



Office of the Secretary
Washington, DC 20250

October 23, 2023

THE HONORABLE JOHN BOOZMAN
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
United States Senate
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Ranking Member Boozman:

This letter transmits the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service's response to P.L. 117-58 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, requiring that the Forest Service provide the Committees a report detailing the number of acres in need of reforestation, and the number of acres reforested after an unplanned event (such as a wildfire).

As required by Section 7016(b)(1) of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, Pub. L. No. 117-328, this report will be posted on the Forest Service's website at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/budget-performance> within 45 days of receipt of the report by the Subcommittees.

If you have any questions, please have a member of your staff contact the Office of Congressional Relations at (202) 720-7095. A similar letter is being sent to Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow.

Sincerely,

/s/ Thomas J. Vilsack

THOMAS J. VILSACK
Secretary

Enclosure



Office of the Secretary
Washington, DC 20250

October 23, 2023

THE HONORABLE JEFF MERKLEY
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Merkley:

This letter transmits the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service's response to P.L. 117-58 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, requiring that the Forest Service provide the Committees a report detailing the number of acres in need of reforestation, and the number of acres reforested after an unplanned event (such as a wildfire).

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If you have any questions, please have a member of your staff contact the Office of Congressional Relations at (202) 720-7095. A similar letter is being sent to Ranking Member Lisa Murkowski.

Sincerely,

/s/ Thomas J. Vilsack

THOMAS J. VILSACK
Secretary

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Washington, DC 20250

October 23, 2023

THE HONORABLE LISA MURKOWSKI
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Ranking Member Murkowski:

This letter transmits the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service's response to P.L. 117-58 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, requiring that the Forest Service provide the Committees a report detailing the number of acres in need of reforestation, and the number of acres reforested after an unplanned event (such as a wildfire).

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If you have any questions, please have a member of your staff contact the Office of Congressional Relations at (202) 720-7095. A similar letter is being sent to Chairman Jeff Merkley.

Sincerely,

/s/ Thomas J. Vilsack

THOMAS J. VILSACK
Secretary

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Washington, DC 20250

October 23, 2023

THE HONORABLE CHELLIE PINGREE
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
House of Representatives
2007 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Pingree:

This letter transmits the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service's response to P.L. 117-58 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, requiring that the Forest Service provide the Committees a report detailing the number of acres in need of reforestation, and the number of acres reforested after an unplanned event (such as a wildfire).

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If you have any questions, please have a member of your staff contact the Office of Congressional Relations at (202) 720-7095. A similar letter is being sent to Chairman Mike Simpson.

Sincerely,

/s/ Thomas J. Vilsack

THOMAS J. VILSACK
Secretary

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Office of the Secretary
Washington, DC 20250

October 23, 2023

THE HONORABLE DAVID SCOTT
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
1010 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Scott:

This letter transmits the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service's response to P.L. 117-58 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, requiring that the Forest Service provide the Committees a report detailing the number of acres in need of reforestation, and the number of acres reforested after an unplanned event (such as a wildfire).

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If you have any questions, please have a member of your staff contact the Office of Congressional Relations at (202) 720-7095. A similar letter is being sent to Chairman Glenn Thompson.

Sincerely,

/s/ Thomas J. Vilsack

THOMAS J. VILSACK
Secretary

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Office of the Secretary
Washington, DC 20250

October 23, 2023

THE HONORABLE MIKE SIMPSON
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
House of Representatives
2007 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Simpson:

This letter transmits the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service's response to P.L. 117-58 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, requiring that the Forest Service provide the Committees a report detailing the number of acres in need of reforestation, and the number of acres reforested after an unplanned event (such as a wildfire).

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If you have any questions, please have a member of your staff contact the Office of Congressional Relations at (202) 720-7095. A similar letter is being sent to Ranking Member Chellie Pingree.

Sincerely,

/s/ Thomas J. Vilsack

THOMAS J. VILSACK
Secretary

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Office of the Secretary
Washington, DC 20250

October 23, 2023

THE HONORABLE DEBBIE STABENOW
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
United States Senate
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow:

This letter transmits the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service's response to P.L. 117-58 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, requiring that the Forest Service provide the Committees a report detailing the number of acres in need of reforestation, and the number of acres reforested after an unplanned event (such as a wildfire).

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Sincerely,

/s/ Thomas J. Vilsack

THOMAS J. VILSACK
Secretary

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Office of the Secretary
Washington, DC 20250

October 23, 2023

THE HONORABLE GLENN "GT" THOMPSON
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Thompson:

This letter transmits the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service's response to P.L. 117-58 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, requiring that the Forest Service provide the Committees a report detailing the number of acres in need of reforestation, and the number of acres reforested after an unplanned event (such as a wildfire).

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If you have any questions, please have a member of your staff contact the Office of Congressional Relations at (202) 720-7095. A similar letter is being sent to Ranking Member David Scott.

Sincerely,

/s/ Thomas J. Vilsack

THOMAS J. VILSACK
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REPLANT Act National Summary for Fiscal Year 2022

Directive:

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (P.L. 117-58) included the following language:

“Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Secretary of Agriculture shall submit to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate and the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives, and make publicly available on the website of the Forest Service, a report that describes, with respect to the preceding year— (1) an evaluation of the degree to which the Secretary has achieved compliance with the requirements contained in the amendments made by this title, including, as a result of those amendments, the number of acres covered by reforestation projects that follow unplanned events (such as wildfires); (2) the total number of acres of land reforested under each authority of the Secretary under which reforestation projects have been carried out; (3) the number of acres of National Forest System land affected by, and the substance of reforestation needs on that land resulting from, unplanned events; and (4) the number of acres in need of reforestation under subsection (e)(1) of section 3 of the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (16 U.S.C. 1601).”

Summary:

The Repairing Existing Public Land by Adding Necessary Trees or REPLANT Act was signed into law as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Public Law 117-58, Title III, Section 70301-70303) on November 15, 2021. The REPLANT Act provides a historic opportunity to address post disturbance reforestation needs and sets a target for the agency to address the reforestation backlog on National Forest System (NFS) lands within 10 years. It also removes the \$30 million funding cap on the Reforestation Trust Fund, which had been in place since the 1980s.

This report meets the reporting requirements specified in Section 70303 of the REPLANT Act.

The annual Reforestation and Stand Improvement Activity Reports appear on the Forest Service Internet website, <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/forest-management/vegetation-management/reforest-tsi>. The REPLANT Act Report will also be published at the same location.

Reporting Element 1 – Evaluation of Compliance:

Reforestation Accomplishments in 2022

In July 2022, USDA Secretary Vilsack and Forest Service Chief Moore released the [*National Forest System Reforestation Strategy*](#)¹. The National Reforestation Strategy outlines the goals and objectives necessary for successful reforestation on national forests. These goals and objectives build a robust framework to increase the pace and scale of reforestation to address existing needs, anticipate future events, and meet the provisions of the recently passed REPLANT Act.

The Forest Service has achieved compliance with fiscal year goals for implementing the REPLANT Act by making investments that lay the groundwork for increased reforestation accomplishments in out years. The agency increased funding allocations to the field more than three-fold over FY 2021; \$65 million (M) was allocated for the reforestation activities as described below and \$35M was invested in nursery facilities to address deferred maintenance and expand capacity.

Investments to field units focused on increasing organizational capacity in nursery, genetics, and reforestation program areas. Increased organizational capacity will support increased future reforestation accomplishments. Multiple hiring events were utilized to increase agency capacity. The agency also expanded the use of partnerships to build additional external workforce capacity. Examples of how the agency used partnerships to build additional external capacity include creating national keystone agreements with options for reforestation support, enacting new national agreements with partners focused on gaps in reforestation implementation, and the development of a reforestation partnership effort to build a pipeline for a future reforestation workforce.

Nursery facility investments focused on addressing a backlog of deferred maintenance and critical operational needs. Planned future investments include conducting a system-wide facilities assessment with recommendations for modernization, optimization, and potential expansion of nursery facilities to support meeting the increased need for seed and seedlings.

In FY 2022, the agency reforested a total of 179,858 acres through planting seedlings, direct seeding, and natural regeneration. These accomplishments represent prior year investments of funding and resources at pre-REPLANT Act levels. Additional activities were conducted on approximately 347,000 acres to prepare for future reforestation accomplishments. Of the total 179,858 acres reforested, natural regeneration accounted for 116,991 acres, planting accounted for 58,308 acres, and seeding accounted for 4,559 acres. A total of 107,417 acres were reforested to address needs caused by unplanned events such as wildfire, insects or disease, severe weather, and other events. Table 1 provides a detailed list of forest vegetation establishment activities contributing to the total acres of reforestation to address unplanned events and the total for all completed acres of reforestation.

Natural regeneration refers to the establishment of seedlings (new trees) from an existing seed source without the need for planting or manual seeding. Where natural regeneration is desired and possible, site preparation may be needed, to ensure that the right soil and site conditions are available to allow seeds to germinate and grow or to remove species which do not meet desired

¹ National Forest System Reforestation Strategy Growing and Nurturing Resilient Forests-
<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/reforestation-strategy.pdf>

management objectives. Certification of natural regeneration is determined through (a minimum of) first- and third-year monitoring to determine if the appropriate tree species, numbers, and distributions are established (with or without site preparation) as required by the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976. If natural regeneration numbers are not at the desired levels, further site preparation treatments may be completed, or planting or seeding may be planned. Alternatively, undesired natural regeneration may be removed to favor tree species that are desired to meet management objectives.

Table 1: FY 2022 Reforestation Accomplishments (acres)

Unplanned Events							Unplanned Event Total	Harvest Total	Grand Total
Forest Vegetation Established (acres)	Failure to Establish ¹	Fire	Insect or disease	Weather event	Other				
Planting	3,344	31,240	2,450	1,132	1,505	39,671	18,637	58,308	
Seeding	0	2,189	0	0	46	2,235	2,324	4,559	
Natural Regeneration	0	60,912	267	433	3,899	65,511	51,480	116,991	
Total	3,344	94,341	2,717	1,565	5,450	107,417	72,441	179,858	

¹Failure to Establish represents activities to address areas where initial reforestation activities did not meet management stocking objectives.

The additional activities conducted on approximately 347,000 acres to support current and future reforestation accomplishments include activities such as:

- Reforestation assessments after wildfire and other disturbance events
- Seed source and collection planning to ensure that genetically appropriate seed is available,
- Seed collection, processing, and storage,
- Surveys and mapping to determine the number and distribution of seeds or seedlings to place within project areas (specifically defined in silvicultural prescriptions that tier towards Land and Resource Management Plans, as required in NFMA),
- Seedling production at nurseries (which generally takes from one to five years, depending on the species and seedling size/type needed),
- Site preparation to remove or reduce competing vegetation,
- Seedling protection to promote seedling survival,
- Monitoring to ensure that a desired number and distribution of seedlings survive; and
- Additional vegetation or animal damage control measures or supplemental planting or seeding to ensure adequate survival, target densities and distributions are obtained, according to NFMA.

Priority List of Reforestation Projects

In FY 2022, the agency developed an interim list of prioritized reforestation projects. The REPLANT Act directs development “*of a priority list of reforestation projects that –*

- *primarily take place on priority land,*
- *promote effective reforestation following unplanned events, and*
- *may include activities to ensure adequate and appropriate seed availability.”*

As defined by the Act, “*‘priority land’ means National Forest System land that, due to an unplanned event –*

- *does not meet the conditions for appropriate forest cover,*
- *requires reforestation to meet the objectives of an applicable land management plan, and*
- *is unlikely to experience natural regeneration without assistance.”*

Ranking of projects, as directed in the REPLANT Act, is based on an “*1) effective reforestation project plan, 2) the ability to measure the progress and success of the project, and 3) the ability of a project to provide benefits relating to forest function and health, soil health and productivity, wildlife habitat, improved air and water quality, carbon sequestration potential, resilience, job creation, and enhanced recreation opportunities.*” FY 2022 reforestation projects were planned at pre-REPLANT levels, therefore all reforestation projects on priority lands and those from planned events were supported without the need for further ranking. Most projects focused on reforestation after unplanned events and all projects contributed to the suite of benefits described above. The Forest Service will continue to develop and refine a process and priority list focusing on the ability of a project to demonstrate the three criteria outlined above. To support the new requirements of the Act, the Forest Service is developing a new data tracking and reporting function within the *Forest Service Activity Tracking Systems (FACTS) database* which identifies projects meeting reforestation backlog and priority land criteria. This will improve project identification, prioritization, data tracking, and reporting.

Reporting Element 2 – Reforestation Authorities

In FY 2022, the agency reforested a total of 179,858 acres under the primary authority of the NFMA, as amended. Of this total, 15,992 acres were completed through various other authorities of the Secretary. A list of forest vegetation establishment activities and acres by authorities are included in Table 2.

These authorities include:

- Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP),
- Joint Chief’s Landscape Restoration Partnership (FSNRC),
- Good Neighbor Authority (GDNBR),
- Stewardship Projects (STWD).

Table 2: Provides FY 2022 total number of acres of land reforested under various authorities of the Secretary under which reforestation projects have been carried out by type of activity (other authorities are a subset under the primary NFMA authority).

NFMA							
Other Authorities							
Forest Vegetation Established (acres)	CFLRP	FSNRC	GDNBR	STWD	Other Authorities Total	NFMA authority Total	Grand Total
Planting	4,275	504	2,155	2,953	9,887	48,421	58,308
Seeding	0	0	0	311	311	4,248	4,559
Natural Regeneration	2,484	723	429	2,158	5,794	111,197	116,991
Total	6,759	1,227	2,584	5,422	15,992	163,866	179,858

Reporting Element 3 – Reforestation from Unplanned Events

At the end of FY 2022, there were approximately 2.3M acres of verified reforestation needs caused by unplanned events such as wildfire, insect or disease outbreaks, severe weather, and other events. These acres will be scheduled for treatment. The total verified reforestation needs, including additional acres resulting from harvest was nearly 2.5M acres, as recorded in the FACTS database at the conclusion of FY 2022. Additional areas impacted by wildfire and other disturbances are still under assessment, which will likely increase the verified acreage total to more closely reflect the total estimate of 3.6M acres of reforestation need. A detailed list of reforestation activities and acres for each type of unplanned event or disturbance are included in Table 3. Listed activities have been previously described under Reporting Element 1 and include seedling planting, direct seeding, and natural regeneration.

Table 3: Provides the verified number of acres of National Forest System land affected by, and the substance of reforestation needs on that land resulting from, unplanned events and harvest.

Forest Vegetation Needs (acres)	Unplanned Events						Unplanned Event Total	Harvest	
	Failure to Establish	Fire	Insect or disease	Weather event	Other			Total	Total Needs
Planting	14,101	1,508,948	19,859	3,870	22,379		1,569,157	50,015	1,619,172
Seeding	551	360	0	11	425		1,347	902	2,249
Natural Regeneration	992	691,293	39,265	6,024	23,809		761,383	106,275	867,657
Total	15,644	2,200,601	59,124	9,905	46,612		2,331,886	157,192	2,489,079

Reporting Element 4 – Total Reforestation Need

At the end of FY 2022, the agency estimates that a total of 3.6M acres of National Forest System lands will likely require reforestation, including nearly 2.5M that have been verified and recorded in the FACTS database which is the system of record. The verified acres are the result of completed silviculture diagnoses and prescriptions. These total accumulated needs are identified by areas in Figure 1. As new acres of reforestation needs are identified, particularly after wildfires and other natural disturbances, and acres of reforestation are completed, the total acres of needs will shift.

Figure 1: Total accumulated reforestation needs (acres) by National Forest System (NFS) lands within state boundaries (outlined in black) as reported in the FACTS database.

