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## Forest Service chief on managing 193 million acres of national forest

By **Tom Fox**, Published: August 14

*Tom Tidwell is chief of the U.S. Forest Service, the agency that manages the nation's 155 national forests and 20 national grasslands that encompass 193 million acres. Tidwell has spent three decades in the Forest Service, serving in a variety of positions that have included district ranger, forest supervisor, legislative affairs specialist and deputy regional forester for the Pacific Southwest Region. Tidwell spoke with Tom Fox, who writes the Washington Post's Federal Coach blog and is the director of the Partnership for Public Service's Center for Government Leadership.*

### What has been the biggest surprise during your tenure as chief of the Forest Service?

Having a good grasp of everything that this agency does, what we're able to do day in and day out, and what a difference it makes to so many people in this country.

I don't know if it's a surprise, but I'm continually impressed with the magnitude of public service that this agency provides in the stewardship of 193 million acres of our national forest and grasslands and through our research and development branch. We provide leading-edge science to deal with issues such as restoration of our nation's forests.

### You have had a very busy forest-fire season this summer. How do you handle these situations and deal with employees on the frontlines?

For any crisis situation, employees need to trust their judgment. They need to rely on their training and experience and always be focused on taking care of the public. When it comes to a fire or any emergency, we make sure that our employees are safe, but we also find ways to communicate with the public and local officials about what is going on. The public should feel comfortable and confident in the level of expertise that we are bringing to these emergency situations.

For instance, we successfully suppress between 97 and 98 percent of all fires, but there is that 2 percent that no matter how many resources, how many firefighters and how many fire engines we have on the scene, it will escape initial attack and get large. In those cases, we need to be able to quickly put a good strategy in place to control the fire.

### What advice do you have to help federal managers increase operational efficiency?

It's so important to be able to understand the benefits of working across federal agencies and state and local governments. The demand from the public for a higher level of service is going to continue to increase, but at the same time, the level of resources that we can bring to the table is diminishing. Federal leaders need to embrace opportunities to become more efficient and effective.

The best example I have is our approach to wild land firefighting. It's not just the Forest Service. It is the Departments of the Interior, Homeland Security, Commerce and, at times, Defense. We've been able to develop an interagency, coordinated response that allows us to quickly respond to fires. I think this is a model for how we need to do things in the federal government.

### How do you explain the importance of the work of the Forest Service to the American public?

We have the responsibility for the stewardship of 193 million acres of land, ensuring that the public is going to be able to enjoy the clean air, clean water and biodiversity that are provided by these lands in a recreational setting. The other key part is the economic activity. Hundreds of thousands of jobs are maintained by the activities of the national forest. Also, there's the importance of conservation and to make sure the next generation is also going to be able to enjoy the same range of benefits.

### Do you have leadership role models?

There's Gifford Pinchot, the first chief of the Forest Service. The longer I'm in this position, the more impressed I am with what he did to establish the agency and build its foundation. The key principles that guide this agency today are just as true as they were 107 years ago. Also, I admire Theodore Roosevelt and what he did for conservation in this country. He took what was, at times, an unpopular stance to preserve the forests we have today.

Another role model is Martin Luther King Jr. and how he was able to influence the way people thought when he didn't have a position of authority. He was able to motivate people to act differently when they really had a choice not to. That's what I look for in leaders — people who are able to listen to others and influence their thinking in a way that is long lasting.

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From: nff-programs-bounces@becomeafriend.org [mailto:nff-programs-bounces@becomeafriend.org] On Behalf Of Chelsea Pennick  
Sent: Wednesday, June 17, 2009 5:32 PM  
To: Nff-programs@becomeafriend.org  
Subject: [NFF-Programs] Tidwell Named New Chief of the Forest Service

Dear Partners:

Below is a news release from the Department of Agriculture announcing the appointment of Tom Tidwell, Regional Forester for Region 1, as the new Chief of the Forest Service. We at NFF are sad to see Gail Kimbell go, but are also excited to work with another great supporter of the National Forest Foundation.

Chelsea

Chelsea Pennick  
Associate, Conservation Awards  
National Forest Foundation  
Building 27, Suite 3  
Fort Missoula Rd.  
Missoula, Montana 59804

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Release No. 0214.09  
Contact: Justin DeJong (202) 720-4623

## **AGRICULTURE SECRETARY VILSACK NAMES NEW CHIEF FOR U.S. FOREST SERVICE**

**Tom Tidwell brings 32 Years of Experience Working to Protect Our Nation's Forests**

WASHINGTON, June 17, 2009 - Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that Tom Tidwell will serve as the new Chief for the U.S. Forest Service.

"Tom Tidwell's 32 years of experience in our forests and impressive track record of collaboration and problem-solving will help us tackle the great challenges ahead," said Vilsack.

Tidwell has spent 32 years with the Forest Service in a variety of positions. He began his Forest Service career on the Boise National Forest, and has since worked in eight different national forests, across three regions. He has worked at all levels of the agency in a variety of positions, including District Ranger, Forest Supervisor, and Legislative Affairs Specialist in the Washington Office.

Tidwell's field experience includes working from the rural areas of Nevada and Idaho all the way to the urban forests in California and the Wasatch-Cache National Forest in Utah, where he served as Forest Supervisor during the 2002 Winter Olympics. He also has extensive fire experience, beginning as a firefighter, and accumulating nineteen years as an agency administrator responsible for fire suppression decisions.

"We thank Gail Kimbell for her leadership and deep commitment to protecting our nation's forests," Vilsack added.

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## New Deputy Regional Forester

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Tom Tidwell

Tom Tidwell is the new Deputy Regional Forester for Fire and Aviation Management, Recreation, Engineering, State and Private Forestry and Tribal Relations. He replaces Kent Connaughton who was selected as the new Associate Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry in the Washington Office.

Tom grew up in Boise, Idaho and attended classes at both Washington State University and the University of Idaho. He began his 28 year Forest Service career on the Boise National Forest in fire and has since worked on 8 different national forests in a variety of positions including district ranger Legislative Affairs in the WO where he worked on the National Fire Plan, planning rule, the roadless rule and the Secure Rural Schools Copunty payments Act.

Tom was most recently the Forest Supervisor on the Wasatch-Cache National Forest in Salt Lake City.

Upon his selection, Tom said: "I look forward to the opportunity of working with the employees in Region 5, being part of the Regional Leadership Team and providing support to the forests. I also look forward to working with our partners, the State of California and the Tribal governments. Region 5 is known for being on the cutting edge in working with the publics and partnerships, and having some of the most complex issues that the Agency faces."

F, LU; Sharon Metzler, Rn, Wilderness, Archeology & Nepa; A. J. Frandsen, Rge, WL, WS; Aaron Howe, E, M; Jeffrey M. Sims, Admin.  
Ranger Districts:

- Ferron—John Niebergall, Ferron, 801-384-2372, DG:  
Mailroom:R04F10D02A
- Moab—Jerald Shaw, Moab, 801-259-7155, DG:  
Mailroom:R04F10D04A
- Monticello—Lee A. Bennett, Monticello, 801-587-2041, DG:  
Mailroom:R04F10D05A
- Price—Ira W. Hatch, Price, 801-637-2817, DG:  
Mailroom:R04F10D03A
- Sanpete—Thomas Shore, Ephraim, 801-283-4151, DG:  
Mailroom:R04F10D01A

**Uinta**—Don T. Nebeker, 88 West 100 N., Provo 84601, 586-5332, 801-377-5780, DG: Mailroom:R04F18A; Brent McBeth, Rn&L, F; Larry Call, Planning; Norman L. Hunstman, Rge, WS, WL; Vaughn Stokes, E, M; Jolene Reed, Admin.

Ranger Districts:

- Heber—Roy H. Daniels, Heber, 801-654-0470, DG:  
Mailroom:R04F18D01A
- Pleasant Grove—Robert R. Easton, Pleasant Grove, 801-785-3563, DG: Mailroom:R04F18D02A
- Spanish Fork—Thomas Tidwell, Spanish Fork, 801-798-3571, DG: Mailroom:R04F18D03A

**Wasatch-Cache**—Vacant, 8230 Fed. Bldg., 125 S. State St., Salt Lake City 84138, 588-5030, 801-524-5030, DG: Mailroom:R04F19A; Susan Giannettino, DFS; Richard Kline, OI; James Mower, Rge, WL, WS; Frank McElwain, Rn, LU, M, Wilderness; Joan Degiorgio, LMP; A. Neal Riffle, F, TM; Richard G. Harris, E; Colleen Reed, Admin.

Ranger Districts:

- Evanston—Clyde Thompson, Evanston, WY, 307-789-3194, DG:  
Mailroom:R04F19D04A
- Kamas—Vacant, Kamas, UT, 801-783-4338, DG:  
Mailroom:R04F19D03A
- Logan—David K. Baumgartner, Logan, UT, 801-753-2772, DG:  
Mailroom:R04F19D07A
- Mountain View—Wayne Anderson, Mountain View, WY, 307-782-6555, DG: Mailroom:R04F19D05A
- Ogden—Raymon Carling, Ogden, UT, 586-5112, DG:  
Mailroom:R04F19D06A
- Salt Lake/Tooele—Michael Sieg, Salt Lake City, UT, 588-5042, DG: Mailroom:R04F19D01A

**Wyoming**

**Bridger-Teton**—Brian Stout, F.S. Bldg., 340 N. Cache, Box 1888, Jackson 83001, 307-733-2752, DG: Mailroom:R04F03A; Jim Gladen, DFS; James Caplan, For. Plnr.; Al Koschmann, EM, M; Dona Smedley, Admin.; Vacant, Res. Ecology; Fred Kingwill, PAS  
Ranger Districts:

- Big Piney—Greg Clark, Big Piney, 307-276-3375, DG:  
Mailroom:R04F03D02A
- Buffalo—John Baglien, Moran, 307-543-2386, DG:  
Mailroom:R04F03D06A
- Greys River—John E. Newcom, Afton, 307-886-3166, DG:  
Mailroom:R04F03D03A
- Jackson—Charles Jones, Jackson, 307-733-4755, DG:  
Mailroom:R04F03D04A
- Kemmerer—Robert Riddle, Kemmerer, 307-877-4415, DG:  
Mailroom:R04F03D01A
- Pinedale—Bob Reese, Pinedale, 307-367-4326, DG:  
Mailroom:R04F03D07A



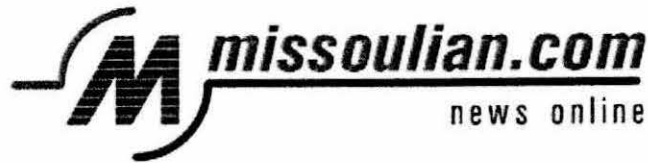
**Tom Tidwell, Regional Forester  
U.S. Forest Service – Region 1**



Tom Tidwell is the Regional Forester for the Northern Region, which encompasses Northern Idaho, Montana, North Dakota and portions of South Dakota. Tidwell is the 20<sup>th</sup> Regional Forester to serve the Northern Region.

Tom grew up in Boise, Idaho and attended classes at both Washington State University and the University of Idaho. He began his Forest Service career on the Boise National Forest in fire and has since worked on 8 different national forests in a variety of positions including District Ranger, Legislative Affairs in the WO, where he worked on the National Fire Plan, planning rule, the roadless rule and the

Secure Rural Schools County Payments Act. Prior to this assignment, Tidwell served as the Deputy Regional Forester for Fire and Aviation Management, Recreation, Engineering, State and Private Forestry and Tribal Relations in the Southwest Region in California. Tom is married to Kim, and they have one daughter, McKenzie.



## Forest Service names new chief - Tidwell third consecutive boss from Missoula office

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By *ROB CHANEY* of the *Missoulian*

Regional Forester Tom Tidwell was named chief of the U.S. Forest Service on Wednesday, making him the third consecutive agency leader to come from the Missoula regional headquarters.

A 32-year veteran of the Forest Service, Tidwell earned local praise for his ability to get people from opposing sides to work together.

"Of all the folks I've worked with in my career, he's one of those rare individuals who has in his bones the understanding of how important it is to collaborate with affected publics," said Dale Harris, director of the Great Burn Study Group and co-chairman of the Montana Forest Restoration Committee. "It might be the nation's gain, but I think it's our loss. He made a mark in the short time he was here."

Tidwell replaces Gail Kimbell, who was the Northern Region supervisor in Missoula before taking over the Forest Service in 2007. She in turn replaced Dale Bosworth, who held the top job for six years. Bosworth was regional supervisor from 1997 to 2001.

The Forest Service's Northern Region commands 25 million acres in Montana, Idaho and North Dakota. That includes 12 national forests and four national grasslands.

Before coming to Missoula, Tidwell worked in eight other national forests in three regions. His positions included district ranger, forest supervisor and legislative affairs specialist in Washington, D.C. He was forest supervisor in the Wasatch-Cache National Forest during the 2002 Winter Olympics in Utah. And he has 19 years of firefighting experience, from ground crew to agency administrator.

"You have to have your act together to have success as a regional forester," said Bosworth, who returned to Missoula after retirement. "This is the last of the wildlands in the lower 48 states. It's an excellent place to get a wide variety of experiences."

In particular, Bosworth said it's a training ground for bringing together the independent and conflicting interests of the Northern Rockies. This area has led the nation in getting those groups to work together.

"I think the public was growing weary of the fighting, and Tom's been there to support that collaboration and help lead it," Bosworth said. This administration is interested in people who can collaborate, and that makes Tom a natural."

**One of those opponents** has been Mike Garrity of the Alliance for the Wild Rockies.

"He's always been professional and polite to deal with, but in end we've ended up suing him regularly - at least 20 times since he's been regional forester," Garrity said of Tidwell. "Still, he's had the most open office, and he doesn't take disagreements personally. I've appreciated that."

Garrity said filling the Forest Service chief job before naming someone as undersecretary of agriculture indicated the Obama administration is not moving far from the Bush administration's policies for forest management. And those policies emphasize timber cutting over wildlife habitat recovery and restoration, Garrity said.

The chief of the Forest Service reports to the agriculture undersecretary. In the Bush administration, Mark Rey held

that job. Mississippian Homer Lee Wilkes was nominated for the post, but withdrew June 10.

Montana Wood Products Association board President Chuck Roady also found it curious that an undersecretary wasn't in place before the Forest Service chief was named. But he was pleased Tidwell got the tap.

"He's going to be real familiar with the forests in Region 1," said Roady, who is also general manager of F.W. Stoltz Lumber Co. in Columbia Falls. "We're dealing with forest biomass, trying to reduce the fuel loading and bug infestation, and we need to use that biomass before it's no good. He's well aware of that. His appointment keeps things on a fairly steady course. He reported to Gail (Kimbell), and they worked together really well. He's somebody we'd look forward to working with."

Tidwell was instrumental in supporting the Montana Forest Restoration Working Group, a collaboration of mill owners, conservation groups, outfitters and recreation clubs to break down barriers to progress on forest projects. Bob Ekey, communications director for the Wilderness Society in Bozeman and co-chair of the working group, called Tidwell's financial and personnel support essential.

"Tidwell understands the American public's vision for a national forest has been changing," Ekey said. "People expect supplies of clean water, world-class wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities in their forests."

Fellow working group co-chair Gordy Sanders of Pyramid Mountain Lumber in Seeley Lake added it was reassuring to see the Montana connections preserved in Washington, D.C.

"Maybe it's the talented staff they've got in the regional office and across the region that helps prepare them," Sanders said. "Tom going to Washington brings more of Region 1 to the national forest lands across the country."

Reporter Rob Chaney can be reached at 523-5382 or at [rchaney@missoulian.com](mailto:rchaney@missoulian.com).

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## Forest chief going for balance

By Donna Kemp Spangler  
Deseret News staff writer  
08/22/2001 Deseret News

There's a sense of reserve about Tom Tidwell.

The quiet thoughtfulness may serve the 46-year-old Boise, Idaho, native well as he takes on one of the most controversial jobs in the state: supervisor of the 1.2-million-acre Wasatch-Cache National Forest, one of America's most heavily used forests, with 6 million visitors a year.

"To find a balance is not going to be an easy thing to do and still protect the solitude experience," Tidwell said.

Utah forest watchdogs are watching Tidwell, somewhat puzzled because they know nothing about the lifelong **Forest Service** bureaucrat. And they have a litany of critical issues on which Tidwell will stand in judgment, from wilderness areas to allowing helicopter skiing to expansion plans at Utah's ski resorts.

"We've had some troubles with forest supervisors in the past," said Gayle Dick, president of Save Our Canyons. The environmental group sued over a 1999 decision made by then-forest supervisor Bernie Weingardt granting Snowbird permission to build a 50,000-square-foot facility atop Hidden Peaks.

But Dick is hopeful.

"He has a very important role to play in this upcoming forest-management plan revision," Dick said. "When we met with him he made a favorable impression. He's obviously pleasant and nice . . . I have high hopes."

Today's issues, Tidwell said, are complex and warrant careful deliberation.

"Controversy is exciting," he said. "It brings people together to find solutions."

But some environmentalists are cautious. They hope Tidwell will look at issues like banning grazing and logging, issues his predecessors refused to address.

"We'd like to see him take a good look at no grazing and no logging -- something that hasn't been considered in the past," said Craig Axford, program director for Utah Environmental Congress.

Tidwell shrugs at those recommendations, holding to the **Forest Service** mantra of multiple use, including extractive uses like logging. He said the solution is to work with local governments and advocacy groups to find a "balance" between competing interests.

"The **Forest Service** will continue to do that," he said. But that doesn't mean every acre will be developed or exploited.

Yet it has industry officials optimistic Tidwell will continue to seek a balance.

"We're looking forward to working with Tom and continue our great relationship with the **Forest Service**," said Snowbird spokesman Dave Fields.

Tidwell is getting his baptism by fire. He is in the midst of finalizing a new management plan for the Wasatch-Cache National Forest that will determine what activities will be allowed and where. A final decision on the plan will not be announced until next spring.

Until then, Tidwell and his staff are wading through more than 500 comments and 100 letters from interested parties -- an unheard-of response to a government land-management plan.

Tidwell is no babe in the woods when it comes to managing forests. He has worked in Idaho, Utah and Nevada. He spent 10 years as a district ranger in Spanish Fork, and three years in Washington, D.C., as

a legislative specialist.

He has dealt with grazing and mining issues in Nevada, timber-wildlife conflicts in Idaho, and controversies surrounding the Central Utah Project. He has dealt with road issues, diseased forests and recreation development.

The issues today are more controversial than ever before with different groups clamoring for a piece of the forest. Some want forests preserved as roadless preserves; others want access for their off-road vehicles. Some want the thrill of downhill skiing on pristine mountain faces and want a helicopter to deliver them there, while others want backcountry solitude.

Tidwell, who is an avid downhill and backcountry skier, said he sees both sides of that argument. The tricky part will be to find compromise between two extremes.

"I want to work with local governments and interested publics to develop local solutions to the issues we face today," he said. "There is a high level of interest in how the forests are managed, and that adds to the enjoyment of the job."

Tidwell knows his new job is fraught with conflict, but he is eager to embrace it. Those on the outside are just as eager to see how he does that.

He has his supporters.

"I like Tom a lot," said Dick Carter of the High Uintas Preservation Council. "I think he's one of the last supervisors who can move the Wasatch-Cache from a traditional forest that sees production of goods, and I mean range, cows, sheep and recreation, out from underneath that into a more ecological framework. That has to be done. He's in position to do that."

But like most conservationists Carter is cautious.

"He is also here in a tough time," said Carter. "Tidwell's stuck with an administration that's hell-bent on taking us backward. So while I like him and I'm hopeful, I'm concerned whether he would be allowed to move the **Forest Service** forward."

Tidwell said he is not predisposed to charge people for using the forests. But he is also a realist when he says it must be determined just how many visitors the forest can handle and what amenities the **Forest Service** will provide.

The Wasatch-Cache budget ranges from \$6 million to \$7 million a year, and it is unrealistic, he said, to expect much in the way of new recreation opportunities. The budget barely covers maintenance of what the **Forest Service** now has.

Why would he even want the job? "It's the Wasatch-Cache," he said. "It is one of the most exciting forests anywhere."

Tidwell replaces Bernie Weingardt, who found himself the focal point of controversy over issues like the Snow Basin land exchange to benefit Earl Holding's ski resort and expansion plans for Snowbird ski resort.

Tidwell inherits some of those controversies, always careful to support his predecessor's decisions. "It was a very positive thing overall," he said of the Snow Basin decision.

Tidwell has a lot on his own plate, from the proposed addition of 70,000 acres of new wilderness along the Wasatch Front to defending President Bill Clinton's forest roadless areas to rolling out the welcome mat for Olympic visitors.

The Wasatch-Cache has been sprucing up the past two years getting ready for the Olympics, building new campgrounds and visitor facilities. The **Forest Service** is an official partner in Utah's Olympic effort.



"The Olympics is just a bonus," he said of his decision to return to Utah with his wife and 8-year-old daughter.

"We love the West," he said. "It definitely feels like home."



## Forest Service names new chief - Tidwell third consecutive boss from Missoula office

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Reporter Rob Chaney can be reached at 523-5382 or at [rchaney@missoulian.com](mailto:rchaney@missoulian.com).

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**From:** John Fedkiw [mailto:jfedkiw@fs.fed.us]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 27, 2010 1:15 PM  
**To:** ClarkT@safnet.org; stevena@duke.edu; alsample@pinchot.org  
**Subject:** Fw: Chief's Fire Speech

Terry, Steve, and Al.

In the event that you have not had access to Forest Service Chief Tidwell's address to the International Union of Fire Chiefs on the landscape-level and societal approach to wildland forest and fire management, a copy is attached. It is a very practical perspective and today extends to all aspects of forest management. It has never been any different in the past except that today the growth of population and its demands, community concerns, and other externality pressures make an explicit approach necessary.

My tracking of the Minnesota systematic landscape-level approach across six landscape ecological/economic regions leads me to conclude that such a systematic approach synergizes the effectiveness of forest use, planning, management, and protection. A case study of its performance since full implementation in 2005 is worthy of an intensive comprehensive case study. It would be a valuable communication for not only the forestry profession but also to communities, stakeholder interests and the general public. It would be a classic example of the relevance and value of the landscape-level and societal holistic approach to forest landscape use, planning, management and protection, and I add would research and education as well..

This is a major cultural change that should be explicitly recognized, discussed widely, and studied by the profession. It is a new way of understanding the holistic, societal goal and process of forestry.

Finally, my perceptions lead me to conclude that there has always been a societal role to the goal and process of forestry. It is evidenced by our legislation and its policy bounds and limits for forest landscape use and development. Society views forests and forestry primarily from its landscape dimension and dynamics and not in terms of site-specific management, the historical focus of forestry in the past. Today forestry needs to be seen and understood as a pro-active joint role of foresters and societal interests and concerns. That will release a new synergism in forestry.

The Forest Service and Chief Tidwell are now leading the way nationally . The circumstances and timing are clearly right for the Society of American Foresters, the Forest History Society, and the Pinchot Institute for Conservation to join in and expand their role.

John Fedkiw

## **A Perspective on Fire Protection in the Wildland/Urban Interface**

Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell

International Association of Fire Chiefs, 8th Annual Conference on the WUI

Reno, NV—March 29, 2010

Welcome to you all! It is a pleasure and an honor to be here to help kick off this conference.

Fire protection in the WUI is one of the thorniest issues we face because it is bound up with two challenges that are tremendously complex: climate change ... and development. These are two of the major drivers of the landscape-scale changes we have been seeing, and I'll talk more about that in a moment.

I am here to give you my perspective on fire protection in the WUI. A perspective is more than just someone's point of view. According to the dictionary, the word "perspective" has to do with relationships—the way things stand in relation to each other. Fire protection in the WUI takes the ability to put things into perspective through the right kind of relationships.

It takes a particular kind of relationship to even start a fire: the relationship among the three sides of the fire triangle. Another kind of triangle drives fire severity: the relationship among fuels, weather, and topography. And it takes yet another kind of triangle to provide fire protection in the WUI: a good working relationship among jurisdictions—federal, state, and local.

But there's one triangle in particular I want to talk about today. It's the relationship among the three things needed to protect the WUI, working across the jurisdictions I just mentioned:

first, restoring ecosystems on a landscape scale—in other words, building fire-adapted natural communities;

second, building fire-adapted *human* communities;

and third, responding appropriately to wildfire.

Each side of this triangle contributes to fire protection in the WUI. Remove any one side—or remove any side of that jurisdictional triangle I mentioned—and the whole thing collapses. At the Forest Service, we are working with the Department of the Interior to build and sustain these triangles—these relationships—through something we call the Cohesive Wildfire Management Strategy. That's the perspective I will share with you today.

### **Drivers of Landscape-Scale Change**

**But** first, I will outline the challenges we face in terms of the changes we have been seeing across the landscape.

America's forests are often in poor or declining health. Many areas are besieged by drought, especially in the Interior West. As you know, drought-stressed forests are especially vulnerable to wildfire as well as to outbreaks of insects and disease.



In much of the West, a legacy of fire exclusion has left forests overstocked and full of hazardous fuels. In terms of fire and fuels, we are in a whole new era. Since 1999, we've had 242 wildfires exceeding 50,000 acres, more than twice as many as in the previous two decades. At least nine states have had record-breaking fires, megafires on a scale rarely seen before. In 2000, for the first time since the 1950s, more than 7 million acres burned in a single year. Two years later, more than 7 million acres burned again. In 2004 and 2005, more than 8 million acres burned; in 2006 and 2007, it was more than 9 million. Some experts anticipate future fire seasons on the order of 12 to 15 million acres.

Overstocked, drought-stressed forests are also susceptible to devastating outbreaks of insects and disease. As you know, entire landscapes are dead or dying across the West, at all elevations and latitudes ... from pinyon pine, to lodgepole pine, to whitebark pine ... from Arizona, to Colorado, to Idaho ... and in California, from the coastal ranges, to the Sierras, to the Cascades.

Drought-stressed forests ... catastrophic fires ... outbreaks of insects and disease ... partly, these are symptoms of a changing climate. Changes in temperature and precipitation, in the timing and magnitude of weather events, are altering ecosystems and fire regimes. Milder winter temperatures are letting bark beetles reproduce faster and spread upslope and northward. Alaska alone has billions of trees killed by insects and other effects of a warming climate. Think of climate change as the common backdrop for all these developments. And these developments in turn contribute to climate change by releasing more carbon into the atmosphere; scientists call it a positive feedback loop.

Climate change is one of the major drivers of the changes we are seeing across our landscapes. Another is growth and development, the spread of homes and communities into America's wildlands. America's population has been growing by leaps and bounds. In 1940, it was 132 million; in 2000, it was 281 million; and by 2030, it is predicted to reach 351 million—or even 410 million, by one estimate.

Much of that growth has occurred—and is still occurring—in or near America's wildlands. From 1940 to 2000, 28 million housing units were built within 30 miles of the national forests, national parks, and wilderness areas. The rate of growth has been highest on or near the national forests. The number of housing units within half a mile of a national forest grew from 484,000 in 1940 to 1.8 million in 2000. The number of units *within* national forest boundaries rose from 335,000 in 1940 to 1.2 million in 2000.

And this will only continue. From 2000 to 2030, we predict substantial increases in housing density on 57 million acres of forest land across the country. That's an area larger than North and South Carolina combined.

All that growth is expanding the WUI at a time of grave and growing dangers associated with climate change. Almost 70,000 communities are now believed to be at risk from wildfire, and less than 6,000 of them have a community wildfire protection plan. That's less than 10 percent. Not surprisingly, nearly 28,000 homes, businesses, and outbuildings have burned in wildfires in the last 10 years.

This year is the centennial of the Big Burn of 1910, when millions of acres burned

across the Northern Rockies and elsewhere in the country ... when hundreds of people perished ... when entire communities burned to the ground. Under the worsening conditions we now face, we have to ask: Are we setting ourselves up for another Big Burn? How can we protect the WUI under these conditions?

For one thing, we have to strengthen that jurisdictional triangle I mentioned. Federal, state, and local authorities have found good ways of working together in the past. The Big Burn set the stage for the Weeks Act of 1911 and the cooperative fire management partnerships that followed. In the future, we need to make those partnerships even stronger. We need to make sure we are reading from the same sheet of music, with a joint response that is seamless across the landscapes we all share.

The FLAME Act passed by Congress last fall has given us a start. It requires the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to develop a Cohesive Wildfire Management Strategy by November 1. To meet this requirement, the Forest Service and Interior are planning a comprehensive analysis, based on the best available science, of all wildlands on a landscape scale. Based on that analysis, we will develop strategic investment, policy, and program alternatives for federal lands. The strategy will focus on three key areas—the three sides of the triangle for WUI protection that I mentioned earlier: landscape-scale ecological restoration; fire-adapted human communities; and an appropriate response to wildfire. In the remainder of my remarks, I will outline all **three**.

### **Ecological Restoration**

I will start with restoration. As the saying goes, the best defense is a good offense. The best way to protect the WUI is to restore surrounding landscapes to a healthy, resilient condition. Healthy, resilient forest ecosystems are less likely to see uncharacteristically severe wildfires that turn into human and ecological disasters.

That does not necessarily mean less fire on the landscape; it might even mean more. As Stephen Pyne has pointed out, the Big Burn of 1910 affected both tribal lands and other lands, but tribal lands saw less damage. Why? Because tribal lands had been subject to a continuous regimen of light burning for millennia. Pyne drew the following conclusion, and I quote: "Fire protection might be better grounded in fire's calculated use than in fire's unwitting suppression."

Forest Service specialists are testing that hypothesis. When a wildfire starts in—or burns into—an area where we previously used fire or otherwise reduced fuels, we are systematically assessing the results. In 2009, we conducted more than 100 such assessments, and we consistently found lower fire severity, with less damage and fewer suppression costs.

For example, the Los Padres National Forest in California conducted prescribed burns on more than 13,000 acres from 2005 to 2009. Last summer, when the La Brea Fire burned into the treated areas, suppression forces were able to contain that portion of the fire perimeter. Hundreds of nearby homes would otherwise have been threatened and many would likely have burned.

The Forest Service and other federal land managers have taken such lessons to heart.

From fiscal year 2001, when the National Fire Plan was launched, to fiscal year 2008, the federal land managers jointly treated 29.1 million acres. That's an average of 3.6 million acres per year, an area more than twice the size of Delaware. And more than half the area treated, an area the size of West Virginia, was in the WUI.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 gave us another big boost. In fiscal year 2009, through recovery funding alone, the Forest Service treated more than half a million acres, benefiting more than 2,200 communities in the WUI.

But we need to do more. In 2001, our scientists looked at the ecosystems most at risk, such as ponderosa pine, and they estimated that almost 400 million acres in all ownerships were at moderate to severe risk—in fire regimes I and II, condition classes 2 and 3. From 2001 to 2008, we treated about 29 million acres of those 400 million acres at risk—that's only 7 percent, a drop in the bucket. In terms of federal lands alone, the treated proportion was much higher, about 23 percent. But at the rate we were going, it would take 35 years to treat the entire federal area at risk. Meanwhile, as the climate continues to change ... as the WUI continues to grow ... millions of additional acres are likely to need treatment. Are we even holding our own?

As a nation, we need to pull together to get the job done. One way is to marshal our resources across jurisdictions; no one of us can do it alone. The National Forest System contains only 20 percent of the nation's forests. Fifty-seven percent are in private landownership, and another 23 percent are in state, tribal, county, municipal, and other federal ownership. Forest ecosystems typically form mosaics—mosaics of plant and animal communities and mosaics of landownerships. This is true not only in the East, but also in the West, where the critical drivers are the same—climate change and demographic growth. Restoration requires an all-lands approach.

The Cohesive Wildfire Management Strategy is a start. It brings together federal land managers to leverage our comparative advantages—our scientific and professional expertise. We will analyze the ecological components of landscapes that shape wildland fire conditions. We will examine the impacts of wildfires, insects and diseases, invasive species, and vegetation management programs on the fire environment, especially in the WUI. We will then identify strategies and priorities for fuels treatments and compare alternative fuels and restoration programs. Based on the results, we will work with partners across borders and boundaries to get more done on the ground. We will need help from all of our partners, including you in this room, to build the fire-adapted natural communities needed to **protect the WUI**.

### **Fire-Adapted Communities**

To protect the WUI, we also need to *build* fire-adapted human communities. Ecological restoration is key, but it alone is not enough. With 70,000 communities in the WUI, there will always be risk from wildfire. To make people, homes, and communities safe from fire, we need to work together not only in the woods, but also right where people live.

Again, no one of us can do it alone. We need seamless coordination across jurisdictions based on that triangle of local, state, and federal partners. The first step is to clearly

define our roles so we can build on each other's strengths. Last year, the Forest Service began working with the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the National Association of State Foresters, and other partners to work out our mutual roles and responsibilities.

Here's my take on that as Forest Service Chief. Our job at the Forest Service is to keep wildfires away from homes and communities—and if we can't always do that, then to reduce fire severity to manageable levels. That's what we're trained and equipped to do, and I believe we do it well.

But we are not trained and equipped for structure protection outside federal jurisdiction. It is not our job, and no one should expect us to do it. We will do anything to save lives, but we will not put our pilots and *firefighters* at risk—lives at risk—to protect somebody's poorly prepared private property in the WUI.

Structure protection in the WUI is the role and responsibility of individual property owners and state and local agencies. The Forest Service has an obligation to support state and local agencies, and I'll say more about that in a moment. But it is up to state and local agencies—not us—to actually do the job of structure protection in the WUI.

I believe that individual homeowner responsibility is key. Americans have a long and proud tradition of individual freedom and private property rights, but with those rights and freedoms comes responsibility. The main responsibility for fire protection in the WUI lies with individual homeowners and communities. That's just the way our system works.

With that *said*, the Forest Service does have a role to play. We have 30,000 employees living in communities all over the country, and many of those communities are in the WUI. That gives us a vested personal interest in building fire-adapted communities. Our strategy is to work through *cross-jurisdictional partnerships* before a fire starts rather than relying on suppression alone. Our community partnerships have an array of tools at their disposal, including community wildfire protection plans; external fuel buffers; internal safety zones; fire departments with the capacity to mitigate, educate, and protect a community at risk; codes and ordinances that address wildfire threats; prevention and education programs; forest management and fuels mitigation; and cooperative fire agreements. These tools make our partnerships stronger, and our partnerships make the tools more effective.

A good example is the national Firewise program, which encourages individual homeowners to take responsibility for making their properties firesafe. With funding from the Department of the Interior, the Forest Service administers a grant with the National Fire Protection Association to provide support and educational materials for the Firewise program. I am happy to say that the program has been growing by leaps and bounds. From 2008 to 2009, the number of designated Firewise communities ... communities able to survive wildfire without intervention ... grew by almost 50 percent, from 400 to nearly 600.

The Forest Service is also encouraging communities in the WUI to plan for wildfires. In 2009, we provided \$6 million in grants to state forestry agencies designed to help communities conduct risk assessments and complete fire management planning activities, such as community wildfire protection plans. Through such activities, we



benefitted nearly 20,000 communities.

We are also working with the Department of the Interior, the National Association of State Foresters, and the U.S. Fire Administration to support the national expansion of the Ready, Set, Go program. Since Ready, Set, Go is the centerpiece of this conference, I will leave the details to other speakers.

Building fire-adapted human communities is key to the Cohesive Wildfire Management Strategy we are developing together with the Department of the Interior. As the second pillar of our strategy, the goal of fire-adapted communities encompasses a series of tools, partnerships, and processes needed to help communities reduce the risk of wildfire. We will analyze the components of effective community wildfire mitigation and we will look at the roles and responsibilities of federal, state, and local governments. We will also examine land use and zoning, the use of community wildfire protection plans, the effectiveness of fire prevention, and the potential for engineering solutions such as **fire-resistant structures**.

#### Response to Wildfire

But our best efforts to restore landscapes and to build fire-adapted communities will not be enough. Most of our landscapes are adapted to *fire*; sooner or later, they will burn. Suppression will be needed, and fire protection in the WUI will always be predicated on a response to wildfire. The question is: What is the appropriate response?

That question has two parts: First, what should our general strategy be in responding to wildfires? Second, what tactics should we use to implement our strategy?

The Big Burn of 1910 gave the Forest Service a rallying cry that resonated with Americans across the nation: Put 'em out, put 'em all out, and put 'em all out fast! Fire exclusion in the form of the 10 a.m. Policy became our national strategic response to wildland fire.

It took decades to see how futile and misguided that policy was. Fire can be postponed, but not indefinitely; in most of our landscapes fire cannot be excluded, and today we are seeing the tragic results: Overgrown forests, in a drought, are fueling megafires. One classic example is Rodeo-Chediski in 2002, which burned almost half a million acres in Arizona.

Accordingly, our strategic response has changed. We still suppress human-caused wildfires, but when lightning is the cause, if conditions are right, we take the opportunity to allow fire to play its natural role. Lightning fires are often the most appropriate means—often the only means, given our limited resources—to achieve our restoration goals on a landscape scale.

Last summer, the federal land managers went a step further, changing the way we implement the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy. Federal fire managers now have the flexibility to manage a lightning-caused wildfire to achieve multiple objectives. They also have the flexibility to change those objectives in response to the way a fire spreads across the landscape.



I know that many in state and local government—maybe even some in this room—have doubts about those changes. I want to assure you that our approach to fire protection in the WUI hasn't changed. Fire managers will continue to be as aggressive as ever in putting out wildfires that threaten lives, homes, and critical natural resources, no matter what the cause.

In this connection, the Forest Service is using new decision support technology. Our Wildland Fire Decision Support System is a Web-based application designed to help fire managers ensure the safety of firefighters and the public, protect structures and natural resources, and use firefighting resources effectively. The new system will help save lives, prevent damage, and reduce suppression costs.

But the most carefully crafted strategic response to wildfire isn't worth anything if not executed well, and that gets to the tactical question of how we implement our policy—how we get boots on the ground. Our Forest Service fire managers have the expertise and experience to make the right decisions—to use the right resources in the right places at the right times. Sometimes, however, we are second-guessed after an incident in the WUI, often by people with little or no expertise and experience.

Make no mistake: We will do everything we can to aggressively fight fire in the WUI, using every resource at our disposal. But we will not put lives and resources at needless risk. We will not put pilots in the air when we know from experience that it will make no difference. And we will not put firefighters in harm's way when we know from experience that a fire will simply blow right over a fireline. To do so would be unconscionable, unprofessional, and irresponsible to the people we serve.

Appropriate fire response in the WUI is predicated on partnerships, and the Forest Service is strongly committed to supporting our state and local partners. Last year, we provided more than \$35 million in grants to state forestry agencies for preparedness, suppression, equipment, and other support, including training for over 42,000 personnel. We also provided more than \$10 million in grants to volunteer fire departments for equipment and other support, including training for over 24,000 personnel.

One of our most successful support programs has been for federal excess personal property. Since 1956, we have provided more than \$1 billion worth of supplies and equipment to state forestry agencies and volunteer fire departments in 50 states and 5 U.S. territories. In 2009 alone, we furnished more than 800 pieces of equipment, including more than 400 trucks and trailers, typically equipped with tanks, generators, and pumps.

Our inability to radio each other in the fire community is a huge barrier to cooperative fire protection in the WUI. To solve the problem, the Forest Service is launching the Central Oregon Interagency Radio Integration Pilot Project. Our goal is to have a single interagency radio system in place by 2013.

Appropriate fire response is the third pillar of the Cohesive Wildfire Management Strategy we are developing together with the Department of the Interior. As part of the strategy, we will conduct a comprehensive analysis of wildfire response and suppression

capabilities. We will also provide a comparative analysis of **suppression program** alternatives.

### Relationships Are Key

In closing, our new Cohesive Wildfire Management Strategy rests on three pillars: restoring fire-adapted *natural* communities; building fire-adapted human communities; and responding appropriately to wildfire. These three elements form a triangle for fire protection in the WUI. Each is necessary for success; and all three sides of the triangle rest, in turn, on the jurisdictional triangle of cooperation and collaboration among local, state, and federal authorities.

Thank you for being here. Fire protection in the WUI is one of the greatest challenges facing fire managers and land managers, particularly in this era of climate change and vigorous growth and development. I commend you for taking on this challenge. Aside from the substance of what you will address at this conference, I hope you will build and strengthen your relationships, because those relationships are key. They are the foundation of the jurisdictional triangle that supports the triangle of fire protection in the WUI.



Forest  
Service

Washington  
Office

1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
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MEMORANDUM FOR KATHLEEN MERRIGAN, THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF  
AGRICULTURE

FROM: Thomas L. Tidwell  
Chief

*Thomas L. Tidwell* 8/20/09

SUBJECT: Travel and Other Irregularities

Concerning your memorandum on travel and other irregularities, you have my assurance that I will take action to prevent management failures regarding conduct of SES Forest Service officials.

Where we do have SES positions that are located outside of DC, you have my assurances that I will take the necessary steps to ensure that all of our employees comply with travel regulations, and I will require the necessary oversight to ensure that our employees fulfill their responsibilities and are held accountable for their actions.

Concerning the question of performance bonuses, even though the performance rating and bonuses was recommended prior to when the investigation was completed, that is no excuse for why the Office of the Secretary was not notified, and the request made that the performance bonus in question be held until after the investigation was completed.

I will ensure that performance awards will not be paid to employees of serious on-going investigations without careful review by the Office of the Secretary.

I will review the investigation reports to gain additional insight into how this happened and determine the actions that I need to implement.

I also want to express my disappointment that criminal charges were not pursued. The idea that the Chief Financial Officer for our Agency, the individual responsible for providing direction and policy for the agency on financial matters including travel, would abuse his position and responsibilities is beyond unacceptable. There is no one in the agency that would have a higher understanding of our policies and rules that must be followed when it comes to travel. Yes, I am responsible to ensure that employees do not abuse their positions, however our Chief Financial Officer also had responsibilities and the fact that there is no penalty for his actions is troubling. I will pursue actions to recover costs to the government.

Again, you have my assurance that I will take the necessary actions to prevent management failures regarding the conduct of SES Forest Service officials from happening again.

cc: Jay Jensen, Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment



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## New Forest chief promises quick spending

By MATTHEW DALY - Associated Press - 06/19/09 | Posted: Friday, June 19, 2009 12:00 am

WASHINGTON - New Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell says he will move quickly to ensure that his agency spends its \$1.15 billion share of federal economic stimulus funding.

The Forest Service has spent \$643 million of its stimulus money so far, including \$228 million in projects announced this month to repair forest roads and bridges in 31 states. Tidwell said even more projects should be approved in coming weeks.

"We're focused on doing the ones that have been selected and letting the contracts so people can get back to work," Tidwell said in a telephone interview with The Associated Press. "That's our first priority."

Tidwell said he will continue many of the policies of his predecessor, Gail Kimbell, including a focus on fighting climate change and reaching out to children to make them more aware of and comfortable with national forests.

Tidwell, 54, was named the agency's 17th chief on Wednesday, capping a 32-year Forest Service career. He most recently supervised national forests in northern Idaho, Montana and the Dakotas - the same post Kimbell and her predecessor, Dale Bosworth, held before taking the top job.

Less than 24 hours into his new role, Tidwell faced an immediate controversy.

Wyoming's Democratic governor wrote a scathing letter to Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, complaining that the Forest Service has excluded Wyoming from stimulus spending.

"Forgive my pessimism, but I have my doubts that most in Washington can even find Wyoming on a map, no less understand the tremendous resource issues we face," Gov. Dave Freudenthal wrote.

Wyoming's forests are suffering from the same pine beetle epidemic that has swept across the West, Freudenthal said, noting that other states like Colorado have received millions in federal money to address the impacts of beetle-killed timber.

Tidwell said he was not familiar with the specifics about Wyoming but would look into the governor's complaint.

He said he would use his experience developing a policy on roadless forests in Idaho as a model for his new job. Tidwell, the top forester in a four-state region, worked with Idaho officials, environmental groups, the timber industry, recreation enthusiasts, Indian tribes and others as the state developed a policy for control of remote, roadless forests.

Idaho was the only state exempted from a recent order by Vilsack drastically slowing down approval of new road projects in national forests.

"I have found these collaborative efforts that bring together a diverse group of interests is probably one of the best ways for us to resolve the controversial issues," Tidwell said. "Bring folks together and let them understand each other's values and develop relationships."



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **AGRICULTURE SECRETARY VILSACK NAMES NEW CHIEF FOR U.S. FOREST SERVICE**

Tom Tidwell brings 32 Years of Experience Working to Protect Our Nation's Forests

WASHINGTON, June 17, 2009 - Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that Tom Tidwell will serve as the new Chief for the U.S. Forest Service.

"Tom Tidwell's 32 years of experience in our forests and impressive track record of collaboration and problem-solving will help us tackle the great challenges ahead," said Vilsack.

Tidwell has spent 32 years with the Forest Service in a variety of positions. He began his Forest Service career on the Boise National Forest, and has since worked in eight different national forests, across three regions. He has worked at all levels of the agency in a variety of positions, including District Ranger, Forest Supervisor, and Legislative Affairs Specialist in the Washington Office.

Tidwell's field experience includes working from the rural areas of Nevada and Idaho all the way to the urban forests in California and the Wasatch-Cache National Forest in Utah, where he served as Forest Supervisor during the 2002 Winter Olympics. He also has extensive fire experience, beginning as a firefighter, and accumulating nineteen years as an agency administrator responsible for fire suppression decisions.

"We thank Gail Kimbell for her leadership and deep commitment to protecting our nation's forests," Vilsack added.

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## Forest Service names new chief - Tidwell third consecutive boss from Missoula office

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By *ROB CHANEY of the Missoulian*

Regional Forester Tom Tidwell was named chief of the U.S. Forest Service on Wednesday, making him the third consecutive agency leader to come from the Missoula regional headquarters.

A 32-year veteran of the Forest Service, Tidwell earned local praise for his ability to get people from opposing sides to work together.

“Of all the folks I've worked with in my career, he's one of those rare individuals who has in his bones the understanding of how important it is to collaborate with affected publics,” said Dale Harris, director of the Great Burn Study Group and co-chairman of the Montana Forest Restoration Committee. “It might be the nation's gain, but I think it's our loss. He made a mark in the short time he was here.”

Tidwell replaces Gail Kimbell, who was the Northern Region supervisor in Missoula before taking over the Forest Service in 2007. She in turn replaced Dale Bosworth, who held the top job for six years. Bosworth was regional supervisor from 1997 to 2001.

The Forest Service's Northern Region commands 25 million acres in Montana, Idaho and North Dakota. That includes 12 national forests and four national grasslands.

Before coming to Missoula, Tidwell worked in eight other national forests in three regions. His positions included district ranger, forest supervisor and legislative affairs specialist in Washington, D.C. He was forest supervisor in the Wasatch-Cache National Forest during the 2002 Winter Olympics in Utah. And he has 19 years of firefighting experience, from ground crew to agency administrator.

“You have to have your act together to have success as a regional forester,” said Bosworth, who returned to Missoula after retirement. “This is the last of the wildlands in the lower 48 states. It's an excellent place to get a wide variety of experiences.”

In particular, Bosworth said it's a training ground for bringing together the independent and conflicting interests of the Northern Rockies. This area has led the nation in getting those groups to work together.

“I think the public was growing weary of the fighting, and Tom's been there to support that collaboration and help lead it,” Bosworth said. This administration is interested in people who can collaborate, and that makes Tom a natural.”

**One of those opponents** has been Mike Garrity of the Alliance for the Wild Rockies.

“He's always been professional and polite to deal with, but in end we've ended up suing him regularly - at least 20 times since he's been regional forester,” Garrity said of Tidwell. “Still, he's had the most open office, and he doesn't take disagreements personally. I've appreciated that.”

Garrity said filling the Forest Service chief job before naming someone as undersecretary of agriculture

indicated the Obama administration is not moving far from the Bush administration's policies for forest management. And those policies emphasize timber cutting over wildlife habitat recovery and restoration, Garrity said.

The chief of the Forest Service reports to the agriculture undersecretary. In the Bush administration, Mark Rey held that job. Mississippian Homer Lee Wilkes was nominated for the post, but withdrew June 10.

Montana Wood Products Association board President Chuck Roady also found it curious that an undersecretary wasn't in place before the Forest Service chief was named. But he was pleased Tidwell got the tap.

"He's going to be real familiar with the forests in Region 1," said Roady, who is also general manager of F.W. Stoltz Lumber Co. in Columbia Falls. "We're dealing with forest biomass, trying to reduce the fuel loading and bug infestation, and we need to use that biomass before it's no good. He's well aware of that. His appointment keeps things on a fairly steady course. He reported to Gail (Kimbell), and they worked together really well. He's somebody we'd look forward to working with."

Tidwell was instrumental in supporting the Montana Forest Restoration Working Group, a collaboration of mill owners, conservation groups, outfitters and recreation clubs to break down barriers to progress on forest projects. Bob Ekey, communications director for the Wilderness Society in Bozeman and co-chair of the working group, called Tidwell's financial and personnel support essential.

"Tidwell understands the American public's vision for a national forest has been changing," Ekey said. "People expect supplies of clean water, world-class wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities in their forests."

Fellow working group co-chair Gordy Sanders of Pyramid Mountain Lumber in Seeley Lake added it was reassuring to see the Montana connections preserved in Washington, D.C.

"Maybe it's the talented staff they've got in the regional office and across the region that helps prepare them," Sanders said. "Tom going to Washington brings more of Region 1 to the national forest lands across the country."

Reporter Rob Chaney can be reached at 523-5382 or at [rchaney@missoulian.com](mailto:rchaney@missoulian.com).

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# The Washington Post

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## Forest Service chief on managing 193 million acres of national forest

By **Tom Fox**, Published: August 14

*Tom Tidwell is chief of the U.S. Forest Service, the agency that manages the nation's 155 national forests and 20 national grasslands that encompass 193 million acres. Tidwell has spent three decades in the Forest Service, serving in a variety of positions that have included district ranger, forest supervisor, legislative affairs specialist and deputy regional forester for the Pacific Southwest Region. Tidwell spoke with Tom Fox, who writes the Washington Post's [Federal Coach](#) blog and is the director of the Partnership for Public Service's Center for Government Leadership.*

### **What has been the biggest surprise during your tenure as chief of the Forest Service?**

Having a good grasp of everything that this agency does, what we're able to do day in and day out, and what a difference it makes to so many people in this country.

I don't know if it's a surprise, but I'm continually impressed with the magnitude of public service that this agency provides in the stewardship of 193 million acres of our national forest and grasslands and through our research and development branch. We provide leading-edge science to deal with issues such as restoration of our nation's forests.

### **You have had a very busy forest-fire season this summer. How do you handle these situations and deal with employees on the frontlines?**

For any crisis situation, employees need to trust their judgment. They need to rely on their training and experience and always be focused on taking care of the public. When it comes to a fire or any emergency, we make sure that our employees are safe, but we also find ways to communicate with the public and local officials about what is going on. The public should feel comfortable and confident in the level of expertise that we are bringing to these emergency situations.

For instance, we successfully suppress between 97 and 98 percent of all fires, but there is that 2 percent that no matter how many resources, how many firefighters and how many fire engines we have on the scene, it will escape initial attack and get large. In those cases, we need to be able to quickly put a good

strategy in place to control the fire.

### **What advice do you have to help federal managers increase operational efficiency?**

It's so important to be able to understand the benefits of working across federal agencies and state and local governments. The demand from the public for a higher level of service is going to continue to increase, but at the same time, the level of resources that we can bring to the table is diminishing. Federal leaders need to embrace opportunities to become more efficient and effective.

The best example I have is our approach to wild land firefighting. It's not just the Forest Service. It is the Departments of the Interior, Homeland Security, Commerce and, at times, Defense. We've been able to develop an interagency, coordinated response that allows us to quickly respond to fires. I think this is a model for how we need to do things in the federal government.

### **How do you explain the importance of the work of the Forest Service to the American public?**

We have the responsibility for the stewardship of 193 million acres of land, ensuring that the public is going to be able to enjoy the clean air, clean water and biodiversity that are provided by these lands in a recreational setting. The other key part is the economic activity. Hundreds of thousands of jobs are maintained by the activities of the national forest. Also, there's the importance of conservation and to make sure the next generation is also going to be able to enjoy the same range of benefits.

### **Do you have leadership role models?**

There's Gifford Pinchot, the first chief of the Forest Service. The longer I'm in this position, the more impressed I am with what he did to establish the agency and build its foundation. The key principles that guide this agency today are just as true as they were 107 years ago. Also, I admire Theodore Roosevelt and what he did for conservation in this country. He took what was, at times, an unpopular stance to preserve the forests we have today.

Another role model is Martin Luther King Jr. and how he was able to influence the way people thought when he didn't have a position of authority. He was able to motivate people to act differently when they really had a choice not to. That's what I look for in leaders — people who are able to listen to others and influence their thinking in a way that is long lasting.

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## Forest Service spends millions to grapple with immediate effect of Western wildfires

**By Associated Press, Published: July 13**

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Nearly \$25 million has already been spent to prepare for the immediate aftermath of this year's wildfires, putting the U.S. Forest Service on track for another possible record year of spending on burned-area recovery efforts.

So far, nearly all of the money is going toward building water bars, removing hazardous trees and spreading seed across hundreds of square miles in southern New Mexico. The state recorded both its largest and its most destructive wildfires in the last two months.

Neighboring Colorado is also having its worst fire season in a decade. Teams of biologists, hydrologists and soil scientists are on the ground there, analyzing what it will take to deal with post-fire flooding and other hazards.

Once their work is done, U.S. Department of Agriculture Undersecretary Harris Sherman said he expects spending to increase significantly.

"This is a very critical stage in the process," Sherman told The Associated Press in a phone interview. "Obviously if we can deal with potential flooding and erosion concerns early on, we will all be much better off."

Scientists weigh everything from weather forecasts and topography to the location of streams and the severity of the burn when determining how much will have to be spent on each acre to keep the damage from getting worse.

In New Mexico, about \$14 million in Burned Area Emergency Recovery funding has been spent on a lightning-sparked fire that raced across more than 465 square miles of the Gila National Forest. Another \$9 million is being spent on shoring up water ways and removing debris in the wake of the Little Bear Fire near Ruidoso, where more than 240 homes were destroyed.

Last year, the Forest Service spent a record total of \$48 million on burned-area recovery work. The funding comes from the agency's annual fire suppression budget.

The formula for recovery is just as complicated as the factors — drought, decades of fire suppression and climate change — giving rise to more severe fires in the West, experts say.

"With the kinds of intensity we've seen on some of the recent fires, there is, for all practical purposes, permanent impairment of the ecosystem," said Wally Covington, director of the Ecological Restoration Institute at Northern Arizona University.

He pointed specifically to last year's Las Conchas Fire near Los Alamos, which burned through hundreds of square miles of tinder dry forest, destroyed dozens of homes and threatened one of the nation's premier government laboratories.

Flooding from the Las Conchas burn scar still remains a concern.

On Wednesday night, a wall of water rushed down Santa Clara Canyon, washing away months of restoration work done by Santa Clara Pueblo and government contractors.

"Our prayers are that it does not get any worse than what it is," Pueblo Gov. Walter Dasheno said.



In the canyon, post-fire flooding has moved car-sized boulders and toppled trees as if they were toothpicks.

“Until you’re on the ground and you see it, you can’t gauge how much stress it’s placing on our families,” Dasheno said, explaining that the pueblo sits at the mouth of the canyon.

Sherman was aware of the flooding near Santa Clara, but said there have been no reports of major flood damage related to the recent string of fires in New Mexico and Colorado.

Aside from those two states, Sherman said burned-area response specialists are working in Arizona, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming. Contracts are being finalized for seeding and mulching, roads and trails are being stabilized, culverts are being prepped for higher flows of water and warning signs are going up.

On the massive Whitewater-Baldy Fire in southwestern New Mexico, seeding started Thursday on more than 26,000 acres and straw mulch will be spread over another 16,000 acres.

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# The Mercury News

MercuryNews.com

## USFS: Tapes show effort to fight 2009 CA wildfire

By JOHN ANTCAK Associated Press Writer

Posted: 09/23/2010 03:44:06 PM PDT

Updated: 09/23/2010 06:53:13 PM PDT

LOS ANGELES—U.S. Forest Service officials said Thursday recordings of calls between fire managers and dispatchers show they quickly understood the gravity of a 2009 wildfire that had broken out near Los Angeles and would eventually scorch 250 square miles, kill two firefighters and destroy 89 homes.

The Forest Service released transcripts of the recordings, which it has said were only discovered after it issued an initial report defending its response to the so-called Station Fire in the Angeles National Forest.

The transcripts, with names redacted, show the difficulty of communication in the mountainous region, the problem of scrounging up resources as multiple fires burned in the state, and that there were requests for aircraft to arrive by 7 a.m. on the first morning after the fire broke out.

At one point in a call, the incident commander asked for "whatever you can get" in terms of airtankers.

"And that's for first thing in the morning," an operations dispatcher said.

"Yeah," the commander said. "I mean, as soon as we can get them."

The Forest Service said in its statement that the

commander was aware that the actual time that aircraft are deployed depends on requirements for pilot briefings and rest requirements for aircrews.

The conversations show efforts to comply with the commander's request for helicopters and airtankers to arrive by 7 a.m., even though there's acknowledgment that was not likely to happen, and

planning to get what they need by diverting aircraft assigned to another fire burning to the east in the same forest.

"I think this thing is going to go to (expletive)," one dispatcher commented.

Aircraft did not reach the fire until later in the morning, when flames had begun spreading.

The July discovery of the recordings is under investigation by the inspector general for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which oversees the Forest Service. Such recordings had been the subject of a Freedom of Information Act request by the Los Angeles Times.

The recordings also contained what Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell called "inappropriate and unacceptable" attempts at humor by people he said were nevertheless trying to professionally deal with the fire.

"These experienced dispatchers were clearly brainstorming many options to get every possible asset to the Station Fire as soon as possible," Tidwell said in a statement. "The way they carried out their jobs tells me they were focused on the seriousness of the situation, and that is what matters in an unfolding, large scale emergency."

Critics have claimed the Forest Service didn't recognize the seriousness of the fire and didn't



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# The Mercury News

MercuryNews.com

launch an air attack early enough on the first morning after it broke out, while it was still small.

Critics also want the Forest Service to reverse a policy against nighttime air attacks on wildfires, which prevented any overnight use of helicopters during the fire's first night.

The Forest Service's initial review released in November concluded the Station Fire did not get out of control for lack of aircraft attacking the flames or because the number of firefighters was scaled back the first night. Rather, it found the blaze began raging because it jumped into inaccessible terrain.

The service contends that it takes firefighters on the ground, not aircraft alone, to contain wildfires.

The Forest Service on Thursday pointed specifically to overnight conversations between the commander of the initial firefighting effort and a dispatcher and then a conversation between two dispatchers.

In addition to names, transcript redactions included phone numbers and law enforcement matters.

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latimes.com/news/local/la-me-station-fire-20100909,0,11468.story

**latimes.com**

## **GAO will probe Forest Service's handling of Station fire**

**The investigative arm of Congress acts on a request by California lawmakers after questions are raised about the tactics and decisions used to fight the largest fire in L.A. County history.**

By Paul Pringle, Los Angeles Times

September 9, 2010

Acting on a request by California lawmakers, the investigative arm of Congress has agreed to conduct a broad inquiry into the U.S. Forest Service's handling of last year's devastating Station fire, officials said Wednesday.

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The state's two U.S. senators and several House members last month urged the Government Accountability Office to examine the Forest Service's decisions and tactics in the fire fight, including its use of aircraft and whether enough was done to protect homes that burned in Big Tujunga Canyon.

Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Burbank) said in a statement that the GAO investigation would "help us to better understand the events surrounding the initial response to the Station fire to improve the response to future fires."

Schiff and other local House members plan to convene a panel in the Los Angeles area in the near future to look into the first stages of the Station fire operation. A session scheduled for last month was canceled because the legislators were called back to Washington.

In addition, a U.S. inspector general is investigating the Forest Service's failure to release recordings of telephone dispatch calls to a federal review team and the public. The Times sought the recordings last year and again this year under the Freedom of Information Act, but Forest Service officials said they did not exist. The inspector general's probe could lead to criminal charges, depending on its findings.

The Station fire was the largest in Los Angeles County history, burning 250 square miles of the Angeles National Forest and destroying scores of homes and other structures. Two county firefighters were killed while defending their camp on Mt. Gleason.

The Times reported that the Forest Service misjudged the threat posed by the fire at the end of Day 1, scaled back its attack that evening and did not fill its own commander's order for a heavy aerial assault shortly after sunup the following morning. The lawmakers asked the GAO to investigate all those matters.

A GAO spokesman said the inquiry would not begin in earnest for about three months because of other commitments and preparatory work. Typically, GAO probes produce detailed reports and testimony before Congress. The office also can refer findings to law enforcement authorities for criminal investigation.

[paul.pringle@latimes.com](mailto:paul.pringle@latimes.com)

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denver & the west

## Forest Service: Fourmile fire won't be contained for 10 days

By Tom McGhee and Joey Bunch  
*The Denver Post*

Posted: 09/08/2010 10:58:59 AM MDT

Updated: 09/09/2010 06:55:20 AM MDT



Frustrated with not being allowed back in, Tyler, 27, who did not want to give his last name, crossed police lines Wednesday and hiked to the home he was renting on Dixon Road in the historic mining-camp town of Gold Hill. Tyler had already learned the home

was destroyed, but he was hoping to find his three cats. (RJ Sangosti, The Denver Post)

BOULDER — A fierce blaze in the foothills west of Boulder has destroyed 135 homes — more than any other fire in Colorado history — and may not be contained for another 10 days.

But evacuees got some good news Wednesday night when Boulder County Sheriff Joe Pelle announced that, weather permitting, evacuations would be lifted at 10 a.m. today for Boulder Heights, Carriage Hills, Pinebrook Hills and areas immediately east. Other neighborhoods are still too volatile for anyone to return.

The Fourmile Canyon fire, which broke out Monday, has driven thousands of residents from their homes and consumed 6,388 acres. Four outbuildings have been destroyed and another 24 structures damaged. The entire burn area has

not been surveyed, and the number of buildings destroyed could rise. There are about 800 homes in the 8,000 acres evacuated, Pelle said.

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### Extras

[Read](#) an updated list of destroyed homes/structures .

[View](#) satellite images of the Fourmile Canyon fire from the University of Colorado .

[Examine](#) a map that details the areas affected by the fire .

[View](#) a gallery of images from the fire in Fourmile Canyon near Boulder .

If you have images related to the fire that you would like to share with The Post, please e-mail [photo@denverpost.com](mailto:photo@denverpost.com) .

[View](#) a realtime map of U.S. wildfires from AP .

From The Boulder Daily Camera:

[Read](#) The Camera's full coverage .

added. "I need you to be ready to go again."

High winds could change the situation quickly, he said.

Incident commander Todd Richardson told the crowd there were 20 miles of perimeter around the fire, and 2 miles of that was now under control, allowing entrance and exit.

The crowd was polite and even encouraging, delivering robust applause to the explanation of the work of hundreds of firefighters and the progress they've made

They listened for more than two hours to Pelle, fire officials, the American Red Cross, and representatives of schools and mental-health services.

About 30 minutes of the two-hour meeting was dedicated

to answering queries about road closings and the best ways to stay up-to-date. Evacuees also submitted questions in writing. The answers to the written questions will be posted on the Boulder County Office of Emergency management's website by today.

More than 1,000 evacuees, along with friends, neighbors and concerned citizens, gathered Wednesday night at the Coors Events Center on the University of Colorado at Boulder campus to be briefed by officials. Pelle told them that, thanks to some rain and lighter winds, "we made very good progress on the fire today."

But he had a warning for those returning to their homes.

"I need you to do something for me," Pelle

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September 9, 2010  
10:18 AM

**CONTACT: Public Employees for Environmental  
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## **Forest Service Chief Mum on Why He Imposed Gag Order Agency Faces FOIA Lawsuit for Failing to Turn Over Documents**

WASHINGTON - September 9 - The Chief of the U.S. Forest Service is wrongfully withholding documents explaining why he imposed a "gag order" forbidding all staff from responding to media inquiries without headquarters approval, according to a lawsuit filed today by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER). The policy prevents timely release of crime, fire and accident reports, as well as adding weeks to the response time for even routine reporter inquiries.

On August 25, 2009, Thomas L. Tidwell, Chief of the Forest Service, issued an order to his leadership directorate concerning "National Media Contacts" in which he forbade any employee from responding to "a member of the national media on any subject; or...a local or regional reporter seeking information about a national issue, including policy and budget issues" without prior clearance from the National Press Office (emphasis in original). In this memo, Chief Tidwell also stated that "I have received disturbing information concerning contacts by some employees with national media, without coordination" and cited the need for "consistent and coordinated messaging."

On February 16, 2010, PEER submitted a Freedom of Information Act request to the Forest Service asking for all documents reflecting the rationale or circumstances leading up to the issuance of the gag order. On April 26, 2010, the agency declared that other than the Chief's memo itself it had no further documents that could shed light on why it was issued.

"This memo was not the product of immaculate conception, springing fully formed from the Chief's forehead," stated PEER Executive Director Jeff Ruch, noting that as a result of the memo national forest units contacted by a reporter must first file a 20-part "Forest Service Media Coordination Request" and await official approvals before responding to inquiries. "This order prevents Forest Service law enforcement from doing their job in cases where media cooperation can be a major asset."

While the Forest Service claims that Chief Tidwell's memo simply reaffirmed pre-existing policy, the memo goes much further. For example, it superseded provisions in the agency's Law Enforcement Handbook that "Responses to requests for background information from the national news media should be provided...and do not require U.S. Department of Agriculture, Press Office approval." More significantly, the handbook also provided that law enforcement personnel "may provide factual information to the media" concerning "emergency or fast-moving situations" such as accidents or crimes.

"President Obama promised a new level of transparency but on any issue of potential controversy, the same old penchant for secrecy still controls," said PEER Counsel Christine Erickson, who drafted the complaint filed today in federal district court in Washington, D.C., noting the irony of official obfuscation over the basis for its public communication policy. "In order to get Freedom of Information Act

compliance under this administration, we have had to file on average a new lawsuit every month "

**[Read the PEER complaint](#)**

**[View the Forest Service gag order](#)**

**[See how the gag order is hampering Forest Service law enforcement](#)**

###

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# The Mercury News

MercuryNews.com

## Forest Service eyes withholding of dispatch tapes

The Associated Press

Posted: 08/03/2010 05:31:45 PM PDT

Updated: 08/03/2010 06:47:45 PM PDT

LOS ANGELES—Federal officials are investigating why recordings of calls made to a dispatch center during the destructive Station Fire were withheld from a review team and reporters.

U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell said Tuesday he was "deeply troubled" that tapes of incoming calls to two of the 14 phone lines at the Angeles National Forest dispatch center were not found earlier.

The tapes could provide insight into initial efforts to contain the blaze last summer that killed two firefighters, destroyed 89 homes and blackened 250 square miles of wildlands on the edge of Los Angeles, Tidwell said.

The Los Angeles Times had requested the recordings under the Freedom of Information Act.

The inspector general of the Agriculture Department will determine why the tapes were not released or turned over to internal investigators. Criminal charges could be recommended based on the results.

The tapes were still being transcribed and the

contents will be released soon, Tidwell said.

U.S. Rep. Adam Schiff is holding a public hearing next Tuesday in Pasadena on the Station fire. In preparation for the hearing, Tidwell had ordered the Forest Service to reexamine how it responded to reporters' requests regarding dispatch calls.

Forest Service officials have been criticized over their response to requests for air tankers and other resources during the first days of the fire that eventually became the largest blaze in Los Angeles County history.

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## James Lewis

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**From:** Dianne Timblin [dianne\_timblin@yahoo.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 25, 2010 2:03 PM  
**To:** jglewis@duke.edu  
**Subject:** Where are they now? Rolling Stones edition

OK, so I decided to take an actual break at lunch and read an article while enjoying my PB&J.

I thought you might be interested in reading it too:

"Ex-Rolling Stones Manager Emerges In South America," by Juan Forero  
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=129385338&ps=cprs>

Two things:

1) Oldham is the only person I've ever heard of who moved to Columbia to kick a drug habit.

2) His mom was one tough customer. To wit,

"My mother, if she was alive, would be very pleased, because it was the first time in my whole life that I had a regular job," Oldham says. "I mean, this is a woman who in 1965, when I had a Rolls-Royce and five other cars — I took her for a ride in the Rolls-Royce — still turned around to me and said, 'Yes, but when are you going to get a regular job?'"

Back to work for me now... Hope your day is going well!

xoxo



BismarckTribune.com

## Forest Chief asks for communication, not court

By LAUREN DONOVAN Bismarck Tribune | Posted: Monday, March 21, 2011 11:51 pm

Ranchers are looking at a cold, wet start for calving this year, but it was either pre-calving enough, or important enough, that many left the ranch Monday to attend hearings with the chief of the U.S. Forest Service on a grazing dispute on the region's National Grasslands.

Chief Tom Tidwell got a polite earful in Watford City and Medora, where some 120 ranchers turned out to support their grazing associations in a disagreement over grazing reductions that will leave more high-grass habitat for sharp-tailed sage grouse and other prairie species.

The hearings, at which cowboy hats abounded, were called by U.S. Sen. John Hoeven, who came down with the flu and wasn't able to attend.

At the heart of the matter was the question why mediators from the State Agriculture Department can't be used to help both sides come to agreement.

Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring said he has trained, capable mediators, but requests to use them by the grazing association were twice turned down by the Forest Service.

The Grand River Cooperative Grazing District started the mediation process, only to have the Forest Service leave the table, Goehring said.

"The resource is more than grass. It's the people here," Goehring said. "We need a good-faith effort so we can resolve these disputes."

Les Haugen, a McKenzie County Grazing Association director said, "We're not here to hurt the ground. We're here to help the ground."

He said the Forest Service wants to make grazing reductions in his allotment based on cattle numbers during drought years when ranchers took voluntary cuts to save grass.

"Now that's going to come back and get us big time," he said.

The dispute so far involves a relatively small number of ranchers in grazing allotments across the National Grasslands, where the Forest Service wants less grazing and more high-structure grass, which is measured at 3.5 inches or higher.

All the grazing allotments on the grasslands either are or will undergo a review that follows an overarching document, the Grasslands Management Plan, itself wrung from a lengthy and contentious process several years ago.

In the case of two allotments, the McKenzie Country Grazing so disagreed with the Forest Service, its plan to maintain a watchful status quo only instead of reductions was included as a separate alternative for both of allotments.

Tidwell said mediation isn't the right tool for the Forest Service because the agency relies on public comment for its policy and management direction.

Not only is it outside of existing procedure, Tidwell said, but he didn't see how mediated agreements could work, since the agency can't make decisions that omit the public.

"It just doesn't fit very well," he said.

He suggested frontloading the process with communication so problems are ironed out before the environmental review begins and to save everyone the expense of time of going to court.

Both sides are hanging their hats on very different hooks when it comes to the whole subject of high-grass structure.

The Forest Service says its studies show that the grasslands are biologically capable of having as much as 85 — 95 percent of grass that meets the high structure threshold, even though it's proposing to manage for one-fourth that much.

The grazing associations, using research from North Dakota State University, says that number is much lower, more like 3 to 5 percent.

Kevin Sedevic, NDSU's rangeland specialist and the point man for ongoing research, said the problem is that the grazing associations are using a number that has a lot of variability.

"I agree they're using the (research) data, even though there's a lot of error. It could be right, or way wrong," depending on the year, Sedevic said.

Dave Pieper, grasslands supervisor, said the agency plans to monitor the allotments for five years so it can make adjustments.

Meantime, Sedevic said the research — which should have started a decade ago — will continue so that basic questions of how much tall grass can even grow on the grasslands might finally be answered.

He said he'd like to see research ahead of hard decisions, though in this case, some grazing decisions are too far into the process to stop now.

"The trouble we have is we're in the middle of the management plan. That's the big struggle we're having now," he said.

Tidwell said that summed up horns of the dilemma and that given the overall Grasslands Management Plan, the Forest Service likely didn't have much discretion in the grazing allotments.

"People may have thought everything's on the table. Well, it's not," Tidwell said. "There's no question that you guys do a very good job of managing the land. We have the responsibility to manage for multiple benefits."

(Reach reporter Lauren Donovan at 701-748-5511 or [Lauren@westriv.com](mailto:Lauren@westriv.com).)

KSTK Local News

[print this page](#)**Forest chief takes heat on timber sales**

Libby Casey, APRN

WASHINGTON, D.C. (2011-03-08) The Chief of the U.S. Forest Service defended its plan today (March 3) to reduce the number of ten-year timber sales in Southeast Alaska. Tom Tidwell appeared before the Senate Energy Committee to explain the President's budget requests for next year. He admitted to Senator Lisa Murkowski that if the goal is to sustain communities in Southeast, things must change.

"And so what I look at what we've been doing in the past in Alaska, it has not worked. We've spent more time in court than we've been out on the ground getting work accomplished," he said.

Murkowski is upset because in 2008 the Forest Service promised to have four decade-long timber sales in the Tongass National Forest, of up to 200 million board feet each. But now instead it wants to convert two of those sales to what are called "stewardship" contracts, and only offer half the board-feet in small parcels.

Murkowski asked Tidwell what happened to the commitment made by his agency. The director says the goal is to make sure timber harvests go forward.

"And I recognize we're not getting enough work done. But I look at what we were doing in 08, 09, and I look at what accomplished in 2010, what plan for 2011, what plan for 2012, and the trends in the right direction. We're building support so we can move forward and get the work accomplished on the ground," he says.

But Murkowski says the second largest remaining mill in Southeast just closed and now only has six employees, and the only large mill left is, in her words, desperately worried about its timber supply.



"You say that the trend is improving, going from 600 employees to six is not a trend I want to see. Recognizing that we've got one remaining large mill, the second largest timber-related construction company is gone. So to me these are not trends I want to continue. I want to take it back the other way," Murkowski says.

Chief Tidwell says the current program is designed to create credibility with Southeast towns and villages, and start building back up the program.

"Right now, as you well know, the industry is almost on its last legs. And I just don't feel we can take the risk on some large projects we could be in court over, verses being able to get work through that we could go ahead and implement that. And so that's our focus, to be sure we can continue to provide work, continue to provide timber sales so existing infrastructure can stay in place," he says.

Murkowski agreed that litigation has hung up timber development, but said

she's not sure the new plan will put the program on track.

"Investing in the future makes it real difficult if everyone who's participant in industry is no longer around. We keep talking about transition to 2nd growth, I've suggested there won't be anyone there to transition," she says.

Murkowski also used her time during the Energy Committee hearing to press Tidwell about why decisions on timber sales that involve old growth trees have to go all the way to Washington for decisions, rather than being decided in Alaska:

"You've got a secretary who's a busy guy. How tuned in is he to looking at a sale in a particular part of the country, how much delay does this create by having to run everything all the way up to the secretary of agriculture?," Murkowski says.

"I worry about the fact we're taking to the secretary level an issue that should be resolved in the regions," she says.

Senators voiced concerns at the hearing about the Forest Service's plan to consolidate some programs, and eliminate others, but Tidwell says much of that is only for accounting purposes. Changes to the agency's contributions to the Federal Subsistence Program, for example, won't actually make a difference on the ground, only on the books, according to the Forest Service Chief.

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# Missoulia

## New USFS chief to address climate effects, watersheds

**ROB CHANEY of the Missoulia** | Posted: Friday, June 19, 2009 12:00 am

Watershed management and climate change science will become top priorities for national forest management, according to newly designated U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell.

The 32-year veteran of the Forest Service spent the past two years leading the Region 1 headquarters in Missoula. He spoke with the Missoulia on Thursday while wrapping up a senior executive service training session in Maine.

**Missoulia:** Tell us about the selection process. Who was in charge of the choice, and what were they looking for in a new chief of the Forest Service?

**Tidwell:** The Secretary of Agriculture (Tom Vilsack) was in charge. They wanted someone who had demonstrated they can work with people, be able to reach out. I expect to develop a collaborative approach. We've very successfully been able to move those concepts forward in the Northern Region. And also to have someone who's been with the agency.

**Missoulia:** Homer Wilkes backed out of the undersecretary of agriculture job last week. That was the post formerly held by Mark Rey, and it oversees the chief of the Forest Service. Who's going to be your boss?

**Tidwell:** Jay Jensen is our acting undersecretary. He's my boss.

**Missoulia:** What sorts of unfinished business from the previous leadership awaits you when you get to Washington?

**Tidwell:** I'm going to have a transition with Chief (Gail) Kimbell. The thing we see as our focus is implementing the economic recovery projects, the opportunity we had there to not only get a lot of essential work done but to provide jobs, especially in counties across the country where there's high unemployment. We continue to move forward with our focus on climate change, to use the science that we have and apply that science so that natural systems are able to adapt to the various stressors that are occurring in the changing climate.

**Missoulia:** What sort of stresses are you focused on?

**Tidwell:** Definitely we're seeing effects on snowpack and the effect that has on streamflow. We're seeing places where there's definitely an extension to our fire season. Even though it's by a couple weeks, you get a bit longer fire season where things are drying out two weeks earlier, and it just adds to the potential for wildfire.

We're also seeing areas where we have to factor in the species composition. (For example) for years we had conifer stands where, if we had fire or something go through there, we need to understand what is the potential for that site? Can we reforest that area, or do we need to look at some other options?

**Missoulia:** What about the Legacy Project (Plum Creek Timber Co.'s effort to transfer thousands of acres of timber land to public and conservation ownership in western Montana)? Are there loose ends to tie up there?

**Tidwell:** That project will continue. My understanding is it's moving forward and we're looking forward to receiving the donation of that land that will come to the national forest. The cost-share road agreement - that's something we're going to continue to work on with the counties and Plum Creek. We'll find a way to address those concerns as we move forward.

**Missoulia:** What new initiatives or directions does the Obama Administration have for forest management?

**Tidwell:** I haven't had a chance to have any extensive briefing on that, but definitely climate change is going to be one of our focused areas. Water will be another area where we will be increasing our emphasis of our management on watersheds. It's one of the things we're seeing with the change of climate, the change of streamflow. The importance of our watershed is something that's very undervalued. We must make sure these watersheds are in the best condition they can be in, to provide the abundant flow of



water that so many people depend on.

**Missoulian:** What practically does that mean?

**Tidwell:** It's one of the things we're taking a look at. I don't have any specifics at this time. We'll definitely look to make sure we're doing everything we can to manage for watershed health. Maintain that clean abundant flow of water that comes off the national forest and grasslands.

**Missoulian:** Does that mean possible restrictions on forest activities?

**Tidwell:** At this time, we don't have any details on what that will be. Water's been one of the foundations of this agency. One of the reasons many of our national forest lands were reserved in the first place was to maintain healthy watersheds. As we see the effects of climate, snowpacks and waterflows, and there's more and more people moving into especially arid parts of this country, there's an increasing need for clean water. We want to make sure we're factoring in the things we need today, to make sure these watersheds are in the best health they can be to serve the needs of 10 or 15 years from now.

**Missoulian:** You've spent a lot of time fighting fire. Congress just finished restructuring how firefighting gets funded. Will we see any changes on the ground in coming fire seasons?

**Tidwell:** I don't know if you'll see any changes, but you'll see a continued increase with our level of collaboration and cooperation with various agencies and the states and local fire agencies so that we can work together and have the most effective response.

**Missoulian:** Recent new legislation was intended to keep you from having to raid other budgets for the rest of the year's activities in order to fund the fire season. Does that give you some flexibility?

**Tidwell:** Yes. The consequence of the last few years of having to transfer a portion of our budget for other programs toward the middle of each summer in order to pay for fire suppression has had an impact on other programs. Not having to do that will definitely help us be more effective and efficient with programs and be able to move forward with the benefits that derive from those programs on recreation and wildlife and watershed work and trails and roads and that sort of thing.

**Missoulian:** One of your predecessors, Dale Bosworth, told me yesterday that climate change and its impact on forests will be a major topic. Does the Forest Service have a leadership role in that discussion, or does it need to wait for guidance on national wildland priorities?

**Tidwell:** We do have a leadership role. Part of it comes from the extensive research that our research-and-development branch of the agency has been doing for the last few decades. We have some of the best science, and we need to make sure we're applying that, using that and sharing that as we move forward. I think we have a key leadership role, not only in the application of science but to help inform and educate our community and the folks we work, so they can understand the changes that are occurring, how it's affecting the landscape and help us find solutions about how we need to change our management so these natural systems are able to adapt to various climate change stressors.

**Missoulian:** A big part of that is the interest in using timber biomass for fuel and energy. Is the Forest Service prepared to manage that kind of demand?

**Tidwell:** There's going to be a need to remove material - biomass - from the forest, especially around our communities and watersheds. And there needs to be a way to use that material, not only to offset the cost, but there's the potential to convert that to energy. It's one of those things that needs to be part of the solution.

**Missoulian:** What about biomass uses that are unproven or uneconomically viable? Do you need to wait, or does the Forest Service have role in clearing that up?

**Tidwell:** It will be both. The industry is moving forward with innovations and developing technology. And we do work and other federal agencies are doing work to help explore new technologies. It becomes more of a partnership between our research branch and other research agencies along with industry.

**Missoulian:** The traditional role of the Forest Service to "get the cut out" has been on the decline with the collapse of the timber industry. At the same time, recreational users are bringing whole new challenges to forest management, like motorized vs. wilderness access. How do you see the agency adapting to this changing management landscape?

**Tidwell:** It's been a long while since we had the focus on timber harvest. For years now we've been focused on managing land and using timber harvest as one of the tools to improve forest health. As we move forward, the increased recreation is just a part of

what we'll need to manage for and provide opportunities for people who use the national forests and places they want to recreate. That is just continuing. That change occurred a long time ago and we'll just keep moving forward, doing the things we have been doing the last few years.

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# Missoulian

## Forester has hopes for regional strategy

By PERRY BACKUS of the Missoulian | Posted: Sunday, April 22, 2007 12:00 am

One of the first things Tom Tidwell wanted to do in his new job as regional forester was to have a heart-to-heart talk with the women and men who staff the ranger stations scattered around the U.S. Forest Service's Northern Region.

"That's where the work gets done," he said.

Tidwell sat down with a number of them recently and listened.

He probably wasn't too surprised to hear that high on the list of challenges they face each day are difficulties implementing projects because of administrative appeals and legal action.

Tidwell wanted his employees to know that help may be on the way in the form of a new regional restoration strategy the agency plans to roll out in the near future. The new plan will focus restoration efforts on areas where there will be multiple resource benefits.

"We want to be able to focus our efforts on the areas with the highest priority," Tidwell said.

Tidwell's hope is the new strategy - designed to restore fisheries, wildlife habitat and forest health - will win public acceptance and pave the way for new projects on the ground.

"I'm optimistic," Tidwell said. "This will be another good opportunity to engage the public."

The general public's perception of the Forest Service is shifting. For the most part, people don't think the agency's main focus is on timber harvest anymore, Tidwell said.

"Personally, I think things are going to get better," Tidwell said. "We want to be able to work together to find areas of common ground. There are pockets of success that we can point to. ... We need to build on those. I believe this restoration strategy is going to be another good tool to help us in those efforts."

There are projects occurring on national forest lands that haven't been appealed or litigated, he said.

"We have a tendency to talk about the decisions that were appealed and litigated, but the ones that were successful we don't hear that much about," Tidwell said.

There may be ways to reach out and resolve these issues before they end up in court, he said.

"I want to look for ways to reduce the amount of litigation," Tidwell said. "I also don't expect that we can get everyone to agree with everything we do. ... I do want to reach out to communities and talk with them."

Wildfire and the growing costs of suppression continue to be a concern.

"Until we can make changes on the ground and restore forests to a more natural state, we'll continue to get the tremendous stand replacement fires that we've seen over the last few years," he said.

In some cases, the wise use of fire can help restoration efforts. In other places, it might require some mechanical manipulation - thinning - of the vegetative cover.

"This region is very, very sound in its use of fire on the landscape," Tidwell said. "We want to be able to let fire be part of the landscape wherever possible.

"I feel lucky to be able to move into a region that has been very well managed in the past. It doesn't need any drastic course

correction. I'll work to build on its successes after I have a better feel for the issues and concerns."

Fire suppression costs continue to consume a larger proportion of the Forest Service's total budget every year.

This year, Tidwell said, fire suppression costs are expected to be nearly 45 percent of the budget. Ten or 12 years ago, it was closer to 13 percent.

Last year, fire suppression costs across the nation ran about \$1.5 billion.

As fire suppression costs continue to climb, Tidwell said, the agency's other programs take a hit as their budgets tighten.

"There have definitely been impacts on other programs," he said.

Those rising fire suppression costs are the result of the

2 percent of fires that escape initial attack.

"Our initial attack crews catch 98 percent of the fires that start every year," he said. "Everyone gets to read about the 2 percent that get away and get large. They often don't hear about the ones our crews catch."

This fire season is shaping up to be another hectic one.

"Unless we get some favorable weather, I expect we'll see another busy fire season," he said.

Tidwell's priorities for his first few months will be to get out of his office in Missoula.

"I feel a strong need to get out on the ground and meet employees and community leaders," he said. "I want to get a feel from them about what we're doing right and what we can do better."

Before signing on as the Northern Region's top forester, Tidwell was forest supervisor on the Wasatch-Cache National Forest in Utah. He also served as district ranger on the Uinta National Forest in Utah for nine years. He held acting forest supervisor assignments on the Fishlake National Forest in Utah and Sawtooth National Forest in Idaho. He also worked in the agency's Washington office on the legislative affairs staff.

Tidwell replaced Gail Kimbell, who became chief of the Forest Service in February.

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# Missoulian

## New forester takes reins of region

**SHERRY DEVLIN of the Missoulian | Posted: Tuesday, March 16, 2004 12:00 am**

Any day now, Gail Kimbell's photograph will be framed and ready to take its place on the wall in the regional forester's office in Missoula.

She'll find herself in distinguished, but decidedly masculine, company.

Portraits of the U.S. Forest Service's previous 18 regional foresters - from William Greeley to Brad Powell - already adorn the wall, nine on either side of the spot reserved for the new boss.

Still, Kimbell doesn't put much stock in her status as the Northern Region's first female regional forester.

"I'm sure those 18 men who came before me were as different from one another as I am from them," Kimbell said Monday. "I have 30 years of experience in natural resource management, and I hope that has far more bearing on what I bring to the job than does my gender."

When she arrived in Missoula this month, Kimbell carried with her credentials as a forest supervisor (three times), a district ranger (twice) and a forester. Twenty-eight of her last 30 years were spent on the ground, working in and around the woods.

The last two were spent in the Forest Service's Washington, D.C., office as associate deputy chief for the national forest system.

Kimbell arrived, too, with a single priority: to restore healthy ecosystems and healthy communities in and around the 12 national forests in Montana and northern Idaho.

"My priorities start and stop with what I can do to facilitate the restoration of healthy forests," she said. "That's the priority."

So this year, the Northern Region forests will complete fuel-reduction - also known as healthy forests - projects on 75,500 acres, almost double last year's accomplishment.

About one-third of the work will involve thinning forests crowded or rendered sickly after nearly a century of aggressive wildland firefighting.

The other two-thirds will involve the return of fire in a controlled - prescribed - fashion.

Everything else the region's forests undertake will be intended to fulfill healthy forests goals as well, Kimbell said - every timber sale, every salvage sale, every watershed or wildlife project.

If the Forest Service is to address the growing wildfire danger, there "has to be active management on the ground," she said. "We have to manage for the health of the whole landscape - for clean water, for wildlife habitat, for healthy vegetation, for recreation."

The work is nothing new, just newly named, Kimbell said. "I've been working on healthy forest issues since my first day. We were doing salvage work following an infestation of tussock moths."

Kimbell began her career with the Bureau of Land Management in Medford, Ore., putting her newly minted forestry degree (from the University of Vermont) to use.

At 24, she fulfilled a childhood dream and moved to Alaska to work in the Chugach National Forest.

"One of the magical things about a Forest Service career is all the beautiful places you get to live," she said. For Kimbell and her husband, that list includes the Mount Jefferson Wilderness in Oregon; Kettle Falls in northeastern Washington; the Eagle Cap Wilderness outside LaGrande, Ore.; and the Bighorn, Pike and San Isabel national forests in Wyoming and Colorado.



Kimbell was forest supervisor on the Bighorn National Forest after the tumultuous departure of supervisor Larry Keown in 1997.

Keown was reassigned to the agency's Denver office after employees questioned his management of both people and the national forest. During Kimbell's tenure, those same employees believed they were retaliated against by being reassigned or terminated.

On Monday, Kimbell said the Bighorn forest "had been embroiled in issues for years" before her arrival and denied that she was involved in any retribution against the whistle-blowers.

Some employees were angry about a decision on the management of the Medicine Wheel, an American Indian sacred area on the Bighorn forest, she said. Others were victims of downsizing required because the forest was "overstaffed for its budget."

She came to Wyoming not to clean house, as some workers charged, but because she was weary with southeast Alaska's rainy weather.

"I wanted 300 days of sunshine after all that rain," Kimbell said.

When she moved to the Pike and San Isabel national forests as supervisor, Kimbell became directly involved in the wildfire-forest fuels issue.

In 1996, before she arrived, the Buffalo Creek fire burned 10,000 acres in four hours, then was followed by a downpour that washed tons of sediment into reservoirs used for drinking water by the city of Denver.

In 2000, the High Meadows fire burned another 10,000 acres, half on public land, half on private. Fifty-two homes were burned as well.

In both instances, foresters and firefighters found that when the fire hit areas where fuels had been thinned, the fire dropped to the ground and could be more easily fought, Kimbell said.

The National Fire Plan followed the 2000 fire season and was significant, Kimbell said, because "we had both an administration and Congress talking about their commitment to forest health."

Now comes the work, which Kimbell knows will be contentious.

"There will always be disagreements and discussion," she said, "but that's good. I am under no illusion that we will ever change everyone's mind. I hear from a lot of people from all sides every day."

In the Northern Region, Kimbell said she is "blessed by an excellent staff" committed to healthy forests and communities and more than qualified to do the work.

There have been concerns and questions since former regional forester Brad Powell was reassigned late last year because he used government-issued computers to access pornography, Kimbell said.

"But people are ready to move on," she said. "I worked with Brad for years and have the utmost respect for his skills and abilities as a resource manager."

Over the next six months, Kimbell will travel to each of the national forests in her new domain and to most of the ranger districts, meeting her staff and the communities they serve.

"That's where my heart is," she said, "and where it will remain."

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THE ASSOCIATED PRESS July 11, 2011, 4:25PM ET

## W.Va. study raises questions about fracking fluid

By VICKI SMITH

### MORGANTOWN, W.VA.

A gas company that legally doused a patch of West Virginia forest with salty wastewater from a drilling operation killed ground vegetation within days and more than half the trees within two years, a new report from the U.S. Forest Service says.

Lead researcher Mary Beth Adams says that the damage to the quarter-acre, detailed in a case study published in the *Journal of Environmental Quality*, shows the need for more research into industry practices.

"There is virtually no information in the scientific literature about the effects of gas well development on forests in the eastern U.S.," she said Monday. That "paucity of knowledge" must be filled so land managers and regulators can make better decisions.

For starters, Adams' report suggests West Virginia create a land-disposal formula that incorporates not only the concentration of salt and chemicals in treated hydraulic fracturing fluid but also the size of the area it can be applied to. Adams says that could help prevent overdoses like the one that occurred in the Monongahela National Forest.

One group has seized on the report already, arguing it shows the need for tighter regulations on how industry disposes of fracking fluid.

"This study suggests that these fluids should be treated as toxic waste," argues Jeff Ruch, executive director of a whistleblower group, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility. "The explosion of shale gas drilling in the East has the potential to turn large stretches of public lands into lifeless moonscapes."

But industry leaders say that in trying to protect the rest of the Monongahela, federal officials created a situation that doesn't reflect reality, forcing the driller to overload an inappropriately small site -- an agreed-upon quarter acre.

"It was set up for failure," said Bob Radabaugh, a longtime forester, industry consultant and owner of S & R Gas Interests in Glenville. "In reality, you want to be able to spread this out on as big an area as you can. What they did was restrict it to a very small area.

"They did right by the forest," he said, "but it backfired on them."

Gas drilling has been a staple of the Appalachian economy for generations, but the industry is in overdrive as unconventional horizontal drilling and fracking technologies allow companies to go deeper. Many are rushing to tap the Marcellus shale field underlying parts of Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and New York.

In 2007, Berry Energy Inc. of Clarksburg began drilling a conventional, vertical gas well in a section of the Fernow Experimental Forest, a part of the Monongahela set aside for research.

Adams said what unfolded over the next two years was an unexpected opportunity for observation.

Some results were expected, from deforestation and road damage to runoff and erosion. Others, including the dramatic die-off when wastewater was land-applied, were not.

Berry Energy didn't immediately return messages Monday, but the report says that in June 2008, under a permit from the state Department of Environmental Protection, it sprayed 75,000 gallons of treated fracking fluid on the quarter-acre.

Adams said the Forest Service hoped to minimize damage and was only told afterward that the industry standard is to use a much larger area.

"We were surprised when the vegetation responded so quickly because we were told there would be no effect, 'This is done all the time,'" Adams said. "And there was a very dramatic response."

Within a few days, all ground vegetation was dead. Within 10 days, the leaves of the hardwoods began to turn brown and drop. Within

two years, more than half of the 150 trees were dead, and sodium and chloride concentrations in the soil were 50 times higher than normal.

Those levels declined over time, but the report says high salt content in the soil had another unexpected result: It attracted foraging white-tailed deer and black bears, slowing the regrowth of vegetation.

Corky DeMarco, executive director of the West Virginia Oil and Natural Gas Association, said his members reuse as much fracking fluid as possible. What's left largely goes to underground injection wells, not land application.

But even before the land application in Fernow, the scientists spotted problems.

When foliage on two dozen trees near the well pad died, they discovered workers had lost control of the drill bore, resulting in an aerial release of fluid. According to state records cited in the report, 15 percent of that fluid was hydrochloric acid.

The damage could have been caused by high pH from a plug that was used to hold the fracking fluid in the geologic formation, the report says. Or, a low pH solution with high chloride levels could be responsible.

"Clearly, a better knowledge of the chemical makeup of the drilling and hydrofracing fluids is needed," it concludes.

Berry Energy also drilled through three caves in the porous limestone Karst formations that underlie the forest, the report said. Known for sinkholes, caves and streams that sink underground, the Karst formations are fragile environments for rare and threatened creatures, from salamanders to the endangered Indiana bat.

Dye studies could trace water movement in the Karst and help evaluate the safety of drilling operations, the report says. While vegetation is relatively easy to evaluate, there is little data about the potential impact of drilling on animals, it notes, "and indeed, some may be more sensitive."

The U.S. Forest Service has proposed banning horizontal drilling and fracking in Virginia's George Washington National Forest due to concern for the ecosystem, but it has yet to recommend one for the Monongahela.

Last week, Deputy Chief Joel Holthrop told a U.S. House subcommittee that the Forest Service is not proposing a national policy but will instead tackle drilling proposals case by case, considering "place-based plans" and public concern.

Berry Energy has drilled only one well in the Monongahela but holds all the mineral rights under Fernow and under about one-third of the Otter Creek Wilderness Area.

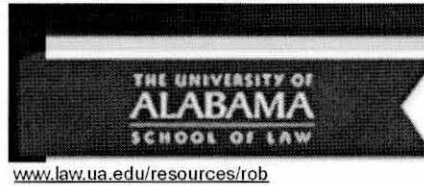
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Online:

Forest Service report: <http://www.nrs.fs.fed.us/pubs/37268>



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## Chief of United States Forest Service: Who is Tom Tidwell?



Sunday, August 08, 2010

Like those before him, Thomas Tidwell has risen up through the ranks of the U.S. Forest Service during his 32-year career before being appointed chief of the agency on June 17, 2009, by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.

After growing up in Boise, Idaho, Tidwell graduated from Washington State University with a degree in wildlife and range management. He also attended classes at the University of Idaho

He began his Forest Service career in the Boise National Forest, and eventually worked at eight different national forests in three regions. His roles have included working on a fire ground as a forest supervisor, a district ranger, and in legislative affairs in the Washington office, where he worked on the National Fire Plan, the 2001 roadless rule and the Secure Rural Schools Co-

Payments Act.

He was supervisor of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest during the 2002 Winter Olympics in Utah.

In 2006, Tidwell was appointed Deputy Regional Forester for Fire and Aviation Management, Recreation, Engineering, State and Private Forestry and Tribal Relations for the Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5).

The following year he was appointed Regional Forester for the Northern Region (Region 1), succeeding Gail Kimbell when she was appointed chief. The Northern Region includes 25 million acres in Montana, Idaho and North Dakota encompassing 12 national forests and four national grasslands.

In June 2009, Tidwell succeeded Kimbell again when he was appointed as chief of the Forest Service. He is the third consecutive person promoted from Region 1 Regional Forester to chief.

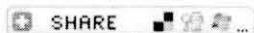
Tidwell and his wife, Kim, have one daughter.

-Noel Brink

[Chief's Biography \(U.S. Forest Service\)](#)

[New Forest Service Chief Vows Quick Spending of Stimulus Money](#) (by Andre Meunier, Associated Press)

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## Lawmakers seek broad probe into Forest Service response to Station fire

**California's two U.S. senators and several local House members ask the Government Accountability Office for the inquiry into the Forest Service's tactics and decisions.**

By Paul Pringle, Los Angeles Times

August 6, 2010

California's two U.S. senators and several local House members Thursday called on Congress' investigative arm to launch a sweeping probe into the Forest Service's response to last summer's disastrous Station fire.

In asking for the investigation by the Government Accountability Office, which typically grants such requests, the lawmakers recommended a broad examination of the Forest Service's decisions and tactics. Those include the use of aircraft early in the fight and the question of whether everything possible was done to protect homes that burned in Big Tujunga Canyon.

The legislators also cited the disclosure this week that telephone dispatch recordings made during the fire were withheld from a Forest Service review team and the public. The Times requested the recordings last year and again this year, but Forest Service officials said they did not exist.

The late discovery of the recordings "casts a dark cloud over the findings of the review panel and immediately warrants an independent review of the Station fire response," the lawmakers said in a letter to the GAO. "Our purpose for this review is to ensure that all actions in the response to the fire were taken swiftly, properly and competently."

In addition to Democratic Sens. Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, the signers include Reps. David Dreier (R-San Dimas), Howard P. "Buck" McKeon (R- Santa Clarita), Adam Schiff (D- Burbank), Judy Chu (D-El Monte) and Brad Sherman (D-Sherman Oaks).

The development comes two days after the Department of Agriculture, which runs the Forest Service, announced that its inspector general had launched a separate investigation into the withheld recordings, which were made at an Angeles National Forest dispatch center. That probe could lead to criminal charges, depending on the findings.

Dreier, whose district includes much of the forest, said he initiated the letter to the GAO "to redouble our

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efforts to get to the bottom of this."

"The notion of not taking every action to find out exactly what happened ... is something that is just plain wrong," he said.

The Times has reported that the Forest Service misjudged the threat posed by the fire, rolled back its attack on the first night and failed to fill an order for air tankers in the hours after sunup the following morning, when the blaze was still small. The lawmakers asked the GAO to examine all of those actions.

The fire blackened 250 square miles, destroyed scores of homes and other structures, and killed two Los Angeles County firefighters. It was the biggest fire in county history.

On Tuesday, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell had invited Congress to ask for the GAO investigation.

"We welcome the opportunity to have the GAO review the actions of the Forest Service," Tidwell said in a statement Thursday.

In November, the Forest Service review team found that the agency followed all proper protocols and procedures in its response to the fire, a conclusion labeled a whitewash by former Forest Service officers and some local elected officials.

A subsequent Los Angeles County Fire Department inquiry was far more self-critical about the events that led to the deaths of Tedmund Hall and Arnaldo Quinones, who died while trying to defend their Mt. Gleason camp.

In the letter to the GAO, the lawmakers say, "We must establish what lessons were learned from this devastating fire. By identifying mistakes made and where different choices would have caused better outcomes, agencies tasked with preventing and fighting fires will be able to better prepare and respond in the future."

Meanwhile, the inspector general also will examine whether the Forest Service had the legal authority to record phone calls to the Angeles dispatch center without the consent of all callers. Radio dispatch communications are routinely recorded, but the Forest Service wants the inspector general to determine whether the phone recordings violated privacy rights, agency officials said.

In an internal memorandum Wednesday that was obtained by The Times, Forest Service Deputy Chief James Hubbard ordered all dispatch centers to stop recording calls until the matter is resolved.

*paul.pringle@latimes.com*

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latimes.com/news/local/la-me-station-fire-20100705,0,7356095.story

**latimes.com**

## **Aerial expert's report on L.A. County's biggest wildfire flies in the face of official review**

**As Capt. Perri Hall watched helplessly, a blaze that had appeared containable erupted into the devastating Station fire. A report by Hall, obtained by The Times, contradicts key assertions by the U.S. Forest Service about its response to last summer's disaster.**

By Paul Pringle

Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

July 5, 2010

Just after first light, a tactical observation plane took off from its old military base in Hemet for an urgent mission above the cathedral peaks of the Angeles National Forest.

The two-man crew had been deployed to direct an air assault on the few acres of brush still burning on Day 2 of last summer's Station fire, which had been nearly contained the evening before.

As the crew prepared for the arrival of three or more air tankers, conditions appeared good for knocking the blaze down once and for all. Winds were calm, and the sun had yet to rise above the pine-crowned mountaintops to heat the thick carpet of chaparral where the fire had flared overnight.

Capt. Perri Hall, a veteran air attack officer for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, who was over the blaze minutes before 7 a.m. on Aug. 27, radioed the U.S. Forest Service with the intention of bringing in the tankers, a lead plane and helicopters.

There was no answer.

"I made several attempts to contact someone on the ground ... with no luck," Hall recounts in a report. "I then attempted to make contact with [the Angeles National Forest] on the command frequencies."

The minutes were passing.

"I finally was able to make contact ... and ask for the lead plane to be started ASAP," he says. "They advise the lead plane would not be available until 0900 hours.

"I then ask to start any air tankers they had and again I was told nothing available until 0900-0930 hours. "I then ask if there were any heli-tankers available and if so get them started. Again I was told nothing available until 0930 hours.

"I gave them a quick report on conditions of 3-4 acres [burning] ... with potential of a major fire."

That potential began turning into reality about an hour later. The fire jumped a critical defense line along Angeles Crest Highway and raced through the dried-out scrub and trees, becoming the biggest conflagration in Los Angeles County history. Two county firefighters were killed.

Hall's account of Day 2, a copy of which was obtained by The Times, contradicts key assertions by the Forest Service about

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its response to the fire. Hall wrote the 1,000-word report soon after the mission, out of frustration and anger at the Forest Service's failure to unleash a more aggressive aerial attack, according to people with knowledge of the situation who requested anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

The captain's narrative challenges a leading conclusion of the Forest Service's official review of the fire: that an earlier aerial assault on Day 2 would have been ineffective because rough terrain would have prevented ground crews from finishing the job. Hall makes no mention of terrain problems, and it was his responsibility to determine whether the landscape was an impediment to aerial drops.

Despite Hall's expertise and bird's-eye perspective, the Forest Service review team never interviewed him, officials said. His plane had been assigned to the fire at the Forest Service's request.

Former Forest Service officials say Hall's account is crucial to any assessment of the firefight because it was his job to determine when and where aircraft should be used.

In the report, Hall describes how he planned to hit the flames quickly:

"I tried again to contact someone on the ground and [a Forest Service battalion chief] responded back to me. I ask if he had any crews on the fire below the road (eastside of highway) and advised him that if I can get some aircraft I was going to go to work direct as possible on it."

But he could not get the aircraft and watched helplessly as the blaze that had appeared so containable erupted into a disaster:

"As the sun came up from behind the ridge to the east the down canyon wind began to increase and started pushing this new fire parallel to the highway. It began to burn freely on both the north and south end."

Hall writes that a single water-dropping helicopter arrived around 8:15 a.m. — other records indicate it reached the blaze about 25 minutes earlier — but it was far from enough:

"The fire began a good run up a ridge perpendicular to the highway. This run resulted in the fire jumping the highway to the west, into an entirely new drainage south of the original fire from the day before."

The delay in the tanker deployment — one of the Forest Service's own commanders had requested three of the heavy ships about six hours before their scheduled 7 a.m. arrival — has been a central issue in government inquiries into the fire. One, a hearing of local House members convened by Rep. Adam Schiff (D- Burbank), is set for Aug. 10.

Cal Fire spokeswoman Julie Hutchinson referred questions about Hall's account to the Forest Service because it was in charge of the operation that day. A Forest Service spokesman in Washington, D.C., said he relayed questions to local officials for his agency, who did not respond.

The efforts of Hall and others to get aircraft to the fire are also chronicled on recordings of radio communications that the Forest Service provided to The Times under the Freedom of Information Act.

On one recording, a Forest Service officer is heard calling at 3:10 a.m. for confirmation of a request made more than two hours earlier for three tankers and other aircraft to be over the blaze at 7 a.m. He is told that the order had been placed and that the Forest Service is "going to see at morning time if we can get [the aircraft] reassigned from the Morris" fire burning nearby.

At 6:49 a.m., on another recording, an officer asking about the lead plane is informed that it would "hold along with the tankers for now."

The Forest Service has blamed the tardy arrival of the tankers on the need for pilots to rest and a lack of available relief planes. But The Times has reported that according to federal records and state officials, the Forest Service failed to fill the order for tankers that its commander placed shortly before 1 a.m. on Day 2, even though Cal Fire had several of the planes available.

Former Forest Service officials say Hall's account and the recordings seem to confirm that a separate order for the Station

fire tankers was never filled and that the agency had instead opted to wait for planes that had been used the day before on the Morris blaze. Those tankers did not begin taking off until after 8:40 a.m.

"The problem wasn't the lack of resources," said former Angeles National Forest Fire Chief Don Feser. "The problem was the lack of will to acquire the resources.... I don't see any real sense of urgency."

Meanwhile, as Hall's narrative continues, he pleads in vain for more planes and other support:

"I made three requests for the DC-10 (Tanker 910) ... and all three were denied. I made two requests for a [helicopter coordinator to help manage the attack] with no fill."

The captain relates that when he landed for refueling, he walked into a dispatch center to press his case: "I told them again of the [fire's] potential and the need for more air tankers.

"When we returned to the fire that afternoon, it had doubled in size and was pushing 500-600 acres."

In the coming weeks, it would consume more than 160,000 acres.

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## Tester won't budge on bill's logging

Posted: Tuesday, July 6, 2010 7:35 pm | Updated: 7:42 pm, Tue Jul 6, 2010.

By Brad Fuqua, The Western News |

Sen. Jon Tester isn't giving up any ground on the four provisions he included in the Forest Jobs and Recreation Act. The legislator reiterated last week that logging will not be stripped from the final version of the bill, which he introduced.

Besides timber, other provisions cover wilderness, recreation and restoration.

"In the end, if we're missing those components, the bill will not move," Tester said during a telephone interview on Tuesday. "We're going to continue to get it passed. That's why we're working so hard to do it."

Tester and his staff met last week with Sen. Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.), chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), who is working on a similar bill.

"We talked about our vision for it and how important the wood products part of it was, along with the recreation component and restoration component," Tester said. "It's moving along but we still have some hiccups."

Tester said everybody he met with last week "wants to see the bill move out of committee. We're still working on it and is on board and we're working to get some language squared away."

Early last month, the Senate sub-committee removed the mandated logging component while creating a discussion amounting to the logging of 100,000 acres over 10 years in Kootenai National Forest and the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest.

Tester responded with a revised version of his own that re-established the logging along with 660,000 acres of new forest.

"We're talking about 3 million acres of trees and 10,000 acres of trees that will be cut ... I can tell you from how over the past 100 years, we've got to start doing some things different," Tester said. "We've got a 21st century forest if we can get forest jobs in, it will help us ... it will do some marvelous things for the forest."

As for coming up with a market for forest products, Tester said it will be there once the Forest Service logs 10,000 acres.

"It's a chicken and egg kind of thing," Tester said. "We've got wood products out there to make two-by-fours, two-by-sixes, plywood... the stuff we won't use can be used for biomass and there are lots of folks out there that want to do bioenergy from wood products, make pellets out of wood products. But they can't do it unless they get a constant, dependable market set it up."

Tester would like to see components of the bill occur immediately, such as logging in wildland-urban interface areas that are wildfire threats.

"It's time. Everybody that lives in the forest understands that stuff out there is dead," he said. "When the understorey is dead, the forest is dead."

brings forth the potential for forest fire.”

On that note, Tester said he talked with Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell recently who indicated a high level of readiness for this season.

“Chief Tidwell told me that they were very well prepared and have incident attack folks available throughout the state and in other places across the country,” Tester said. “Tom Tidwell came out of Montana and he’s very aware of the challenges that they’re ready to rock ‘n’ roll if fire season starts right now.”

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# Senator Lincoln Tours Flood Damage

posted 2:37 pm Sat June 12, 2010 - Caddo Gap

from Channel 7 - <http://www.katv.com/news/stories/0610/745269.html>

Arkansas Sen. Blanche Lincoln and other leaders are viewing the damage at a rural Arkansas campground where at least 17 people died in massive flash flooding.

Lincoln, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell are touring the area, which is inside the Ouachita National Forest. The tour is closed to the media, but the leaders planned a briefing for later Saturday afternoon.

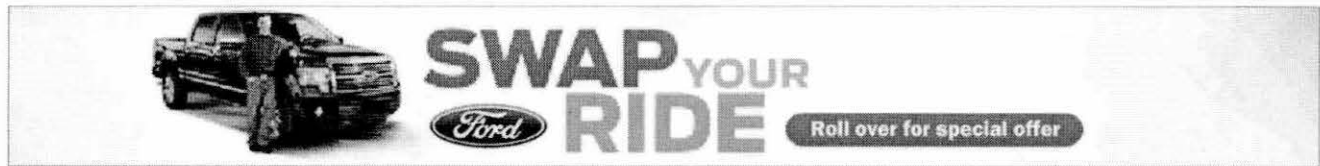
Searchers continue to look for any survivors of the flash flooding, which began suddenly early Friday morning. Two dozen people are missing.

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## Tester adjusts forest bill

By JOHN S. ADAMS Tribune Capitol Bureau • June 18, 2010

HELENA — Sen. Jon Tester on Thursday unveiled a revised version of his Forest Jobs and Recreation Act.

The Montana Democrat's new proposal comes in response to a Senate committee discussion draft leaked earlier this month, which stripped some of the most controversial provisions out of Tester's bill.

As originally proposed, Tester's forest measure would add 660,000 acres of new wilderness in Montana, while mandating logging on 100,000 acres on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge and Kootenai national forests.

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee draft, which was circulated among members of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge Partnership group approximately three weeks ago, removed those mandates.

The committee draft also removed controversial language that allowed military helicopter landings and the use of motorized vehicles for livestock and wildlife management within wilderness boundaries.

Tester said his latest draft would result in the same outcome laid out in his original proposal, while including some of the ideas contained in the committee's draft.

"It, too, is a discussion draft," Tester said Thursday in a telephone call with reporters. "It very likely will not be the final version that the committee votes on."

He said his staff is in daily negotiations with committee staff in an attempt to hammer out a bill that can be brought before Congress for a vote before lawmakers wrap up work later this year.

However, Tester warned that if the final committee bill does not contain mandated logging levels aimed at sustaining the state's dwindling wood-products industry, then it will be "dead on arrival."

"I have said from the beginning that I will only

support a bill that contains the four carefully balanced provisions that have resulted from years of folks working together, those being timber, wilderness, recreation and restoration," Tester said. "The committee's bill stripped out the timber and restoration certainties in my bill. All four components are critically important to this bill."

Tester said the U.S. Forest Service was critical of the mandated logging quotas contained in the original proposal.

Harris Sherman, undersecretary of natural resources and the environment at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, testified at a committee hearing in December that the mandated logging levels outlined in Tester's original bill "are likely unachievable and perhaps unsustainable."

Tester said Thursday that the agency now supports the bill.

"We were able to work with the Forest Service and get them on board," Tester said. "They support this bill."

Joe Walsh, a spokesman in the Forest Service's Washington, D.C., office declined to comment on the agency's position on Tester's latest proposal.

"We have not received a copy of the senator's latest draft, but we will review it when we get a copy," Walsh said. "Right now, this is a work in progress between the senator and the committee."

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In a follow-up e-mail, Tester spokesman Aaron Murphy said the agency is "fine with" the "sustainability of the mechanical treatment levels prescribed by the bill."

"It's our understanding that the Forest Service believes the work Jon is trying to achieve is ecologically sustainable (through mechanical treatment)," Murphy wrote. "Undersecretary Sherman is no longer saying that this work is ecologically unsustainable. Regarding the demand for logging mandates, those discussions are ongoing."

Tester said his new draft incorporates a committee proposal to create a national framework for managing federal forest lands. Referred to as the national forest initiative, the new provision directs the secretary of agriculture to select forests on which to conduct forest restoration work aimed at creating timber jobs and restoring watersheds. The bill requires the agency to consider work on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge, the Seeley Lake District of the Lolo, and the Three Rivers District of the Kootenai national forests first.

Tester said he still is working on revisions to the portion of the bill that designates wilderness areas. He indicated that some of the provisions stripped by the committee's version — such as allowing helicopter landings in one wilderness area — could be reinstated.

"What we're working to do is allow for the military landings without compromising the wilderness," Tester said. "It may be put back in a different form than wilderness, let's just put it that way."

Tester said members of the collaborative group that helped draft the original bill — which includes wilderness, conservation and timber groups — support his proposed changes to the measure.

"They're enthusiastic," Tester said. "They have the same information that you have in front of you, and they're fired up about it. They like it."

However some environmental and conservation groups that have been critical of Tester's bill from the start still are miffed at his latest proposal.

"If the goal is protecting some wilderness in

Montana and getting some restoration and fuel reduction work accomplished, then the Energy and Natural Resource Committee's draft, while not perfect, is a step in the right direction, and superior to both Senator Tester's original bill and his new proposal," said Matthew Koehler of the Last Best Place Wildlands Campaign, who testified at the committee's hearing in December.

"As we move forward, let's hope Senator Tester and the collaborators give the committee's draft significantly more consideration than just proclaiming it dead on arrival," Koehler added.

George Nickas, executive director of Wilderness Watch, said Tester's latest proposal attempts to rewrite longstanding forest management policies, including the Wilderness Act, by allowing previously banned activities in federally designated wilderness areas.

"I would hope that the senator would honor the Wilderness Act and not even try to put that language back in that bill," Nickas said.

Like Koehler, Nickas said if the bill is to have a chance of passing, the committee draft would be a better starting point for negotiations.

"I think it's too bad if Senator Tester is drawing a line in the sand by saying, 'mandated logging or nothing.' I think by doing that, he's saying 'nothing.'" Nickas said. "Mandated logging is not where a lot of folks in the conservation community, nor do I think a lot of members of Congress, are

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willing to go."

Tester said he is committed to sticking to the goals of the partnership that helped create the bill.

"I can tell you I've got plenty of fight left in me, and so do thousands of Montanans who support this bill, but more importantly support the ideas and principles that this bill contains," Tester said.

Reach Tribune Capitol Bureau Chief John S. Adams at 442-9493, or jadams@greatfallstribune.com

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## Feds announce timber program for Tongass forest

By MARY PEMBERTON (AP) – 3 days ago

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — The U.S. Forest Service on Wednesday announced a program to open up economic opportunities and spare the remaining old-growth trees in the country's largest national forest.

The forest service said the approach in Tongass National Forest will move timber harvesting into roaded areas of previously clear-cut sections and away from old-growth timber in roadless areas.

The program is in line with a new direction the Obama administration set for the 17-million-acre rain forest in southeast Alaska, where the struggling timber industry, influential conservation groups and the forest service have wrangled for decades over forest management.

"This administration is committed to developing a framework to help communities stabilize and grow new jobs," Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said. "The path forward must lead to job creation while protecting old-growth roadless areas, and the transitional framework announced today is a big step in the right direction."

That framework is designed to provide jobs, including ones in the developing fields of forest restoration and renewable energy, as well as tourism and recreation. A wide array of other business opportunities are in the works, from growing oysters to restoring totem poles.

The forest service is working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development programs and the Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration to implement the transition.

The liaison with Rural Development is key because loans and grants can be offered under 30 different programs, said Alaska Regional Forester Beth Pendleton.

The goal is to move quickly away from harvesting old-growth trees and toward new businesses that will sustain the small communities scattered throughout the Tongass, which covers up to 80 percent of the Alaska Panhandle.

A few old-growth sales in roaded areas will be offered to keep the timber industry's infrastructure working while the transition is made to second-growth harvest.

Pendleton said long-term stewardship contracts will help bridge the transition. Those timber contracts, the first of which will be ready in 2011, will include additional business opportunities, such as pre-commercial thinning, recreational trail and cabin replacement work, and fish and wildlife habitat restoration.

Last fall, communities came up with their own list of projects. They ranged from building a bald eagle observatory to building a biomass energy facility to developing broadband services.

One of those ideas is already under way, Pendleton said. In Hydaburg on Prince of Wales Island, totem poles are being restored after the town requested some cedar logs from the forest service.

Pendleton, who was attending a meeting of Tongass stakeholders in Kake to discuss the plan, said the service was excited about expanding economic opportunities in Southeast.

"We believe that we can grow some new jobs, expand some existing operations," she said.

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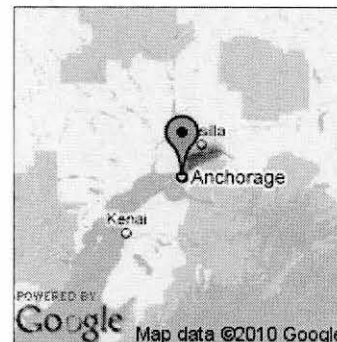
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# Feinstein pushes for Sunrise approval

## Her comments surprise opponents of power line

By [Onell R. Soto](#), UNION-TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

Friday, March 26, 2010 at 12:05 a.m.



/ AP

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., talks to reporters outside of the Senate floor on Capitol Hill in Washington, Wednesday, Dec. 16, 2009. (AP Photo/Harry Hamburg)

San Diego Gas & Electric Co. promised investors yesterday that its biggest project ever, the controversial \$1.9 billion Sunrise Powerlink, won't be held up by federal bureaucrats.

"We are ready for construction, as soon as we get the decision we need from the U.S. Forest Service," SDG&E Chief Operating Officer Michael Niggli told a meeting of financial analysts.

One-sixth of the line — about 20 miles of 120 — crosses the Cleveland National Forest, and the company is pressing the forest supervisor, William Metz, to approve it without a new environmental review. SDG&E says the line has been studied enough. Critics, including some who have sued, say earlier environmental studies are fatally flawed.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein came to SDG&E's side last week, when she pressured the head of the Forest Service during an appropriations hearing to quickly approve the power company's request.



Michael Rains, Phone: 610-557-4017. Director, Research and Development Office. NRS, Office of the Station Director. Has worked for the Forest Service for almost 38 years. Currently directs the Northeastern Research Station. Has held various positions across the country in timber management, watershed restoration, budget planning and development, information systems and administration, and state and private forestry. Started professional career as a wildland firefighter at Mt. Danaher in California in the mid-1960s.

Mike Bablick, Biological Technician, Region 9, Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, Medford/Park Falls Ranger District, Phone: 715-762-5117, [mbablick@fs.fed.us](mailto:mbablick@fs.fed.us).

Val Mezainis, Director- International Programs. Phone: 202-205-1650, [vmezainis@fs.fed.us](mailto:vmezainis@fs.fed.us)

Stewart M. Brandborg, a fourth-generation Montanan, is a founding member of the Last Best Place Wildland Campaign. "Brandy" grew up in Montana's Bitterroot Valley, where his father served as the Supervisor of the Bitterroot National Forest from 1935 to 1955. Brandy spent over a decade researching wildlife in the Bob Marshall, Selway-Bitterroot and Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness areas and he was later employed as a wildlife biologist with the Forest Service and state wildlife agencies in Montana and Idaho. From 1964 to 1976, Brandborg served as executive director of The Wilderness Society. Brandborg played an instrumental role in the passage of America's Wilderness Act in 1964 and other landmark public land legislation, including groundwork for the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. Met both Pinchot and Bob Marshall.

“The longer you guys hold it up, the less renewables we have in an area that is a heavy consumer of electricity,” she told Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell. “I don’t think there’s any flora or fauna or real environmental problems that I know of.”

Feinstein, a San Francisco Democrat, said the line is needed to create green jobs.

She also told Tidwell there was no opposition, then corrected herself when a staff member handed her a note, calling the opposition “NIMBY groups fully considered and dismissed” by state and federal regulators.

The San Diego Union-Tribune yesterday shared Feinstein’s comments with several Sunrise opponents, including county Supervisor Dianne Jacob. After they responded with astonishment, Feinstein said she might reconsider.

“I was unaware of major local opposition to the Sunrise Powerlink infrastructure project,” Feinstein said, in a statement. “I’m happy to meet with Supervisor Dianne Jacob and hear the concerns of the local community. If there are substantial concerns raised, I’ll take another look at it.”

SDG&E spokeswoman Jennifer Ramp said the company welcomed further consideration by the state’s senior senator.

“We are confident that as Senator Feinstein continues to examine this green energy project and the extreme efforts we have made and will make to minimize impact on people and the environment, as (state regulators) have, she will conclude that Sunrise should proceed on schedule,” Ramp said.

SDG&E wants to begin construction in June and have 1,000 gigawatts coursing through the line by 2012. The project will be paid for by California utility customers through electricity bills. The company is guaranteed a return on its investment.

SDG&E is about to sign a construction contract, has begun taking people’s land through eminent domain and has had special cable manufactured, said Niggli, who becomes the company’s president next month.

“We’ve already ordered all the steel,” he said.

SDG&E says the line is needed to bring power to San Diego from wind turbines in the East County and Mexico, plus solar and geothermal plants in the Imperial Valley. It says the line will also increase reliability and lower costs.

The other two big approvals required, by the Bureau of Land Management and the California Public Utilities Commission, came more than a year ago.

The PUC gave the line the go-ahead in December 2008 after Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger voiced his support, but only if its route avoided Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. SDG&E wanted to build the line through the park.

The PUC’s approval came over the objections of an administrative law judge and a commissioner who had studied the line. The commissioner said it wouldn’t make environmental or financial sense unless it was dedicated solely to bringing power from wind, solar and geothermal generators to San Diego. SDG&E said it wouldn’t build the line with those conditions.

Environmentalists, consumer advocates and backcountry residents have gone to court to ask judges to set aside those agencies’ approvals. They say the line was not properly studied because much of the discussion in the 11,000-page environmental impact report focused on the route through Anza-Borrego.

Hamilton also hosted the Boy Scouts of America's Order of the Arrow organization as nearly 1000 scouts from across the United States arrived on the Bridger-Teton to complete more than \$1,000,000 in service projects throughout the Forest.

Before moving to Jackson, Wyoming as the Bridger-Teton's Forest Supervisor, Hamilton worked for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for almost 20 years in various jobs. A few of those jobs included the BLM National Invasive Plant Program Manager, Area Manager in the Phoenix District Office, Branch Chief of Biological Resources in the Arizona State Office, and two tours of duty in the BLM Washington Office as program leader for Ecosystem Management and Wildlife Habitat Management.

By profession, Hamilton is a Wildlife Biologist and worked as a Habitat Biologist for the Alaska Fish and Game Department in Anchorage, Alaska before working for BLM. She graduated from Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biological Sciences and Secondary Education.

\*Jack Capp, Retired, Wildlife Biologist [jackcapp@earthlink.net](mailto:jackcapp@earthlink.net). Recipient of Lloyd Swift Sr. Award, presented periodically to a current or past Forest Service employee. The award recognizes an exceptional few who provided national or regional leadership in the management of fish, wildlife, and rare plants. <http://warnercnr.colostate.edu/ctl-faculty-list/jack-capp.html>

- 1987 – National Leader, Strategic Planning and Appeals Coordinator, Wildlife and Fisheries and Rare Plants, Washington DC.
- 1988 – Legislative Assistant, Senator Harry Reid (D- Nevada), United States Congress, Washington DC
- 1989 – Regional Director, Wildlife, Fisheries, Watershed, Ecology, Subsistence, Alaska Region, Juneau Alaska
- 1999 – 2005 Special Assistant to Director, Forest Service International Programs, Washington, DC

Chris Wood, currently CEO of Trout Unlimited [cwood@tu.org](mailto:cwood@tu.org). Served as the senior policy and communications advisor to Chief Dombeck for four years. Chris began his career as a temporary employee with Forest Service Research in Idaho and also worked for the Bureau of Land Management and American Rivers, a river conservation group.

Bill Cronon, UW-Madison (history professor) [From Mike Dombeck—no reason given.]

Jim Sedell, Retired Research Scientist, [jim.sedell@nfwf.org](mailto:jim.sedell@nfwf.org). Jim Sedell was named Director for the Pacific Southwest Research Station, located in Albany, California, in January, 2004. In this position, he directed 13 research program areas grouped into eight institutes and laboratories. The geographic areas of responsibility of the PSW Station include California, Hawaii, and the U.S. Before coming to California, Sedell served as Director for Wildlife, Fish, Water and Air Research in the Forest Service national headquarters in Washington, D.C. Prior to his appointment as director, he served as the Agency's Water Coordinator, and in a variety of other positions providing leadership in water-related programs, such as insect ecology, fisheries, riparian ecosystem management, and river ecology.

The route ultimately chosen is no better, said lawyer Stephan Volker, who represents environmental and community groups challenging the line in court.

“The Sunrise Powerlink is a dagger at the heart of the endangered Peninsular bighorn sheep,” Volker said. That’s because the line would bisect a mountainous piece of habitat — where Interstate 8 splits in two as it descends into the Imperial Valley — which is key to making sure sheep herds on both sides of the freeway can breed with each other. “I don’t say this lightly. I believe this would be the final nail in the coffin of the sheep.”

Michael Shames, executive director of UCAN, the Utility Consumers’ Action Network, is suing to stop Sunrise because he believes it will needlessly raise electric bills.

“UCAN is now a NIMBY, eh?” he said in response to Feinstein’s comment. “Our legal arguments are compelling ones that the politicians and regulators haven’t considered and won’t consider. So SDG&E may think this is a done deal, but last I checked, the company didn’t own or control the state court system.”

Feinstein is not alone in pushing for Sunrise, while SDG&E mounts an aggressive lobbying effort.

The senator said Schwarzenegger and President Barack Obama have both called upon Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to push the Forest Service, one of his agencies, to give the line a green light.

For the Forest Service, the question isn’t about politics, but about the law: whether it can win legal challenges if it relies on those earlier studies.

“We are looking at that analysis that was completed by the Bureau of Land Management for this project, and we’re evaluating it to see if it does meet all the issues raised about having a line placed on the Cleveland National Forest,” Chief Tidwell told Feinstein during the appropriations hearing last week.

He said his agency won’t approve the line without knowing it can win in court.

After Feinstein pressed for approval, Tidwell gently challenged her view of a lack of opposition.

“Based on my inbox, I’ve received quite a few e-mails from people who actually are concerned,” he said.

Feinstein dismissed those concerns.

“Well, can you tell me what the concern is, because in California, you can get a suit over almost anything. We have to find out what the public good is and move with the public good,” she said.

Tidwell didn’t get to lay out the concerns, but said the Forest Service will look at them and at the scientific documents already prepared.

“If we need to do additional analysis, we will let you know,” he told Feinstein.

The two House members who represent much of the Sunrise route, Duncan Hunter, R-Alpine, and Bob Filner, D-Chula Vista, both oppose it.

“We don’t see eye to eye on 99 percent of the things we debate on,” Hunter said yesterday. “On one percent, including this ... we do.”

Jacob said Feinstein will benefit from visiting San Diego’s backcountry.

“She has always been a rational and common-sense person. These comments are out of character with the senator I know,” she said. “If she will give me two hours, I believe I can change her mind.”



Conference for Oregon SAF. He served as executive director of the Western Forestry and Conservation Association for six years and was manager of the SAF Northwest Office and editor of the Western Forester.

\*Ed Brannon in Milford, PA – retired director of Grey Towers and supervisor of the Flathead NF.

John Fedkiw in Maryland - retired from USDA, oversaw the development of forest planning.

Jean Pablo in DC - retired from the WO, oversaw the Pinchot collection at the Library of Congress - lots of Pinchot family stories.

Bob Devlin (rdevlinb@aol.com) - retired director of timber management for R-6, supervisor of the Umpqua NF, supervisor of the Rogue River NF.

Dick Ferraro (rferraro@hevanet.com) - retired R-6 & WO upper management in administration, helped work on the Data General contract & implementation.

Chuck DeRidder (deridder@europa.com) - retired R-6 employee/human resources, developed several popular training programs for foresters & engineers (GRID, Intensive Semester, etc).

Butch Marita, retired R9 Regional Forester: butchmarita1943@msn.com. Butch was also a board member of the American Land Conservancy, a non-profit group specializing in conservation solutions to threatened land and water.

Carole “Kniffy” Hamilton, Forest Supervisor, Region 4, Bridger-Teton National Forest, Supervisor's Office, [khamilton@fs.fed.us](mailto:khamilton@fs.fed.us), Phone: 307-739-5510. Ten years in position after 20 years with the BLM. In December 2000, Hamilton announced in a draft environmental impact statement that she does not plan to allow oil and gas drilling on nearly 370,000 acres near the Gros Ventre Wilderness, southwest of Jackson Hole.

In 2000, the Bridger-Teton National Forest participated in the USA Ski Trials for the National Olympics and Hamilton welcomed participants from across the nation. Led the Bridger-Teton through the outbreak of the Green Knoll Fire, which drew national attention as it burned just outside of Wilson, Wyoming, in 2001. In 2003, Hamilton decided not to lease 375,000 acres of the Bridger-Teton surrounding Jackson and the Gros Ventre Wilderness area. In 2004, Hamilton collaborated with industry and environmental organizations to consent to leasing in 44,720 acres of the Bridger-Teton that were outside of roadless areas and began work on an Environmental Impact Statement to look at issues around Canada lynx habitat and air quality. In 2005, Hamilton began the process of revising the Bridger-Teton Forest Plan. In 2008, Hamilton garnered the support of her fellow community leaders, as well as leaders in Grand Teton National Park and the National Elk Refuge and urged their participation in the designation of the Path of the Pronghorn. The Path of the Pronghorn is a migration corridor that historically the pronghorn herds have used as they transition between winter and summer ranges in western Wyoming.

## SUGGESTED INTERVIEW SUBJECTS

\*Orville Daniels [odaniels@montana.com](mailto:odaniels@montana.com) (406) 728-4268. Orville was Forest Supervisor on the Lolo NF in Missoula for around 20 years. Prior to that, he was Forest Supervisor on the Bitterroot NF during the Bitterroot controversy in the early 70's. He was on the Bitterroot when the first prescribed natural fire was allowed to burn in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness and he was instrumental in getting the policy going for that program. While on the Lolo he was a leader in forest planning under the National Forest Management Act. The Lolo was a pilot forest and one of the first to complete a plan under the Act. He was also a Center Director for the Curlew Job Corps Center in Washington state in the 1960's shortly after the Forest Service began the program.

Elly Towns [mizellyrolls@comcast.net](mailto:mizellyrolls@comcast.net) (303) 469-5009. Elly was the first female African-American Regional Forester. She was RF in the Southwest Region. She was Director of Lands in the Washington Office before becoming RF. She worked on water issues in the Regional Office in Denver which is a story all in itself. May have a law degree which is a bit of a nontraditional educational background for the Forest Service.

Douglas R. Leisz, retired associate chief of the Forest Service and was regional forester in California. He began his career as a forester in the early 1950s. He supported innovative programs in fire management, computer systems, and human resources, and played an important role in several large land acquisitions.

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Bud Moore - started with the Forest Service in the 1930s as a fire lookout and smokechaser. As fire manager for the Forest Service in the 1970s, he was an early advocate for allowing fire to burn in wilderness. Dr. Moore is the author of *The Lochsa Story* which chronicles his experiences as a forest ranger, backcountry woodsman and trapper in the northern Rockies.

Sally Collins – Associate chief under Dale Bosworth. Associate deputy chief, NFS; and forest supervisor, Deschutes National Forest, Oregon. Worked for both the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management in Oregon and Colorado. Held positions as deputy forest supervisor, assistant planner, wilderness specialist, environmental coordinator and mineral leasing coordinator.

Elizabeth Estill - Forest Service Deputy Chief, Programs and Legislation; Regional Forester of the Southern Region located in Atlanta; assistant director, Recreation and Management; director, Recreation Management; associate deputy chief, National Forest System; and regional forester, Rocky Mountain Region. Additionally, Estill served 14 years with the Tennessee Valley Authority, directing the only federal recreation demonstration area, Land Between the Lakes.

Bob Tokarczyk ([tokarbb@aol.com](mailto:tokarbb@aol.com)) - retired USFS, began his 35 years with the USDA Forest Service as a Junior Forester on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest and completed his career as its supervisor during the time of volcanic activity from Mount Saint Helens. Since joining SAF in 1959, Bob helped form SAF's Columbia Gorge Chapter and the first Leadership Training