars.

- What did the agency prioritize adopting this categorical exclusion over other activities to improve forest health?

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Response: The Forest Service did not prioritize adopting this CE over other activities to improve forest health. Forest Service CEs often provide greater coverage of activities to improve forest health than those CEs of other agencies. Regarding the electric vehicle CE, the FS responded to Department of Energy's outreach to make their electric vehicle charging station categorical exclusion available for adoption. The Forest Service formally adopted this CE on May 14, 2024. As of June 21, 2024, there have been no decisions signed under this adopted CE category.

- How many decisions have been signed using this adopted authority for the installation of charging stations?

Response: The FS has completed consultation with multiple agencies on adoption of 10 categorical exclusions listed below. The agency expects the CEs will be available for use upon publication of an adoption notice in the Federal Register. The FS anticipates publishing this notice in July 2024.

Department of Commerce

A(4) Siting/construction/operation of microwave/radio communication towers less than 200 feet in height without guy wires on previously disturbed ground.

A(6) Adding fiber optic cable to transmission structures or burying fiber optic cable in existing transmission line rights-of-way.

National Telecommunications and Information Administration

C-4: New construction or improvement of land, operations, or support facilities, switching stations, maintenance facilities, and other non-tower structures supporting wired or wireless communications systems.

C-5: Installing, operating, maintaining, retrofitting, upgrading, repairing, removing, and/or replacement of existing microwave or radio communication towers, instruments, structures, or buildings.

C-6: New construction or improvement of temporary buildings or experimental equipment (e.g., trailers, prefabricated buildings, and test slabs) on previously disturbed ground, with no more than 1 acre (0.4 hectare) of ground disturbance.

C-7: New construction of self-supporting (e.g., monopole or lattice) wireless communication towers at or below 199 feet with no guy wires that require less than 1 acre (0.4 hectare) of ground disturbance.

C-8: Acquisition, installation, reconstruction, repair by replacement, and operation of aerial or buried utility (e.g., water, sewer, electrical), communication (e.g., fiber optic cable, data processing cable and similar electronic equipment).

Bureau of Land Management

D(2) Placement and use of temporary (not to exceed one month) portable corrals and water troughs, providing no new road construction is needed.

Department of Energy

B5.23 Electric Vehicle Charging Stations. The installation, modification, operation, and removal of electric vehicle charging stations, using commercially available technology, within a previously disturbed or developed area.

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Bureau of Indian Affairs

L(1) Roads and Transportation. Approval of utility installations along or across a transportation facility located in whole within the limits of the roadway right-of-way.

- How many electric vehicles does the U.S. Forest Service currently have in its fleet?

Response: As of July 24, 2024 the agency has 9 fully electric vehicles.

- Is the agency contemplating adopting any other categorical exclusions from other agencies? If yes, please provide the specific categorical exclusions.

Response: The Forest Service is currently in consultation with multiple agencies on the potential to adopt an additional 15 categorical exclusion categories listed below.

Bureau of Land Management

E(12) Grants of right-of-way wholly within the boundaries of other compatibly developed rights-of-way.

E(13) Amendments to existing rights-of-way, such as the upgrading of existing facilities, which entail no additional disturbances outside the right-of-way boundary.

E(17) Grant of a short rights-of-way for utility service or terminal access roads to an individual residence, outbuilding, or water well.

F(10) Disposal of mineral materials, such as sand, stone, gravel, pumice, pumicite, cinders, and clay, in amounts not exceeding 50,000 cubic yards or disturbing more than 5 acres, except in riparian areas.

Department of Energy

B4.6 Additions and Modifications To Transmission Facilities.

B4.13 Upgrading and Rebuilding Existing Powerlines.

B4.14 Construction and Operation of Electrochemical-Battery or Flywheel Energy Storage Systems.

B5.1 Actions To Conserve Energy or Water.

B5.16 Solar Photovoltaic Systems.

B5.22 Alternative Fuel Vehicle Fueling Stations.

US Geological Survey

2.4(B). Collation of data and samples for geologic, paleontologic, hydrologic, mineralogic, geochemical and surface or subsurface geophysical investigations, and resource evaluation, including contracts therefor.

2.4(G). Test or exploration drilling and downhole testing, including contracts therefor.

2.4(I). Digging and subsequent site restoration of exploratory trenches not to exceed one acre of surface disturbance.

2.4(K). Off-road travel to drilling, data collection or observation sites which does not impact ecologically sensitive areas such as wilderness areas, wetlands, or areas of critical habitat for listed endangered or threatened species.

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2.4(P). Minor activities required to gain or prepare access to sites selected for completion of exploration drilling operations or construction of stations for hydrologic, geologic, or geophysical data collection.

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Questions from Senator Ron Wyden

Question 1: The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and Inflation Reduction Act provided the United State[s] Forest Service with significant resources designed to increase the pace and scale of wildfire risk mitigation efforts through hazardous fuels reduction projects, including funding specifically for prescribed fire activities. Would you please explain how these resources are being used nationally to reduce wildfire risks and improve ecological health using both mechanical and prescribed fire treatments? It would be most helpful if this information was broken down by state.

Response: The Forest Service relies on a mix of funding to reduce wildfire risk and improve ecological health, and increase pace and scale of prescribed fire activities, particularly in the West. Ongoing efforts using annually appropriated, IRA, and IJA funding include the agencies internal cross regional efforts to mobilize resources in support of prescribed fire implementation nationally. Addressing wildfire risk is a national effort, with an emphasis on investment in the Wildfire Crisis Strategy (WCS) landscapes. In FY23 the Forest Service implemented over 160 thousand acres of prescribed fire activities and accomplished nearly 570 thousand acres of mechanical or other types of treatments on the 21 WCS Landscapes. Additionally, the Forest Service documented over 100 thousand acres of naturally occurring wildfire that met objectives in a management plan helped reduce wildfire risk. Continued coordination with tribes, partners, other agencies, and communities contributed to an implementation record high for hazardous fuels treatments, including 1.95 million acres of prescribed fire in 2023. Working collaboratively with partners, like The Nature Conservancy, prescribed fire implementation using BIL and IRA funds occurred in the following states: CA, CO, ID, KY, MN, NM, OR, TN, UT, VA, WA. Additionally, funding was awarded through the Community Wildfire Defense Grant program for projects that will result in nearly 160 thousand acres of fuels mitigation in addition to planning efforts on state and private land.

The table below provides a breakdown in treatments for FY 23 and FY24 within the 21 WCS priority landscapes by state, as of October 17, 2024.

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State	Rx Fire		Mech & Other
	FY 23	FY24	Combined FY 23 and 24
Arizona	257,449	147,476	404,925
California	98,989	256,115	355,104
Colorado	15,030	27,923	42,953
Idaho	48,362	68,984	117,346
Montana	12,970	20,739	33,709
Nevada	1,428	31,286	32,714
New Mexico	4,411	10,433	14,844
Oregon	55,496	281,536	337,032
Utah	11,827	35,033	46,860
Washington	44,688	93,110	137,798
Total	550,650	972,635	1,523,285

As part of strategic wildland fire management, the Forest Service continues to update or establish Potential Operational Delineations (PODS). PODs are identified and available to inform decision making on hazardous fuel treatments, including prescribed fire and wildfire. Eighty Forest Service units have developed or are in the process of finalizing PODs in the most fire prone units within the US. PODs have been developed in the following states: AZ, CA, CO, ID, MN, MT ND, NE, NM , NV, OK, OR, SD, TX, UT , WA, WY,

The agency continues to invest in a more permanent workforce capable of fire response and hazardous fuels mitigation work on a year-round basis. In 2023 the agency converted 271 temporary employees to permanent positions. Investment in prescribed fire training has been realized in the National Interagency Prescribed Fire Training Center (NIPFTC) expansion out west. NIPFTC workshops are planned in AR, AZ , CO , IL ,KS, LA , MO, MT, ND, NE, NM, OK, OR , SD, UT, WY. for FY2024. Funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs act supported Job Corps crews' training and involvement in prescribed fire and fuels work nationally, and particularly in Southeastern states. Further investments using IRA funding went into the Student Conservation Association (SCA) to develop a wildland fire academy with a focus on recruitment and training of the future fire and fuels management workforce.

Question 2: Many of the metrics that the U.S. Forest Service has historically used for forest management accountability, such as acres treated or commercial timber volume, have been insufficient to measure the

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success of programs that are designed to improve land health, protect important resources or reduce risks to nearby communities. Those types of metrics do not adequately measure and described the public benefit achieved from federal investments. What metrics are being used and developed by the U.S. Forest Service to measure the success and cost effectiveness of its wildfire risk mitigation and forest health program objectives? These should include metrics related to overall natural ecological health of the lands, including both water quality as well as air quality.

Response: The agency is developing an outcome-based key performance indicator to measure the effectiveness of treatments in reducing wildfire risk to communities, infrastructure, and municipal watersheds. We desire a measure which is transparent, easy to understand and accurately reflects the investments made to reduce wildfire risk. This measure will be meaningful, repeatable and will utilize best available science to communicate as clearly as possible the effectiveness of the treatments implemented in reducing wildfire risk. The agency has been working on the science for a number of years and believes it is ready to implement. A workgroup, comprised of members from across our Deputy Chief areas, has been working on this specific task since January. A study, led by the Fire Modeling Institute, is being conducted to determine the final, specific elements related to the modeling and capacity needed to implement this approach. The agency plans to implement this new key performance indicator in FY26 but is currently testing various parts in FY24 and FY25.

The agency will continue to report our current key performance indicators for the hazardous fuels program such as acres treated, and acres mitigated. These measures provide an indication of the work performed each fiscal year based on annual appropriations. We are looking forward to the development and implementation of our new outcome-based measure to reduce wildfire risk.

Question 3: The U.S. Forest Service has proposed a nationwide amendment to all 128 forest land management plans intended to provide consistent direction to conserve and steward old-growth forest conditions on lands managed by the agency. The agency received \$50 million from the Inflation Reduction Act "for the protection of old-growth forests on National Forest System land and to complete an inventory of old-growth forests and mature forests within the National Forest System." Will this funding be sufficient to complete and fully implement the National Old-Growth Amendment? If not, what additional resources are expected to be necessary to successfully carry out this effort?

Response: The Forest Service has used the \$50 million from the Inflation Reduction Act to complete the (1) mature and old growth forest definitions and inventory report and (2) mature and old growth forest threats analysis report. The Forest Service also invested this funding in capacity building through contracts and agreements to support implementation of the National Old Growth Amendment over the next three Fiscal Years (2025-2027), including the development of adaptive implementation strategies.

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Questions from Senator James E. Risch

Question 1: My office has been alerted by Forest Service staff in the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest that they will not be able to achieve their prescribed burn target this year, through no fault of their own. The new EPA National Ambient Air Quality Standard is predicted to prevent at least half of prescribed burn work in the forest. This national forest contains a Wildfire Crisis Strategy Landscape and must treat thousands of acres before the 2024 wildfire season begins.

- Was your office consulted at all as the EPA developed the new standard? If yes, please explain the nature of your comments on the standard.

Response: The Agency was consulted through the review process for the revised NAAQS standard and provided significant input throughout. The Agency emphasized that prescribed fire is a critical tool to reduce fire hazard.

The agency is currently determining if there will be impacts on prescribed fire use in states where the revised standard is potentially being exceeded. In areas potentially above or near the revised annual Particulate Matter NAAQS, state air regulators are currently assessing sources of pollution which may be contributing to the elevated levels. In some areas, prescribed fires may be contributing to the elevated fine particulate matter which could result in the state needing to use the Exceptional Event Rule (EER) to demonstrate the impact on monitoring data and to have that data removed by EPA. The state may choose to be conservative in prescribed burn permit issuance to avoid such an EER demonstration for prescribed fire and subsequent workload.

On November 9, 2023 the Secretaries of USDA and the Department of the Interior (DOI) along with EPA Administrator and Director of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Wildland Fire and Air Quality Coordination ([Biden-Harris Administration Agencies Sign Interagency Agreement to Address Wildfire Risk and Protect Communities from Smoke | The White House](#)) which is supporting work to allow strategic use of prescribed fire while addressing air quality objectives under the current Clean Air Act and subsequent rules.

Ultimately, EPA and state air regulators will have to decide how smoke from prescribed fire is handled under NAAQS.

- How do you plan to engage with the EPA and local Forest Service staff to ensure critical fuel reduction work is finished before catastrophic wildfires start?

Response: The Agency has been working extensively with EPA, CDC and DOI to address the balancing of air quality and land management objectives as part of the Wildland Fire and Air Quality Coordination MOU signed by our Secretary in November of 2023.

Question 2: There have been several sawmill closures in Idaho and across the West in the recent past. These sawmills are the lifeblood of rural communities and are an essential part of fire risk reduction strategies. Unfortunately, a lack of available timber is often the reason for these closures. The most recent closure, the

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Stimson Plummer mill, was closed because extensive litigation has prevented access to 231 million board feet of timber in North Idaho.

- If litigation cannot be fully prevented, what other avenues are available to your agency to ensure timber and hazardous fuels are able to be removed from our national forests?
- How is the Forest Service working to create alternative workforce development opportunities for communities who lose sawmills as a result of low fiber availability?

Response: Active vegetation management projects are sometimes challenged in court. The agency regularly wins such challenges, but courts sometimes direct the agency to conduct additional analyses. The time delays associated with the litigation, successful or not, as well as any additional time taken for court-ordered further analyses do negatively impact the agency's ability to increase the pace, scale, and crucial location of hazardous fuels treatments. Key to success is designing projects particularly suited to the area, having a well-defined purpose and need, and collaborative engagement with stakeholders. When the agency receives an unfavorable decision, we adjust projects or amend land management plans to continue moving forward with restoration efforts. We are committed to using all available authorities provided by Congress to expedite projects, while still adhering to applicable law, regulations, and court decisions. The Forest Service is leveraging all available mechanisms and opportunities to deliver grant programs to strengthen sawmills and wood products facilities to enhance their ability to be competitive and create new markets. This includes Wood Innovations, Community Wood Facilities and Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance grant programs. Other initiatives such as the Hazardous Fuels Transportation Assistance Grants help move forest products to processing locations. Moving timber from areas of limited markets to facilities that can process this material helps keep forest products industry viable and treat landscapes. The Forest Service is utilizing available authorities and programs to support local industry.

Question 3: Idaho's wildland firefighters have experienced major difficulties coordinating with federal firefighting teams due to a difference in technology used. Federal firefighting teams have transitioned to digital radios that cannot communicate with older, analog radios still in use by state teams.

How will the Forest Service ensure communication with state firefighting teams still occurs as states transition to newer technology?

Response: The National Interagency Incident Communications Division (NIICD, at the National Interagency Fire Center) maintains an approved list of radios for use by all federal employees and all personnel under contract with the federal government working on wildland fires. These approved radios are capable of operating in both analog and digital modes. For large wildland fire incidents, analog mode is used exclusively which includes portable mountain top repeaters. Although these requirements apply nationally, it does not guarantee that local agencies operate in analog mode. We welcome any collaboration required to assist our partners with the resolution of communication issues to improve interoperability and our collective response.

Question 4: Idaho's forests are great examples of the success of the collaborative process. Our state deeply values the input of all who are affected by actions taken in our forests, and our forest plans reflect this belief. However, the Forest Service's proposal to amend all 128 forest plans in less than one-year tramples on this respect and violates your own established procedures to support locally tailored plans.

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Given the extreme differences in forests across the country, how does the Forest Service expect to successfully and identically amend all 128 forest plans simultaneously?

Response: Land management plans across the national forests and grasslands contain various protective measures, known as plan components, that relate in some way to old growth. The proposed national amendment will build on these existing plan components and create a consistent national framework. The proposed national amendment will allow local units to factor in the unique conditions and challenges of a particular area with more flexibility to respond to rapid changes in wildfire behavior, drought, insects and disease. Throughout the amendment process we are engaging with tribes, cooperating agencies, and others who are interested through various platforms to ensure transparency and coordination at the local level.

Question 5: The threats of wildfire, insects, and disease all flourish in untreated, unmanaged forests. Though the old growth plan amendment may be intended to assist the health of our forests, it is obvious that blocking hazardous fuels treatments and timber harvest in old growth stands would exacerbate these serious threats.

Please explain what established science was used to determine the Forest Service's new hands-off approach with the proposed old growth plan amendment.

Response: The Mature and Old Growth threat analysis demonstrates that fire, insects, and disease are the largest threats to both mature and old growth across all Forest Service regions--management of these areas to improve their health and resilience will be a continuing priority for the Agency. The proposed National Old Growth Amendment would not prescribe a hands-off approach to the management of old growth forests. Instead, the Amendment recognizes that active management is needed to maintain resilient, healthy forests and ecosystems—including in old-growth forests. The Amendment complements our work with the wildfire crisis strategy by providing consistent national management direction to maintain and improve old-growth forests with specific exceptions to reduce fuel hazards within the wildland urban interface or to protect communities or infrastructure from wildfire.

Question 6: The Forest Service has set the FY25 hazardous fuel reduction target at 4 million acres, a 400,000 acre decrease from FY23. When wildfires continue to rage at unprecedented levels, why would the agency choose to reduce proactive fire reduction strategies?

Response: The agency agrees proactive, hazardous fuels treatment is one of the best ways to reduce wildfire risk. The current hazardous fuels target for FY25 is based on anticipated funding levels. In FY23, the agency reached a historic milestone for our hazardous fuels accomplishments of 4.35 million acres to reduce wildfire risk. Additionally, the agency reached a new milestone in treating 1.95 million acres by prescribed fire.

These historic levels of achievement were made possible by prior year investments in regular hazardous fuels appropriations, BIL and IRA funding. Also, funding from those same sources in FY23 greatly aided in the implementation of critical projects last year. In FY24, the agency experienced a decrease in regular hazardous fuels appropriations of \$32 million. This reduction will have negative impacts on our work in out years due to unmet planning work and capacity needs with our partners. The agency continues to make maximum use of the

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hazardous fuels funding associated with BIL and IRA. However, the vast majority of IRA funding will be expended by the end of fiscal year 2025. FY26 will be the last apportionment of the hazardous BIL funds. Flat to continued decreases in our regular hazardous fuels allocations and the loss of supplemental hazardous fuels funding mean the agency will have to reduce our work to reduce wildfire risk. The FY 2025 President's budget requested \$207 million for Forest Service's hazardous fuels program to return this program back to the minimum baseline level previously enacted in FY 2023. The House FY 2025 Interior appropriations bill would increase funding to \$202 million while the Senate's proposed 2025 hazardous fuels funding level is over \$208 million.

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Questions from Senator John W. Hickenlooper

Question 1: Over the past two decades, Colorado has seen an uptick in large, high intensity fires – including at high elevations where our snowpack accumulates. That snow is the water supply for not just Coloradans, but the 18 states downstream of the headwaters found in our mountains – and often, also within the National Forest System. The megafires in our state have directly impacted our watersheds, creating a ripple effect on our ecosystems and our drinking water. How is the Forest Service prioritizing watershed function, both when looking at post-fire recovery and building long-term resilience to future fires?

Response: When prioritizing watersheds to invest in, the agency uses assessments of watershed condition from the Watershed Condition Framework (WCF), the presence of high value resources in the watershed (TES species, municipal or irrigation water supplies, disadvantaged communities, etc.), consideration of threats from wildfire, flood or drought, and opportunities to partner with interested stakeholders in carrying out the activities. In developing a Watershed Restoration Action Plan, deficiencies in watershed function (e.g., severely burned areas, barriers to fish passage, excessive fuel loads, or excessive sediment loading from roads), are identified and projects are implemented to address the identified deficiencies.

The Burned Area Rehabilitation (BAR) program, funded in FY 2022-26 by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, supports burned area rehabilitation, including projects to restore watershed function following wildfire. BAR projects are prioritized at the local-unit level based on needs determined by specialists, informed by local partners, and supported at the regional and national levels.

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Questions from Senator Mike Lee

Question 1: The Utah School Trust Lands Administration (SITLA) has a mandate to raise revenue for public schools in Utah. For years, SITLA has been attempting to work with the Forest Service to gain access across Forest Service-managed land into a SITLA parcel with valuable timber resources. SITLA has offered to use an existing road footprint that could be reopened with only a few days of work. Another option is to construct an approximately quarter-mile road. SITLA is and has been open to options, but there has been a lack of communication from the Forest Service. Do you commit to working with SITLA, the state of Utah, and myself to resolve this issue in a timely manner?

Response: Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest personnel have been working with SITLA to resolve concerns regarding access to timber resources on their land. The existing road footprint referenced in the question has been closed for 30 years. That section is in a Forest Plan management prescription defined as: Maintaining and Restoring Forest Ecosystem Integrity. Reopening the road would require environmental analysis. The Forest pursued other options and recommended a road that crosses private land owned by the Randolph Land and Livestock LLC. The road directly accesses the section of SITLA land referenced and shows signs of an older logging project in the area. Randolph Land and Livestock group recently has used the road to support a stock water project by installing pipelines, troughs, and a holding tank. The Forest advised SITLA to work with the Randolph Land and Livestock LLC.

Question 2: The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), in cooperation with the Weber Basin Water Conservancy District, has planned dam improvements at reservoirs that provide water to thousands of Utahns throughout the Weber Basin. An Environmental Assessment (EA) was nearly complete when the Forest Service claimed that because the dams are in a roadless area, no heavy equipment could be brought in for improvements and maintenance. This Forest Service decision came after comments had been submitted. It is my understanding that the Chief of the Forest Service has the authority to allow essential machinery in roadless areas. Do you commit to allowing the necessary equipment for the dam repairs on Forest Service land?

Response: We appreciate your concerns about maintaining public water in the Weber Basin. The Forest Service determined that the intent of the "once-in once-out access" referenced in the current Forest Plan was to perform reservoir maintenance as had been conducted in the past, by "walking" in the necessary equipment along accessible routes and with mitigation measures in place to minimize resource impacts.

Additionally, for areas in the Weber Basin covered by an affirmative Wilderness recommendation the management posture is constrained by the following direction: "For areas recommended as wilderness, wilderness characteristics must be protected until Congress takes final action (FSH 1909.12,7.31). These areas are managed to maintain the characteristics qualifying them as capable and available for wilderness recommendation. Activities must not result in long-term changes to the wilderness character" (Forest Plan: 4-65).

Allowing motorized access into the Recommended Wilderness to the extent required for the proposed action would need to be balanced against the preservation of wilderness characteristics in the area. The Forest Service will continue to assess the proposal.

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Question 3: In response to Senator Barrasso during the hearing, you stated that “there’s a little ‘c’ and a big ‘c’” regarding cooperating agencies. What you described is not defined in law, Forest Service guidance, or rules. Please describe the difference between “little ‘c’ and big ‘c’” cooperating agencies.

- How does the Forest Service decide whether a cooperating agency is a “little c” or “big c”?
- What are the differences in treatment and input between these types of agencies?
- Please provide a statutory citation that authorizes the Forest Service to designate “little c” or “big c” cooperating agencies.

Response: Section 107(a)(3) of NEPA permits, but does not require, lead agencies to designate Federal, State, Tribal, or local agencies that have jurisdiction by law or special expertise as cooperating agencies. See 42 U.S.C. 4336a(a)(3). Thus, CEQ’s NEPA regulations at 40 CFR 1501.8(a) provide that a State, Tribal, or local agency with special expertise with respect to any environmental issue may become a cooperating agency by agreement with the lead agency. The Forest Service implements NEPA consistent with the CEQ NEPA regulations. The Forest Service cooperates (little “c”) informally with numerous governmental entities for nearly all of the NEPA analyses it undertakes. In addition to this informal cooperation, the Agency regularly establishes formal Cooperating Agency relationships (big “C”) in many NEPA analyses, consistent with CEQ’s NEPA requirements.

Question 4: In the Manti-La Sal Forest planning process, the Forest Service proposed a designation of the entire Manti-La Sal area as an “area of tribal importance,” authorizing tribal co-management opportunities. Does the Forest Service give preference to co-management agreements with Tribes over units of local or state governments? Please describe the decision-making process the Forest Service goes through to determine whether a unit of Forest Service land should be co-managed.

Response: The Manti-La Sal’s planning process follows the Forest Service Planning Rule which requires that: “The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to provide for: ... Management of areas of tribal importance.” (36 CFR 219.10(b)(iii)) In response to this requirement, the draft Land Management Plan (LMP) recognizes the entire forest as an area of tribal importance and includes this component: “Partner with tribes to identify sacred sites, traditional cultural properties, plant communities, springs, and other areas of tribal interest and cooperatively develop appropriate management strategies to maintain or improve their values.” (See, Draft Manti-La Sal National Forest Plan Revision, p. 54.) The Manti-La Sal National Forest’s draft LMP does not include co-management. The Forest Service does not have the statutory or regulatory authority to co-manage National Forest System lands with Tribes or with any other entity. The term co-management does not appear in the draft LMP for the Manti-La Sal National Forest.

Question 5: Would you support granting the State of Utah co-management opportunities to protect its traditions and culture in the Manti-La Sal Forest?

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Response: The Forest Service does not have any authority under which it could co-manage the Manti-La Sal National Forest with the State of Utah or with any other entity. Co-management of National Forest System lands is not authorized by law or regulations.

Question 6: Will the Forest Service adjust the draft Manti-La Sal National Forest Land Resource Management Plan to reflect the comments and concerns of state and county governments following the upcoming meetings you referenced in the hearing?

Response: The final Land Management Plan (LMP) will be an adjustment from the draft version based on comments received and concerns raised. As part of the LMP revision process, the Agency endeavors to consider all input and respond accordingly, within the current framework of laws, regulations, and policies.

- Did the Forest Service propose a draft forest plan before meeting with local officials to receive local input?
 - No. Manti-La Sal National Forest staff met with local officials both before and during the assessment and scoping periods, which are the initial two phases of the LMP revision process. Their input has been considered throughout the revision process. On June 4, 2024, Manti-La Sal National Forest staff met with the Emery County Commissioner and others to share updates on the planning process including comments received during the DEIS public comment period.
- Did the Forest Service meet with any Tribal entities regarding the draft forest plan prior to its release?
 - Yes. As with the local officials, Manti-La Sal National Forest staff have met with the Tribes during the various stages of the LMP revision process. In short, there have been on-going conversations with all parties throughout the process.

Question 7: The preferred alternative in the draft forest plan and accompanying EIS for the Manti-La Sal National Forest proposes to add approximately 122,780 acres of “recommended wilderness.” Please provide a detailed explanation of how a recommended wilderness designation helps wildfire mitigation efforts.

- Are machine-based fuels treatments permitted in a recommended wilderness area?

Response: Yes, machine-based fuels treatments are permitted in recommended wilderness areas on a case-by-case and as-needed basis. Wilderness evaluation, as part of the LMP revision process, is a requirement of both law and agency policy. Wildfire mitigation is an implementation action (activity) that the agency undertakes. The agency endeavors to maintain the characteristics of the landscape that led to the recommendation.

- Is the construction of electric transmission lines permitted in a recommended wilderness area? Is the construction of water storage infrastructure permitted in a recommended wilderness area?

Response: Lands Special Use authorizations for utility corridors and water storage infrastructure would be considered on a case-by-case basis if those uses could not be reasonably accommodated off National Forest System Lands. The draft LMP neither authorizes nor prohibits the construction of electric transmission lines or water storage infrastructure. The authorization of special uses of National Forest System land is explained in

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section 2.13.1 of the draft forest plan and evaluated under the Forest Service Special Uses regulations at 36 CFR 251.54,

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Questions from Senator Alex Padilla

Question 1: Recreation.gov is a popular website for users to book campsites, enter hiking lotteries, or reserve vehicle passes and with each of these transactions a small reservation fee is charged. While many users expect the entirety of their fees directly benefit the lands they are visiting, some of that money is instead funneled to the website manager, which has reported over \$140 million in profits from 2018 to 2022. It's important we use thoughtful reservations systems that balance both our conservation efforts with public access, but I'm concerned there is a lack of transparency here around the fee structure for the website. What's the status of the recreation.gov contract and what is the forest service doing to increase the transparency of lottery and campsite reservations and fees?

Response: The current service contract for the Recreation.gov platform was awarded to Booz Allen Hamilton in May 2017 after an open and fair competition following strict federal regulations. The current contract expires September 30, 2027. However, Booz Allen Hamilton may earn one additional year as a term of the award based on performance. If the additional year is granted, the contract will expire September 30, 2028. The affected federal agencies are already beginning to develop the request for proposals for a new contract.

The federal government designed the existing contract using a fee-per-transaction model. The contractor proposed pricing based on this contracting model, which helps cover the investment and corresponding business risk to provide this valuable public service. This contracting model has been praised as an excellent example of government efficiency, as it involves no cost to the federal government and shifts all risk to private industry. While the contractor received \$140 million between 2018 to 2022, it is not accurate to describe this amount as profit. This is the amount that the federal government paid to the contractor for the services it provided, as stipulated in the contract. This amount covers all the contractor's expenses, including personnel and equipment, for performing the contracted work. The contractor invests considerable resources in maintaining, improving, and expanding the service in response to visitor and field staff needs and expectations. Recreation.gov is a dynamic system that keeps pace with technology, feedback, agency priorities, and the ever-changing outdoor recreation landscape. Recreation.gov represents a considerable achievement by the federal government in providing a one-stop reservation service for all federal recreation opportunities for more than 25 years through multiple contractors.

All fees on the Recreation.gov platform are specified upfront to all users on the Rules and Reservation Policies webpage. When a customer makes a reservation on Recreation.gov and pays the associated fees, the U.S. Treasury processes the payment and deposits the payment amount in a Forest Service account. The Forest Service receives and pays monthly invoices from the contractor based on the fee-per-transaction pricing in the contract and then disburses the remaining funds.

The interagency team that manages Recreation.gov is also working to improve transparency and assist visitors with their trip planning decisions. For example, the team conducted listening sessions to enhance understanding of user perspectives and how to improve the lottery application experience. Recreation.gov now provides data to set expectations for the odds of securing a permit through the lottery process. For campsite reservations, when visitors encounter fully reserved campgrounds, Recreation.gov provides recommendations of

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campgrounds nearby that have availability during a visitor's desired travel dates. Visitors also now can set an availability alert for their preferred location and dates. Once an alert is set in their account, they will be notified immediately when a cancellation occurs for their desired location and dates and will also receive data on how many users are receiving the same notification so that they can get an idea of their chances of securing a reservation.

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Questions from Senator Steve Daines

Question 1: Chief Moore, what are the challenges to doing hazardous fuels treatments in Inventoried Roadless areas?

Response: The 2001 Roadless Rule prohibits the construction of roads and the harvesting of trees in Inventoried Roadless Areas, unless one or more of a series of exceptions apply. For example, the Rule allows for the construction or reconstruction of roads if they are needed to protect health and safety in cases of imminent danger. Likewise, the Rule allows for the harvesting and removal of generally small diameter trees to “Restore ecosystem structure and function, such as reducing the likelihood of uncharacteristic wildfire.” State-specific roadless rules for National Forests in Idaho and Colorado apply a similar management framework. The general prohibition on road construction can sometimes limit access to cut and remove trees. Sometimes removal of more than generally small diameter trees is needed to fully reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire.

Question 2: Chief Moore, is there an average cost difference to treat hazardous fuels in Inventoried Roadless areas compared to non-Inventoried Roadless areas? Please describe the factors that contribute to the cost difference if there is any.

Response: The Forest Service does not track the difference in cost of tree removal in inventoried roadless areas versus other areas. There are several salient factors that contribute to differences in cost. For example, the 2001 Roadless Rule prohibits the construction of roads and the harvesting of trees except for very specific purposes. The Rule allows for the construction or reconstruction of roads if they are needed to protect health and safety in cases of imminent danger. Additionally, the Rule allows for the harvesting and removal of generally small diameter trees to “Restore ecosystem structure and function, such as reducing the likelihood of uncharacteristic wildfire.” The road exception and the timber removal exception may not align, and the agency may need road access to cut and remove trees if it is to improve the health of ecosystems in roadless areas. Additionally, the harvesting of small diameter trees is frequently not sufficient to move the area to a more desirable condition that is at a reduced risk for uncharacteristic wildfire.

Question 3: Chief Moore, recently two wood products facilities in Montana announced their closures. Another facility in Idaho also closed. The Forest Service cannot address our forest health crisis without the wood products industry, and yet they are being directly impacted by Forest Service policies. How are you ensuring there is accountability in the Forest Service to meet the goals you have established as Chief?

Response: The wood products industry is essential to the success of the Forest Service achieving its mission to sustain the health, resiliency, and productivity of the nation’s forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. Ensuring accountability within the Forest Service to meet established timber management goals comes down to several key factors.

1. Performance Metrics – Establishing clear, measurable performance metrics for all targets related to both timber volume sold and the number of acres treated, to improve resilience across critical landscapes.

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- Senior Leadership and I regularly track progress against these metrics to ensure alignment at all levels of the agency.
2. Regular Audits and Evaluations – This involves assessing the effectiveness of programs and initiatives being funded by both appropriated funds and other funding such as, BIL and IRA funding through general management reviews. This involves taking an adaptive management approach and fostering a learning culture within the agency.
 3. Transparent Reporting – Maintaining transparency through regular public reporting to stakeholders, industry, and Congress. This includes regular updates and providing detailed data on progress and achievements. Publicly accessible accomplishment dashboards on the internet have become an important method of sharing both progress and accomplishments to the public and stakeholders. Several key dashboards include, Timber Sales, Hazardous Fuel Treatments, and the Wildfire Crisis Strategy Dashboard. Additional Dashboards for other key programs are in development.
 4. Stakeholder Engagement – Engaging stakeholders and partners on a regular basis ensures that the Forest Service is listening to diverse perspectives which are considered and integrated, as appropriate, in decision making as it relates for forest management. Taking the opportunity to receive feedback, identify areas of improvement, and to be responsive to concerns and suggestions.
 5. Monitoring – Continue with regular monitoring of all levels of Timber Sale development and implementation, to ensure that swift corrective actions are taken.

Implementing these approaches, the Forest Service can foster both a learning culture and be accountable to meet specific goals and targets.

Question 4: Chief Moore, what do you believe the relationship between the Forest Service and the wood products industry should look like?

Response: The relationship between the Forest Service and the wood products industry should be centered on trust and a balance between collaboration and sustainability. A collaborative relationship, built on trust, emphasizes joint efforts in sustainable forest management (e.g. developing new wood and biomass markets, wildfire risk reduction, improving forest health, etc.). Sustainable forest management should be a priority to ensure the long-term health and productivity of forest ecosystems. The Forest Service and industry should support the economic viability of the wood products industry, while ensuring that harvesting does not compromise the ecological integrity of forests, watersheds, and wildlife habitat. Industry's engagement and perspective for issues pertaining to forest management, including the economic viability of timber harvesting, forest health, wildfire risk reduction, and timber volume currently under contract, are part of this success. By fostering a cooperative and balanced relationship built on trust, the Forest Service and the wood products industry can achieve our mutual goals of conservation and sustainable resource utilization, supporting a healthy resilient ecosystem, for current and future generations.

Question 5: Chief Moore, how can the Forest Service help our wood products industry remain viable?

The Forest Service works collaboratively at all levels of the organization to implement actions that support the forest products industry. This includes actions on supply, wood innovations/financial support, contracting, and

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research and development. The Forest Service recognizes the vital importance of a stable supply of wood products to industry, communities, and our landscapes. Timber harvest serves as a crucial instrument and often the first step taken to implement a full suite of activities, such as prescribed fire, that lead to restored and protected watersheds, habitats, and the wildland urban interface for communities at risk. Actions include:

- **Timber Sales:** The agency has steadily increased the number of acres restored through timber sales and resulting timber volume sold by more than a billion board feet or nearly 30% over the last 20 years.
- **GNA:** In FY23, there were 507 active agreements, with 238 MMBF sold. This is up from 188 agreements, with 89 MMBF in FY18. GNA leverages cross-boundary opportunities to increase capacity.
- **Stewardship:** In FY23, there was 1063 MMBF under stewardship authority compared to 793 in FY18.
- **Volume under contract:** Since 2013, the agency has increased volume under contract from 5.4 BBF to as much as 8 BBF in 2023. The Agency understands that volume under contract plays a critical role in supporting industry to withstand fluctuations in supply as well as secure financing for equipment and capital investments. It buffers purchasers from delays due to litigation, wildfire, or other disturbances.
- **Restoration Plans:** Staff at the unit level are working with partners to coordinate our 2025-2029 restoration plans (includes hazardous fuels, reforestation, and timber outputs) with stakeholders to ensure we are treating the right acres and providing natural resource benefits, including wood products.

The agency is participating in an external Sustainable Biomass Program Regional Risk Assessment to determine if National Forest System meets the requirements of this program, a requirement for customers. This assessment would provide assurance that woody biomass is sourced both legally and sustainably for U.S. export of wood pellets and chips.

The Forest Service is actively exploring novel contract mechanisms and using all available flexibilities to support a resilient timber industry. This includes: Emergency Rate Redeterminations; leveraging contracting tools like stewardship contracts which cover the full suite of preparation and implementation of a project; and ensuring that all timber contracts advertised include forest products that can be marketed by purchasers by making marginal material optional or subject to agreement. We also authorized Substantial Overriding Public Interest (SOPI) extensions for contracts with at least 20% pulp – providing relief from the decline of demand for paper products through rate redeterminations and up to two additional years for implementation.

The Forest Service can help the wood products industry remain viable by continuing to focus on increasing the overall pace and scale of restoration treatments through strategic investments in critical landscapes across the nation. To support this, the agency is working along several fronts to increase opportunities for industry.

- The Forest Service is testing innovative projects to expand forest product transportation distances to viable markets using national Keystone Partnerships and BIL funding.
- **Timber Transit Pilot - Hazardous Fuels Transportation Assistance Grant Pilot Program (HFTA):** The HFTA Pilot Program funded under IRA is designed to increase pace and scale of forest restoration treatments by focusing on transportation challenges and utilizing excess hazardous fuels and traditional forest products.
- The USDA-Forest Service and Rural Development (RD) are working together to leverage BIL funds with an RD Business and Industry Loan Guarantee program to establish the Timber Production and Expansion Loan guarantee program.

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- Wood Innovations grants, Community Wood facilities grants, and Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance grants are used to provide financial and technical assistance to States, Tribes, Industry, and other public partners. The Wood Innovations Program stimulates, expands, and supports U.S. wood products markets and wood energy markets to support the long-term management of National Forest System and other forest lands.
- Innovative Research such as providing the industry with the latest research on forest management practices. For example, USFS supports the creation of markets for low-grade biomass from fuels treatment, harvesting, and industrial residues through research, grants, and TA support. Over a hundred Wood Innovations grants and technical assistance projects by the USFS Wood Energy Team have supported use of these materials and economic health for industry. Forest Products Lab research supports use of low value timber for sustainable aviation fuel, an emerging product that could reduce aviation industry emissions.

By implementing these measures, the Forest Service aims to significantly enhance the availability of timber for all wood products and support the IIA's infrastructure objectives while ensuring the ecological needs of local landscapes are met. These strategic investments help to support a viable wood products industry while improving the overall resilience of critical landscapes across National Forests.

Question 6: Chief Moore, the Forest Service conducts timber harvests on one-tenth of one percent of acres within the National Forest System lands each year. Would increasing commercial timber harvest sales help reduce overcrowding and fuels buildup in our National Forests?

Response: The agency integrates across program areas to reduce wildfire risk. Commercial timber harvest is one of many tools that contribute to reducing fire risk across our National Forests, with the focus on investing in treatments in the right location and at the right scale. Through implementation of the Wildfire Crisis Strategy, we have learned the highest priority areas in need of treatment to protect communities, watersheds, and other critical infrastructure, are often the most expensive and least productive in terms of availability of wood products. The bi-partisan infrastructure law (BIL or IIA) and inflation reduction act (IRA) have led to the highest level of investment in forest management, in the Agency's history. The Forest Service is aware that industry has taken on a substantial number of projects, including integrated resource service contracts, Good Neighbor Agreements, contracts with state partners, and partner agreements that focuses on fuels reduction and restoration activities. The Forest Service is committed to increase the number of acres treated through all methods, including commercial timber harvest. The agency evaluates the economic costs of implementing projects during our planning process to ensure we can maximize outcomes on the ground using all tools available. The increase in pace and scale of timber harvests coupled with the strategic location of these activities has reduced forest densities. This reduction in the overstory and ladder fuels through commercial and non-commercial methods frequently enables the effective use of prescribed fire. The combination of treatments is best for mitigating the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire and reducing the risk to communities, infrastructure, and municipal watersheds.

Question 7: Chief Moore, what is the main challenge to making timber harvest targets in Montana?

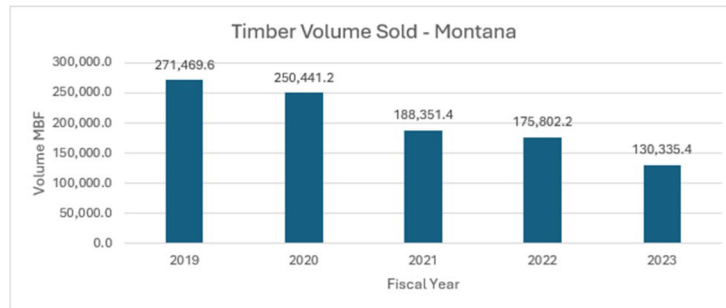
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Response: Vegetation management projects in Montana continue to be subject to high levels of litigation. Currently, 340 MMBF of timber volume is subject to active litigation, with 206 MMBF of that volume either preliminarily or permanently enjoined (enjoined timber sales are when the contract has been suspended and no operations can continue). Although the Agency is usually able to offer the planned timber volume after either successfully defending a project or addressing the court-identified deficiencies, the lengthy time to navigate the judicial review represents lost opportunity costs as staff resources dedicated to defending current projects are unable to begin new projects to prepare to meet targets for the coming year. This affects both Forest Service and the US Fish and Wildlife Montana Field Office as they are often a party to Forest Service litigation.

Question 8: Chief Moore, in Montana what was the volume of timber sold from National Forest System lands in the past 5 years?

Response: Timber Volume Sold (MBF) in Montana from fiscal year 2019 through fiscal year 2023 is displayed in the trailing charts. These volumes include permits and additional timber sale volume.

Fiscal year	Volume Sold (MBF)
2019	271,469.6
2020	250,441.2
2021	188,351.4
2022	175,802.2
2023	130,335.4



Question 9: Chief Moore, what actions is the Forest Service taking to maintain, repair, or upgrade current employee housing?

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Response: The Agency continues to utilize funds collected from rent, as well as appropriated funds, to maintain and repair federal housing for employees. Administrative units prioritize the most critical housing maintenance and repair.

In FY 2024, Great American Outdoors Act Legacy Restoration Funds contributed \$46 million to address federal housing deferred maintenance across 33 administrative units primarily in the western United States. For FY 2025, the agency is proposing an additional 35 projects to be funded with \$29 million from the Legacy Restoration Fund to improve the condition of employee housing. In addition, the FY 2025 President's Budget includes a \$25 million increase in facilities maintenance and leases funding targeted at addressing critical facility maintenance to improve the condition and availability of federal government housing for wildland firefighters and other essential employees. This funding will cover the cost of maintenance for approximately 100 housing units, benefit over 400 employees, and address \$13,000,000 in deferred maintenance. This funding supports the employee housing program's objectives to address facility maintenance backlogs, invest in additional maintenance for firefighter housing, and fund Forest Service facility leases.

In addition, the Forest Service is taking the following actions:

- Analyzing all possible funding sources for and developing a plan to prioritize investments in employee housing.
- Discussing how the agency can adjust its inventory of employee housing to ensure that it matches current and projected workforce needs, including having a diverse mix, with a focus on communal housing that can be shared but is designed to allow for individual privacy.
- Collaborating with the Job Corps Program to identify housing repairs that can be completed by Job Corps students.

Question 10: Chief Moore, what is the current percentage of Forest Service employee housing in Montana in the following conditions: poor, fair, good, excellent, and obsolete?

Response: As of October 2023, there were 216 Forest Service housing units in the iQMIS for Montana. According to the data in the Internet Quarters Management Information System (iQMIS), the interior and exterior condition of the 216 housing units is as follows:

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Interior Condition

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total
4	81	113	18	216
2%	38%	52%	8%	

Exterior Condition

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total
3	96	99	18	216
1%	44%	46%	8%	

Based upon the data in the Natural Resources Manager database, approximately 75% of the federal housing units in Montana are at least 50 years old, with an average age of 68 years old. The industry and Forest Service design life for a facility is 50 years.

Question 11: Chief Moore, in your testimony you stated that by FY25 much of the funding from the Inflation Reduction Act will have been invested. Please provide a breakdown of what Forest Service Region these funds have been used in and what they were used for.

Response: Please see the table below:

USDA Forest Service Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Spending
through December 31st, 2023

Region	IRA Total Spending
Northern Region	\$53,462,115
Rocky Mountain Region	\$58,121,173
Southwestern Region	\$92,393,457
Intermountain Region	\$119,917,976
Pacific Southwest Region	\$609,061,071
Pacific Northwest Region	\$82,167,635
Enterprise	\$246,761
Southern Region	\$75,658,689
Eastern Region	\$104,918,216
Alaska Region	\$3,547,317
International Institute of Tropical Forestry	\$63,221
Washington Office	\$61,403,204
National Operations ¹	\$329,242,150

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Rocky Mountain Research Station	\$197,190
Northern Research Station	\$1,039,034
Common Business Services	\$41,007,726
Pacific Northwest Research Station	\$247,040
Pacific Southwest Research Station	\$145,808
Southern Research Station	\$270,481
Grand Total	\$1,633,110,262

1/Includes program funds managed nationally in support of units (e.g. national agreements) and unallocated funds.

USDA Forest Service IRA funded Wildfire Crisis Strategy
Landscape Projects - Total Spending through December 31st,
2023

State	Total Spending
Arizona	\$70,545,142
California	\$514,194,353
Colorado	\$23,490,645
Idaho	\$45,703,519
Montana	\$7,059,482
New Mexico	\$5,130,715
Nevada	\$52,191,613
Oregon	\$27,814,515
Utah	\$22,491,994
Washington	\$15,182,108
Total	\$783,804,085

Examples of IRA investments include:

- \$1 billion in Urban and Community Forestry competitive grants for 385 grant proposals in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and several U.S. Territories and Tribal Nations.
- \$700 million over ten years to permanently conserve state and privately-owned forestlands through the Forest Legacy Program. In FY23 and FY24, the Forest Service awarded \$342 million to 60 projects that will conserve 413,000 acres of private forestlands across the United States.

Question 12: Chief Moore, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act provided \$1.4 billion for hazardous fuels treatments. Please provide a breakdown of what Forest Service Region these funds have been used in and the type of treatment (i.e. prescribed fire, pre-commercial thinning, commercial timber harvest, etc.).

Response: The Forest Service has primarily focused its activities on the 21 Wildfire Crisis Strategy (WCS) landscapes to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire. In FY 23, the Forest Service implemented over 160

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thousand acres of prescribed fire activities in these landscapes. Pre commercial thinning and commercial thinning silviculture activities account for over 90 thousand acres each. Other silviculture, range and invasive type treatments account for nearly 400 thousand acres of fuels reduction activities. Additionally, over 100 thousand acres of naturally occurring wildfire that met objectives in a management plan helped reduce wildfire risk.

The table below provides additional details on treatments in FY 23 and FY 24 within the 21 WCS landscapes, as of October 17, 2024. USFS Region	RX Fire	Pre-Commercial	Commercial Thin	All Other Activities	Total
01	20,800	1,829	3,211	21,503	47,343
02	15,030	141	1,601	26,181	42,953
03	261,860	40,191	39,292	78,426	419,769
04	56,192	18,016	8,424	116,104	198,736
05	96,584	12,008	43,471	187,591	339,654
06	100,184	80,721	60,487	233,438	474,830
Total	550,650	152,906	156,486	663,243	1,523,285

Question 13: Chief Moore, in the hearing you stated that the Forest Service faces competing goals when it comes to funding fuels reduction projects. What are Forest Service's specific goals and objectives when it comes to funding fuels reduction projects?

Response: The hazardous fuels management program treats acres to reduce the risk for uncharacteristic wildfire by prioritizing treatments in the vicinity of critical infrastructure, communities, drinking water sources, critical habitat, and traditional homelands by restoring and maintaining resilient landscape. Decision space for the agency to meet these goals will be constrained as our hazardous fuels supplemental funding (BIL/IRA) is expended and if our regular hazardous fuels appropriations is reduced as in FY24. The agency has worked hard to be effective and efficient with our use of hazardous fuels funding. However, we struggle with the funding available to maintain our current acres which are in a desired, low wildfire risk state. The investments from BIL/IRA provided a tremendous opportunity to reduce the wildfire risk in high cost, high priorities areas to protect communities. However, we are still well below the goals of the 10-year Wildfire Crisis Strategy of treating 20 million additional acres. Funding levels, such as in the FY24 hazardous fuels appropriation and wildland fire management salary and expense create significant trade off decisions regarding maintaining our past year investments or reducing wildfire risk in high priority areas. The FY 2025 President's Budget requested

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\$207 million for Forest Service's hazardous fuels program which would return the program to the previous minimum baseline funding level enacted in FY 2023.

Question 14: Chief Moore, Forest Roads provide critical access for rural communities, firefighters and first responders, and for recreational users. What is the current deferred maintenance backlog on Forest Roads in Montana?

Response: In FY2023, the estimated Deferred Maintenance for National Forest System Passenger Car Roads in the State of Montana was \$638 million. Deferred Maintenance values for passenger car roads are based on a statistically significant random sample of these assets to generate a national Deferred Maintenance cost per mile. While enough information has been collected to generate a regional cost per mile, these regional averages are not statistically valid at the unit or state level. However, they have been applied at this level for estimation purposes.

Question 15: Chief Moore, what is the average length of time it takes to complete the hiring process for full time employees?

Response: The time required to hire an employee varies based on how a position is advertised. For example, some positions are filled non-competitively (e.g., through a veteran's preference), which allows the hiring process to proceed much more quickly, and other positions attract a large number of applicants, which require more time to vet. The agency generally takes 120 to 130 days, but can take as few as 60 days, to fill a position advertised on USAJobs.

Question 16: Chief Moore, the Forest Service instituted a 30-day hiring pause following the final FY24 appropriations bill. Prior to the pause, the Forest Service hired 3-4,000 staff. For Region 1, please identify each position, title, GS-level, and duty station that was created and/or recruited and hired from January 2021-May 2024 in Region 1's leadership office.

Response: From January 2021 through May 2024, the Northern Region hired 209 employees for its regional office; a description of each position is included in attachment 4 to this QFR. Given possible attrition within that period, the total may include two or more hires for a single position. The regional office for the Northern Region oversees seven national forests in Montana (the Beaverhead-Deerlodge, Bitterroot, Custer Gallatin, Flathead, Helena-Lewis and Clark, Kootenai, and Lolo), two national forests in Northern Idaho (the Idaho Panhandle and Nez Perce-Clearwater), and the Dakota Prairie Grassland in portions of North Dakota and South Dakota and is staffed accordingly.

Question 17: Chief Moore, foresters and other field positions at the Forest Service provide critical work to keeping our National Forests healthy. How many positions were hired in Montana's national forests vs. Region 1 leadership office? Please provide the breakdown of positions, titles, GS-level, duty station, etc. for those positions in each of Montana's national forests.

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Response: From January 2021 through May 2024, the Northern Region filled the positions listed below at the administrative unit level in Montana; a description of each position is included in attachment 4 to this QFR. Given possible attrition within that period, the totals shown below may include two or more hires for a single position. Multiple employees in the regional office work directly with administrative units in the region to accomplish work at the administrative unit level (e.g., work performed by timber strike teams, NEPA strike teams, and grants and agreements specialists).

- Aerial Fire Depot (smokejumper, aviation, supply, and equipment units): 73 positions
- Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest: 167 positions
- Bitterroot National Forest: 183 positions
- Custer Gallatin National Forest: 220 positions
- Flathead National Forest: 169 positions
- Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest: 197 positions
- Kootenai National Forest: 174 positions
- Lolo National Forest: 198 positions

Attachment #1



Forest Service

Washington Office

1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250**Date:** June 26, 2024**Route To:****Subject:** Chief's Hiring Assessment Letter**To:** National Leadership Council

I communicated with you April 2 on the need for a Strategic Hiring Assessment and Strategy, with follow up direction to be issued within 30 days. This letter outlines national direction based on the results of the Assessment.

While we were able to complete the Assessment in 30 days, it has taken more time to analyze and develop strategic hiring direction that responds to the results. I am grateful to all our leaders who have continued to steward our work and continue to deliver on our mission. The key finding of the assessment is that our agency is not attriting staff at the historic rate of nearly 9 percent. In fact, we are well below 5 percent. On one hand, we should celebrate that our staff are staying because they feel connected to the mission, they feel heard, and they are committed to improving our Nation's forests and grasslands. To stay within budget and continue to deliver on our core mission, we must implement tighter controls on both internal and external hiring.

We recognize career advancement opportunities are very important so we will immediately resume internal hiring. While we will resume internal hiring, we must recognize the interconnectedness of our positions. For non-fire positions that remain in the system but have not reached the stage of a tentative job offer, each Region/Station/Deputy Chief Area should work with Human Resources Officer to prioritize these jobs to advance a prioritization process with strict criteria and centralized approval for any external hires. In addition, all Forest Service units should complete workforce planning in the coming weeks, a process that the agency estimates will take about 5 weeks. Guidance on that was issued by Business Operations on June 20. This will allow us to project and prioritize our workforce needs in relation to our expected budget for FY2025.

For the pending external hires, we will move forward with 157 of the tentative job offers. These include line officers; law enforcement officers; Resource Assistants; some hard to fill mission critical positions; Pathways Recent Graduates; Presidential Management Fellows; and some positions under specific non-competitive hiring authorities. Remaining positions in the tentative offer stage will not move to final offer. Each unit with a pending tentative offer will work with their HRO on next steps. Our Human Resources Management leadership team will also be developing Frequently Asked Questions and additional details around implementing these changes, which will be forthcoming soon.

The Office of the Chief will approve future hiring of external candidates, using a set of criteria. We will focus on the highest priority positions needed to protect public health and safety; to fulfill critical mission deliverables; as well as positions that are highly specialized and/or have



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been demonstrated to be very difficult to fill internally. The criteria will also apply to the conversion of individuals from student employment programs into permanent Forest Service positions. National Leadership Council (NLC) leaders will be working with our Business Operations Deputy Chief and our Human Resources teams to more fully develop these criteria and incorporate them into the hiring process.

When filling future positions using BIL, IRA, Disaster Supplemental or other temporary funds, positions should be filled as temporary or Term unless otherwise approved by the Office of the Chief.

Deliberate conversations will continue regarding non-fire retirement covered "fire positions" (for example airworthiness positions or aviation inspectors) to ensure critical services are evaluated and staffing is in place in preparation for the peak of wildfire activity. As was stated in the April 2 letter, this does not impact ongoing Fire hiring.

If you have questions or need clarification, please contact Mary Pletcher Rice, Deputy Chief of Business Operations, Mary.PletcherRice@usda.gov or Deedra Fogle, Acting Human Resources Director, deedra.fogle@usda.gov.

We are at our best when we face challenges together. We are leaning heavily on our core value of interdependence, as we steward the whole, sharing leadership across the agency to navigate these changes while supporting our workforce. We will continue to tell the story at every opportunity of the value of our nation's forests and grasslands and the need to continue to invest in them and in the Forest Service. As always, I am grateful for all of you and the amazing work our employees do to serve the American public.

Thank you for all you do.

RANDY MOORE
Chief

Attachment #2

Below is a list of projects supporting sawmills and other wood processing facilities from the FY2024 Wood Innovations NOFOs. Awards were announced on 5/14/2024. Awards are from three grant programs: Community Wood Grants, Wood Innovations Grants, and Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance Grants.

Number of Awards: 126

Awarded Funding: \$62,659,333

Community Wood Grant Program				
Award YR	Project Applicant	City	State	Award Amount
2024	SmartLam NA Enterprises US, LLC.	Dothan	AL	\$ 1,000,000
	The project involves constructing separate, state-of-the-art CLT and Glulam production facilities, each equipped with advanced technology for efficient and eco-friendly manufacturing. This upgrade will significantly increase production capacity, making mass timber products a competitive alternative to traditional building materials, and offshore mass timber competitors. The ecological benefit is twofold: promoting the use of low-value wood, thus aiding in forest restoration, and offsetting embodied carbon emissions through constructing large commercial structures with Mass Timber.			
2024	Sierra Institute for Community and Environment	Crescent Mills	CA	\$ 1,000,000
	The project is attempting to create a mass timber manufacturing facility using wood from the Lassen and Plumas National Forests to help restore the local town of Greenville after the Dixie Fire.			
2024	Wakefield Biochar	Valdosta	GA	\$ 1,000,000
	Construct a biochar production system at Wakefield Biochar's processing facility. Over two years, the plant will produce 12,000 tons of biochar and 3-4 MW of sustained electricity using 60,000 wet tons of locally sourced waste biomass. The project will help expand the utilization of biomass resources in the area and in the state. It will also contribute to the local economy by providing 20 jobs to an underserved community and will produce enough biochar to offset 37,400 tons of carbon dioxide (CO2) during the first two years after commissioning our reactors.			
2024	Robinson Lumber Company, LLC	New Albany	IN	\$ 1,000,000
	Replace aging, outdated dry kilns with new modern dry kilns and equipment and adding additional drying capacity to increase production in our New Albany, Indiana Lumber yard			
2024	Treeline, Inc	Chester	ME	\$ 999,998
	This thermal wood treatment facility will modify Eastern Hemlock, along with a smaller amount of Maple, Pine, and Spruceby enhancing dimensional stability and durability, while reducing moisture absorption and increasing resistance to decay, insects, and fungal growth.			
2024	Manthei Wood Products	Petoskey	MI	\$ 1,140,000
	Help with a new, state-of-the-art plywood press, inspection and repair line, and trimming line from Burke North America that will be located in the new facility and thermally powered by a brand new wood boiler unit that enables Manthei Wood Products to use forest by product residues as a bio fuel.			
2024	Specialty Lumber Solutions	Kansas City	MO	\$ 648,450
	Install a thermally-lect, energy-efficient biochar production unit (BPU) on the site of Specialty Lumber Solutions' existing sawmill			
2024	High Country Lumber and Mulch, LLC	Lexington	NC	\$ 200,722
	Dixie Forest Products seeks funding to support its latest project focusing on the refurbishment and optimization of four steam powered dry kilns. The proposed project would provide a substantial platform to increase efficiency in kiln-drying processes of Appalachian hardwoods and softwood lumber. Dixie Forest Products will commission Southeastern Installation, Inc (SII) of Lexington, N.C. to upgrade existing controls in four kilns complete with new motor control centers and frequency drives – all of which will be controlled with their industry-leading "Kiln-Dry 9060" computerized software.			
2024	Hancock Lumber	Madison	NH	\$ 1,000,000
	Install a 400hp biomass boiler and an ESP to control emissions to heat 7 kilns. Additionally, will install a back-pressure turbine (+/- 275kw) to provide electricity for the sawmill & regional grid			
2024	Baillie Lumber Company	Smyrna	NY	\$ 624,750
	This project will complete the installation and commissioning of two new Electrostatic Precipitators at our Smyrna and Cayuta locations in NY state.			
2024	CutMyTimber	Eagle Creek	OR	\$ 1,000,000
	This project will help pay for large format CNC machines that will expand fabrication capabilities to extra large timber components.			
2024	Timberlab, Inc	Portland	OR	\$ 1,000,000
	Purchase new CNC equipment			

2024	Steeley Lumber Co., Inc.	Huntsville	TX	\$	1,000,000	The plan is to incorporate roundwood into our raw material by expanding the drying and pelletizing process. This funding will be used to acquire an equipment that waste energy but will also be creating green energy in the process. Our means of doing this is by installing a mechanical drying process capable of reducing raw material moisture content by a total of 12%. Steeley Lumber Co. has a focus on a smaller carbon footprint and more biomass energy options; the utilization of byproducts is a natural method to achieve this goal.
2024	Baillie Lumber Company LP	West Point	VA	\$	684,617	The installation and commissioning of a new optimized board edger at the Baillie Lumber Companies West Point VA location. This state of the art McDonough board edger will utilize the most up to date optimization system on the market to drive more value out of each and every log that passes through the mill. The current edger system is over 50 years old and utilizes no scanning, all cutting decisions are made by the operator which reduces the overall recovery by up to 15%.
2024	The Turman Group	Hillsville	VA	\$	500,000	Revolutionize its hardwood lumber grading process through a visionary project focused on the integration of cutting-edge optimization technology by implementing the USNR lumber grader, a state-of-the-art system designed to elevate efficiency, ensure consistency, and mitigate the risk of human error in the grading process.
2024	Yakama Nation	Toppenish	WA	\$	981,717	Purchase equipment to manufacture CLT on the Yakima Nation.
Wood Innovations Grant Program						
Award YR	Project Applicant	City	State	Award Amount	Brief Description	
2024	Bluestone Renewables Holding LLC	Belmont	AZ	\$	300,000	This project will fund site diligence, environmental permitting, and public communications associated with a wood to methanol plant near Flagstaff
2024	California Hotwood	Dewey	AZ	\$	150,000	This project would purchase and install four permanent firewood stacking lines to increase production from 200,000 to 800,000 bundles per year
2024	Kalbab Millworks LLC	Colorado City	AZ	\$	145,000	This project will purchase stationary mill equipment including pellet machine, dust collection system, pallet stacker and notcher and mulch coloring machine to expand mill operations.
2024	Lignetics	Show Low	AZ	\$	300,000	This project would purchase upgrades to the facility's packaging line to increase throughput while improving safety and product quality.
2024	Nevo Star Wood Products LLC	Snowflake	AZ	\$	300,000	This project will purchase and install a new sawmill machine to process logs 14 to 40 inches in diameter
2024	G C Forest Products	Mammoth Lakes	CA	\$	296,000	Project funds would pay capital analysis, investment material preparation, and investor engagement, an investment-grade feasibility study, legal counsel; and, owner's engineering and product delivery services for a new pellet
2024	Green Diamond Resource Company	Eureka	CA	\$	300,000	This project would pay for engineering, architectural design and studies for a new mass timber regional headquarters building.
2024	Growpro Inc	Fort Jones	CA	\$	187,500	This project would pay salary to update and install fully automated biochar reactors capable of processing 1000 pounds per hour of dry wood into 200 pounds per hour of biochar, and a hydronic heating system capable delivering 5.4 million btu/hour of heat to a 60,000 square foot greenhouse.
2024	Plumas Wood Fiber LLC	Greenville	CA	\$	28,000	This project would pay for basic site engineering for permitting purposes to establish a facility to manufacture engineered potting substrate to replace peat.
2024	Rath Industries, Inc.	Redding	CA	\$	258,480	This project would purchase a kiln to dry 2.6MMBF/yr green lumber to increase the product value by 30-70% at a mill that produces affordable log cabin kits.
2024	Redding Rancheria Economic Development Corporation	Redding	CA	\$	300,000	The project will cover costs associated with the permitting process to establish the Red Bluff Biomass to Hydrogen (B2H) Facility by 2025 and to bring the Red Bluff Facility online by 2026.
2024	Sierra Institute for Community and Environment	Taylorsville	CA	\$	200,000	This project would cover costs for mass timber design and building permit drawing submittals for 1-6 buildings in a fire devastated town.
2024	Sierra Valley Cogen LLC	Loyalton	CA	\$	150,000	This project would pay costs to develop a plan to restart an idled and damaged 20 MW wood fired power plant.
2024	South Tahoe Refuse Co.	South Lake Tahoe	CA	\$	287,711	This project would pay for design and permitting for a net-metered 250kW combined-heat-and-power system that would use wood chips from STR operations to generate energy.

2024	Trinity River Timber Company	Korbel	CA	\$	298,000	This project would pay for personnel and contractors to research a CA-based dowel laminated timber (DLT) production facility alongside a sawmill in Humboldt County, CA.
2024	Eagle Wood Cutting and Processing	Olathe	CO	\$	81,290	This project would purchase a firewood processor and pour concrete pad at facility
2024	EcoTech Biofuels, LLC	Pueblo	CO	\$	300,000	This project will complete engineering and design work to obtain financing and pricing for a biofuels (SAF/diesel) plant in Colorado.
2024	KFB Forestry LLC	Drake	CO	\$	58,470	This project would purchase a stationary firewood processor as a heat source from wood harvested from company's mitigation projects
2024	Lignum Support LLC	Pueblo	CO	\$	300,000	This project requests funds to cover labor costs for a year to operate sawmill startup in Colorado
2024	Redstones Timber Frames Inc.	Pagosa	CO	\$	280,500	This project will pay for salary, supplies, and contract services to bring stackable log housing components to market
2024	Routt Millworks DBA The Mill	Steamboat Springs	CO	\$	175,000	This project will purchase new sawmill equipment to replace aging mill system
2024	Timber Age Systems, Inc.	Durango	CO	\$	190,484	This project will design six prototype housing units to create awareness of Ponderosa pine CLT
2024	Yosemite Clean Energy LLC	Saguache	CO	\$	300,000	This project will pay for pre-engineering and feedstock analysis for the development of a biofuel gasification plant in San Luis Valley Colorado.
2024	Hull Forest Products, Inc.	Pomfret Center	CT	\$	176,764	This project would purchase a ring debarker to reduce fiber loss and improve recovery.
2024	Choice OpCo LLC, dba Pioneer Processors	Fitzgerald	GA	\$	300,000	This project would purchase firewood kilns and baskets to expand firewood production capabilities.
2024	Claude Howard Lumber Company	Statesboro	GA	\$	250,000	This project would purchase an optimized trimmer and edger for their softwood sawmill to increase production .
2024	Mar-lac Poultry Inc.	Gainsville	GA	\$	300,000	This project would purchase two shavings modules and a top press role for new sawmill/shavings plant.
2024	Nature Coatings Inc.	Atlanta	GA	\$	300,000	This project would purchase equipment to manufacture textile pigment from biochar.
2024	Roseburg Forest Products	Atlanta	GA	\$	191,809	This project would involve conducting laboratory experiments using southern yellow pine to improve LVL quality with microwave systems.
2024	Southern Legacy Wood Products LLC	Cleveland	GA	\$	300,000	This project would purchase a firewood heat shrink bundling line and other equipment to expand production capabilities
2024	Three Forks Timber Processors LLC	Ellijay	GA	\$	238,193	This project would purchase a natural gas kiln, hoist, and electrical installation to expand lumber production and markets.
2024	Pacific Current, LLC	Honolulu	HI	\$	300,000	This project would pay for personnel and contracting to design a new conventional fuel delivery system at a biomass plant in Hawaii.
2024	Simonpietri Enterprises LLC	Kailua	HI	\$	300,000	This project would fund the final engineering design for a new wood products manufacturing facility to make biochar in Hawaii.
2024	Boise Cascade	Boise	ID	\$	300,000	This project would purchase finish sander to increase efficiency and improve product offerings
2024	Robinson Lumber Company	New Albany	IN	\$	300,000	This project would purchase an automated lumber stacker and 10 bin system.
2024	Kentucky Hardwood Lumber Co, Inc.	Somersset	KY	\$	168,976	This project would pay for contractual work to install a new sawmill carriage at a hardwood mill in KY.
2024	Somersset Pellet Fuel	Somersset	KY	\$	300,000	This project would pay for installation and supplies to install a fire log pellet production line at an existing pellet mill.
2024	Coushatta Forest Products LLC	Coushatta	LA	\$	179,500	This project would update control systems for cutoff saws, infed decks, and a sawmill sorter to improve production at a southern yellow pine sawmill.
2024	Meadow Farm, LLC	Lee	MA	\$	300,000	This project would purchase a modular sawmill and other equipment to develop manufacturing capabilities.

2024	Godfrey Forest Arizona LLC	Jay	ME	\$	300,000	This project would use funds to cover engineering services, permitting, raw material studies and RFP development for a new OSB/OSL plant in Maine.
2024	Tanbark Molded Fiber Products	Portland	ME	\$	300,000	This project would pay for personnel and contractual services to install two thermofomers for customers to transition to Type 3 molded fiber.
2024	Ottawa Forest Products, Inc.	Amasa	MI	\$	300,000	This project would pay for personnel to install and operate optimization equipment at a sawmill in Michigan.
2024	Hill Wood Products, Inc.	Cook	MN	\$	300,000	This project would complete concept design and engineering to expand pellet operations in Cook, MN.
2024	Fred Nettendille Lumber	Woodville	MS	\$	300,000	This project would purchase a new sawmill and miscellaneous equipment for increasing production.
2024	Kanduch Logging	Philipsburg	MT	\$	225,973	This project would purchase and install a firewood processor, scale, and trailer loader to construct a firewood processing facility.
2024	Panhandle Forest Products	St. Regis	MT	\$	300,000	This project would purchase and install wood fired hot water heat system for wood drying at a treating facility.
2024	Evergreen CLT, LLC	Stony Point	NC	\$	300,000	This project would purchase a CNC machine, automated CLT press and lifting pads to scale up production at its plant.
2024	Polk Sawmill	Rutherfordton	NC	\$	300,000	This project would purchase a 3D scanning and optimization system for processing hardwood logs.
2024	Verenovo Energy Inc.	North Wilkesboro	NC	\$	300,000	This project would purchase a pyrolysis unit for production of biochar.
2024	Dugin and Crowell Lumber Co., Inc.	Springfield	NH	\$	1,000,000	This project would purchase a boiler as part of a CHP system at a NH sawmill.
2024	Tahoe Forest Products Company	Carson City	NV	\$	300,000	This project would contract fabrication, electrical and installation services for new integrated sawmill.
2024	Gutchess Lumber	Cortland	NY	\$	1,000,000	This project would purchase a wood-fired boiler and four turbines at a PA sawmill to save \$1.2 million/year in electricity costs.
2024	Brooks Wood Lot LLC	Oakridge	OR	\$	50,699	This project would purchase a new Woodmizer sawmill, combination planer, and dehumidifier lumber kiln.
2024	Elk Creek Forest Products	McMinnville	OR	\$	300,000	This project would purchase bandmill resaw equipment for remanufacturer/wholesaler to increase production efficiency.
2024	Go Lab, Inc.	White City	OR	\$	300,000	This project would fund pre-engineering and permitting costs for the company to construct a 350,000 ton wood fiber insulation plant in White City, Oregon.
2024	Timberlab, Inc.	Portland	OR	\$	330,000	This project would use funds to pay for contracts to design, engineer and permit a mass timber manufacturing facility.
2024	Brownlee Lumber, Inc.	Brookville	PA	\$	300,000	This project would purchase a ring debarker to reduce fiber loss and improve recovery.
2024	Clear Lake Lumber, Inc.	Spartansburg	PA	\$	122,868	This project would pay for installation and fabrication to install a tie handling line at a sawmill.
2024	Collins Pine	Kane	PA	\$	300,000	This project would purchase three dry kilns to replace five outdated kilns in their drying operation.
2024	Cummings Lumber Company	Troy	PA	\$	270,215	This project would purchase a rip optimization system and contractual services at a flooring facility.
2024	Clark Lumber Company Inc.	Red Bolling Springs	TN	\$	300,000	This project would purchase a thermal chamber to thermally modify hardwood lumber.
2024	Panther Creek Forestry	McMinnville	TN	\$	272,774	This project would purchase stationary firewood and post peeling equipment to process 20-30,000 tons of low-grade wood annually.
2024	Unaka Forest Products Inc.	Jonesborough	TN	\$	300,000	This project will purchase new stationary sawmill unit to expand and accept increased volumes.
2024	Whell Lee Lumber Company	Baxter	TN	\$	300,000	This project would use funds to purchase a rip optimizer and backlog chains for the mill to expand into thermal modification.
2024	Texas Urban Sawmill	Dripping Springs	TX	\$	200,000	This project would pay personnel costs to remove hazardous fuels, operate sawmill and establish connection with Austin ReStores.
2024	Cersosimo Lumber Company, Inc.	Brattleboro	VT	\$	300,000	This project would purchase a trim expert computer system and scanners to optimize trim saw at a sawmill.
2024	Ryegate Associates	Ryegate	VT	\$	1,000,000	This project would purchase waste recovery modules at a biomass CHP plant which would dry wood chips to increase combustion efficiencies.

2024	Vermont Renewable Gas, LLC	Shelburne	VT	\$	300,000	This project would use funds for installation, testing and training to develop a renewable natural gas plant in Vermont.
2024	Mercer Spokane	Spokane Valley	WA	\$	300,000	This project would pay for prototyping, testing and certification services to provide direct pathway in WA 6-story modular single stair typology
2024	Pacific Northwest Renewable Energy LLC	Hoquiam	WA	\$	300,000	This project would pay for engineering design work and legal services for development of a 440,000 ton pellet plant in Washington
2024	Pacific Rim Tonewoods	Concrete	WA	\$	298,326	This project would pay for personnel, training, and contractual to install new saw for processing smaller diameter timber into guitar parts
2024	StructureCraft	Seattle	WA	\$	150,000	This project would pay for personnel salary, graduate tuition, and expenses to provide reliability testing to determine seismic factors for mass timber via FEMA P695.
2024	Vaagan Brothers Lumber	Coville	WA	\$	300,000	This project would pay for fabrication and personnel costs to install an x-ray log scanner at the company's sawmill to increase production
2024	Krueger Lumber Co	Valders	WI	\$	187,500	This project would pay for installation for a new gang saw to replace outdated equipment at a Wisconsin sawmill.
Wood Products Assistance Grant Program						
Award YR	Project Applicant	City	State	Award Amount	Brief Description	
2024	Galena Village Corporation	Galena	AK	\$ 653,813	Alaska Native Corporation seeking funding to purchase a new feller buncher to support community wood needs	
2024	The Port Graham Corporation	Port Graham	AK	\$ 725,236	Alaska Native Corporation seeking funding to support new log truck, loader, and generator to aid in the expansion of a wood products venture.	
2024	Arizona Log & TimberWorks, LLC	Eagar	AZ	\$ 1,000,000	Post and pole manufacturer to add composting operation to utilize their residues, which was limiting their production. Most funding used for equipment purchases and rentals.	
2024	Dakota Logging	Dewey	AZ	\$ 550,000	Logging firm and firewood processor to add fire wood kilns and packaging equipment.	
2024	Novo BioPower	Snowflake	AZ	\$ 1,000,000	Biomass power facility to utilize funding for turbine and generator rebuild and condenser re-tube maintenance to keep facility running.	
2024	California Hotwood, Inc	Oroville	CA	\$ 149,000	Firewood production facility seeking funding to upgrade firewood processing equipment. in an area with lots of industry.	
2024	Collins Company	Chester	CA	\$ 935,118	Large sawmill seeking contractual funding to assist with the upgrade of their planer system.	
2024	Franklin Logging, Inc	Burney	CA	\$ 535,637	Existing sawmill seeking funding to purchase and install kiln controls and log loader.	
2024	High Desert Lumber LLC	Alturas	CA	\$ 984,197	Restart sawmill seeking additional funding (after previous WPIA award) to continue expansion by adding cant production, install dowel machine, add railcar loading and chip van loading area, trailer loader, debarker, and other items.	
2024	HL Power Co	Wendel	CA	\$ 1,000,000	Biomass power facility seeking funding to lease loader with lower emissions than their current equipment due to operating limitations of current equipment because of tight equipment emissions rules.	
2024	La Jolla Band of Luiseno Indians	Pauma Valley	CA	\$ 893,444	Tribal organization seeking funding to purchase sawmill and assorted wood finishing tools and equipment to operate a tribal woodshop. Would also contract for personnel training and production of internal training videos.	
2024	Mt. Lassen Power	Westwood	CA	\$ 997,800	Restart biomass power facility to use funding for personnel start-up training and the procurement of hardware, equipment and software needed for the new computer controls. Funding will also be used for electrical upgrades and safety controls.	
2024	Rath Industries, Inc	Redding	CA	\$ 996,099	Small/mid-sized specialty sawmill seeking funding to complete a variety of engineering/design/installation work associated with adding new machine centers, matched with applicant's purchase of equipment.	
2024	Scotts Valley Energy Corporation	Kelseyville	CA	\$ 409,957	Tribal organization seeking funding to support the establishment of two facilities (wood processing site (1) to feed a small scale biomass energy/biochar production facility (2)). Much of the funding would be used for engineering/design.	
2024	Sierra Forest Products	Terra Bella	CA	\$ 989,284	Existing large sawmill facility seeking funding to complete a planemill trim-sort upgrade.	
2024	Trinity River Lumber Company	Weaverville	CA	\$ 465,000	Large sawmill seeking funding to upgrade edger in-feed system to increase efficiency and value recovery.	

2024	Biochar Now LLC	Fort Collins	CO	\$	750,000	Biochar production facility to establish a new facility in Larimer County, CO. Funding will be used to purchase biochar kilns and required computer controls.
2024	Golden West Pine Mills, LLC	Ault	CO	\$	933,325	Small sawmill east of the Front Range to add panel saw, sawmill, vacuum kilns, and stationary generator to producer EGAR (Edge-glue-and-rip) lumber. One of few operations along the Front Range, north of Denver.
2024	Parma Post & Pole, Inc	Parma	ID	\$	770,264	Post and pole manufacturer to use funding for purchasing two dowel peeler mills to add to current peeler capacity.
2024	Tuckers Timber LLC	Star	ID	\$	545,689	Facility produces lumber and firewood. Project funding would be used to purchase firewood processor and
2024	California Hotwood, Inc	Kalispell	MT	\$	189,045	Firewood processing firm seeking funds to upgrade firewood processing equipment, conveyors, and pallet wrapper.
2024	Panhandle Forest Products Inc	St. Regis	MT	\$	1,000,000	Post and pole facility to add copper azole treating equipment for preserving posts and poles.
2024	SmartLam NA Enterprises US, LLC	Columbia Falls	MT	\$	1,000,000	CLT manufacturer to purchase and install new CNC machine for processing CLT and glulam products.
2024	Sillwater Post and Pole LLC	Olney	MT	\$	1,000,000	Post and pole manufacturer to redesign and reconfigure log infed systems, purchase and install new by-product chain conveyor, product sorting bins to improve efficiency, and add pointing machine.
2024	Sun Mountain Lumber, Inc	Livingston	MT	\$	1,000,000	Sawmill firm refurbishing and restarting damaged facility. Funds will be used to upgrade grade scanner AI and contractual for engineering and install contractors. Only industry in the area.
2024	Tahoe Forest Products, LLC	Carson City	NV	\$	1,000,000	New sawmill in critical area to complete phase 2 of facility building--planer design and install to increase utilization and allow for additional species usage.
2024	Brooks Wood Lot LLC	Oakridge	OR	\$	389,656	Firewood processing facility seeking funding to purchase firewood kiln with wood biomass heating.
2024	Gilchrist Forest Products, LLC	Gilchrist	OR	\$	900,000	Large sawmill operation seeking funding related to the installation of a new train chip car reloader system to ease the transportation of residue chips.
2024	Iron Triangle LLC	John Day	OR	\$	981,651	Existing post and pole facility seeking equipment funding to add log debarking equipment to improve log scanning, bark grinder and chip bin, firewood drum saw, and firewood packaging equipment.
2024	Forest Products Distributors	Rapid City	SD	\$	500,000	Black Hills pellet manufacturing firm to add another pelletizer to increase production.
2024	Rosebud Sioux Tribe	Rosebud	SD	\$	911,176	Tribe to add forest operations equipment, chip processing equipment, and briquette machine to turn in-woods and residue chips into briquettes to meet the firewood needs of tribal members, and possibly sell in the future.
2024	Spearfish Pellet Company, LLC	Spearfish	SD	\$	928,600	Black Hills pellet manufacturer to use funding for contractual expenses related to adding a Wet Electrostatic Precipitator to reduce emissions and increase production of wood pellets. Would allow for increased use of federal by-products.
2024	Blizzard Lumber Company	Kamas	UT	\$	203,585	Small sawmill to add firewood processor, cross cut saw, and material handling equipment to utilize low grade material for firewood, rather than low grade lumber.
2024	Thompson Sawmill	Randolph	UT	\$	619,239	Small sawmill to use funding to purchase electric stationary grinder to produce chips for playgrounds, mulch and animal bedding.
2024	Vaagen Brothers Lumber, Inc	Colville	WA	\$	1,000,000	Large sawmill seeking contractual funding to support engineering and design budget for a major re-tooling of the sawmill to allow for the utilization of a wider range of log sizes.
2024	Menominee Tribal Enterprises	Neopit	WI	\$	866,062	Large tribal sawmill seeking funding to upgrade both small and large log handling and scanning equipment, in-wood forestry equipment, and a flatbed trailer for product delivery.

Attachment #3

Percentage of Litigated Vegetation Management Decisions by Region FY 2014 – 2023			
Region *	No. Lawsuits	No. Veg. Mgmt. Decisions	% Veg. Mgmt. Decisions Litigated
1	44	352	12.5
2	2	272	0.7
3	1	149	0.8
4	7	264	2.7
5	34	485	7.0
6	12	551	2.2
8	2	762	0.3
9	3	384	0.8
10	1	61	1.6
WO	0	2	0

Timber Volume affect by Litigation by Region in FY23 (as of September 2023)		
Region	Volume Affected	Narrative of Affected Regions
Region 1	652.1 MMBF	289.3 MMBF in Idaho, 362.8 MMBF in MT
Region 2	None	
Region 3	None	
Region 4	41.1 MMBF	The Payette NF signed a new decision lifting suspensions on 3 of their 6 sales under contract affected by the Lost Creek-Boulder Creek litigation. A 2nd NEPA decision is planned to be signed this Summer to enable the completion of the remaining 3 sales.
Region 5	900 MMBF	350,000 acres, none enjoined
Region 6	36 MMBF	Notable adverse decisions include the Sanpoil and Bulldog projects as well Eastside 21” Screen Amendment (six eastside forests) that affected multiple timber sales
Region 8	None	
Region 9	34.2 MMBF	Region has two projects under litigation: Wayne National Forest - Sunny Oaks Project Monongahela National Forest - Greenbrier Southeast Project
Region 10	None	

Attachment #4

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

1	CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	HUNTER HORSE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
2	FORESTRY TECHNICIAN	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	HUNTER HORSE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
3	FORESTRY TECHNICIAN (JOHNSTOWN HANDCARE)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	HUNTER HORSE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
4	FORESTRY TECHNICIAN	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	TALLY LAKE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
5	FORESTRY TECHNICIAN (Huckleberry)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	SMART LAKE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
6	Lead Forestry Technician (Huckleberry)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	HUNTER HORSE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
7	Lead Forestry Technician	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	HUNTER HORSE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
8	LEAD FORESTRY TECHNICIAN (HUNTER HORSE RANGER)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	HUNTER HORSE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
9	LEAD FORESTRY TECHNICIAN (JOHNSTOWN HANDCARE)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	HUNTER HORSE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
10	FORESTRY TECHNICIAN (TUMBLEWEED AND WINDWARD)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	ROSAURUS	MONTANA
11	FORESTRY TECHNICIAN (WILDERNESS TRAILS)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	SPOTTED BEAR RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
12	Lead Forestry Technician (Huckleberry)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	SPOTTED BEAR RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
13	ADAM'S SUPER ASSIST	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	HUNTER HORSE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
14	ADAM'S SUPER ASSIST	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	HUNTER HORSE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
15	Forestry Technician (Wilderness Trails)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	HUNTER HORSE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
16	Forestry Technician (Handcure)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	TALLY LAKE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
17	Forestry Technician (Handcure)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	SMART LAKE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
18	Forestry Technician (Equal Rider)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	HUNTER HORSE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
19	Forestry Technician (Equal Rider)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	HUNTER HORSE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
20	FORESTRY TECHNICIAN (Equal Rider)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	TALLY LAKE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
21	FORESTRY TECHNICIAN	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	SMART LAKE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
22	FORESTRY TECHNICIAN	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	SPOTTED BEAR RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
23	FORESTRY TECHNICIAN	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	SPOTTED BEAR RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
24	FORESTRY TECHNICIAN (FIRE FIGHTER OPTI)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	HUNTER HORSE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
25	FORESTRY TECHNICIAN (TIME STAFF AND IMPROVEM)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	SPOTTED BEAR RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
26	FORESTRY TECHNICIAN (TIME STAFF AND IMPROVEM)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	SPOTTED BEAR RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
27	ADAM'S SUPER ASSIST	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	TALLY LAKE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
28	ADAM'S SUPER ASSIST	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	ENGINEERING & ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES	MONTANA
29	ENRGO TECHNICIAN (CYL)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	SPOTTED BEAR RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
30	Forestry Technician (Resource)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	SPOTTED BEAR RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
31	Forestry Technician (Resource)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	SPOTTED BEAR RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
32	Forest Technician Timber Stand Improvement	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	SPOTTED BEAR RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
33	PATINSTRY COORD	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	RESOURCES	MONTANA
34	ANIML PACKER	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	SPOTTED BEAR RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
35	SUPPLY FORESTRY TECHNICIAN	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	MONTANA
36	SUPPLY FORESTRY TECHNICIAN	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	HUNTER HORSE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
37	SUPPLY FORESTRY TECHNICIAN (HANDCARE)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	SMART LAKE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
38	SUPPLY FORESTRY TECHNICIAN (HANDCARE)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	MONTANA
39	ANIML PACKER	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	SPOTTED BEAR RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
40	FORESTRY TECHNICIAN (FLANDKILL)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	TALLY LAKE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
41	FORESTRY TECHNICIAN (FIRE)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	SPOTTED BEAR RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
42	STOCK WORK	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	SPOTTED BEAR RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
43	MTECLOG TECHNICIAN	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	SPOTTED BEAR RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
44	SUPPLY FORESTRY TECHNICIAN (FIRE)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	HUNTER HORSE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
45	FORESTRY TECHNICIAN (DOPUCH)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	SPOTTED BEAR RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
46	FORESTRY TECHNICIAN (FIRE)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	SPOTTED BEAR RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
47	BIOLOGICAL SCIENTIST (CALL FIRE)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	HUNTER HORSE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
48	Forester	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	TALLY LAKE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
49	ENGINEERING TECHNICIAN (CIVIL)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	HUNTER HORSE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
50	ENGINEERING TECHNICIAN (CIVIL)	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	ENGINEERING & ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES	MONTANA
51	CHILDREN'S PROGRAM SPECIALIST	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	ENGINEERING & ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES	MONTANA
52	ADAM'S MOUNT SPECIALIST	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	ENGINEERING & ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES	MONTANA
53	ADAM'S OFFERS SPECIALIST	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	TALLY LAKE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA
54	FLATHEAD SCOUTING SPECIALIST	FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST	TALLY LAKE RANGER DISTRICT	MONTANA

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FSSTRY TECHNCN	7	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	REYNOLDS RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
FSSTRY TECHNCN (FHE)	7	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	CABINET RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
FSSTRY TECHNCN (FHE)	7	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	REYNOLDS RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
FSSTRY TECHNCN (FHE)	7	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	FIRE AND AVIATION	FOREST	MONTANA
FSSTRY TECHNCN (HELLACK)	7	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	FIRE AND AVIATION	FOREST	MONTANA
ADV SUPRT ASSN (FHE)	7	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	THREE RIVERS RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
FSSTRY TECHNCN (FHE)	7	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	REYNOLDS RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
FSSTRY TECHNCN (FHE)	7	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	REYNOLDS RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
ADV SUPRT ASST	7	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	REYNOLDS RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
ADV SUPRT ASST	7	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	REYNOLDS RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
FSSTRY TECHNCN	7	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	SUPERVISORY PUBLIC SERVICES	FOREST	MONTANA
FSSTRY TECHNCN (TDB SALE PREP)	7	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	LIBBY RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
FSSTRY TECHNCN (TDB STAND IMPRVMT)	7	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	CABINET RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
Supervisory Forestry Technician	8	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	REYNOLDS RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
Supervisory Forestry Technician (Hdline)	8	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	FIRE AND AVIATION	FOREST	MONTANA
Supervisory Forestry Technician	8	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	CABINET RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
SUPVY FSSTRY TECHNCN	8	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	THREE RIVERS RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
SUPVY FSSTRY TECHNCN	8	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	THREE RIVERS RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
SUPVY FSSTRY TECHNCN	8	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	REYNOLDS RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
SUPVY FSSTRY TECHNCN	8	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	LIBBY RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
ENRGO TECHNCN (FHE)	8	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	THREE RIVERS RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
ENRGO TECHNCN (FHE)	8	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	THREE RIVERS RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
ENRGO TECHNCN (FHE)	8	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	CABINET RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
ENRGO TECHNCN (FHE)	8	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	CABINET RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
MTNCE WKR	8	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	REYNOLDS RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
MTNCE WKR	8	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	REYNOLDS RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
FSSTRY TECHNCN (DSPTCH)	9	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	FIRE AND AVIATION	FOREST	MONTANA
FSSTRY TECHNCN (FHE)	9	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	THREE RIVERS RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
FSSTRY TECHNCN (FHE)	9	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	THREE RIVERS RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
FSSTRY TECHNCN (FHE)	9	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	LIBBY RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
FSSTRY TECHNCN (FHE)	9	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	LIBBY RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
FSSTRY TECHNCN (TDB STAND IMPRVMT)	9	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	LIBBY RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
Supervisory Forestry Technician	9	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	LIBBY RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
SUPVY FSSTRY TECHNCN	9	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	LIBBY RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
SUPVY FSSTRY TECHNCN	9	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	THREE RIVERS RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
ARCHOLOGST	9	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	LIBBY RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
CIVIL ENGR	9	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	ENGINEERING	FOREST	MONTANA
CIVIL ENGR	9	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	ENGINEERING	FOREST	MONTANA
Insulating Technician (Civil)	9	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	CABINET RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
FSSTRY TECHNCN (Reer)	9	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	REYNOLDS RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
ADV MONT SPLCLST	9	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	REYNOLDS RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
ARCHOLOGST	9	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	LIBBY RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
ENRGO TECHNCN (CIVL)	9	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	LIBBY RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
ENRGO TECHNCN (CIVL)	9	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	LIBBY RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
ENRGO TECHNCN (CIVL)	9	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	LIBBY RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
ENRGO TECHNCN (CIVL)	9	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	LIBBY RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
Supervisory Forestry Technician (Hdline)	9	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	SUPERVISORY OPERATIONS	FOREST	MONTANA
SUPVY FSSTRY TECHNCN (HELLACK)	9	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	REYNOLDS RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
SUPVY FSSTRY TECHNCN (HELLACK)	9	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	LIBBY RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
SUPVY FSSTRY TECHNCN (HELLACK)	9	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	LIBBY RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
ENRGO TECHNCN (CIVL)	11	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	FIRE AND AVIATION	FOREST	MONTANA
ENRGO TECHNCN (CIVL)	11	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	FIRE AND AVIATION	FOREST	MONTANA
ENRGO TECHNCN (CIVL)	11	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	SUPERVISORY OPERATIONS	FOREST	MONTANA
ENRGO TECHNCN (CIVL)	11	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	SUPERVISORY OPERATIONS	FOREST	MONTANA
DISZONE FIRE MONT OFF	11	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	LIBBY RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
DISZONE FIRE MONT OFF	11	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	CABINET RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
Forest Fire Training Center Manager	11	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	FIRE AND AVIATION	FOREST	MONTANA
FOREST PROCTS RECR SPLCLST	11	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	SUPERVISORY OPERATIONS	FOREST	MONTANA
FOREST PROCTS RECR SPLCLST	11	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	SUPERVISORY OPERATIONS	FOREST	MONTANA
BE MONT SPLCLST	11	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	SUPERVISORY PUBLIC SERVICES	FOREST	MONTANA
SOIL SCNTST	11	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	REYNOLDS RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST	11	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	LIBBY RANGER DISTRICT	FOREST	MONTANA
FORESTR (SILVCLTR)	11	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	SUPERVISORY OPERATIONS	FOREST	MONTANA
CIVIL ENGR	11	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	SUPERVISORY OPERATIONS	FOREST	MONTANA
CIVIL ENGR	11	KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST	SUPERVISORY OPERATIONS	FOREST	MONTANA

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PROGRAMT SPECIST	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT & PLANNING	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
SOCIENTIST	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT & PLANNING	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
CIVIL ENGR	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	ENGINEERING	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
SOIL CONSERVATION	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	ENGINEERING	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
LANDSCP ARCH	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	ENGINEERING	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
Assistant to AD F&M Operations	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	FIRE AVIATION & AIR	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
FIRE MGMT SPECIST	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	FIRE AVIATION & AIR	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
Fire Management Specialist	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	FIRE AVIATION & AIR	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
Fire Management Specialist	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	FIRE AVIATION & AIR	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
Fire Management Specialist	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	FIRE AVIATION & AIR	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
Fire Management Specialist	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	FIRE AVIATION & AIR	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
Supervisory Training Program Specialist	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	FIRE AVIATION & AIR	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
FORSTER	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	FOREST & RANGELAND	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
FORSTER	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	FOREST & RANGELAND	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
FORSTER	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	FOREST & RANGELAND	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
GRANTS MANAGEMENT SPECIST	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	GRANTS & AGREEMENTS	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
GRANTS MANAGEMENT SPECIST	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	GRANTS & AGREEMENTS	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
GRANTS MANAGEMENT SPECIST	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	GRANTS & AGREEMENTS	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
LIASN SPECIST	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	PUBLIC & GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
PARTNERSHIP COORD	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	PUBLIC & GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
PUBLIC AFF SPECIST	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	PUBLIC & GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
REVIEW APPRAISER	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	RECREATION, MINERALS, LANDS, HERITAGE & WILDERNESS	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
REVIEW SPECIST	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	RECREATION, MINERALS, LANDS, HERITAGE & WILDERNESS	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
LAND SURVYR	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	RECREATION, MINERALS, LANDS, HERITAGE & WILDERNESS	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
LANDSCP ARCH	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	RECREATION, MINERALS, LANDS, HERITAGE & WILDERNESS	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
LANDSCP ARCH	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	RECREATION, MINERALS, LANDS, HERITAGE & WILDERNESS	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
Supervisory NATRL Resource Mgr	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	RECREATION, MINERALS, LANDS, HERITAGE & WILDERNESS	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
SUPPLY BUDGET ANAL	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	STATE AND PRIVATE FORESTRY	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
NATRL RESOURCE SPECIST	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	STATE AND PRIVATE FORESTRY	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
NATRL RESOURCE SPECIST	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	STATE AND PRIVATE FORESTRY	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
PLANT PATH SPECIST	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	STATE AND PRIVATE FORESTRY	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
PLANT PATH SPECIST	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	STATE AND PRIVATE FORESTRY	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
TRIBAL RELATIONS SPECIST	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	STATE AND PRIVATE FORESTRY	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
TRIBAL RELATIONS SPECIST	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	STATE AND PRIVATE FORESTRY	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
Burnout	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	STATE AND PRIVATE FORESTRY	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
FISH BIOLIST	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	WATERSHED, WILDLIFE, FISHERIES & RARE PLANTS	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
PROGRAMT SPECIST	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	WATERSHED, WILDLIFE, FISHERIES & RARE PLANTS	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
PROGRAMT SPECIST	13	REGIONAL OFFICE	WATERSHED, WILDLIFE, FISHERIES & RARE PLANTS	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
BRIDGE OFFICR	14	REGIONAL OFFICE	WATERSHED, WILDLIFE, FISHERIES & RARE PLANTS	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
CH OF STAFF	14	REGIONAL OFFICE	WATERSHED, WILDLIFE, FISHERIES & RARE PLANTS	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
PROGRAMT SPECIST	14	REGIONAL OFFICE	ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT & PLANNING	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
NATRL RESOURCE MGMT SPECIST	14	REGIONAL OFFICE	ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT & PLANNING	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
Supervisory NATRL Resource Mgr	14	REGIONAL OFFICE	ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT & PLANNING	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
Supervisory NATRL Resource Mgr	14	REGIONAL OFFICE	ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT & PLANNING	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
DEPUTY REGIONAL F&M DIRECTOR	14	REGIONAL OFFICE	FIRE AVIATION & AIR	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
DEPUTY REGIONAL F&M DIRECTOR	14	REGIONAL OFFICE	FIRE AVIATION & AIR	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
PROGRAMT SPECIST	14	REGIONAL OFFICE	FOREST & RANGELAND	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
Supervisory NATRL Resource Specialist	14	REGIONAL OFFICE	FOREST & RANGELAND	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
Supervisory NATRL Resource Specialist	14	REGIONAL OFFICE	FOREST & RANGELAND	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
Supervisory NATRL Resource Specialist	14	REGIONAL OFFICE	FOREST & RANGELAND	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
DEP REGNL FORSTR	15	REGIONAL OFFICE	RECREATION, MINERALS, LANDS, HERITAGE & WILDERNESS	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
DEP REGNL FORSTR	15	REGIONAL OFFICE	RECREATION, MINERALS, LANDS, HERITAGE & WILDERNESS	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
DIR	15	REGIONAL OFFICE	WATERSHED, WILDLIFE, FISHERIES & RARE PLANTS	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
DIR	15	REGIONAL OFFICE	WATERSHED, WILDLIFE, FISHERIES & RARE PLANTS	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
Supervisory NATRL Resource Management	15	REGIONAL OFFICE	ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT & PLANNING	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
Supervisory NATRL Resource Management	15	REGIONAL OFFICE	ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT & PLANNING	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
Regional Fire and Aviation Director	15	REGIONAL OFFICE	FIRE AVIATION & AIR	REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA
Total	15	REGIONAL OFFICE		REGIONAL OFFICE	MONTANA