



Wildfire danger increasing across U.S., federal official tells Reno audience

By Jeff DeLong • jdelong@rgj.com • March 30, 2010

A combination of forest restoration projects, creation of communities that can survive fire and aggressive fire fighting will be needed as wildfire danger increases across the country, the chief of the U.S. Forest Service said Tuesday.

Wildfires are getting larger and burning more fiercely, Tom Tidwell told a Reno conference of wildfire experts.

Warming climate and increasing development near forested terrain will result in increasingly dangerous fire behavior, Tidwell, chief of the Forest Service since June 2009, said.

"The fire behavior that we're seeing, that people say surprises them, that is what we should expect," Tidwell said. "I think we should no longer be surprised."

Climate change, Tidwell said, is "one of the major drivers" in drying overgrown forests drying and make them susceptible to insect attack, with 17 million acres of pine forest across the interior West dead or dying due to bark beetles.

"In terms of fire fuel, we're in a whole new era," Tidwell said.

Serious wildfire years such as 2007, when more than 9 million acres burned nationwide, could soon be surpassed by seasons consuming 12 to 15

million acres, Tidwell said.

The danger is increased as more people move closer to fire-prone public land. Between 1990 and 2000, 28 million housing units were built within 30 miles of national forests, he said. Now nearly 70,000 communities across the country are deemed at risk from wildfire, Tidwell said.

Tidwell says forest restoration projects are crucial to thin overgrown forests and treat the landscape with prescribed fire.

Between 2001 -- when Congress adopted the National Fire Plan -- and 2008, nearly 30 million acres of federal land were treated to prevent fire. Tidwell said at that pace, it will take 35 years to treat the amount of terrain needed.

"It is essential we build support for the type of treatment that has to occur," Tidwell said.

Also needed are "fire adaptive communities" by using fire-resistant building materials and creating defensible space, a responsibility Tidwell said will fall on homeowners.

Advertisement

IF YOU'RE NOT PRINTING ON A KODAK ESP ALL-IN-ONE PRINTER, CHANCES ARE
YOU'RE PAYING TOO MUCH FOR INK.

FIND OUT HOW MUCH YOU'RE OVERPAYING FOR INK AT www.kodak.com/ink

Monthly Payments
the same as or lower than rent

&

up to **\$5,000** in closing
Townhomes & Homes from the

LENNAR.COM

*Click for details. © 2010 Lennar Corporation.



Side x Side Industry News

Home :: About :: Advertise :: UTV Information :: Product I

- [Access Info](#)
- [General News](#)
- [New Products](#)
- [Off-Road](#)
- [Random Thoughts](#)
- [SxS Events](#)
- [SxS Racing](#)
- [Uncategorized](#)

National Recreation Advocacy Group Applauds Lawmakers Stance Against USFS De-Facto Wilderness Policy

by [Jon Crowley](#) on 21/04/10 at 8:24 am

POCATELLO, ID (April 21)—The BlueRibbon Coalition, a national recreational advocacy group, today applauded a group of 18 lawmakers who sent a letter to U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell challenging the agency's ability to manage lands as "de-facto" Wilderness. The Coalition, as well as recreationists across Montana and Northern Idaho, has been opposing an attempt by the U.S. Forest Service Region 1 to manage all Recommended Wilderness Areas (RWAs) in a de-facto Wilderness state, which bans all motorized recreation and mountain bike use.

BRC's Executive Director, Greg Mumm said "Only Congress can designate Wilderness, which makes sense because Wilderness is the most restrictive land management designation on the planet. It is not wise, nor legal, for any federal land management agency to establish de-facto Wilderness areas. We are pleased to see members of Congress remind the U.S. Forest Service of this important fact."

The letter was spearheaded by Natural Resources Committee ranking member Doc Hastings (WA) and Rob Bishop (UT), National Parks, Forests and Public Lands Subcommittee ranking member. The letter noted "It is a baseless, twisted reading of the law to suggest that Congress intended to allow an agency to administratively declare an area as recommended for wilderness designation and then to manage that area exactly as if Congress had taken action to make such a designation."

The letter was at least partly in response to an earlier letter sent to Chief Tidwell in support of the Region 1 Policy. That letter was organized by Representative Raul Grijalva (AZ), Chairman of the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands. Grijalva and 72 Representatives requested Tidwell expand its Region 1 guidance across all USFS managed lands.

Mumm noted that the policy suggested by Representative Grijalva creates a situation where currently

authorized motorized and mechanized recreation does not preclude lands becoming RWA's – but then mandates those uses be all but eliminated. Mumm said, “Since the existing uses do not stop the lands from being recommended as Wilderness, then certainly those historic activities should be allowed to continue until Congress acts.”

Mumm also stressed that a “de-facto” Wilderness policy precludes collaborative solutions such as those reached in recent land use legislation. “Such a policy presupposes the agency’s desires on what is properly between Congress and the American people. By doing so, it eliminates the opportunity for motorized and mountain bike users to reach acceptable compromise with State and local governments, Wilderness advocates, and other stakeholders.”

MORE INFO ON THE WEB:

Letter to Chief Tidwell

http://www.sharetrails.org/uploads/Bishop_Letter_to_Tidwell_re_RWA_issue.pdf

Previous BRC Nationwide Action Alert

<http://www.sharetrails.org/alerts/?alert=1107>

Congressman Grijalva’s Dear Colleague Letter

http://www.sharetrails.org/public-lands/?section=Letter_01

###

The BlueRibbon Coalition is a national recreation group that champions responsible recreation, and encourages individual environmental stewardship. It represents over 10,000 individual members and 1,200 organization and business members, for a combined total of over 600,000 recreationists nationwide. 1-800-258-3742.

www.sharetrails.org

Related posts:

1. [National Recreation Advocacy Group Urges USFS To Broaden Science Support Base In Development Of The New Planning Rule](#) POCATELLO, ID (April 8)–The BlueRibbon Coalition (BRC) expressed its concerns...
2. [RECREATION GROUP FILES FOIA APPEAL TO DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR REGARDING NATIONAL MONUMENTS](#) OAKLEY, CA (March 17)–A national recreation group exercised its appeal...
3. [COALITION OPPOSES PLAN TO LOCK UP PUBLIC LANDS IN SOUTHWESTERN SOUTH DAKOTA](#) RAPID CITY, SD (February 3)–A controversial proposal from the South...
4. [OBAMA SECRET PLAN FOR MONUMENTS COMPELS CONGRESSIONAL ACTION](#) POCATELLO, ID (February 19) - - The BlueRibbon Coalition, a...
5. [Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area Working Group Meeting and Field Visit](#) Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area Working Group Meeting and Field...

Related posts brought to you by [Yet Another Related Posts Plugin](#).

Comments are closed.

- [Comments](#)
- [Featured](#)
- [Tags](#)

Sponsors



Brandborg: Tester Logging Bill Threatens Our National Forests

✉ By Matthew Koehler, New West Unfiltered 3-25-10

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 roll 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. - mk

Tester Logging Bill Threatens Our National Forests By Stewart M. Brandborg

I am a fourth-generation Montanan who grew up in a U.S. Forest Service family. Guy Brandborg, my father, served as Supervisor of the Bitterroot National Forest from 1935 to 1955. I still fondly remember Gifford Pinchot, during one of his last western trips, visiting my father in front of our fireplace. And, I still marvel at Bob Marshall's one-day hike from White Cap Creek on the Selway River up and over the Bitterroot Divide down Boulder Creek in time to join my family around the dining room table for supper.

After earning my Masters degree in Forestry and Wildlife Management in 1951, I worked over 12 years as a wildlife biologist with the Forest Service and state wildlife agencies in Montana and Idaho.

I was associated over 20 years with The Wilderness Society, including serving as its executive director from 1964 to 1976. In these years, I was privileged to advocate for the protection of our public lands legacy, presenting the case for wildland preservation across the nation. During my tenure, the U.S. Congress passed landmark public lands legislation, including the Wilderness Act of 1964, and laid the groundwork for the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act.

For 70 years now, I have been involved with public lands issues. With this background, it is with deep personal concern that I share serious reservations about Sen. Jon Tester's Logging and Recreation Bill, S. 1470.

Despite the best intentions of Senator Tester, this ill-advised measure, as written, poses a serious threat to our National Forests and other publicly-owned lands. Specifically, the logging mandated by S. 1470 is unprecedented and represents an unscientific override of current forest planning, leading the head of the Forests Service to tell the Senate Committee at last December's hearing that the logging levels in S. 1470 are unachievable and unsustainable.

I also agree with the Forest Service that unfunded mandates in this bill would result in other National Forests in Montana and the region having their funds raided to support excessive logging on the

Beaverhead-Deerlodge. The Forest Service described this serious concern as “balkanization” of our national forest system.

The Tester bill is described by supporters as the product of collaborative effort that brought all stakeholders together in its drafting. In fact, the Beaverhead-Deerlodge portion of the bill was originally conceived and contrived by a few logging mills and a few conservation groups.

The initial deliberations of the Beaverhead Partnership excluded major players – the US Forest service, local county governments, watershed and irrigation interests, local and state land, wildlife, and wilderness interests, and a broad segment of other user groups – who have concern for the long-term protection of our National Forests.

Back in September, I, with a delegation including scientists and a retired Forest Service ranger, met with Senator Tester's staff in an attempt to improve the bill. While we appreciated the meeting, our suggestions and concerns have been ignored. Unfortunately, this appears to be typical treatment of those concerned about S. 1470. If you support the bill, you are welcomed into the collaboration. If you have concerns with the bill, too bad. This is not how America's public lands should be managed.

If Congress were to endorse Senator Tester's bill as written, over 100 years of federal resource protection laws, set in place through the bipartisan actions of 50 Congresses, could be overridden by any interest group that gains the ear of any Congressman or Senator. We need not open this Pandora's Box of special loopholes and subsidies for a handful of corporations. We need not forsake our remaining public wild lands heritage.

There are plenty of needed, well-paying forest jobs in road reclamation, watershed restoration and replanting with native species. These forest restoration jobs promote steady flows of pure water for improved wildlife habitat, better fishing and hunting, irrigation and community water supplies and continued sustainable harvests from our fiber producing lands. Fuels reduction projects within community protection zones will, based upon best available science, most efficiently and effectively protect homes and lives while providing even more jobs.

In years past, Congress responded to the voice of the American people and protected our public lands legacy from raids by special interest groups. I hope we can stop Senator Tester from breaking up America's National Forest system for local commercial interests.

Stewart M. Brandborg lives in the Bitterroot Valley with his wife, Anna Vee. In 2001 he received the Robert Marshall Award, – The Wilderness Society's highest honor – for his notable influence on American's Wilderness legacy. [End of article]

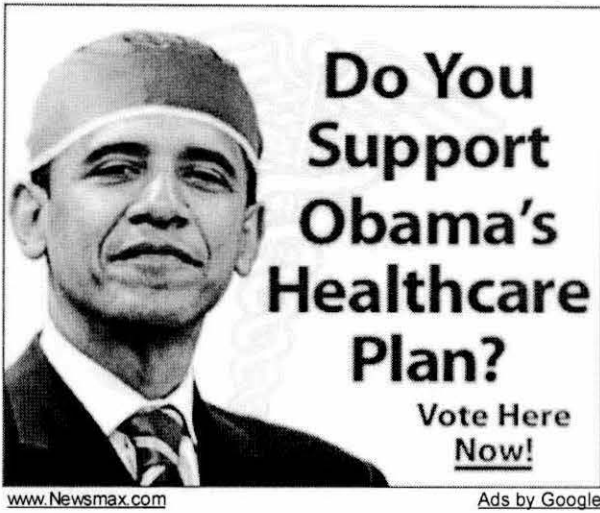
Comment By OldArt, 3-25-10

this is so oldschool...

This article was printed from www.newwest.net at the following URL: http://www.newwest.net/main/article/brandborg_tester_logging_bill_threatens_our_national_forests/

© 2007 NewWest, All Rights Reserved

Use of this site is subject to New West's [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).



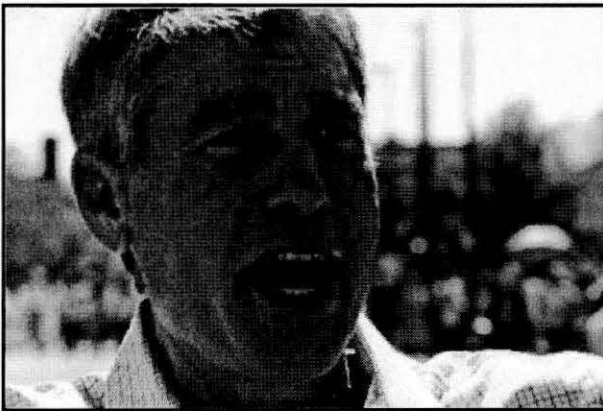
Udall blasts delay tactics of Senate GOP

‘Who wants to work around rules like that when you've got fire season looming?’

By [David O. Williams](#) 3/24/10 5:02 PM



Democratic U.S. Sen. Mark Udall Wednesday blasted the “obstructionist” tactics of Republicans angered by the passage of health care reform who are crippling the legislative process using an obscure rule to block hearings on Democrat-sponsored bills.



For the second day in a row, Republicans successfully canceled a Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee hearing on Udall’s National Forest Insect and Disease Emergency Act, which would provide more funds to the Forest Service to mitigate the fire danger posed by Colorado’s ongoing pine bark beetle epidemic.

State Sen. Dan Gibbs, D-Silverthorne, whose mountain district has been ravaged by a more than 90 percent mortality rate in huge swaths of national forest, flew to Washington at his own expense— a \$600 roundtrip— but had to return before he could testify.

“If Republican leadership had any idea of what we are facing in Colorado with this epidemic, they would stop these games now and let us do our jobs and help Colorado with this serious issue,” Gibbs said in a release. A former wildland firefighter, Gibbs has been very active on both the state and national beetle-kill-mitigation front.

The issue is largely nonpartisan in Colorado, where every passing fire season brings more and more concern about potentially catastrophic blazes in and around the state’s mountain communities. Finding funds to thin

dead forests close to towns, ski resorts and reservoirs has been a top priority for Udall dating back to his days in the U.S. House.

“We had a year-long debate on health care insurance reform,” Udall said on a conference call with reporters Wednesday. “There were over 100 amendments included in the bill itself that were introduced by Republicans. It was controversial and contentious, but we resolve our difference at the ballot box on Election Day and we resolve our differences in Congress by holding up or down votes.”

Udall said playing games with public safety was a dangerous gambit for Republicans, especially using an arcane rule that allows members of the Senate to object to any hearing starting after 2 p.m., as well as any hearing that starts two hours after a Senate session begins.


Udall said an Armed Service Committee hearing on the 2011 budget and military strategy in the Pacific was canceled over the objections of ranking Republican Sen. John McCain, who asked for an exception. Two generals and an admiral traveled from Korea, Hawaii and Nebraska to testify.


Udall said a Veteran’s Affairs Committee hearing on plans to end homelessness among veterans and a Committee on Environment and Public Works hearing on improving energy security and the environment through transportation policy were both cut short because of the two-hour rule.


“That’s the definition of an arcane rule, but one that could create great mischief as it has over the last few days,” Udall said. “Who wants to work around rules like that when you’ve got fire season looming?”

Got a tip? Freelance story pitch? [Send us an e-mail](#). Follow [The Colorado Independent on Twitter](#).

Print 

 [Leave a comment](#)

 [Follow us on Twitter](#)

 [Become a fan on Facebook](#)

Advertisement



FreedomWorks.org/NoReconciliation

Ads by Google

Add New Comment

DISQUS COMMENTS

 Profile

Please log into DISQUS to comment on [The Colorado Independent](#).

From yubanet.com

US
Feinstein Holds Hearing on FY 2011 Budget Request for U.S. Forest Service

Author: Sen. Dianne Feinstein's office
Published on Mar 17, 2010 - 7:08:50 AM

Washington, DC Mar. 17, 2010 – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today chaired a hearing on the President's Fiscal Year 2011 budget request for the U.S. Forest Service. Senator Feinstein chairs the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies. U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell was the primary witness.

During the hearing, Chairman Feinstein touched on the following topics: the Forest Service's proposed new Integrated Resource Restoration account, firefighting and prevention budgets, Quincy Library Group, and other Forest Service operating programs.

Following are Senator Feinstein's remarks prepared for delivery:

"Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, I welcome you to our hearing on the Fiscal Year 2011 budget request for the U.S. Forest Service.

I'm pleased to welcome Tom Tidwell, the new Chief of the Forest Service.

Chief Tidwell, this is the first time you've had the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee, so I want to say how much I am looking forward to working with you. And given all the changes proposed in your budget request, it's clear that we have a lot to discuss.

The President's request provides \$5.38 billion for the Forest Service, an increase of \$61 million, or 1 percent, over the Fiscal Year 2010 enacted level.

Despite the constraints reflected in this budget, I am pleased to see a number of important programs receive increases.

In particular, the budget request provides a total of \$2.64 billion for all wildland fire activities, an increase of \$129 million over the enacted level. That's a 5 percent increase. Within that amount, hazardous fuels reduction activities are funded at \$349 million, roughly equal to this year's level.

The budget also proposes \$1.59 billion to fund operations for the nation's forests and grasslands, a 2 percent increase.

State and private forestry programs receive a 4 percent increase, for a total of \$321 million. And land acquisition programs increase by 16 percent, for a total of \$74 million.

There are also a number of program cuts.

Funding for construction and maintenance of facilities, roads and trails is cut by 21 percent compared to the enacted level, for a total of \$438 million.

Most notably, road construction and maintenance is cut by 31 percent, for a total of \$164 million. This cut comes despite the fact that the Service reports a \$3 billion backlog in road maintenance as part of its budget request.

Finally, funding for State and volunteer fire assistance programs is slashed by 29 percent, for a total of \$57 million.

Turning to the details, I'd like to focus in particular on two major changes that are part of this request. One is the proposal to combine several of the agency's land management programs into a new Integrated Resource Restoration account. The other is a major restructuring of the agency's fire preparedness and suppression accounts.

Starting with wildland fire programs, the budget requests a total of \$1.5 billion for fire suppression activities. That's an increase of \$90 million – or 6 percent – over the enacted level.

That amount includes \$1.2 billion as part of fire suppression account and \$333 million that has been shifted to the preparedness account.

For years, the Forest Service has been charging a portion of its preparedness costs to the fire suppression account, hiding the true cost of the agency's readiness needs. I am pleased to see this Administration shift funds to properly pay for these activities within the preparedness account – where they belong.

All told, the budget requests \$1 billion for firefighter salaries, training and equipment, a 49 percent increase compared to 2010.

While I do support the level provided in this budget for fire suppression, I am concerned that this request divides firefighting funds into three overly complicated accounts. The request includes:

• \$595 million for base fire suppression programs;

• \$291 million for the FLAME Fund " passed by Congress last year " which the Secretary can use to cover the cost of fighting large wildfires; and

• \$282 million for a third account " the Wildland Fire Contingency Reserve " which is a reserve fund that can only be accessed by Presidential declaration.

I'm afraid I just don't understand the need to have three separate fire suppression accounts, so I look forward to having the chance to discuss your proposal further.

An even more significant change in this budget is the proposal to merge three National Forest System programs to create a new, \$694 million dollar line item called the 'Integrated Resource Restoration' program.

I understand that the Administration has proposed this initiative to provide flexibility to fund restoration work it plans to do on the ground. However, I'm concerned that the budget request leaves a lot of questions unanswered.

First, I would like to talk about why the Administration feels such a significant restructuring of the budget is necessary to accomplish your restoration goals. I am concerned that collapsing three programs into one huge new account would reduce transparency and accountability regarding how program dollars are spent.

I'd also like to discuss how the Forest Service proposes to allocate funds for this new initiative " particularly how the agency plans to implement a new, \$50 million dollar Priority Watersheds and Jobs Stabilization initiative to fund large-scale restoration projects and create jobs in rural communities.

Finally, I'd like to discuss the impact that these proposed changes will have on the availability of timber supply from national forests. Chief Tidwell, I am hoping you can provide some clarity on exactly how much timber the Forest Service plans to produce in Fiscal Year 2011. I'd also like to talk about how your agency plans to implement such a large increase in the use of stewardship contracting.

These are important questions which I hope you and your staff will help us work through as we begin the process of drafting an appropriations bill. I also look forward to discussing a number of issues that are important to national forests in California this morning. Now I'd like to turn to my Ranking Member, Senator Alexander, for any comments that he wishes to make."

© Copyright YubaNet.com



Book Now



Click to Print

SAVE THIS | EMAIL THIS | Close

Stimulus funds going to slashed programs

By Matt Kelley, USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — More than \$3.5 billion in economic stimulus funds are going to programs that President Obama wants to eliminate or trim in his new budget.

The president's budget released this month recommends getting rid of Army Corps of Engineers' drinking-water projects, which got \$200 million in stimulus funds, and a U.S. Department of Agriculture flood-prevention program, which received \$290 million from the stimulus, a USA TODAY review of stimulus spending reports show.

ONE YEAR LATER: Stimulus spending breakdown

STOCKS CLOSE LOWER: Bernanke signals end of stimulus

The administration's budget plan says the corps and USDA programs are inefficient and duplicate similar, more effective work by other agencies. The proposed cuts indicate the programs shouldn't have gotten money from the \$862 billion stimulus package, said Tom Schatz of the non-partisan budget watchdog Citizens Against Government Waste.

"It's certainly inconsistent, and it would have been better to have this realization a year ago," Schatz said. "But if inconsistency means they're going to cut the programs, it's OK. It's the other way around that bothers us."

White House budget office spokesman Thomas Gavin said the administration wasn't being inconsistent. Unlike the annual spending bills, the corps and USDA programs in the stimulus law didn't mandate funding for specific projects selected by members of Congress, Gavin said in an e-mail. That allowed agencies to "invest (stimulus) funds where they can do the greatest good," Gavin said.

The stimulus law, however, requires the corps' stimulus money to be spent only on projects that Congress had previously approved for funding.

Obama's proposed budget also includes \$334 million in cuts to programs that got more than \$3 billion in stimulus money. They include:

- A \$100 million cut in funding for maintenance and construction in national forests. The Forest Service got \$650 million for such projects in the stimulus package, of which \$55.6 million has been spent, according to USDA reports. The White House budget says the Forest Service doesn't need as much money because it is building fewer roads.
- A \$44 million decrease in funding for an Interior Department program to thin trees and brush on federal land to mitigate wildfires. The stimulus provided \$15 million for the program. The administration says it is reorganizing the program, which has been less effective than it should be because it didn't focus on preventing the fires most likely to threaten homes.

Obama signed the stimulus package a year ago today, an occasion that the administration is marking with events at the White House today and across the country this week.

Stimulus spending: A year later

A year ago today, President Obama signed the economic stimulus bill, which the Congressional Budget Office now says will cost \$862 billion. The law provides \$626 billion in spending and \$236 billion in tax cuts. USA TODAY's Matt Kelley looks at where the bulk of the money has gone so far in some of the largest spending programs.



EDUCATION

Total funding \$98.2 billion



ENERGY

\$33 billion



TRANSPORTATION

\$48.1 billion



SAFETY NET

\$207 billion (estimate)

PROGRESSIVE



SHOPPER M.F. IN CO	
2001 HONDA ACCORD	
PROGRESSIVE	\$ 375
AMERICAN FAMILY	\$ 635
FARMERS	\$ 526
STATE FARM	\$ 440

Start your search at PROGRESSIVE.COM

Enter ZIP Code:

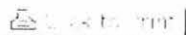
Get Your Best Quote

Amount available	\$69.3 billion	\$20.4 billion	\$34.1 billion	\$120.2 billion
Amount paid out	\$32.3 billion	\$1.1 billion	\$8.6 billion	\$103.9 billion
Status	The largest share of education money spent so far, \$19.6 billion, went to state governments as part of the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund. States can use that money to shore up budgets for schools and other essential services.	About half of the energy funding, \$16.8 billion, is for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, including \$5 billion to make low-income housing more energy efficient. Only about \$687 million of that money has been spent.	The Transportation Department has \$23.9 billion in the pipeline for highway construction and has spent \$6.1 billion so far. The administration in January announced \$8 billion in grants for 13 high-speed rail projects.	The package increased federal payments to states for Medicaid and unemployment insurance and boosted spending on food stamps. Unemployment insurance payments were \$10 billion higher in 2009 than originally estimated.
What's next	The Education Department plans to announce in early April the first round of grants under Race to the Top, a \$4.4 billion program distributing money to states with innovative school improvement plans. Forty states and D.C. applied for a share of the money.	The Energy Department this year will fund carbon sequestration projects from among a dozen awarded preliminary investments. Carbon sequestration captures carbon dioxide produced by industry for reuse or permanent storage. There's \$1.4 billion in available funding.	The Transportation Department plans next month to redistribute all stimulus funds for highway projects that didn't get spent or allocated by today. Mass transit funds must be awarded by March or the department will redistribute that money, too.	The increased federal Medicaid payments to states under the stimulus package are set to expire at the end of the year. However, the additional funds for food stamps and unemployment insurance payments would continue.

Sources: Congressional Budget Office; stimulus spending reports by the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Labor and Transportation.

Find this article at:

http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2010-02-17-stimulus-funds_N.htm



[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.



Environmental Groups Sue Over Tongass Timber Sale

Environmental groups file lawsuit in Alaska over contentious Tongass timber sale

By MARY PEMBERTON

The Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska

Three environmental groups are going to court to try and stop a particularly contentious timber sale of old-growth trees in the country's largest national forest.

Greenpeace, Cascadia Wildlands and the Tongass Conservation Society filed the lawsuit Monday in U.S. District Court in Anchorage. It alleges that the U.S. Forest Service failed to comply with federal environmental laws in approving the Logjam timber sale last year in the Tongass National Forest.

The lawsuit alleges that the Forest Service failed to consider the Logjam timber sale's impact on wolves, deer and salmon in that part of the Tongass. It asks the court to force the Forest Service and its contractors to stop work on the project on 3,422 acres and send it back to the agency to make it comply with federal laws.

Attorneys for the agency in Juneau were evaluating the lawsuit and it was too soon to comment, said Ray Massey, Forest Service spokesman for the Alaska region.

The Forest Service in December put about one-third of the Logjam timber targeted for harvest out for bid. Viking Lumber Co. was the only bidder. Critics maintain that the Logjam timber sale was designed to keep Viking, one of the few commercial timber mills still operating in southeast Alaska, in business.

"The ink is barely dry on the final offering and already these groups are chomping at the bit to destroy production and prosperity," said Rep. Don Young, R-Alaska.

Young said the timber sale would provide between 251 and 356 jobs and he will work to ensure the project goes forward, despite the lawsuit.

The Forest Service last year approved the Logjam timber sale on Prince of Wales Island at 73 million board feet — near the high end of several options. The decision angered environmental groups that worked with the Forest Service and wanted half that amount.

The groups that filed the lawsuit were not among those that negotiated with the Forest Service on Logjam.

The area already is heavily logged, the groups said, and wildlife need the old-growth buffers that remain for shelter and safe travel.

Carol Cairnes, president of the Tongass Conservation Society, said she explored the groves last fall.

"Without this old-growth, the deer have little shelter in the winter. Then the wolves are short on prey, and people are short on subsistence meat," she said.

Of concern to the groups is the impact on Sitka black-tailed deer, the primary food source for Alexander Archipelago wolves. The subspecies of gray wolf has been considered for listing under the Endangered Species Act. The lawsuit states that the Forest Service's environmental work ignored how the loss of habitat will affect deer and wolves.

The groups also take issue with the miles of roads required for the project. According to the lawsuit, five miles of permanent roads and 17 miles of temporary roads will be needed.

Cascadia Wildland's Gabe Scott said the logging roads on Prince of Wales Island are in disrepair and are killing salmon because of blocked culverts. The Logjam area already contains 125 to 151 miles of Forest Service roads, the lawsuit said.

"Roads, especially badly maintained ones, are salmon killers," Scott said.

Copyright 2010 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

Oklahoma Sen. Tom Coburn criticizes off-roading limits in Ouachita National Forest

BY CHRIS CASTEEL Comments 1
Published: January 12, 2010

WASHINGTON — Sen. Tom Coburn on Monday criticized a U.S. Forest Service decision to ban most cross-country travel by off-road vehicles in the Ouachita National Forest.

Coburn, R-Muskogee, said the decision, which will take effect this spring, would have "a devastating impact on the economy in Southeast Oklahoma."

He said, "I'm outraged by Forest Service's Washington-knows-best attitude and total disregard for the Oklahomans whose livelihoods depend on tourism in the Ouachita National Forest area."

Under the decision announced last week, under development for four years beginning under the Bush administration, there will be designated routes for off-road vehicles. Those wanting to use those routes will have to get a map from a ranger's office and make sure they comply with the designations.

Forest Supervisor Norm Wagoner said in a prepared statement that most riders of off-road vehicles had ridden "legally and sensibly and have been responsible in their use of the National Forest."

"But in order for the forest to balance the desires of off-highway riders with the responsibility to maintain a healthy and sustainable forest, it required a project like this that took a hard look at the problems and then designated routes that allow access, protect against damage and result in a sustainable travel system," Wagoner said.

The Forest Service's approach to the matter, Coburn said, had been "a case study in bureaucratic incompetence and arrogance."

He said, "This plan will not only hurt the economy of Southeast Oklahoma but will also hurt the very forest they are trying to protect.

"Mass road closures will result in greater concentration of off-highway vehicles in limited areas, resulting in greater damage to the forest."

December 16, 2009

New Senate Bill Aims to End 'War' Over Eastern Ore. Forests

By NOELLE STRAUB of [Greenwire](#)

Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) today unveiled legislation to revamp management of 8.3 million acres in six national forests in eastern Oregon with the backing of both timber and conservation groups that have long battled over the land.

Wyden, chair of the Senate subcommittee that oversees forests, said the [bill](#) (pdf) is meant to resolve decades of "war" over Oregon's forests that have left them "choked" and unhealthy.

"This bill is also going to provide the long-term certainty required to restore each of the six east-side national forests, protect our most sensitive environmental assets and restore countless jobs in ... rural communities that are literally hanging on for their economic survival by their fingernails," Wyden said.

He acknowledged that the bill, which requires timber harvest on hundreds of thousands of acres in its first three years, would face "significant challenges" but noted the range of groups backing the bill. They include the industry group American Forest Resource Council and owners of several timber companies, along with Oregon Wild, the Nature Conservancy, Pacific Rivers Council, Defenders of Wildlife and the National Center for Conservation Science and Policy.

Officials from several of the groups who joined Wyden at a press briefing said the past decades have been frustrating but that the new bill would bring stability to management of the state's forests.

The bill would affect forests east of the Cascades. The Forest Service would have two years to perform an assessment of forests and watersheds in eastern Oregon, resulting in a 10-year plan to restore their health, and another year to begin restoration projects. The bill would direct the Forest Service to focus on landscape-scale projects of at least 25,000 acres in each national forest.

During those three years, administrative appeals of timber sales would be prohibited and the Forest Service would be required to thin a minimum number of acres -- 80,000 acres the first year, 100,000 the second year and 120,000 the third.

The legislation also would create a new "objection process" aimed at expediting administrative challenges. Before the agency could issue a final decision on a project, anyone who had submitted comments during the project's development would have 30 days to object to the proposed decision.

The agency then would make a final decision within 30 days.

The measure would encourage "collaborative groups" that include industry and conservation officials to assist the agency in carrying out the bill's provisions. It would also establish a scientific panel to advise the agency.

The measure also would establish protections for large trees with a diameter of 21 inches measured at breast height, although exemptions would be made for actions that would improve forest health, reduce "uncharacteristic" risk from fire or insects, or for safety. It also calls on the Forest Service to develop experimental projects to protect trees more than 150 years old.

The bill also would limit road building and seek an overall net reduction in roads, and enact watershed protections.

[Click here](#) (pdf) to read the legislation.

Copyright 2009 E&E Publishing. All Rights Reserved.

For more news on energy and the environment, visit www.greenwire.com.

Copyright 2009

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [First Look](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)

The New York Times

This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers here or use the "Reprints" tool that appears next to any article. Visit www.nytreprints.com for samples and additional information. Order a reprint of this article now.

PRINTER-FRIENDLY FORMAT
SPONSORED BY



December 17, 2009

Foes Unite to Support Bill on Old-Growth Forests

By LESLIE KAUFMAN

Calling a truce in a long and bitter battle, timber executives and environmentalists united Wednesday in supporting legislation to codify and expand current protections for old-growth forests on federal land in eastern Oregon.

After nearly eight months of talks, representatives of both groups joined Senator Ron Wyden, Democrat of Oregon, at a news conference in Washington as he introduced a bill that would ban cutting of trees more than 21 inches in diameter and protect delicate watershed areas.

Such prohibitions are already in place in many forests but are administrative in nature rather than mandated by law, and subject to rollback at any time.

In return for their support for such limits, which they had previously fought, timber groups were promised steady, unimpeded access to younger trees as part of a broader program to assure the health of the forests and fire prevention.

The bill will also limit construction of permanent and temporary roads, while seeking to cut the overall number in forested areas. The legislation applies to six national forests spanning nearly 10 million acres east of the Cascades.

Timber executives said the guarantee of reliable access to timber and an understanding that more money would go to forest management led them to soften their stance on the regulations.

In a written statement, Tom Partin, president of the American Forest Resource Council, cited Senator Wyden's "personal commitment to aggressively pursue increased federal forest management funding and provide needed oversight."

The fight over the old growth forests in Oregon, sometimes ferocious, stretches back three decades. In 1991, a federal judge blocked all logging of old-growth timber on national forests in the Pacific Northwest to protect the habitat of the northern spotted owl. A furor ensued as the logging industry argued that it would lose thousands of jobs.

Since then numerous federal rules have been added on how the forests can be logged. Along with lawsuits and low timber prices, the restrictions have forced many mills out of business.

Both sides have gradually come to see preservation of the mills as a shared issue.

Still, to forge a consensus on the legislation, Mr. Wyden had to put aside attempts to regulate forests on the wetter western half of the state, where much of the old-growth forest remains and the logging industry is healthier.

Environmentalists praised the bill nonetheless, noting not just the legal prohibitions on logging but also the positive mandate to manage the forest for health and preservation.

“The nutshell that is different is that they will be planning for restoration projects rather than timber sales,” said Sean Stevens, a spokesman for Oregon Wild, one of the conservation groups who helped negotiate the agreement.

Josh Kardon, Mr. Wyden’s chief of staff, said he hoped that the deal would pave the way for greater trust and for cooperative management of the forests.

“These parties have been at war for three decades, so this is big in and of itself,” he said. “But the significance could be quite a bit larger if we could get people not used to working together to work together.’

Copyright 2009 The New York Times Company

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [First Look](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)



NEWS

**Back to Forest Service drawing board
Court ruling requires an updated national plan**[Print Page](#)

By KATHY PORTIE

Reporter

Published: Wednesday, December 30, 2009 7:56 AM PST

The U.S. Forest Service is asking for public comment regarding the development of new regulations to implement the National Forest Management Act of 1976.

Once implemented, the rule will govern all regional forest plans and site-specific projects, including those on the San Bernardino National Forest. Projects that could be affected include timber sales, livestock grazing and road construction throughout the entire 193 million acre system.

The new regulations come as a result of a lawsuit brought by the Center for Biological Diversity and others that opposed the Forest Service's attempts to revise the 1982 rule in 2000, 2005 and 2008. "The main provision the Center is concerned with is the viability provision of all fish and wildlife," said Marc Fink, a lawyer with the Center for Biological Diversity. "The provision was weakened in 2000, and then in 2005 and 2008 it was gutted. We're hoping the Obama administration will strengthen the provision."

The Forest Service begins the process to develop a new rule, but in the meantime the original 1982 rule is in force. "Climate disruption demands that the Forest Service stop trying to weasel out from under laws and embrace a new era of scientifically sound planning, ecosystem protection and public accountability," Fink said.

The new planning effort began with a public notice in the Federal Register on Dec. 18 announcing a 60-day public comment period. The new rule could take up to two years to complete.

The San Bernardino National Forest's regional land management plan, which was updated in 2005, will not be affected by this latest ruling, at least not until the new national plan is amended. "Right now it's a little too early to comment on it from our point of view," said John Miller, San Bernardino National Forest public information director. "Every forest is in a different stage of the plan."

For more information on the new regulation or to see a copy of the project document, log onto www.fs.fed.us/emc/nfma/2000_planning_rule.html. Written requests for more information can be sent to Director, Ecosystem Management Coordination Staff, Forest Service, USDA, Mail Stop 1104, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-1104.

Copyright © 2009 - Big Bear Grizzly

[\[x\] Close Window](#)

[print](#)

Forest Service rewriting Bush-era logging rule

by Jeff Barnard / The Associated Press

12.20.09 - 01:09 pm

GRANTS PASS, Ore. — After striking out the last three times, the U.S. Forest Service is embarking on another rewrite of the basic planning rule that balances logging against fish and wildlife and clean water in national forests.

Echoing his speech earlier this year laying out a greener future for the national forests, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced from Washington, D.C., on Thursday that work is starting on an environmental impact statement to take the place of the most recent one produced by the Bush administration that was struck down by a federal judge.

“Our national forests and grasslands are great natural treasures that we must conserve and restore for the benefit of future generations,” Vilsack said in a statement. “Developing a new planning rule provides the opportunity to manage national forests and grasslands for the benefit of water resources, the climate and local communities.”

The Bush administration’s attempt to ease protections for fish and wildlife habitat under the rule were struck down last June by U.S. District Judge Claudia Wilken in Oakland, Calif., who found that the Forest Service failed to take a hard look at the environmental impacts of changing the rule.

Learning from the past, the Forest Service is committed to a transparent, public process based on science, and was even starting a blog on its Web site so anyone could weigh in on the issues, said Joel Holtrop, deputy chief of the Forest Service in charge of the national forest system.

Besides the traditional issues of timber production, fish and wildlife habitat, and clean water, the process would also consider global warming, restoration of unhealthy forests, and the growth of wildfires on the 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands, he said.

After World War II, the primary role of the national forests was turning out timber, until the 1976 National Forest Management Act created the idea of multiple use, making the Forest Service responsible for providing fish and wildlife habitat and clean water, as well.

The 1982 update of rules putting the act into force included a mandate to maintain viable populations of so-called indicator species, such as the northern spotted owl. As the demands of that sank in, forests had to cut back timber production, until today national forests produce about a quarter of what they did during the peak years in the 1980s.

© newsminer.com 2009

Bills would push more national forest thinning

(AP) – 7 hours ago

GRANTS PASS, Ore. — Bills to open more of the backcountry in national forests to fire-prevention thinning projects and to promote woodburning heating systems in public buildings have been introduced in the U.S. House.

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden said Tuesday the bill to expand thinning projects faces an uphill battle in the House Committee on Natural Resources, even with bipartisan support. But the Oregon Republican said the huge backlog in the backcountry on national forests needs to be addressed.

"What we are trying to do is provide the kinds of tools to the (U.S.) Forest Service that, frankly, every other forester has today, whether it is on state land, county land or certainly private land, so they can practice good stewardship more effectively on the federal forests," Walden said from Washington, D.C.

The bill would amend the 2003 Healthy Forests Restoration Act, which never fulfilled its promise of jump-starting thinning projects on federal lands and around communities, to expand the areas where the Forest Service could use a streamlined environmental review process.

U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader, D-Ore., meanwhile, introduced a bill to offer \$100 million in interest-free loans to install wood-burning heating systems in schools, hospitals, universities and government and tribal offices.

Andy Stahl of Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics, a conservation group, said the thinning bill contained a "Trojan Horse" designed to allow more commercial logging in the name of reducing fire danger on national forests.

By inserting the words "Necessary connected action" into a section of the original bill, the amendment would open the door to streamlined environmental reviews of timber sales connected to thinning projects, Stahl said.

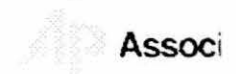
"The only way hazardous fuel reduction projects pay their way out the woods is if you sell commercial timber with them," Stahl said. "So it's necessary to have a commercial timber sale to reduce hazardous fuels.

"But a commercial timber sale under the current law doesn't fit the Healthy Forests Restoration Act criteria. This amendment would do so."

The bills drew support from Tom Partin, president of the American Forest Resource Council, a timber industry group. He said they would make it more certain where the Forest Service can conduct large thinning projects without having to go through major environmental reviews, and help build a market for thinning materials that currently have little value.

Co-sponsors were Reps. Brian Baird, D-Wash.; Cathy McMorris Rodgers, R-Wash.; Schrader, and Stephanie Herseth Sundlin, D-S.D.

Copyright © 2009 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.



Map



[Execute Order 13514](#)

Inventory your GHG emissions, set targets, and manage performance

www.carbonnetworks.com

[\\$99/mo Bill Consolidation](#)

All Credit Cards & Unsecured Debts. Made Possible By New Bankruptcy Law

BillsBills.com/FreeConsultation

[How to make electricity](#)

\$198 shocking new homeowner's kit has Power Co execs red in the face

www.Power4Home.com

November 29, 2009

Protecting the Forests, and Hoping for Payback

By WILLIAM YARDLEY

SISTERS, Ore. — A patch of ponderosa pines here in the Deschutes National Forest has been carefully pruned over the last few years to demonstrate the United States Forest Service's priorities in the changing West: improving forest health and protecting against devastating wildfire while still supporting the timber economy.

Yet occasionally, when tour groups come through, someone will ask what role the trees might play as the nation addresses global warming. After all, forests soak up carbon dioxide as they grow.

"We've always said that's outside the scope of this project," said Michael Keown, the environmental coordinator for the Sisters Ranger District, which includes more than 300,000 acres in the Deschutes forest in central Oregon. "But those days have come and gone."

The giant evergreens of the West have long been proclaimed essential, whether the cause was saving salmon and spotted owls or small towns and their sawmills. Now, with evidence showing that American forests store 15 percent or more of the carbon gases produced in the nation, expectations are growing for them to do even more.

Over the next 50 years or so, experts say, some forests could be cultivated to grow bigger, more resilient trees, potentially increasing their carbon storage by 50 percent and providing an important "bridge" to a time when the nation will theoretically have shifted away from greenhouse-gas producing fossil fuels.

But even as some private forests are already being marketed as "carbon sinks," or storehouses, that could play a role in a future carbon cap-and-trade program, government agencies and academics are struggling to understand and measure how carbon is stored and released. After decades of controversy surrounding the management of forests, debate persists over how they can best be used to fight global warming while also being protected from their threats, including more and bigger wildfires.

"While healthy, functioning forests may serve as a means to sequester carbon, under current practices, many of our Western forests are at risk of turning from a carbon sink to a carbon source," Tom Tidwell, the head of the Forest Service, told a Senate subcommittee on Nov. 18 in a hearing on forest management and climate change.

"Projections indicate that while these forests continue to sequester more carbon in the short-term," Mr. Tidwell said, "in 30 to 50 years, disturbances such as fire and insects and disease could dramatically change the role of forests, thereby emitting more carbon than currently sequestering."

The challenges and benefits range by region. Studies show that the potential carbon capacity of the predominantly fir forests on the wet west side of the Cascade Range in the Pacific Northwest is at least three times as high as that of the drier regions over the mountains and to the southwest.

Many drier forests, including here east of the Cascades, have grown unnaturally dense after logging and efforts

to save them from wildfires. Experts say measures taken to stop fires can end up causing more devastating ones by allowing the growth of small trees and underbrush, “ladder fuels” that ignite bigger trees.

On federal lands, the Forest Service has recently emphasized removing ladder fuels, including in the demonstration project here in the Metolius Basin.

“The suite of things we’re doing benefits the carbon sequestration,” said Brian Tandy, who helps oversee forest growth in the Deschutes. “We weren’t doing it to address some of that specifically, but the way we’re moving is sort of in line with that.”

Still, after years of fights over logging practices, including lawsuits to reduce clear cutting on federal land, distrust of the Forest Service’s motives remains. Mr. Tandy made a point of saying that one reason he does what he does is to help meet “society’s needs for wood products.”

Beverly Law, a professor of global change forest science at [Oregon State University](#), pointed to the Deschutes project as an example of the Forest Service protecting against climate change while potentially improving carbon storage. Yet Ms. Law also said fire officials should not presume that what might keep a forest from burning will enhance it as a carbon asset.

“There’s this opinion out there that when people see smoke from fire, they think it’s all going up in smoke — well, no, it’s not,” Ms. Law said, referring to forests that experience relatively low-intensity fires, a common dynamic in dry areas like central and eastern Oregon and parts of California. “Only 5 percent of the total ecosystem carbon is going up in smoke. When you talk about trying to prevent that, it’s not as big a carbon pulse to the atmosphere as people think.”

Ms. Law, along with Mark E. Harmon, a professor of forest ecology at Oregon State, and others say that forest policy should be tailored to individual forests and that the risk of carbon released in a wildfire should be weighed against the carbon costs of trying to prevent fire.

“They say they have to do thinning all over the place because they say fire might happen here,” Ms. Law said, “but it might not happen for decades.”

The math only gets more complicated. Newer, ostensibly environmentally friendly efforts to use cleared brush and small trees as biofuel could potentially release more carbon through transportation and processing than if the material were simply burned in the woods. By the same token, removing a completely burned forest can end up releasing more carbon than if the dead trees are left alone.

Others counter that thinning and fire prevention efforts now under way will have long term benefits, even if they release some carbon initially.

“You can regain that emitted carbon and actually put on even more carbon by redirecting the growth in the forest to the large trees that you leave in the forest — and you avoid the substantial emission of carbon you’d have in a wildfire,” said Malcolm North, a research ecologist at the Forest Service’s Pacific Southwest Research Station and an associate professor of forest ecology at the [University of California, Davis](#).

In his comments to the Senate subcommittee, Mr. Tidwell pointed out that while the Forest Service manages vast tracts of the West, private landowners control the majority of forest land in the United States. Still, said Andrea Tuttle, the former director of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Prevention, the

government has a different obligation than private owners.

“The Forest Service as a public agency should be managing the forest for the people,” Ms. Tuttle said. “Part of that is to make them resilient to climate change and at the same time find opportunities where appropriate to use the forest as a carbon sink.”

Copyright 2009 The New York Times Company

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [First Look](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)

latimes.com/news/local/la-me-station-fire 1-2009nov01,0,1318879.story

latimes.com

Missed opportunities let Station fire become a disaster

By the time heli-tankers arrived in force, the blaze had leaped Angeles Crest Highway. The last best chance to prevent a catastrophe had vanished.

By Paul Pringle

November 1, 2009

On a sizzling August morning, as flames burned unchecked down the road, fire crews milled about at an Angeles Crest Highway ranger station. Others were parked along the pavement -- a critical line of defense -- their engines quiet and hoses slack.

It was more than an hour after first light, and some six hours after U.S. Forest Service commanders had determined that the fire required a more aggressive air attack. But the skies remained empty of water-dropping helicopters -- tankers that were readily available.

Then, after the sun had heated the hillsides above La Cañada Flintridge, and as the first chopper finally began unloading on the flames, the fire gathered speed and shot over the highway, turning tall pines into torches. The last best chance to stop the blaze without significant losses vanished.

"That's what turned into the Station fire," said one firefighter who saw the flames jump the road about 8 a.m. on Aug. 27.

Drawn from interviews and records, a picture of the fateful Day 2 of the Station fire raises troubling new questions about the U.S. Forest Service's response to the blaze when it was still small and considered relatively easy to contain.

The conflagration eventually killed two Los Angeles County firefighters, destroyed about 90 dwellings and devastated one of America's most-visited national forests. The largest fire in county history, it was not fully contained until Oct. 16.

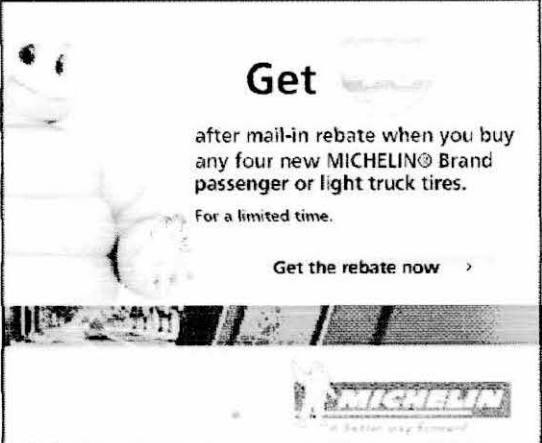
The Forest Service should have pounced on the flames as soon as light filled the sky, when the ground was cool and the winds were down, said the firefighter who was at the scene. Like others with knowledge of the operation, he requested anonymity because he is not authorized to speak publicly about the matter.

"Air tankers should have been there 30 minutes before sunup," he said. "These folks knew what kind of fire they had going below the road, and they did not staff it with adequate resources. There is no excuse for that."

Although the Forest Service has acknowledged that it learned overnight it had underestimated the threat posed by the fire, witnesses said no helicopter hit the blaze until at least 90 minutes after first light. Two choppers from the city and county of Los Angeles -- crucial reinforcements -- did not reach the fire until 10 a.m., fire officials said. By then, it had multiplied many times in size.

Later in the day, as the blaze raged out of control, commanders rejected recommendations from firefighters for more aircraft, including DC-10s to dump retardant, according to the firefighter who was there. By twilight, the flames would consume about 500 acres.

More precise timeline and deployment information was not available. Forest Service officials declined to be interviewed,



Get

after mail-in rebate when you buy any four new MICHELIN® Brand passenger or light truck tires. For a limited time.

[Get the rebate now](#)

MICHELIN
"A Better Way Forward"

citing an internal investigation into the agency's handling of the fire.

"It is premature to draw conclusions as to what could have been done differently to contain the Station fire before completion of the formal review, an in-depth and comprehensive process that has helped our dedicated firefighters to contain more than 98 percent of fires during initial attack," Tom Tidwell, the Washington, D.C.-based chief of the Forest Service, said in an e-mailed statement.

Conditions on the second day were ominous. There was little wind that morning, but temperatures were headed to the 100-degree mark and the chaparral along Angeles Crest Highway was thick and dry; it had not burned in many years.

Forest Service officials and other experts had long warned that any blaze in those lower reaches of the forest, above the foothill communities, could quickly turn into an epic and ruinous fire.

Even so, a Times photographer saw crews standing at the Angeles Crest Ranger Station -- which gave the fire its name -- perhaps in a briefing or awaiting assignment, as the blaze continued to gain momentum. He was there when the crews were deployed later to the spot where the flames leaped over the road.

Some firefighters were pulling on their gear while others hurriedly unrolled hoses, all too late to halt the advance of the blaze, Times photos show. A helicopter is captured in the photos dumping water after 9 a.m.

Once it got away, the fire -- suspected to be arson -- would go on to char 160,577 acres, wipe out homes in Big Tujunga Canyon and turn ancient stands of trees to cinders. The cost of fighting it has been estimated at nearly \$100 million, with property losses and recovery expenses yet to be tallied.

The two firefighters were killed on the fifth day, when their truck plunged into a deep canyon.

The Forest Service probe was launched after The Times reported that the agency erred in concluding that the fire presented little danger at the end of the first day and thus scaled back its response.

Three weeks before the fire, the Forest Service issued a memorandum directing its Southern California managers to trim expenses by reducing the use of reinforcements from municipal departments and the state.

County Fire Department ground crews and helicopters played a vital role in containing the Station blaze to 15 acres on Day 1, but the Forest Service did not ask them to return in the same numbers the next day, according to interviews and records.

In previous interviews, before the Forest Service stopped releasing information, Angeles Forest Fire Chief David Conklin told The Times that costs never influenced his decisions on reinforcements. He said his commanders had realized in the small hours of Aug. 27, between 1 a.m. and 2 a.m., that they needed more help from the county and the Los Angeles Fire Department.

The county was subsequently asked for two helicopters but provided only one, a decision that has since been criticized.

Nevertheless, the Forest Service did not deploy the city and county heli-tankers until several hours after they could have begun flying, fire officials said.

Because of the increased risk of flying in darkness, the Forest Service has a policy of not making aerial water dumps at night -- something that is routinely done by the city and county. Forest Service and county officials also have said that much of the terrain where the fire flared up in the morning was too treacherous for ground crews.

"The overriding concern was firefighter safety," said county Fire Chief P. Michael Freeman, who added that his department sent ground crews to the blaze at 6 a.m. at the Forest Service's request.

But the hazards do not explain the delay in putting air tankers to work as morning broke on Day 2. If the area was too steep for ground crews to confront the fire, even in daylight, that should have only heightened the need for helicopter drops as early as possible, firefighters say.

Glenn Smith, command pilot for the city department, said its heli-tanker could have begun dousing the flames at dawn.

"If they call the night before and make the request, we can do that," he said. "We didn't get invited. We wanted to go."

Deployment records obtained by The Times also show that the Forest Service did not pull in air tankers from the state Department of Forestry and Fire Protection until the third day of the blaze, although they were available from the start.

Conklin and county Chief Deputy John Tripp have said they believed they had enough aircraft to combat the fire on the second day. Freeman said he has ordered an executive review of his department's response during the first five days of the fire, with a report due Nov. 17. It will show "who did what when, and what was our involvement," he said.

After The Times began examining the tactics used in the fire, the Forest Service and the county department said in September that they planned to change their procedures so that the two agencies immediately stage a joint assault on any blaze in the lower Angeles National Forest.

Meanwhile, the firefighter who witnessed the Station blaze bound across the highway said he is still shaken by thoughts of a missed opportunity.

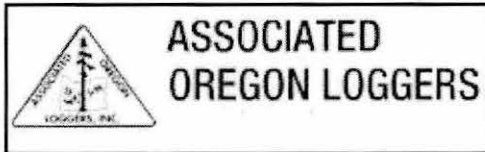
"It just amazes me that they allowed the fire to escape like that," he said. "It's very frustrating to see that happen, and then to have a tragic loss of life."

paul.pringle@latimes.com

Copyright © 2009, [The Los Angeles Times](#)

Timber: Few fires, lawsuit updates, protest damages

Posted By [admin](#) On October 14, 2009 @ 3:00 am In [Uncategorized](#) | [4 Comments](#)



[1] [Update on Current Policy News Affecting Forest Business & Timber Supply](#)

by [Rex Storm, Forest Policy Manger](#)

[2] [Associated Oregon Loggers](#)

2009 Fire Season Remains Calm: With a few weeks left in this year's forest fire season, state-protected forests have had a below-average season. As of Sept. 21st, a total of 866 fires had burned 7,298 acres on "state-protected forestlands" (private/state/BLM). The ten-year average for the same period is 968 fires and 25,787 acres. This success has resulted from aggressive efforts to stop most fires when they're small, limited late-summer lightning, fewer recreational or rural user starts, and ongoing prevention by industrial operators. Let's close the season in a fire safe manner!

Contract Firefighting Bombers Lack Replacement: For decades, aerial tankers have been the West's best firefighting tool, rapidly dropping retardant to snuff forest fires. Over the years, low federal contract rates were insufficient to cover the replacement cost (depreciation) of an aging air tanker fleet run by aviation contractors. Now, with over half the agency's aged contract bombers grounded, the remaining nineteen 40-60 year-old tankers will be grounded by 2012. The USDA inspector general reported that a history of inadequate funding has failed to replace aging aircraft—and future firefighting becomes more costly and ineffective without the contract air tankers. Much the same situation occurs in the contract logging industry—years of low contract rates have failed to cover asset depreciation, sapping contractors of vital capital and weakening the logging sector.

State Forest Plan Revision to Assure Volume: At its Sept. meeting, the Oregon Board of Forestry agreed to begin rulemaking to revise the NW Oregon State Forest Management Plan—assuring slightly improved timber sale volume. The unanimous approval confirms the Board's June decision to raise harvest volume to 196 million bdf/yr, reduce long-term complex forest structure area down to 30-50%, and not require a federal Habitat Conservation Plan. The Board also began a process to redefine state forest "greatest permanent value, to assure future harvest volumes are achieved. OR Dept. of Forestry should complete a new plan by April 2010, and implement increased timber sale volume in 2012. Without the revision, state forest harvest would soon fall to 144 million/yr.

State Forest Decision Challenged: A "petition for reconsideration" has been filed by nine environmental organizations, challenging the OR Board of Forestry's June decision to revise the NW Oregon State Forest Plan. The Board's decision tentatively agreed to raise the annual harvest volume 6% for the Tillamook & Clatsop State Forests, from the current 184 million to 196 million bdf/yr. The proposed boost is far below the 282 million promised when the Board adopted the plan in 2001. The enviro petitioners seek less harvest, and more complex forest structure.

Board Hears that Forests Always Changing: The OR Board of Forestry held a Sept. workshop to discuss the latest science about forest management linkages to natural change in ecosystems. Today's science shows always-changing forests due to periodic disturbances, such as wildfires, pest or disease, storms and floods. At the workshop, Board members and forest managers acknowledged how future Oregon forest policies must focus on keeping private and state forests actively-managed through non-regulatory incentives to encourage modern harvest and regeneration.

BLM Director Confirmed: In August, the US Senate confirmed two appointments that direct the Bureau of Land Management. Bob Abbey was confirmed as BLM Director, and Wilma Lewis becomes US Interior Dept. Asst. Secretary for Land & Minerals. Lewis will supervise Abbey, as well as other federal energy and mineral resources. BLM Director Abbey has 32 years of state & federal agency experience and was Nevada BLM Director. Abbey oversees 10,800 employees with a \$1.8 billion budget, and manages 258 million acres—including 4 million acres of western OR forest.

Industry Challenges BLM Plan Withdrawal: In Sept., Oregon's timber industry filed a lawsuit in

US District Court, challenging Interior Secretary Ken Salazar's July decision to "withdraw" the Bureau of Land Management's 2008 Western Oregon Forest Plan Revision (WOPR). Industry plaintiffs (Douglas Timber Operators, Swanson Group, Seneca Timber, C&D Lumber, Carpenters Union) say the withdrawal violates federal laws and court rulings. Until court resolution, the BLM continues its current 204 million bdft/year timber offering, whereas the WOPR called for 502 million.

Industry Challenges Owl Plan Withdrawal: In Aug., the forest industry (American Forest Resources Council, which AOL is a member) filed another legal challenge of Secretary Salazar's July decision to also withdraw the 2008 n. spotted owl recovery plan and habitat designation. AFRC will fight this political meddling in an ongoing Washington, DC District Court case filed by AFRC, which earlier had challenged the owl plan. Without a better owl recovery plan, future westside BLM and national forest timber sales would continue to be hobbled by bureaucratic gridlock and lawsuits.

Damages Calculated for Protest Arrests: Oregon Dept. of Forestry officials announced that district attorneys would seek to recover the cost of arresting 27 protestors who blocked logging contractors from a Elliott State Forest timber sale in July. About 100 Earth First! and Cascadia Rising Tide protestors blocked loggers from working the UmpCoos Ridge 2 timber sale, located east of Reedsport. The arrested criminals with were charged with misdemeanor interference to agricultural operations. Preliminary law enforcement cost estimate is calculated at \$103,000.

Coos Bay Railroad Seeks to Reopen: The Port of Coos Bay began repairs needed to reopen its 110-mile Coos Bay rail line from Veneta to Coos Bay, formerly operated by Central OR & Pacific Rail. The Port purchased the rail line in May from CORP, which closed the line in Sept. '07. To restore service by late-2010, the Port must repair tunnels, bridges, signals and track. The Port also seeks additional federal funds, and wants to lease the Coos to Coquille rail—still owned by Union Pacific—because that line serves major customers, Roseburg FP and G-P mills.

Weyco Sells Commercial Business: Weyerhaeuser Co. has sold yet another business segment—the "commercial" portion of its iLevel® engineered structural product line to a subsidiary of Atlas Holdings LLC—to be renamed 'RedBuilt.' Weyco sells four plants (located in Hillsboro & Stayton; Chino, CA; and Delaware, OH), plus 13 sales and engineering offices employing 230. Atlas has 40 plants and 3,200 employees in North America and Europe. Weyco keeps its "residential" structural framing businesses, iLevel® and TrusJoist®, with OR plants in Albany, Eugene and Sweet Home.

Forestry Coalition Recommends Revitalizing: The Western Forestry Leadership Coalition (WFLC), consisting of agency leaders, released a report urging a revitalization of the Western forestry sector economy. The coalition cites 20-years of mill closures that strip the region's ability to manage its forests. The recommendations include: find new markets for small logs & biomass; strengthen economic goals; and improve forest policy to maintain global competitiveness. Report summary available at: www.wflcweb.org/infomaterials/brochures_presentations.php

Willamette Supervisor Named: Regional Forester Mary Wagner announced Meg Mitchell as the new Willamette National Forest Supervisor, following the retirement of Dallas Emch. Mitchell has 20 years of US Forest Service experience, most recently as Supervisor of the Green Mountain Nat. Forest in Vermont. She also worked in Washington, DC and Alaska.

Sherman Nominated as Ag Undersecretary: In Sept., President Obama nominated Harris Sherman, as the US Dept. of Agriculture Undersecretary for Natural Resources. The previous nominee, Homer Lee Wilkes declined the nomination in May. If confirmed by the US Senate, Sherman would oversee the US Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service. He is currently Colorado's Dept. of Natural Resources director, and considered a moderate who supports resource management.

Ag Nominee Showed Balance in Colorado: Harris Sherman, the nominated US Ag Undersecretary over the Forest Service, oversaw Colorado's state plan proposed for assigning roadless areas in Colorado's national forests. A positive indicator of Sherman's ability to balance economic needs, enviros denounced Sherman's Colorado roadless plan as weaker than the Clinton-era 2001 Roadless Rule. The Colorado plan would release some areas for management, and in other unroaded areas allow temporary roads, fire prevention, salvage & fuel reduction, mining, and utilities.

Former Forest Service Chiefs Debate: A September presentation in Missoula brought together the last six former US Forest Service chiefs: Max Peterson ('79-87), Dale Robertson ('87-93), Jack W. Thomas ('93-96), Mike Dombeck ('96-01), Dale Bosworth ('01-07) and Gail Kimbell ('07-09). The chiefs agreed that tomorrow's Forest Service and its new Chief Tom Tidwell must show stronger leadership in federal forest management. The older three ex-chiefs lamented a FS now frozen by analysis paralysis, conflicting laws & court rulings, indecision about roads, plus outlandish costs for planning & firefighting.

Oregon thinning project tests Obama forest policy

By JEFF BARNARD (AP) – 20 hours ago



DIAMOND LAKE, Ore. — When Sharon Karr's cabin was built on the shores of this high mountain lake in 1928, there were few neighbors and little thought given to the prospects of wildfire.

There are now 102 cabins on this land on the Umpqua National Forest, and fears of a big fire have grown. Young trees have crowded in among the big ones, and an increasing number of the pines are turning red and dying from the borings of mountain pine beetles.

The Bush administration had proposed lessening fire dangers by thinning trees around the cabins and also in the backcountry.

Conservation groups are closely watching the logging proposal as a test of whether President Barack Obama follows through on his promise to break from the Bush administration and protect the 58 million acres of national forests across the country that are known as roadless areas from commercial logging.

"This puts Obama now in the position ... where he can clarify and end 20 years of roadless battles by making a very clear decision that they simply should not be roaded and logged," said Kieran Suckling, policy director of the Center for Biological Diversity. "We are getting mixed signals."

Karr is resigned to cut trees around her cabin to reduce the risk of fire, but is less sure about thinning far from the cabins in the back country, where the U.S. Forest Service says it needs fire breaks so firefighters can stop a fire before it gets to the cabins.

"It's at that point where I can't decide if we need to save the roadless area or we need to protect what we call the urban interface," she said.

Steve Koch, general manager of the Diamond Lake Resort, has no doubts thinning in the back country will help prevent a disaster.

"Once it (a fire) gets going it's not going to stop. It's going to walk right over the top of us," he said.

During the presidential campaign, Obama promised to respect a 2001 Clinton administration rule to protect roadless areas in national forests from commercial logging. It was his one promise concerning national forests, which had been a battleground during the Bush administration's eight years in office.

Roadless areas have escaped logging largely because they have been too remote and rugged to make timber harvests profitable. But with the government spending \$1 billion a year to fight wildfires, pressure to do something is growing. The 2001 rule allows thinning to reduce the danger of wildfire and control insect infestations — both of which are factors around Diamond Lake.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack last May said he would personally review all proposals to log in roadless areas. One exception is national forests in Idaho, where the state adopted the Bush administration's offer to take authority over roadless development.

In August Vilsack gave a speech saying conserving national forests was a necessity and they would be managed to protect clean water and combat climate change.

Some conservation groups remain wary.

Though the Obama administration has refused to defend a number of Bush administration environmental policies in court, it did not walk away from 2007 plans to open nearly 1 million acres to road building on four national forests in Southern California, Suckling said.

A federal judge last month tossed out the plan.

"They have been slow out of the box and have not been aggressive about withdrawing the flawed policies of the Bush administration," Suckling said. "The sense I get of Vilsack and the Forest Service now is they are going to be significantly reticent to gear up for significant new roadless projects."

Jay Jensen, deputy undersecretary of Agriculture for the Forest Service, said the logging proposal has yet to reach the secretary's desk — it is still moving through the Forest Service review process — but if it does it will be evaluated on its merits.

Map





USDA Secretary Outlines Forest Policy

USDA Secretary Outlines Forest Policy – New forest policy vision addresses restoration issues across broader landscapes, including both federal and private lands.

By DeAnna Stephens

Date Posted: 10/1/2009

The vision for future forest policy recently revealed by the Obama Administration had a broad scope that could appeal to many sides, but lacked key tangible details.

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack revealed the new direction for the Forest Service in his first major address regarding Forest Service policy.

Facilitating collaboration between various stakeholders and creating an 'all-lands' approach that covers both federal and private forests are just some of the avenues that the USDA Secretary said he planned to use to promote the conservation and restoration of America's forests.

While he did not give many particulars on his plans, Secretary Vilsack did demonstrate that forest conservation was non-negotiable by the Obama Administration.

"President Obama has made clear his interest in conserving our natural environment, and I intend to take that responsibility very seriously and to devote the time necessary to do it right," he said.

"While most Americans may live in urban areas, most of us are also dependent upon rural lands, particularly forest lands for clean water and a healthy climate. For these reasons, conserving our forests is not a luxury. It is, in my view, a necessity."

An area that Secretary Vilsack did include some details

 [email this article](#)

 [print this article](#)

 [feedback](#)

on was forest restoration.

“Restoration, for me, means managing forest lands first and foremost to protect our water resources while making our forests far more resilient to climate change,” the Secretary said.

“In many of our forests, restoration will also include efforts to improve or decommission roads, to replace and improve culverts, and to rehabilitate streams and wetlands. Restoration will also mean the rehabilitation of declining ecosystems.”

Secretary Vilsack named three barriers that he said have historically kept the Forest Service from pursuing a restoration agenda – budget restraints, the loss of forest infrastructure from timber mill closures and distrust between environmentalists, the Forest Service and the forestry community.

In his speech, Secretary Vilsack appealed to both environmentalists and the forest products industry to move past the timber wars of the past and work together toward a common goal.

“Unfortunately, the debate about the future of our forests and our forest policy has been highly polarized for a long time,” he said. “But given the threats that our forests face today, Americans must move away from polarization. We must work and must be committed to a shared vision, a vision that conserves our forests and the vital resources important to our survival while wisely respecting the need for a forest economy that creates jobs and vibrant rural communities.”

The Secretary does not intend for collaboration to end with private entities, however. Integration among government agencies is also a goal of the USDA, particularly between the Forest Service and the National Resource Conservation Service, which assists conservation efforts on non-Federal lands.

In addition to facilitating collaboration between diverse

stakeholders, Secretary Vilsack wants the Forest Service to be viewed as an agency whose concerns extend beyond federal forests to all forests, including state, tribal and private lands.

“The reality is that 80% of the forest area in the United States is outside of the national forest system,” Secretary Vilsack said. “And many of our national forests are adjacent to state and private land. Management decisions that are made both on and off the national forest obviously have important implications for that forest landscape.”

Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell agreed with Secretary Vilsack’s all-lands approach.

“We need to expand our efforts to ensure that we are using all of the USDA and other federal programs to address restoration issues across broader landscapes,” said Chief Tidwell. “Forest and grassland health, wildfire, water quality, and wildlife connectivity are issues that have never stopped at the boundaries of the National Forest System.”

According to Secretary Vilsack, sustainable forest management and restoration will be encouraged by new markets created by climate change that the Forest Service will help develop.

“Emerging markets for carbon and sustainable bioenergy will provide landowners with expanded economic incentives to maintain and restore our forests,” Secretary Vilsack said. “The Forest Service must play a significant role in the development of new markets and ensuring their integrity. Carbon and bioenergy aren’t the only new opportunities for landowners. Markets for water can also provide landowners with incentives to restore watersheds and manage forests for clean and abundant water supplies.”

According to Secretary Vilsack, both these new markets and traditional forest industry markets are vital to improving forest health.

[Page 1](#)

(NEWS-TELEPHONIC.COM)

Technology trumps temperature: Broken display can't be fixed

Sunday, September 20, 2009

By BEVIS FURBERSON,

DIANE LAMP

0

Q. I live in downtown Greensboro and had long depended upon Jefferson-Pilot to inform me of the outside temperature by means of its electronic sign at the top of its high-rise building. Lincoln Financial has discontinued displaying the temperature.

That strikes me as odd. It does display the time, but I don't really need that. I wear a watch, after all, and so does nearly everyone else. I don't wear a thermometer, however, and to my knowledge neither does anyone else.

I would like to know why LF has discontinued displaying the temperature and whether it has any intention of restoring that valuable service. So I am asking a reporter.

— *Karl A. Schleunes, UNCG history department*

A. Unfortunately, we have bad news to report. The popular — but not always dependable — digital display atop the Lincoln Financial building has been plagued by technical problems that cannot be fixed. That's according to Sol Kovach, a spokesman for the company.

"Apparently the technology for the tower is old enough that the part that is broken is obsolete," Kovach said. "So we had to omit that part from the display."

The display, which has a long and storied history, will continue to feature the time and the company's initials.

The former Jefferson-Pilot building is the tallest building in downtown Greensboro. Lincoln Financial bought out Jefferson-Pilot Financial in 2006.

For almost a century, Greensboro residents have been looking up at the former Jefferson-Pilot building. When the original 17-story building at Market and Elm streets opened in 1923, it was the tallest building between Washington and Atlanta.

In the mid-1950s, the U.S. Forestry Service built a watch tower on top of the 245-foot building. For years, it served as the watch point for forest fires across the Piedmont and was the highest point used anywhere in the U.S. by the forestry service.

It took 200 bulbs to light up the original time and temperature display that was installed about 1955.

The pyramid topping the newer 20-story twin tower was installed in August 1989. The next month, workers placed the new digital display atop the 375-foot building.

Company executives declined to say how much it cost but gave a hint: "Someone has said for the same amount of money, we could have bought everyone in Greensboro a wristwatch."

A bundle of old newspaper clippings shows that Greensboro residents have noticed when there were changes or irregularities with the time and temperature sign over the years.

This headline ran in the April 29, 1988, newspaper: "Temperature sign has a HOT flash."

The temperature that day, according to the not-so-trustworthy display: 179 degrees.

ADVERTISEMENT



Durham Moms! Lose 47lbs, Follow 1 Rule!
I Cut Down 47 lbs of Stomach Fat In A Month
By Obeying This 1 Old Rule [Explore now...](#)



Acai Berry EXPOSED (Official Test)
Want To Use Acai Berry? Do Not Use. Read This Warning Now. [Explore now...](#)



[Click to Print](#)

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

More aviators push for airstrips on national forestland

By Karl Puckett, USA TODAY

GREAT FALLS, Mont. — A clearing in Lewis and Clark National Forest is about to go from being a home for grazing cattle to a stopover for pilots.

If it opens as planned next spring, the Russian Flat grass airstrip will give aviators access to the Little Belt Mountains. It will be the first such strip approved on national forestland in about four decades, according to Bozeman, Mont., pilot John McKenna, 55, a backcountry airstrip expert who is president of the Recreational Aviation Foundation (RAF).

Nationwide, 154 forests are updating travel rules, and some aviators support the process, says Gordon Schofield, group leader for land use in the U.S. Forest Service's Northern Region, based in Missoula, Mont. That is leading to new requests for airstrips, he says.

Some existing and proposed airstrips on public land run by the federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are being challenged.

"They really serve a very small, elite group of people, and they affect a large group of people and wildlife," says Gerry Jennings, vice president of the Island Range chapter of the Montana Wilderness Association in Great Falls, Mont. "They're noisy."

The association is suing the BLM over its new management plan for the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument in north central Montana, in part over airstrips, according to federal court records. As part of the plan, the BLM closed four of 10 airstrips, but the wilderness association says that still is too many airstrips for a national monument, which Jennings says is supposed to have a higher level of protection.

"Having a plane come in on you kind of defeats the experience you are there to achieve," says Ray Bloxham of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance based in Salt Lake City.

In July, then-Forest Service chief Abigail Kimbell reiterated the policy on backcountry airstrips in a memo to regional foresters, calling them "an appropriate use of National Forest System lands." Tom Tidwell has since replaced her, but Bill Woodland, a recreation specialist for the Forest Service in Washington, D.C., says the policy hasn't changed.

"It was felt we have been so focused on roads and trails that we're kind of losing sight of that third term: airfields," Woodland says.

The Forest Service manages 193 million acres of forest and grassland and operates about 120 backcountry airstrips in forests in the 48 contiguous states, Woodland says. The Forest Service has 157,000 miles of trails nationwide for other types of uses, he says.

McKenna says RAF is in talks with both federal and private landowners about reopening closed airstrips or approving new ones in Montana, Idaho, Colorado, Utah, Maine, Michigan and California.

The not-for-profit foundation seeks to maintain existing backcountry airstrips nationwide, but it's also lobbying for new recreational runways.

Open Now

The Orange Savings Account

High Interest.

No Fees.

No Minimums.

ING DIRECT
Save your money

Member FDIC

Most of the existing airstrips were constructed in the 1930s, '40s and '50s, mainly to support firefighting efforts and give agency personnel quicker access into the backcountry, Schofield says.

"As people started to develop a wider range of interest in recreation they thought, 'Well, gee whiz, can't we use these strips to get back there to fish or float or whatever?' "


On the Salmon-Challis National Forest in Idaho, for example, a backcountry airstrip is used to access the river for rafting trips, Welsh says.

Most backcountry airstrips are in Western states, Woodland says.

Puckett reports for the Great Falls Tribune in Montana

Find this article at:

http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/environment/2009-09-16-grass-airstrips_N.htm

 [Click to Print](#)

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

Copyright 2009 USA TODAY, a division of Gannett Co. Inc.



September 11, 2009

New Obama Pick for USDA Undersecretary Criticized for Roadless Views

By NOELLE STRAUB AND ERIC BONTRAGER of [Greenwire](#)

This story was updated at 3:50 p.m. EDT.

The Obama administration's new pick to lead the Forest Service and farmland conservation programs has drawn criticism from environmental and hunting and fishing groups concerned about his past role in controversial roadless rule decisions.

Harris Sherman, executive director of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, has been nominated as Agriculture undersecretary for natural resources and environment. The post directs the Forest Service and conservation projects at the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Sherman is a longtime associate of Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, who also was once executive director of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources. If confirmed, he would join a long list of Colorado officials with ties to Salazar who now help oversee the nation's public lands.

When Sherman's name was first floated as a possible pick in June, some conservation groups questioned the choice because of his efforts on roadless issues in Colorado. Yesterday, the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership responded to Sherman's nomination by stressing the need for safeguarding roadless areas.

"We would like to congratulate Mr. Sherman and ask that he promote the long-term conservation of our backcountry hunting and fishing traditions, including upholding and defending the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, which safeguards our nation's roadless areas, should he be confirmed as undersecretary," Joel Webster, associate director of campaigns for the TRCP Center for Western Lands, said in a statement.

Colorado is developing its own roadless rule to govern more than 4 million acres of national forest, including some of the nation's best known backcountry recreation areas. Only two states, Colorado and Idaho, embarked on a process the Bush administration established to petition for state-specific roadless protections. Critics say Colorado's draft rule is far less protective than Idaho's.

In June, Michael Francis, director of the Wilderness Society's national forest program, said Sherman's work on the Colorado rule makes him a poor choice for Agriculture undersecretary. "The process that Mr. Sherman has been leading in Colorado would essentially eviscerate the protections

of the 2001 rule," Francis said. "I question whether he could do what the president would want him to do" (*Greenwire*, June 11).

But today, Suzanne Jones, the Wilderness Society's regional director in Denver, played down the differences and said the group will work with Sherman on roadless issues, among others.

"Harris Sherman has extensive conservation experience out West," Jones said. "That will be useful in D.C. We worked closely with him out here in Colorado. While we haven't agreed with him on every issue, most noticeably Colorado's decision to pursue a state-specific roadless rule, we look forward to working with him ... on a whole suite of issues. We trust he will be a good steward of our public lands and carry out President Obama's pretty clear vision for forest protection and management."

In June, David Petersen, a Trout Unlimited official in Colorado who was on the state's roadless task force, also questioned how Sherman would be able to advocate for the national rule after having worked for the state-specific plan in Colorado.

"It just troubles us and seems like a very unusual choice, an incongruous choice for a man whose job here in Colorado has been to fight off our consistent requests to lay aside the administrative state rule," Peterson said at the time. "It just doesn't seem like a very good fit, and we're troubled by it."

Yesterday Petersen directed questions to Trout Unlimited's chief operating officer, Chris Wood, who could not be reached by deadline.

USDA spokesman Caleb Weaver said the administration's roadless policy will not change. "President Obama and Secretary Vilsack have expressed their strong support for protecting roadless areas on our National Forests. Harris Sherman will be part of the effort to achieve that goal," Weaver said.

Other issues

Earthjustice Vice President Marty Hayden said that while Sherman's biggest challenge will be the roadless rule debate, he will also be charged with helping chart a new direction for the federal forest planning rule, which dictates how 155 national forests and 20 national grasslands develop individual forest plans. "That's the big rulemaking that awaits them," Hayden said.

A Bush-era revision of the planning rule spent years in litigation. A federal judge sided with environmentalists in June and threw it out, ruling that the Forest Service had failed to analyze the effects of removing requirements guaranteeing viable wildlife populations.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack last month said the Obama administration would not appeal the judge's ruling and would opt instead to initiate a new planning process that will serve to integrate all the administration's priorities, from wildlife conservation to economic concerns to collaboration with stakeholders (*E&ENews PM*, Aug. 14).

Sherman needs to move quickly to help the Forest Service adopt a new planning rule, said American Forest Resource Council President Tom Partin, explaining that many forest plans have been "in limbo" for years while the debate over the Bush forest planning rule was being fought out in the courts.

"We can limp along with existing forest plans, but forest conditions have changed so much over the last 15 years, they have to take a look at the existing science," like the impacts of forest fires and beetle infestations on forest resources, Partin said.

Partin said Sherman's long history with resource management in Colorado reflects Vilsack's trend in recent months of picking qualified individuals for key positions in USDA, in contrast to the polarizing appointments in past administrations. "The people that he has appointed don't have an agenda; they look at the land and determine how it needs to be managed," Partin said.

Background

Sherman is Obama's second pick for the undersecretary post. Homer Lee Wilkes, the Mississippi state conservationist, was nominated in May for the post but withdrew his name from consideration, citing family and financial reasons.

Under the Bush administration, the position was held by Mark Rey, who generated significant controversy during his tenure. Yesterday, Rey praised his potential successor. "I think he is eminently qualified and will do a fine job," Rey said. "I wish him the best in his new endeavor."

Salazar and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack also praised the nomination.

"In the many years I have worked with Harris Sherman I have known him to be a top-notch public servant, a champion for Colorado's land, water, and wildlife, and a problem-solver," Salazar said in a statement. "President Obama and Secretary Vilsack have made a terrific choice. ... His vision for stewardship will be a great asset to our nation in this new role."

Sherman also served as Colorado DNR director once before, under Gov. Richard Lamm (D). Between his two stints as DNR director, he served as managing and senior partner of Arnold & Porter LLP's Denver office.

Currently, Sherman is also director of compact negotiations for the Colorado Interbasin Compact Commission, chairman of the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, and co-chairman of the Governor's Forest Health Advisory Council. He has previously served as chairman of the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission, the Colorado Mined Land Reclamation Board, the Denver Regional Air Quality Council and as a commissioner of both Mines and the Denver Water Board.

Sherman graduated from Colorado College and earned his law degree from Columbia University Law School.

Missoulian

Former U.S. Forest Service chiefs ponder future of agency

By KIM BRIGGEMAN of the Missoulian | Posted: Thursday, September 10, 2009 5:00 am

Tomorrow's U.S. Forest Service and its new chief forester should take leadership roles in hot-button conservation issues, former chiefs told a Missoula audience Wednesday.

"I think the Forest Service really has to show what we can do regarding climate change. There's a huge number of things the Forest Service can do in that realm," Dale Bosworth said.

"The chief ought to be a high-profile conservationist visible to the public again, because that bully pulpit is still there," agreed Mike Dombeck.

Bosworth and Dombeck participated in a 90-minute panel consisting of the last six Forest Service chiefs during this week's 2009 Forest Service Reunion at the Hilton Garden Inn.

More than 400 retired and current employees of the agency showed up to listen. Among them was Tom Tidwell, who this summer moved from Region I headquarters in Missoula to Washington, D.C., to assume the chief's mantle in the Obama administration.

The panel represented Forest Service national leadership for the past 30 years, and national forest experience that stretches back for nearly half of the agency's 104 years of existence.

They sat in chronological order on a podium in one of the motel's large conference rooms. First came R. Max Peterson, who was chief for eight years starting in 1979. To his left were F. Dale Robertson (1987-1993), Jack Ward Thomas (1993-1996), Dombeck (1996-2001), Bosworth (2001-2007) and Gail Kimbell (2007-2009). Kimbell was the first and only woman to sit in the chief's chair in Washington.

"I'm absolutely sure this kind of assembly has never happened before in the history of the Forest Service," noted moderator George Leonard, a former associate chief. "Unfortunately that has more to do with the political nature of the Forest Service than anything else."

The panel was asked to muse on the reunion's theme: "Where Do We Go From Here?"

Not surprisingly, opinions ranged widely, though the discussion never reached the debate level. It came closest when Leonard posed the question of the still largely unresolved issue of roadless areas.

"I really think the roadless battle is over. Some just haven't realized it yet," said Dombeck, who oversaw roadless inventories that resulted in the far-reaching Roadless Rule of 2001. "If we look at the number of roads that have been built in the last couple of decades, it's really very small."

The rule is still being challenged in court, Dombeck said. "But I think we need to get on to more important issues."

"I don't agree with Mike," countered Peterson. "I don't think the battle has actually begun yet."

It's best for now to treat roadless areas as future reserves, he said. However, "if you look at the population growth and the increasing consumption rates and so on, we'll simply have to have access to those areas. But we'll only get access to them when the public decides that's the right thing to do, and right now that's not anything that will happen in the next 10 years."

Several ex-chiefs lamented the penchant to devote too many resources to planning and not enough to on-the-ground work.

"Paralysis by analysis," Bosworth called it, adding it's a waste of money to spend eight to 10 years developing a 15-year plan.

Thomas agreed.

"Just pouring more and more money into planning doesn't seem to be getting us any further down the road," he said.

Robertson noted the Forest Service has few funding advocates in Washington, D.C.

"The Forest Service has simply got to get some traction in the budget process," he said.

He urged establishing better relationships with lobbyists and interest groups so they'll "spend their political chips on the Forest Service."

All agreed the "hodgepodge" laws and lawsuits the agency deals with tie its hands. Timber and wilderness constituencies continue to fight the same old battles, Thomas said.

"Things have changed. It's almost impossible to effectively and efficiently manage our national forests," said Thomas.

But there's a danger - in the media and within the agency itself - of painting too grim a picture. Kimbell, the newest ex-chief, said since she's returned to western Montana in the last month, she's witnessed "great stuff going on" in nearby national forests.

"The Forest Service is getting a lot more done on the ground than we sometimes realize," agreed Bosworth.

"I think the most important thing the Forest Service has is the Forest Service people," said Robertson, urging a reemphasis on the agency's chain of command to get things done.

"There's a new era dawning," said Thomas, and the Forest Service will have a big role in emerging energy and conservation issues. It needs and deserves support in these trying times.

"Some of us, including me, need to quit bitching," he said.

Reporter Kim Briggeman can be reached at 523-5266 or at

> **YOUR HOME FOR
REAL ESTATE INFORMATION.**

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL | REAL ESTATE

FIND IT ALL HERE >>>

Dow Jones Reprints: This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers, use the Order Reprints tool at the bottom of any article or visit www.djreprints.com

See a sample reprint in PDF format. Order a reprint of this article now

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

WSJ.com

U.S. NEWS | SEPTEMBER 3, 2009

Pot 'Plantations' on the Rise

Border Crackdown Makes Farming in U.S. Forests Attractive; Cartel Links Suspected

By STEPHANIE SIMON

Marijuana growers, many believed to be affiliated with Mexican drug cartels, are aggressively expanding their illegal farming operations in the U.S., clearing land to plant pot in dozens of national forests from coast to coast.

Illicit cannabis farms on public land first sprang up in California more than a decade ago and remain a serious problem in that state. But in the past two years, the U.S. Forest Service has documented a rapid expansion of the practice.

Authorities have discovered pot farms in 61 national forests across 16 states this year, up from 49 forests in 10 states last year. New territories include public land in Colorado, Wisconsin, Michigan, Alabama and Virginia.

"They're moving across the country," said David Ferrell, director of law enforcement for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which includes the Forest Service.

With the expansion comes an increased risk to campers and hikers -- a particular concern this Labor Day weekend, as families converge on public land just as many cannabis crops are ready for harvest.

The propane tanks, stoves and trash left behind by pot farmers pose fire risks; such a camp is believed to have sparked a fire last month that burned 88,000 acres in California's Los Padres National Forest. And many pot patches are watched over by armed guards or booby-trapped. Some are remote, but others are near popular tourist sites, such as a pot farm discovered late last month in California's Sequoia National Park, a half-mile from a cave famed for its crystal formations.

Operators of RV parks and campgrounds near public land have taken to warning vacationers to be cautious in the woods. Stockpiled food or trash of any type might be an indication of a prolonged campout linked to a pot farm, officials said. They advise hikers who spot such signs to retreat and call authorities.

The pot farms are not fly-by-night operations. Growers cut down trees and terrace canyons to create plantations big enough for tens of thousands of plants. They apply pesticides and herbicides -- some not approved for U.S. use. They dam or divert streams and hook together miles of PVC piping to build irrigation systems, some rigged to sophisticated timers.

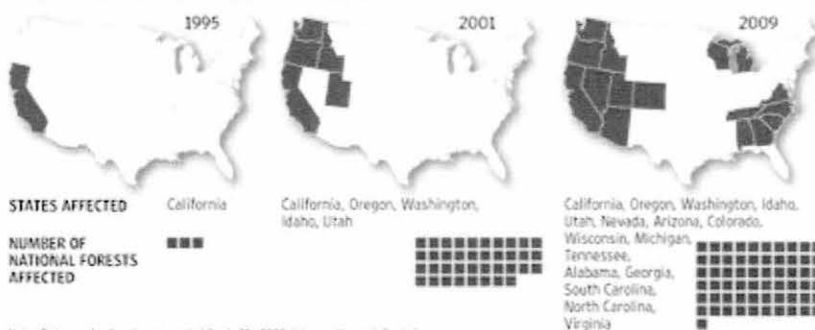
Each camp is typically tended around the clock by guards who may be equipped with assault rifles, night-

vision goggles, walkie-talkies and radios to monitor law-enforcement chatter.

"It seems like every year, they step it up a notch," said Michelle Gregory, a special agent with the California Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement.

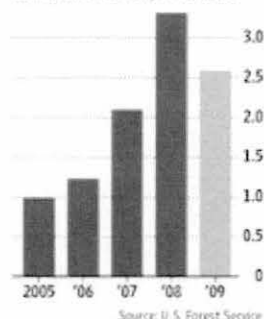
Grass Lands | The spread of pot farms in national forests

Drug-trafficking activity in national forests, by year



Note: Data are for fiscal years ended Sept. 30; 2009 data are through Sept. 1

Marijuana plants eradicated at national forests, in millions



Source: U.S. Forest Service

So far this fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30, federal agents have raided 487 pot farms on forest-service land, where they destroyed 2.6 million

marijuana plants, seized 138 firearms and made 369 arrests on felony drug charges.

Nearly half the farms were tended by foreign nationals, and investigators say they believe some of the big operations are controlled by Mexican drug-trafficking rings. The investigation into the cartels' role is still at an early stage. But by tracing contacts, money trails and distribution networks, "we're starting to have success at linking these [pot farms] back to groups that have traditionally been enemies of ours in Mexico," said Jeff Sweetin, special agent in charge of the Rocky Mountain region for the Drug Enforcement Administration.

The pot magnates also appear to be heavily involved in trafficking other drugs, such as methamphetamines and cocaine, Mr. Sweetin said.

Growing marijuana in the U.S. is increasingly attractive to foreign cartels because fencing and stepped-up patrols along the Mexican border have made it tougher to smuggle drugs into this country, said Howard Campbell, an anthropologist who studies the cartels at the University of Texas at El Paso.

The cartels have drug-distribution networks in more than 200 U.S. cities, so it is relatively simple for them to recruit workers to scout forests and tend pot crops across a broad swath of the country, Mr. Campbell said.

Pot growers may also find this a good time to expand because cash-strapped states and counties have cut patrols. California's marijuana task force, which includes local, state and federal agents, has reduced aerial surveillance and eliminated overnight stakeouts and overtime missions, according to Ms. Gregory.

In the Rocky Mountain region, Mr. Sweetin said some law-enforcement agencies can no longer devote resources to tracking suspects and building criminal cases; the most they can do is cut down marijuana plants when they find them -- and hope the growers don't return next season.

Write to Stephanie Simon at stephanie.simon@wsj.com

Printed in The Wall Street Journal, page A3

Copyright 2009 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. Distribution and use of this material are governed by our Subscriber Agreement and by copyright law. For non-personal use or to order multiple copies, please contact Dow Jones Reprints at 1-800-843-0008 or visit www.djreprints.com

Originally published 04:45 a.m., September 3, 2009, updated 05:14 a.m., September 3, 2009

EXCLUSIVE: Forest Service was warned on fire prevention

Chuck Neubauer and Julie Pendray THE WASHINGTON TIMES

LOS ANGELES | Months before it dispatched its famed firefighters to California's historic inferno, the U.S. Forest Service was warned by its internal watchdog that it could not reliably decide which forests were most vulnerable to wildfires or take pre-emptive actions because it had failed to follow through on reforms it promised to make in 2006.

The April 3 warning from the Agriculture Department's inspector general about a continued shortcoming in the Forest Service's fire prevention program called "hazardous fuels reduction production" surfaced Wednesday as Forest Service officials acknowledged that the government agency failed to clear more than 1,500 acres of Angeles National Forest underbrush that it had been authorized to clear.

The U.S. Forest Service obtained permits to burn away undergrowth and brush on more than 1,700 acres, but had done so on just 193 acres, Forest Service resource officer Steve Bear told the Associated Press.

The letter from the inspector general's office critiqued the Forest Service on its follow-up to the 2006 audit by the inspector general and said the service had failed to upgrade its information gathering, as had been recommended for its fire prevention program and promised by the service itself.

The Forest Service initially said it would have the IG's recommendations in place by July 31, 2007, but missed that deadline.

In its April letter, the inspector general said the Forest Service needed to have the enhanced system in place before it started spending recovery act money on such fire prevention projects.

"We agreed and we have implemented the enhanced reporting system," said Allison Stewart, national press spokeswoman for the Forest Service.

She did not immediately know when the reporting system was put into effect. It could not be determined whether any stimulus money or other anti-fire projects had been funded as a result of any post-April moves by the Forest Service.

The "fuels reduction" program required more detailed information on how well such fire prevention methods as performing controlled burns, removing dry underbrush and thinning forests worked, the IG said, adding that the Forest Service needed to break down results of the various anti-fire strategies by geographic region and in other ways.

The letter said that without more detailed information the Forest Service "risks not being able to identify and select those fuels projects which would provide the most benefits and reduce the greatest risks of damage from wildland fires."

The "hazardous fuels reduction program" spends hundreds of millions of dollars annually trying to prevent or reduce forest fires by removing flammable material on which forest fires feed.

On Wednesday, higher humidity gave firefighters a slight reprieve in their efforts to quell the biggest fire in Los Angeles County history, as Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger visited the command center to congratulate crews for their work.

The principal fire, formally called the Station Fire, encompasses 140,150 acres, or nearly 220 square miles, 98 percent of which is on federal land in Angeles National Forest in the foothills north of the nation's second-largest city. It was considered 28 percent contained Wednesday night.

Jody Noiron of the Forest Service said at a news conference that the cause of the Station Fire was under investigation, though human cause had not been ruled out.

Several congressmen and county and city officials representing the threatened areas also spoke at the morning news conference at Hansen Dam Park on Foothill Drive, the multiagency command center.

Besides criticism of the Forest Service clearance by Los Angeles city officials, Rep. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, California Republican, noted that there could be problems in some wilderness bills, too, as well as too many restrictions on homeowners doing clearance. Mr. McKeon said he would work with Rep. Adam B. Schiff, California Democrat, to address that.

"This brush was ready to explode," said Los Angeles County Supervisor Mike Antonovich, whose district overlaps the forest. "We are working with federal and state agencies to protect property from potential flood damage and landslides and to assess any damage to the watershed. It's imperative that the federal agencies implement common-sense policies to protect our properties."

But Mr. Schwarzenegger also said people need to listen to fire agencies, do their own clearance and help themselves when fires arise.

"There comes a certain time when it's time to get out," he said.

Two areas were still under mandatory evacuation: parts of Alta Dena, southeast of the forest, and parts of Acton, along the northern perimeter. Five Red Cross shelters continued to operate, though some were quiet.

"People are glad to be going home," said Sharon Christensen, a volunteer at the shelter in La Canada. #Others were in the La Crescenta, Palmdale, Santa Clarita and Tujunga neighborhoods.

Areas still threatened include the Mount Wilson Observatory, the San Gabriel Wilderness, and camping and equestrian areas immediately west and east of the forest.

The fires near the communities of La Crescenta and La Canada are considered contained. The fire is thought to have started in La Canada. The cause is under investigation.

More than 4,000 people from fire agencies across the country fought the flames, supported the crews or advised media Wednesday. Eight helicopters and nine helitankers operated, along with 11 air tankers. Sixty-four bulldozers were employed in the field, as well as 488 engines and 73 hand crews.

The fire has destroyed at least 62 homes and three commercial buildings. Two firefighters have been killed.

Chuck Neubauer reported from Washington.

Missoulian

Plans for U.S. Forest Service museum in Missoula to be unveiled

By **ROB CHANEY** of the Missoulian | Posted: Thursday, September 3, 2009 5:45 am

In a return to its historic roots, a new national museum will celebrate the U.S. Forest Service in Missoula.

Plans for the future National Museum of Forest Service History will be unveiled at a special gathering Tuesday. Construction on the actual building may begin within a year.

The first Forest Service district office was opened in Missoula in 1908, and eventually became the headquarters for Forest Service Region 1.

Former Region 1 supervisor and now Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell will lead a group of dignitaries in unveiling the plans.

A tour of the project takes place Tuesday at 11:15 a.m. In addition to Tidwell, invited dignitaries include the National Museum of Forest Service History's Gray Reynolds, James Deutsch of the Smithsonian Institution, Missoula Mayor John Engen, state Sen. Dave Wanzonried, Missoula County Commissioner Bill Carey and Missoula County Public Schools Superintendent Alex Apostle.

The museum will be built on a 36-acre site at 6305 Highway 10 W., about a mile west of Missoula International Airport. Its public and private partners have already raised more than \$3.2 million for site purchase, building design and museum conceptual planning. Another \$8 million must be raised to complete construction and exhibit displays. Once that is in hand, construction should take about nine months.

Features will include a 3-D theater, an authentic ranger cabin and fire lookout and memorial tree grove.

When complete, the \$12 million facility is expected to house more than 40,000 exhibits. It will cover the cultural, ecological, economic, political and social history of the Forest Service, and the lands and communities it influenced.

The nonprofit National Museum of Forest Service History was founded in 1988. For the past three years, the museum's board members and volunteers have been preparing the site, designing the 30,000-square-foot building and planning exhibits for it to display.

Tuesday is also the date for the annual Museum of Forest Service History members' meeting, the 2009 Forest Service Reunion and the USFS Leadership Council meeting.

Reporter Rob Chaney can be reached at 523-5382 or at rob.chaney@missoulian.com.

The New York Times

This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers here or use the "Reprints" tool that appears next to any article. Visit www.nytreprints.com for samples and additional information. Order a reprint of this article now.



July 17, 2009

Limits on Logging Are Reinstated

By **FELICITY BARRINGER**

In a move to protect endangered species, Interior Secretary [Ken Salazar](#) announced Thursday that his department had reversed a Bush administration decision to double the amount of logging allowed in and around old-growth forests in western Oregon.

Veering between swipes at "indefensible" moves by the Bush administration and pledges to step up noncontroversial timber sales, Mr. Salazar said in a conference call with reporters that he was reinstating a compromise reached 15 years ago to limit logging with the goal of protecting watersheds, trout and salmon fisheries and endangered birds like the northern spotted owl.

"Today we are taking action to reform the Department of Interior and correct mistakes by correcting legal shortcuts the late administration made at the end of its tenure," Mr. Salazar said.

The Bush policy, challenged in the courts by environmentalists, would have allowed timber companies to cut up to 502 million board-feet of lumber annually from 2.6 million acres of forests in the region, or about double the amount allowed under the [Northwest Forest Plan](#), which was adopted in 1994 under President [Bill Clinton](#).

In fighting the Bush plan, known as the [Western Oregon Plan Revisions](#) — or to its detractors, "Whopper" — environmentalists argued that the department's [Bureau of Land Management](#), which oversees the forests, had failed to consult with the [Fish and Wildlife Service](#) about the logging's impact on endangered and threatened species.

Environmentalists also took issue with a related decision that narrowed the extent of protected habitat for the spotted owl.

The [Endangered Species Act](#) requires federal agencies to consult wildlife agencies about potential consequences of prospective actions.

Kristen Boyles, a lawyer with the environmental group Earthjustice, praised the reversal of the Bush policy on Thursday. "Whopper was not going to be the ticket for Oregon," she said. "It would have been a sea of stumps, and not what we needed to see in working Oregon forests."

She added, "This is a big step for the Obama administration to take."

Still, Mr. Salazar's decision to reverse that policy during a severe [recession](#) was fraught: at 12.1 percent, the unemployment rate in Oregon is among the highest in the country. In Douglas County, where the

forestlands involved are located, the unemployment rate is 16.9 percent, in large part because of closings of sawmills and the loss of timber jobs.

Tom Partin, president of the American Forest Resource Council, expressed frustration with the reversal. "Oregon is facing double-digit unemployment," he said in a statement. Opening up logging under the Bush administration's plan "would have given our timber-dependent communities a real boost."

But Mr. Salazar said the Obama administration hopes "to move beyond the battles of the past" while reviewing possible updates to the 15-year-old Northwest Forest Plan.

In a [question-and-answer post](#) Thursday on its Web site, the [Interior Department](#) listed several timber sales it said it was preparing in Oregon that would create at least 200 jobs.

[Tom Strickland](#), the Interior Department's assistant secretary for fish, wildlife and parks, said in the conference call that such timber sales, now on a fast track, would most likely focus on smaller-diameter trees.

But Ann Forest Burns, a spokeswoman for the American Forest Resource Council, a timber-industry group, questioned that approach. "Just thinning the second growth will not restore the health of these forests and will not be what these communities need," Ms. Burns said.

Some economists, however, argue that the timber economy in Oregon suffers less from logging restrictions than from the housing downturn and new low-cost competition from logging companies overseas.

Despite the logging limits, spotted owl numbers have continued to decline since the Northwest Forest Plan was put in place in 1994. Dominick DellaSala, chief scientist for the nonprofit National Center for Conservation Science and Policy and an expert on the species, said competition from its more aggressive cousin, the barred owl, had hampered the spotted owl's recovery.

"We need to continue to protect the old forest to let these two owl species settle out their differences," Dr. DellaSala said.

Copyright 2009 The New York Times Company

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [First Look](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)

"America's Best Political Newsletter" Out of Bounds Magazine

counterpunch

edited by alexander cockburn and jeffrey st.clair*Inside the New Print Edition of Our Subscriber-Only Newsletter!*

Report From the Afghan Front It's Obama's War and It's Going Very Badly

Exclusively for CounterPunch subscribers, Patrick Cockburn files a special report from Kabul: the Taliban's tightening grip on most of the country; plummeting US popularity in a bankrupt country rotted by corruption. For fifty years, Seymour Melman waged intellectual war on Pentagon capitalism, making the case for peaceful conversion. David Price brings to light decades of FBI secret surveillance. Senator Jim Webb is launching the first determined bid in forty years to overhaul the US criminal justice system at whose call is the American gulag. Alexander Cockburn reports on the prospects for his success. **Get your new edition today by [subscribing online](#) or calling 1-800-840-3683 Contributions to CounterPunch are tax-deductible. [Click here to make a donation](#). If you find our site useful please: [Subscribe Now!](#) CounterPunch [books](#) and [gear](#) make great presents.**

[Order CounterPunch By Email For Only \\$35 a Year !](#)**Meet & Debate (Perhaps Even Date) CPers Online at [CounterPunch's New Facebook Page!](#)**

Today's Stories

June 26-28, 2009

Jeffrey St. Clair
Meet the Retreads:
[Obama's Used Green Team](#)

June 25, 2009

Kathy Kelly
Now We See You,
Now We Don't

Jack Bratich
You Provide the
Tweets, We'll Provide
the Info War: the
[Media and the Iranian Protests](#)

Wendell Potter
The Health Insurance
Industry v. Health
Care Reform: a
Former Insurance
Industry Insider Tells
All

Charles R. Larson
Don't Cry for Him,

Obama's Used Green Team

Meet the Retreads

By JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

Of all of Barack Obama's airy platitudes about change none were more vaporous than his platitudes about the environment and within that category Obama has had little at all to say about matters concerning public lands and endangered species. He is, it seems, letting his bureaucratic appointments do his talking for him. So now, five months into his administration, Obama's policy on natural resources is beginning to take shape. It is a disturbingly familiar shape, almost sinister.

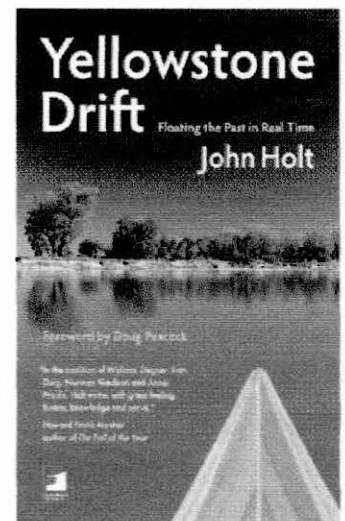
It all started with the man in the hat, Ken Salazar, Obama's odd pick to head the Department of Interior. Odd because Salazar was largely detested in his own state, Colorado, by environmentalists for his repellent coziness with oil barons, the big ranchers and the water hogs. Odd because Salazar was close friends with the disgraced Alberto Gonzalez, the torturer's consigliere. Odd because Salazar backed many of the Bush administration's most rapacious assaults on the environment and environmental laws. Odder still because Salazar, in his new position as guardian of endangered species, had as a senator repeatedly advocated the weakening of the

SHARE

Weekend Edition
June 26-28, 2009Now Available from
CounterPunch Books!

Yellowstone Drift:
Floating the Past
in Real Time
by John Holt

Introduction by Doug Peacock

[Click here to Buy!](#)

[Argentina! GOP Sex Scandal of the Week](#)

[Alan Farago
The Tears of Mark Sanford](#)

[Jonathan Cook
Israeli Firms Accused of Profiting Off Holocaust](#)

[Gareth Porter
Khobar Bombings: Telltale Signs of Saudi Fraud](#)

[Bitta Mostofi / Bill Quigley
"You Will Not Get Past Us"](#)

[David Macaray
Six Ways to Reinvigorate Labor](#)

[Mark Schuller
Haiti's Elections: "Beat the Dog Too Hard"](#)

[Website of the Day
Worst Slide Story](#)

June 24, 2009

[Andrew Cockburn
How the U.S. Has Secretly Backed Pakistan's Nuclear Program From Day One](#)

[Dean Baker
Making Financial Regulation Work](#)

[Andy Worthington
The Story of Abdul Rahim al-Ginco](#)

[James Bovard
Obama and the Torturers](#)

[Diana Gibson / Ray McGovern
Torture Eats the Soul](#)

[P. Sainath
The Age of the Everyday Billionaire](#)

[Gareth Porter
Investigating the Khobar Tower Bombing: Why Was Al Qaeda Excluded From the Suspects List?](#)

Endangered Species Act.

Salazar never hid his noxious positions behind a green mantle. Obama certainly knew what he was buying. And the president could have made a much different and refreshing choice by picking Rep. Raul Grijalva, the Arizona Democrat, a Hispanic, a westerner and a true environmentalist who had helped to expose the cauldron of corruption inside the Bush Interior Department. Yes, Obama could have picked a western environmentalist; instead he tapped a prototypical western politician with deep ties to the water, oil, timber, ranching and mining industries. So the choice was deliberate and it presaged the deflating policies that are now beginning to stream out of his office, from siding with Sarah Palin against the polar bear to greenlighting dozens of Bush-era mountaintop removal mining operations across Appalachia. (As CounterPunch pointed out last fall, Obama and Palin have long since established symbiotic harmony on God's Pipeline, the proposed \$30 billion natural gas pipeline that, if constructed, will slice across the tundra and boreal forests from Prudhoe Bay through Canada to Chicago.)

Salazar wasted no time in turning the Interior Department office into a hive of his homeboys. This group of lawyers and former colleagues have already earned the nickname the Colorado Mafia, Version Three. It's Version Three because Colorado Mafia Version One belonged to James Watt and his Loot-the-West zealots from the Mountain States Legal Fund. The Version Two update came in the form of Gale Norton and her own band of fanatics, some of whom remain embedded in the Department's HQ, just down the hall from Salazar's office.

Beyond a perverse obsession with Stetson hats, Salazar and Watt share some eerie resemblances. For starters, they look alike. There's a certain fleshy smugness to their facial features. Who knows if Salazar shares Watt's apocalyptic eschatology (Why save nature, Watt once quipped, when the end of the world is nigh.), but both men are arrogant, my-way-or-the-highway types. Watt's insolent demeanor put him to the right even of his patron Ronald Reagan and ultimately proved his downfall. Salazar may well meet the same fate—if Obama, knock-on-wood, doesn't nominate him for the next Supreme Court vacancy first. Most troubling, however, is the fact that both Watt and Salazar hold similar views on the purpose of the public estate, treating the national forests and Bureau of Land Management lands not as ecosystems but as living warehouses for the manufacture of stuff: lumber, paper, wedding rings, meat, energy.

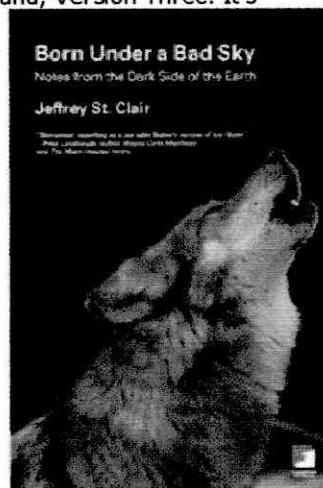
With this stark profile in mind, it probably comes as no big shock that the man Salazar nominated to head the Fish and Wildlife Service, the agency charged with protecting native wildlife and enforcing the Endangered Species Act, has viewed those responsibilities with indifference if not hostility. For the past twelve years, Sam Hamilton, whose nomination to head the agency is now pending before congress, has run the Southeast Region of the Fish and Wildlife Service, a swath of the country that has the dubious distinction of driving more species of wildlife to the brink of extinction than any other.

From Florida to Louisiana, the encroaching threats on native wildlife are manifest and relentless: chemical pollution, oil drilling, coastal development, clearcutting, wetland destruction and a political animus toward environmental laws (and environmentalists). And Sam Hamilton was not one to stand up against this grim state of affairs.

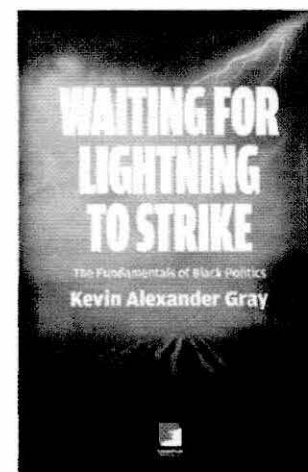
A detailed examination of Hamilton's tenure by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility reveals his bleak record. During the period from 2004 through 2006, Hamilton's office performed 5,974 consultations on development projects (clearcuts, oil wells, golf courses, roads, housing developments and the like) in endangered species habitat. But Hamilton

Spell Albuquerque:
Memoir of a "Difficult Student"
By Tennessee Reed

**SPELL
Albuquerque**
Memoir of a "Difficult" Student
**TENNESSEE
REED**



Waiting for Lightning to Strike:
The Fundamentals of Black Politics
Kevin Alexander Gray



[Click Here to Buy!](#)

"The Case Against Israel"
Michael Neumann's
Devastating Rebuttal of
Alan Dershowitz

Robert Alvarez
The Department of
Energy's Nuclear
Albatross

Dave Lindorff
Medicare for All

Steven Colatrella
Remembering
Giovanni Arrighi

Website of the Day
Protest as Terrorism

June 23, 2009

David Price
Obama's Classroom
Spies

Patrick Cockburn
Iraq Reels Toward a
New Era

James Ridgeway /
Jean Casella
Bi-Partisan Bull on
Health Care: Three
Ex-Senators Get It
Up for the Health
Care Industry

Dave Lindorff
Using the Economic
Crisis to Attack
Workers

Carmelo
Ruiz-Marrero
Puerto Rico: Biotech
Island

Gary Leupp
Dennis Ross Moves
to the White House

Brian M. Downing
The Erosion of the
Mullahs' Monolith

Robert Bryce
Are Theocracies
Doomed?

Nicholas Dearden
The G8 is Dead

Yousef Munayyer
Seeing Through
Israeli Delay Tactics

Website of the Day
The Great White
Father of America

June 22, 2009

gave the green light to all of these projects, except one. By contrast, during the same period the Rocky Mountain Office of the Fish and Wildlife Service officially consulted on 586 planned projects and issued 100 objections or so-called jeopardy opinions. Hamilton has by far the weakest record of any of his colleagues on endangered species protection.

There's plenty of evidence to show that Hamilton routinely placed political considerations ahead of enforcing the wildlife protection laws. For example, in the agency's Vero Beach, Florida office Fish and Wildlife Service biologists wrote a joint letter in 2005 complaining that their supervisors had ordered them not to object to any project in endangered species habitat—no matter how ruinous.

Take the case of the highly endangered Florida panther. One of Hamilton's top lieutenants in Florida has been quoted as telling his subordinates that the big cat was a "zoo species" doomed to extinction and that to halt any developments projects in the panther's habitat would be a waste of time and political capital.

"Under Sam Hamilton, the Endangered Species Act has become a dead letter," says PEER's Executive Director Jeff Ruch, noting that the White House announcement on Hamilton touted his "innovative conservation" work. "Apparently, the word 'no' is not part of 'innovative' in Mr. Hamilton's lexicon. To end the cycle of Endangered Species Act lawsuits, the Fish and Wildlife Service needs a director who is willing to follow the law and actually implement the Act. Hamilton's record suggests that he will extend the policies of Bush era rather than bring needed change."

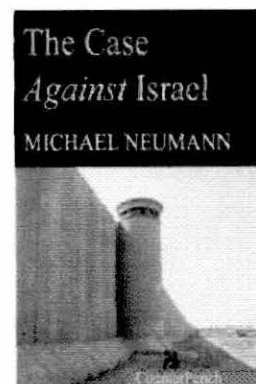
Now this man has the fate of the jaguar, grizzly and northern spotted owl in his compromised hands. Feel the chill?

Over at the Agriculture Department Obama made a similarly cynical pick when he chose former Iowa governor Tom Vilsak to head the agency that oversees the national forests. Vilsak resides to the right of Salazar and not just in the sitting arrangement at Cabinet meetings. He is a post-Harken Iowa Democrat, which means he's essentially a Republican who believes in evolution six days a week. (He leaves such Midwestern heresies at the door on Sundays.) Think Earl Butz—minus the racist sense of humor (as far as we know).

Vilsak is a creature of industrial agriculture, a brusque advocate for the corporate titans that have laid waste the farmbelt: Monsanto, Archer Daniels Midland and Cargill. As administrations come and go, these companies only tighten their stranglehold, poisoning the prairies, spreading their clones and frankencrops, sucking up the Oglala aquifer, scalping topsoil and driving the small farmers under. It could have been different. Obama might have opted for change by selecting Wes Jackson of the Land Institute, food historian Michael Pollan or Roger Johnson, president of the National Farmers Union. Instead he opted for the old guard, a man with a test tube in one hand and Stihl chainsaw in the other.

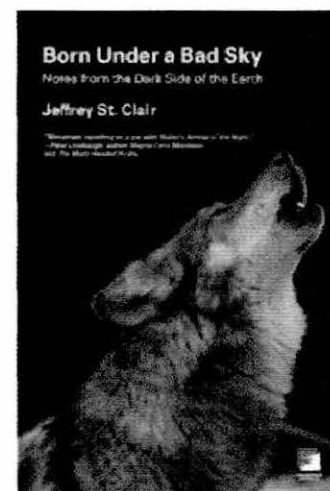
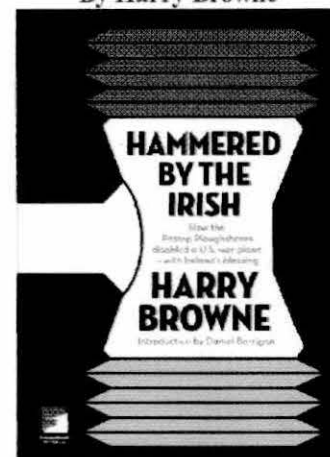
Through a quirk of bureaucratic categorization, the Department of Agriculture is also in charge of the national forests. At 190 million acres, the national forests constitute the largest block of public lands and serve as the principal reservoir of biotic diversity and wilderness on the continent. They have also been under a near constant state of siege since the Reagan era: from clearcuts, mining operations, ORV morons, ski resorts and cattle and sheep grazing.

Since 1910, when public outrage erupted after President William Taft fired Gifford Pinchot for speaking out against the corrupt policies of Interior Secretary Richard Ballinger, the chief of the Forest Service had been treated as a civil service employee and, much like the director of the FBI and CIA, was considered immune from changes in presidential administrations. This all changed when Bill Clinton imperiously dismissed Dale Robertson as chief in 1994 and replaced him with Jack Ward Thomas, the former wildlife biologist who drafted Clinton's plan to resume logging in the ancient forests of the Pacific Northwest. Thomas' tenure at the agency proved disastrous for the environment. In eight years of Clinton time, the Forest Service cut six times as much timber as the agency did under the



[Click Here to Buy!](#)

**The Inside Story of the
Shannon Five's Smashing
Victory Over the
Bush War Machine**
By Harry Browne



**Born Under a Bad Sky:
Notes from the Dark Side
of the Earth**
By Jeffrey St. Clair

**RED STATE REBELS:
Tales of Grassroots Resistance
from the Heartland**

[Michael Hudson
Obama's \(Latest\)
Surrender to Wall
Street](#)

[Esam Al-Amin
What Actually
Happened in the
Iranian Presidential
Election? A Hard
Look at the Numbers](#)

[Chris Floyd
Dexter's Legions in
Afghanistan](#)

[Jack Z. Bratich
The Fog Machine:
Iran, Social Networks
and Genetically
Modified Grassroots
Organizations](#)

[Atash Yaghmaian
We Children of the
Revolution](#)

[Laura Carlsen
Victory in the
Amazon](#)

[Paul Craig Roberts
The U.S. Regime-
Change Recipe for
Iran](#)

[Vijay Prashad
Gun v. Butter: Now
You are Only Poor](#)

[Fred Gardner
Charles Lynch Gets a
Year and a Day \(No
Thanks to Eric
Holder\)](#)

[Andy Thayer
The Blank Check:
How We Got the
Obama-DOMA
Debacle](#)

[David Macaray
Unions and the
Newspaper Crisis](#)

[Website of the Day
The Most Spied Upon
Town in America?](#)

June 19 - 21, 2009

[Alexander Cockburn
I Become an
American](#)

Jeffrey St. Clair

Reagan and Bush I administrations combined. The pace of logging set by Thomas continued unabated during the Bush the Younger's administration.

So now Vilsak has given the boot to Gail Kimbell, Bush's compliant chief, and replaced her with a 32-year veteran of the agency named Tom Tidwell. Those were 32 of the darkest years in the Forest Service's long history, years darkened by a perpetual blizzard of sawdust. You will search Google in vain for any evidence that during the forest-banging years of the Bush administration, when Tidwell served as Regional Forester for the Northern Rockies, this man ever once stood up to Kimbell or her puppetmaster Mark Rey, who went from being the timber industry's top lobbyist to Bush's Undersecretary of Agriculture in charge of the national forests. (Point of interest: Rey, once known as the Skeleton of the Timber Industry for the hundreds of thousands of acres of clearcuts on his rapsheet, has now been retained as a fixer by WildLaw, an environmental law firm in Alabama -- retained without ever having issued a single *mea culpa* for his career as a top rank ecocider. You just can't make this stuff up, anymore.) No, Tidwell was no whistleblower. He was, in fact, a facilitator of forest destruction, eagerly implementing the Kimbell-Rey agenda to push clearcuts, mines, oil wells and roads into the heart of the big wild of Montana and Idaho.

Despite this dismal resumé, Tidwell's appointment received near unanimous plaudits, from timber companies, ORV user groups, mining firms and, yes, the Wilderness Society. Here's the assessment of Cliff Rody director the Montana Forest Products Association, a timber industry lobby outfit: "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."

And here, singing harmony, are the tweets of Bob Eckey, a spokesman for the Wilderness Society, which some seasoned observers of environmental politics consider to be yet another timber industry lobby group: "Tidwell understands the American public's vision for a national forest has been changing."

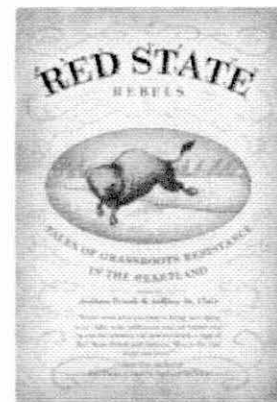
During his tenure in Montana, Tidwell specialized in the art of coercive collaboration, a social manipulation technique that involves getting environmental groups to endorse destructive projects they would normally litigate to stop. Yet, when copiously lubricated with the magic words "collaboration" or "climate change" most environmentalists can be enticed to swallow even the most ghastly of clearcuts in the most ecologically sensitive sites, such as the Bitterroot Mountains in Montana to the fast-dwindling ponderosa pine forests of Oregon's Blue Mountains.

One of Tidwell's highest priorities will, it seems, be turn the national forests into industrial biomass farms, all in the name of green energy. Under this destructive scheme, forests, young and old alike, will be clearcut, not for lumber, but as fuel to be burned in biomass power generators. Already officials in the big timber states of Oregon and Washington are crowing that they will soon be able to become the "Saudi Arabia" of biomass production. Did they run this past Smokey the Bear?

Of course, Smokey, that global icon of wildfire suppression, and Tidwell will, no doubt, find common ground on another ecological dubious project: thinning and post-fire salvage logging. We've reached the point where old-fashioned timber sales are a thing of the past. Now every logging operation will an ecological justification — specious though they all certainly turn out to be.

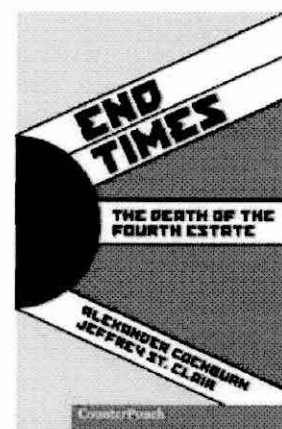
The Alliance for the Wild Rockies, one of the few green outfits to consistently stand up against Democratic Party-sponsored depredations on the environment, sued Tidwell at least 20 times during his time as regional forester in Missoula. There's no record of Tidwell being sued even once by Boise-Cascade, Plum Creek Timber or the Noranda Gold Mining Company.

Yet by and large, the mainstream environmental movement has muzzled itself while the Obama administration stocks the Interior Department with corporate lawyers, extraction-minded bureaucrats and Clinton-era retreads. This strategy of a self-imposed gag order will only serve to enable Salazar and Vilsak to pursue even more rapacious schemes without



Edited by
Jeffrey St. Clair
and Joshua Frank

How the Press Led
the US into War



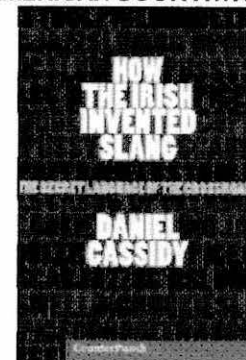
END TIMES:
The Death of the Fourth Estate
Alexander Cockburn &
Jeffrey St. Clair

Buy End Times Now!

**New From
CounterPunch Books**
The Secret Language
of the Crossroads:

**HOW THE IRISH
INVENTED SLANG**
By Daniel Cassidy
WINNER OF THE

AMERICAN BOOK AWARD!



Click Here to Buy!

Firebrand: Rod Coronado's Flame War

any fear of accountability.

The pattern of political conditioning has been honed to perfection. Every few weeks the Obama administration will drop a few meaningless crumbs--such as the reinstatement of the Clinton Roadless Area rule--toward the enviro establishment, which will greedily gobble them up one after the other until, like Hansel and Gretel with groupthink, they find themselves hopelessly lost in a vast maze of Obama-sanctioned clearcuts. After that, they won't even get a crumb.

Patrick Cockburn Who Will Control Iraq's Oil?

On the environment, the transition between Bush and Obama has been disturbingly smooth when it should have been decisively abrupt.

Al Giordano What the Left Should be Learning From Iran

Where will the administration meet its first roadblock? Who will erect it?

Henry A. Giroux The Iranian Uprisings and the Challenge of the New Media

Jeffrey St. Clair is the author of Been Brown So Long It Looked Like Green to Me: the Politics of Nature and Grand Theft Pentagon. His newest book, Born Under a Bad Sky, is just out from AK Press / CounterPunch books. He can be reached at: sitka@comcast.net.

Anthony DiMaggio The Electoral Façade

Paul Craig Roberts Are the Iranian Protests Another US Orchestrated "Color Revolution?"

John Ross 46 Dead Mexican Toddlers: Sacrificed on the Altar of Neoliberalism

Gareth Porter Spinning Civilian Deaths in Afghanistan

Carl Ginsburg Obama's Bix Fix: Placating the Bankers, Again

Tommi Avicoli Mecca 40 Years After Stonewall: From Smash the Church to Going to the Chapel

Joe Bageant Workers' Rights: No Balls, No Gains

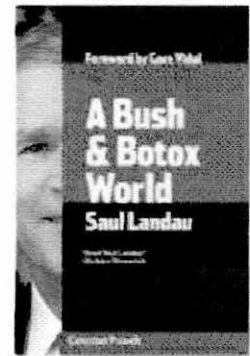
Serge Halimi Protectionism: We've Been Here Before

P. Sainath Price of Rice, Price of Power in India

Jim Goodman The Claim Deniers: Why the Health Insurance Industry Doesn't Deserve Our Trust

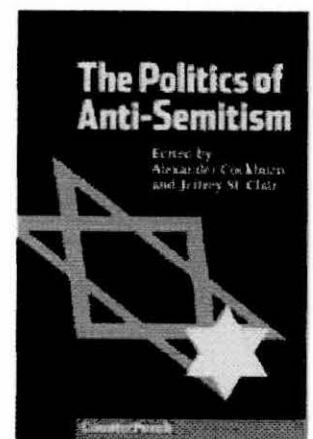
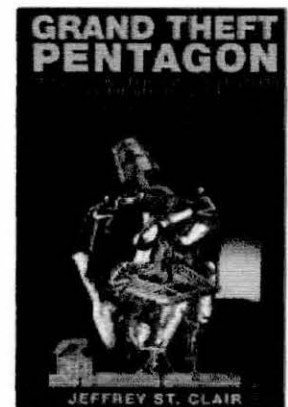
Dave Lindorff Obama's Health Care

Saul Landau's Bush and Botox World with a Foreword by Gore Vidal



[Click Here to Order!](#)

Grand Theft Pentagon How They Made a Killing on the War on Terrorism



The Politics of Anti-Semitism
Edited by Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair



July 1, 2009

Judge Tosses Bush-Era Forest Management Regulations

By NOELLE STRAUB of [Greenwire](#)

A federal judge sided with environmentalists yesterday and threw out Bush-era Forest Service regulations that govern management plans for national forests.

Judge Claudia Wilken of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California ruled that the service failed to analyze the effects from removing requirements guaranteeing viable wildlife populations. The planning rule determines how 155 national forests and 20 national grasslands develop individual forest plans, governing activities from timber harvests to recreation and protecting endangered plants and animals.

Wilken's **decision** (pdf) marks the third time a court has rejected revisions of the regulations over the past decade.

"We hope it's the last gasp of the Forest Service under the Bush administration and that we can now move forward with the Obama administration and try to come up with rules that will actually protect the forests," said Marc Fink, attorney for Center for Biological Diversity and one of the attorneys representing the plaintiffs in the case.

Conservation groups hope the Forest Service will reinstate the 1982 rule while coming up with new regulations, Fink said. Forest Service spokesman Joe Walsh said the decision is under review. "The review will help them decide what direction to go in," he added.

Wilken said the 2008 rule violated both the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Endangered Species Act. The environmental impact statement prepared by the Forest Service for the 2008 rule, she wrote, "does not actually analyze the environmental effects of implementing the Rule."

Although the environmental impact statement "repetitively insists" that the rule will have no effect on the environment because it merely sets out the process for developing land resource management plans, Wilken noted that argument was rejected twice before by courts and that she rejects it, too.

For example, she wrote, the 2008 rule does not require that plans "insure" the viability of vertebrate species, as the 1982 rule did, or even provide a "high likelihood" of viability, as a 2000 revision did. Instead, the 2008 rule states a goal of providing a framework to contribute to sustaining ecological systems.

"Although the [environmental impact statement] discusses the differences between the various standards, it fails to acknowledge the effect of eliminating the viability requirement," Wilken wrote. "Because the [statement] does not evaluate the environmental impacts of the 2008 Rule, it does not comply with NEPA's requirements."

The Forest Service had cited the Supreme Court's recent *Summers v. Earth Island Institute* decision that advocacy groups cannot challenge federal regulations on public lands unless they can prove they are themselves directly threatened by the proposed rules. But Wilken said that decision does not bear on yesterday's case. The overarching nature of the planning rule makes it impossible to link the procedural arguments of this case to any particular site-specific project, she said.

"The present case involves a challenge, not to the substance of any particular regulation, but to the Forest Service's failure to follow proper procedures when promulgating the 2008 Rule," the judge wrote.

In 2007, a federal judge in San Francisco stopped the Forest Service from using a planning rule put in place in 2005, siding with 19 environmental groups and the state of California, which argued that the Bush administration removed environmental protections without providing for proper public comment or considering the effect on endangered species.

Several environmental groups also challenged an attempt in 2000 by the Clinton administration to revise the planning rule, even though the Clinton rule was endorsed by many environmentalists and opposed by the timber industry. That rule was suspended by the Bush administration in early 2001 and never implemented, but the court case continued in part. The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the environmental groups and remanded the case for further proceedings.

The groups in yesterday's case are Citizens for Better Forestry, Environmental Protection Information Center, Center for Biological Diversity, Wild West Institute, Gifford Pinchot Task Force, Idaho Sporting Congress, Friends of the Clearwater, Utah Environmental Congress, Cascadia Wildlands Project, Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center, Wild South, the Lands Council, Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics, Oregon Wild and WildEarth Guardians. A separate lawsuit by Defenders of Wildlife, Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society, and Vermont Natural Resources Council challenging the same rule was consolidated with the case.

An official with industry group American Forest Resource Council said they are reviewing the decision and could not yet comment.

[Click here](#) (pdf) to read the judge's decision.

Copyright 2009 E&E Publishing. All Rights Reserved.

For more news on energy and the environment, visit www.greenwire.com.

KTVZ.COM

NEWS 21
CHANNEL

Forests Service: \$247 million for trail work

Associated Press - July 23, 2009 6:55 PM ET

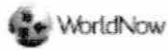
The U.S. Forest Service is spending \$274 million of its economic stimulus money on catching up on a huge backlog of maintenance of trails and facilities - and \$10 million of that goes to Oregon.

Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell said Thursday from Washington, D.C., that the 191 projects were chosen on the basis of economic need in the states where they are located, as well as the potential to correct environmental problems, such as erosion.

He adds that this will not clear up the backlog of \$4 billion worth of projects.

The money in Oregon goes to the Oregon Youth Employment Initiative, and for work on the Pacific Crest Trail, and trails on the Mt. Hood, Umatilla, and Ochoco national forests.

Copyright 2009 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.



All content © Copyright 2000 - 2009 WorldNow and KTVZ. All Rights Reserved.
For more information on this site, please read our [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#).



TRANSCRIPT

United States Department of Agriculture • Office of Communications • 1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-1300 • Voice: (202) 720-4623 • Email: oc.news@usda.gov • Web: <http://www.usda.gov>

Release No. 0382.09

Contact:
USDA Office of Communications (202) 720-4623

AGRICULTURE SECRETARY VILSACK PRESENTS NATIONAL VISION FOR AMERICA'S FORESTS

Audio

SEATTLE, August 14, 2009 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today outlined his vision for the future of our nation's forests. In his first major address regarding the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Vilsack set forth a new direction guided by the principles of conservation, management, and restoration of these natural treasures.

Below are excerpts from Secretary Vilsack's speech as prepared for delivery:

"A healthy and prosperous America relies on the health of our natural resources, and particularly our forests. America's forests supply communities with clean and abundant water, shelter wildlife, and help us mitigate and adapt to climate change. Forests help generate rural wealth through recreation and tourism, through the creation of green jobs, and through the production of wood products and energy. And they are a national treasure – requiring all of us to protect and preserve them for future generations.

"The President has made clear his interest in conserving our natural environment. I intend to take that responsibility very seriously and to devote the time and attention it deserves. I also know that Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell shares that commitment.

"The Forest Service must not be viewed as an agency concerned only with the fate of our National Forests, but must instead be acknowledged for its work in protecting and maintaining all American forests, including state and private lands. Our shared vision adopts an 'all-lands approach,' requiring close collaboration with the NRCS and its work on America's private working lands.

"Our shared vision begins with restoration. Restoration means managing forest lands first and foremost to protect our water resources, while making our forests more resilient to climate change. Forest restoration led by the dedicated people at the Forest Service opens non-traditional markets for climate mitigation and biomass energy while appropriately recognizing the need for more traditional uses of forest resources.

"Emerging markets for carbon and sustainable bioenergy will provide landowners with expanded economic incentives to maintain and restore forests. The Forest Service must play a significant role in the development of new markets and ensuring their integrity. Carbon and bioenergy aren't the only new opportunity for landowners. Markets for water can also provide landowners with incentives to restore watersheds and manage forests for clean and abundant water supplies. These markets can also create jobs in rural.

The New York Times

This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers here or use the "Reprints" tool that appears next to any article. Visit www.nytimes.com for samples and additional information. Order a reprint of this article now.

PRINTER-FRIENDLY FORMAT
SPONSORED BY



August 18, 2009

NATIONAL BRIEFING | WEST

California: Marijuana Growers Linked to Wildfires

By [SOLOMON MOORE](#)

A large wildfire in Santa Barbara County spread from a campfire set by illegal [marijuana](#) growers last week, according to the police and fire officials. The blaze, known as the La Brea Fire, burned more than 85,000 acres, fire officials said. The [United States Forest Service](#) said in a statement that Mexican drug cartels were suspected of being behind the marijuana operation. Cartel operatives plant marijuana crops in remote fields camouflaged by protected wilderness, drug enforcement officials said. The growers often camp for long periods near their crops and use pesticides and fertilizers, many of which are restricted in the United States and banned in protected forests. They also clear protected forests in order to plant marijuana. Marijuana eradication officials say that environmental damage caused by illegal pot growers often takes years to repair. The La Brea is one of several blazes that forestry crews fought last week, including the Lockheed Fire, as Southern California heads into its dry, windy fire season.

Copyright 2009 The New York Times Company

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [First Look](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)



July 31, 2009

New Efforts Needed for Handle Off-Highway Vehicles on Public Lands, GAO Says

By NOELLE STRAUB of [Greenwire](#)

With a lack of resources and staff leaving federal land managers unable to handle the increasing use of off-highway vehicles on public lands, the agencies must change their planning, communication and enforcement efforts, a government watchdog has found.

Use of OHVs on public lands increased from 2004 through 2008, emerging as a national issue and bringing environmental, social and safety impacts, a new Government Accountability Office report says.

The Forest Service has identified unmanaged motorized recreation as one of the top four threats to national forests. Federal land management agencies have only recently begun to respond to this trend by revising their plans and how they manage OHV use, but they face constrained budgetary and staff resources and other competing management priorities, the report says.

Most officials from the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and National Park Service said OHV-related environmental impacts occur on less than 20 percent of their lands, although a few said such impacts occur on 80 percent or more of their lands, the report says. The most widespread impacts were soil erosion, damage to vegetation, wildlife habitat fragmentation, and the spread of invasive species.

About 110 OHV-related deaths occurred nationwide per year on public lands from fiscal 2004 through 2008, about 570 total, according to data provided by field unit officials. The most often reported social and safety impacts were conflicts between OHV and nonmotorized users, displacement of nonmotorized users, conflicts with private landowners, and irresponsible OHV operation.

Although the agencies reported taking a variety of actions to manage OHV use, agency field unit officials said they cannot sustainably manage their OHV route systems, the report says. Sustainable management would include having the necessary resources available to ensure compliance with regulations, educate users, maintain OHV use areas and evaluate the existing OHV program.

Some agency units have taken actions such as supplementing federal funds with outside resources like state grants, communicating with the public by posting signs and maps, and enforcing OHV

regulations by occasionally patrolling OHV areas and writing citations for OHV violations, the report says.

However, few officials said their unit had signs and maps for nearly all of their OHV areas. And while most field unit officials said they conduct enforcement activities, such as writing citations, about half indicated that fines are insufficient to deter illegal or unsafe OHV use.

The Forest Service and BLM in particular will be better able to manage OHV use if they improve their strategic planning, GAO said. For example, the Forest Service's OHV plan does not identify strategies or time frames for implementing important aspects of OHV management, such as motorized-travel designations on the ground, communicating with the public, monitoring OHV trail systems or enforcing OHV regulations.

While BLM's recreation plan contains strategies addressing key aspects of OHV management, the agency has not identified time frames for implementing these strategies or performance measures for monitoring progress, GAO said.

The agencies also should develop more user-friendly maps and signs for their route systems and seek more appropriate fines to deter violations of OHV regulations, GAO recommended.

The Park Service has no extensive planning or guidance for managing OHV use but that "seems reasonable" given that OHV use is limited to only a few units and not a predominant recreational activity on Park Service lands, the report says.

The Interior and Agriculture departments generally agreed with GAO's findings and recommendations. However, on route designation, the Forest Service feels the existing strategy, time frame and performance measures are appropriate for travel management planning. The agency agreed with GAO's other goals but said its preferred method is development of a national-level plan specifically addressing OHV management.

"While the agency will soon provide guidance to its field staff through the dissemination of an implementation guide, in the future the agency will also develop a strategy, timeframes and performance measures for implementation," the Forest Service said. "Developing strategies and timeframes for this plan will be straightforward. Identifying new performance measures will offer a challenge due to the situation differences, at the local level, and the added costs to collect that information in a way that is accessible and meaningful at the national level."

BLM said it concurred with the recommendations and is developing additional measures and drafting a manual and handbook to provide detailed guidance to field offices.

[Click here](#) (pdf) to read the report.

Copyright 2009 E&E Publishing. All Rights Reserved.

AP Interview: New Forest chief vows quick spending

By MATTHEW DALY - 57 minutes ago

WASHINGTON (AP) — 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.

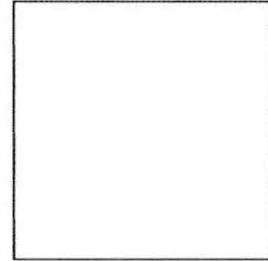
"I have found these collaborative efforts that bring together a diverse group of interests is probably one of the best ways for us to resolve the controversial issues," Tidwell said. "Bring folks together and let them understand each other's values and develop relationships."

Copyright © 2009 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

 [Add News to your Google Homepage](#)



Map



Court upholds federal roadless rule

MIAMI, Fla. - A Bill Clinton-era federal rule that keeps logging and road graders out of roadless areas in national forests was upheld by a federal appeals court Friday, but U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell believes a federal roadless rule unique to Colorado will enhance wild land protections across the state while keeping communities from being harmed by the bark beetle.

The U.S. 10th Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver on Friday upheld the long-contested 2001 Roadless Rule, which protects about 58 million acres of undeveloped wild lands on national forests nationwide and about 4 million acres in Colorado from new road construction. Thousands of acres in Roosevelt National Forest are in roadless areas, including Greyrock near Fort Collins.

The Clinton rule, long derided by developers and extraction industries, had been overturned by a federal district court in Wyoming. Anticipating that the 2001 rule would not be implemented in Colorado, state and federal officials began creating a Colorado-unique rule six years ago, opening some land up for certain kinds of development, including the removal of some bark beetle-killed trees. That rule is set to be finalized soon.

Though the court's Friday decision makes the more restrictive 2001 rule effective in Colorado, the Forest Service is eager to push ahead with the Colorado rule, which will affect forest land throughout Larimer County.

Tidwell, speaking at the Society of Environmental Journalists annual conference in Miami, said Saturday he doesn't think there will be a conflict between Colorado's rule and the 2001 rule. In fact, he said, the Colorado rule is an "addition and improvement" on the Clinton-era rule partly because it gives foresters the flexibility to remove dead trees around homes.

"We're hoping to get the final Colorado rule out later next year," he said.

The Colorado rule, which allows the Forest Service to harvest trees around beetle-ravaged communities, will provide the agency with more flexibility to respond to the bark beetle spread than the 2001 rule, Tidwell said.

Advertisement

Make it Yours™
Browse thousands of designs for over 3,000 devices.
Get 15% off with code: SAVE15

Browse Designs **skin**

Print Powered By Format Dynamics



Environmental groups have long believed the 2001 rule to be nearly the gold standard for roadless area protection across the country, and many have called for the Colorado rule to be scuttled in order to protect areas where it would allow development.

"The importance of maintaining a national policy to preserve America's most pristine forests cannot be overstated," Jane Danowitz, director of the Pew Environmental Group's U.S. Public Lands Program, said in a statement Friday.

"Without the roadless rule, protection of these national forests would be left to a patchwork management system that in the past resulted in millions of acres lost to logging, drilling and other industrial development," she said.

Some of those lands eventually could be set aside for wilderness designation, which would bar all development and vehicle entry.

When asked if the implementation of the 2001 roadless rule could lead to future wilderness designation, Tidwell said the Forest Service wants more of its land to become wilderness, but that decision must be made by Congress.

Advertisement

Make it Yours™

Browse thousands of designs for over 3,000 devices.

Get 15% off with code: SAVE15

Browse Designs

skin.com

Print Powered By Format Dynamics

By [First Tracks!! Online Media](#)

Washington, DC – President Barack Obama on Monday signed into law the [Ski Area Recreational Opportunity Enhancement Act](#) (S. 382/H.R. 765), which paves the way for more robust summer operations at the nation's 121 ski areas that operate on public lands.



Mountain biking at Utah's Deer Valley Resort
(photo: FTO/Todd Copeland)

The new law, championed by Colorado Democratic Senator Mark Udall, is designed to allow ski resorts located in Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, Washington and Wyoming to offer their guests a wider array of activities in summer. It amends the National Forest Ski Area Permit Act of 1986 to permit activities beyond the alpine and Nordic skiing already allowed in ski areas on public lands. Such uses would include zip lines, mountain coasters and alpine slides as well as mountain biking and concerts that some resorts already offer on adjacent private land, but this new law allows such facilities on National Forest Service land leased to the resorts with Forest Service approval.

The law's proponents say that it will create 600 extra jobs and is expected to bring in an additional \$40 million to local communities in direct spending. It will also increase lease payments by ski resorts to the federal government.

"The national forests have always been some of America's greatest playgrounds," said U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell. "It is exciting that our ski areas will now be able to offer more recreational opportunities and economic benefits."

The bill was co-sponsored by U.S. Senator John Barrasso (R-WY), U.S. Representative Rob Bishop (R-UT), and U.S. Representative Diana DeGette (D-CO).

Share this page:

74

[More Available Services](#)

Related stories:

1. [Ski Area Summer Use Bill Passes Congress, Heads to Obama for Signature](#)
2. [Federal Bill to Expand Ski Area Summer Use Passes U.S. House](#)
3. [New Jersey Ski Helmet Bill Closer to Law](#)
4. [Senate Considers Bill to Allow Expanded Activities at Ski Resorts on U.S. Forest Service Land](#)
5. [New Mexico's Sipapu Ski Area Remains Open for Summer Activities While Carson National Forest Closes](#)

azdailysun.com

Forest Service enters new era with massive stewardship contract

Posted: Tuesday, May 22, 2012 5:05 am

The news that the Forest Service has finally awarded its massive, 300,000-acre stewardship contract for northern Arizona is certainly welcome. The big wildfires of recent years, combined with hotter summers, have underscored the continued risks that the forests and local communities are under unless decisive action is taken.

But even with a new wood products mill up and running in Winslow by late 2013, it will be decades before the forests show significant progress. The initial plans call for thinning 30,000 acres a year, whereas last year's Wallow Fire charred 540,000 acres in less than a month.

Because of an innovative public-private collaboration, the Flagstaff area had gotten a decade's head start on forest thinning until the recession hit. Then, starting in 2008, plans for projects like the one approved for Schultz Pass sat on the shelf for several years until it was too late -- the wildfire in 2010 occurred because the Forest Service couldn't find a bidder for the trees. And Congress has made it clear that although it will appropriate plenty of money to fight fires, it isn't willing to put the same amount into preventive thinning.

Now, with new mills like the one in Winslow and elsewhere across the country set to contract for all the small-diameter wood that loggers can harvest, it will be up to the private sector to underwrite the restoration of our forests. One reason Pioneer Forest Products was chosen was because of its focus on cabinets and furniture, products that would likely withstand a continued economic downturn. The other bidder was set to use the wood for primary building materials, and the Forest Service apparently wasn't willing to put all of its chips on the housing construction market.

So instead of paying loggers up to \$400 an acre to haul away doghair thickets when the U.S. Treasury was flush, the Forest Service will actually be getting a token payment of \$22 an acre for the 300,000 acres that Pioneer Forest Products will harvest. That's \$6.6 million over 10 years, enough to conduct oversight of the contractors and plan for the next large-scale stewardship contract, even if Congress cuts the agency's budget further.

As for the Flagstaff region, most of the major thinning projects close to town have been completed. As we reported last week, the next big one will be on the rim of Sycamore Canyon 30 miles to the southwest. It's an area just outside an extremely combustible wilderness zone that can't be treated mechanically, so a buffer is needed when Sycamore Canyon inevitably falls prey to catastrophic wildfire. The city of Flagstaff also wants to move up the scheduled thinning of the Dry Lake Hills and Lake Mary watersheds to protect against post-fire flooding.

Until the mill and the thinning get started, however, the watchword, as ever, is extreme caution in the woods during dry season. Healthy forests are the key to healthy communities in northern Arizona. We're about to turn the corner on forest health, so let's be sure we get there safely.

BAY JOURNAL

Forest Service urged to uphold hydrofracking ban

Agency received letter from environmental coalition as well as comments from 50,000 individuals on plan for George Washington National Forest

By Karl Blankenship

A coalition of conservation groups from around the Bay watershed is urging the U.S. Forest Service to stick to the prohibition on horizontal drilling for natural gas that it proposed in its draft management plan for the George Washington National Forest.

Their letter - along with a campaign that generated more than 50,000 comments from individuals - sought to bolster the proposed restrictions on drilling in the Marcellus Shale, which have drawn fire from members of Congress and the administration of Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell.

The 1.1-million-acre forest, located in Virginia and West Virginia, is the largest single federal landholding in the Bay watershed.

The management plan proposed this spring would prohibit the drilling technique needed to access the gas in the deep Marcellus Shale formation underlying about half of the forest. No such prohibition was in the previous management plan.

Although there has been little interest to date in drilling in the Marcellus formation within the forest, the natural gas industry and its supporters in Congress worry that any drilling prohibition would set a precedent for other federal lands.

The draft plan led to a congressional hearing in July in which Rep. Doug Lamborn, R-CO, chairman of the House Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee, said the Forest Service "would essentially close the entire forest to a safe and efficient means of energy development."

Joe Holtrop, deputy chief of the Forest Service, insisted at the hearing that the plan did not set a national precedent, saying that forest management plans are "place based" documents for individual forests, and take into consideration local concerns. Horizontal drilling has been opposed by several counties and cities adjacent to the forest.

"I want to be clear," Holtrop said, "the U.S. Forest Service has no policy, nor do we have any plans to develop any policy to ban horizontal drilling and the associated hydraulic fracturing."

Extracting gas from the Marcellus Shale, a formation that stretches from southwestern Virginia to New York, has been controversial because accessing it requires drilling deep wells, then drilling horizontally.

Water and a wide variety of chemicals are pumped into the well under very high pressure to break up rocks, a process called hydraulic fracturing, or hydrofracking for short. The process creates large volumes of wastewater. This wastewater, bearing minerals, chemicals and sometimes radiation, has contaminated streams and caused other problems in some places where drilling has occurred.

Representatives of the oil and gas drilling industry testified at the hearing that the Obama administration was restricting access to a domestic energy source that burns cleaner than other



Like 345 Send

13



First Tracks!! Online Ski Magazine on Google+

View our new all-in-one

Social Media page

Get our free Android app!



Click here for more information and download

AdChoices

Tired Of Obama?

Learn How You Can Take A Stand To Ensure Our Country Has A Future
www.PoliticalPlan.com

Steamboat Ski Deals

Save 20% Off Steamboat Ski Packages. More at Official Resort Site!
www.steamboat.com

Ski Winter Park Colorado

Ski and Stay from \$84 pp/nt! More Info at Official Resort Site.
www.winterparkresort.com

Breckenridge Ski Resort

Official Site. Reserve Tickets, Lodging, Rentals, And More Online.
www.Breckenridge.com

Job Openings

Search For Job Openings. Apply For a Position Today!
www.FindTheRightJob.com



fossil fuels. And, they insisted, hydraulic fracturing had caused relatively few problems relative to the number of wells drilled.

But environmental groups contend that the large amount of water which must be drawn from other sources to drill each well - as much as 4 million to 5 million gallons - and the threat of spills involving contaminated drilling wastes pose a threat to high-quality streams and drinking water supplies.

They also said drilling activities would affect wildlife habitat and interfere with recreational activities in the forest.

Choose Clean Water, a coalition of conservation groups in the Bay watershed, helped generate more than 50,000 individual comments in favor of the draft management plan before the comment period closed in mid-October.

In a letter signed by 75 organizations, the coalition stated that "due to the documented risks of horizontal drilling and high-volume hydraulic fracturing and the numerous public benefits that could be impacted through this type of gas drilling, our organizations feel strongly that the Forest Service would be well-justified in prohibiting horizontal drilling on future federal oil and gas leases" in the George Washington forest.

But they also expressed concern that about 93 percent of the forest, or almost 1 million acres, would remain open to leasing for vertical drilling, noting that 90 percent of all vertical wells also involve hydraulic fracturing, although they generally produce less wastewater than horizontal wells. Further, those wells would present the same risks for surface and ground water, as well as problems for wildlife habitat and recreation.

The letter stated that the plan did not sufficiently analyze those risks and said, at a minimum, that watersheds that supply local drinking water and other priority watersheds should not be available for leasing.

After reviewing comments, the Forest Service expects to finalize its management plan next March.

Related stories in this issue:

- [EPA to set rules for treating wastewater from natural gas drilling](#)
- [Impact fee sought for Marcellus drilling in PA](#)

Karl is the Editor of the Bay Journal. [Send Karl an e-mail.](#)

The Bay Journal is published by [Chesapeake Media Service](#) for the [Chesapeake Bay Program](#).
[Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [RSS Feeds](#) | © Copyright 2010 - Bay Journal

- [Log in](#)
- [Register](#)



- [Home](#)
- [News](#)
 - [Resorts](#)
 - [Equipment](#)
 - [Events](#)
 - [People](#)
 - [World Cup](#)
 - [Backcountry](#)
- [Features](#)
 - [Destinations](#)
 - [Western U.S. & Canada](#)
 - [Eastern U.S. and Canada](#)
 - [Midwestern U.S. and Canada](#)
 - [Europe & Mediterranean](#)
 - [South America](#)
 - [Australia and New Zealand](#)
 - [Asia](#)
 - [Equipment](#)
 - [Weather](#)
 - [Technique](#)
 - [Events](#)
 - [Other](#)
- [Forums](#)
- [Social](#)
 - [All-In-One](#)
 - [Facebook](#)
 - [Twitter](#)
- [Conditions](#)
- [Videos](#)
- [Ski Map](#)
- [Subscriptions/RSS](#)
- [Downloads](#)
- [Search](#)
- [Mobile](#)
 - [Mobile Site](#)
 - [Apps](#)
- [About](#)
 - [Contact Us](#)
 - [All About Our Operations](#)
 - [Advertising](#)
 - [Website Problems](#)
 - [Miscellaneous](#)

FREE NIKE GOLF® GEAR.
 Start earning with just two nights. [REGISTER NOW](#)

Register for free Federal Times E-Newsletters



- Weekly highlights from print
- Daily round-up of top govt. news
- Monthly topic-specific reports

[Agency News >> Federal Budget]

Budget chaos reigns: 2012, 2013 plans in disarray in wake of debt deal

By SEAN REILLY | Last Updated: August 15, 2011

Comments (9)

Recommend (4)

Like 5

15

SHARE

Federal financial managers are accustomed to dealing with budget challenges. But rarely have they faced the combination of challenges now heading their way:

- With seven weeks to go before the next fiscal year begins, Congress has not passed any of the dozen spending bills that keep the government operating; and most agencies, if not all, will likely enter the fiscal year under a continuing resolution.
- The Office of Management and Budget has not given any guidance to agencies on how to prepare their 2013 budget submissions, which are due to OMB in only a few weeks. That OMB guidance typically goes out to agencies in June, but it has been sidetracked by uncertainty created by the lengthy and inconclusive debt ceiling negotiations.

Many experts forecast another bruising partisan clash over the 2012 budget — as there was this year over the 2011 budget — that may again threaten the shutdown of some agencies.

"It's been extremely difficult," Peter Grace, director of strategic planning and management at the Housing and Urban Development Department, said last week of the uncertainty.

A continuing resolution typically maintains spending at the preceding year's levels. At some agencies, such as the Veterans Affairs Department and Nuclear Regulatory Commission, that shouldn't be a problem, top officials said last week.

But the challenges are magnified for agencies like the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, which are picking up big new regulatory chores under the Dodd-Frank financial service overhaul. Another is the Social Security Administration, whose workload is swelling as baby boomers retire and the dismal economy drives more people to seek disability benefits.

"People are significantly concerned and they're stressed out," said Witold Skwierczynski, president of the American Federation of Government Employees council that represents SSA's field operations staff. "It's crisis after crisis."

The agency imposed a partial hiring freeze more than a year ago. To cut overtime, it recently announced that field offices will close to the public 30 minutes earlier each day.

In the next year, Skwierczynski said, SSA will have to shed 4,400 employees, including those who work directly for the agency and those at affiliated state offices, if the agency is forced to operate on current-level funding. Those cuts can be accomplished through attrition if the agency's budget is unchanged. But if funding is cut, employees would be furloughed one day for every \$25 million in reductions, said Skwierczynski, citing official projections.

Michael Gallagher, SSA's deputy commissioner for budget, finance and management, declined an interview request. An SSA spokeswoman confirmed the potential workforce cuts, but added in an email that "we will do everything we can to avoid furloughs."

At the CFTC, which is supposed to assume oversight of a \$3 trillion derivatives market, a long-term continuing resolution would mean that the agency could keep working on required rulemakings, but would otherwise have to make tradeoffs, Chairman Gary Gensler said in an interview.



House Speaker John Boehner Obama leave the Capitol in trying federal budget negotiat on a FY2011 spending plan ju federal shutdown in April. Wit remaining before the start of l not passed any of the dozen : the government operating; m will likely enter the fiscal year resolution. (File photo / Getty

Federal Times Video

That could entail shifting staff from oversight of the futures market that the commission already regulates, Gensler said. It also could slow its ability to handle a flood of new registrations from derivatives dealers. Without more resources, CFTC employees can't be "effective cops on the beat," Gensler said.

Although commission employees have so far been able to meet the challenges, he added, "they need reinforcements."

Prospects for another shutdown

Absent any clear direction from Capitol Hill, agency leaders are treading carefully.

Last month, Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell announced a hiring "pause" at the agency and warned employees that stiff budget cuts are possible next year.

"We don't want to face a situation where the final budget levels are approved midway through the fiscal year that cause us to take unplanned and drastic action to achieve required savings," Tidwell said in an email.

In an interview, Associate Forest Service Chief Mary Wagner expected the partial hiring freeze to last a few more weeks as managers try to dovetail fiscal 2012 funding projections with workforce needs. They are also having to factor in the possible consequences of an early retirement program announced in May, she said.

Under a spending bill approved in June by the Republican-controlled House, the Forest Service would take an 11 percent cut next year. But the Democrat-controlled Senate has yet to weigh in on that legislation or most other appropriations bills.

Although nothing will happen before lawmakers return early next month from their August break, a battle is already rumbling over GOP plans to use some of the spending bills to target policies they oppose. Among them: the Health and Human Services Department's implementation of last year's health care legislation and the Environmental Protection Agency's efforts to regulate greenhouse gas emissions.

For HHS, a shutdown is "absolutely" possible if lawmakers reach a deadlock over the legislation that funds the department, former Rep. Tom Davis, R-Va., now director of federal government affairs at Deloitte & Touche LLP, said last week.

Although Davis estimated the odds of that at less than 50-50, he added that "in divided government, that's one of the most contentious bills."

Congress could also go to the brink over legislation covering EPA, said Manik Roy, vice president for federal government outreach at the Pew Center on Global Climate Change. While predicting that the Obama administration will "hang tough," Roy sees the bill as Republicans' best chance of getting policy changes they want.

Questions about 2013

Meanwhile, agencies are supposed to be putting the finishing touches on their 2013 budget requests, normally due to OMB by Sept. 12, said Thad Juszczak, a former federal budget officer. Until OMB officials provide some guidance, however, "you can't expect that to happen," he said.

OMB spokespersons did not reply to requests for information on their plans.

Other effects of a 2012 continuing resolution could end up buried in budgetary fine print. Although the debt ceiling legislation included extra money for college Pell Grants, the Education Department program could nonetheless end up short by \$1.5 billion if the CR lasts all year, said Jack Jennings, president of the Center on Education Policy, a nonpartisan policy and research organization.

Agencies are soldiering on. "We're doing what we know how to do to produce the best budget we can by Sept. 12," said Todd Grams, chief financial officer at the Veterans Affairs Department.

One cushion for VA is that its vast health care system is funded a year in advance, meaning that it won't be affected by a continuing resolution, Grams said. He declined to discuss the assumptions the department is using in assembling its 2013 budget.

Meanwhile, the Forest Service is working conservatively off this year's budget in order to have the flexibility to act on whatever comes out of Congress and OMB, Wagner said.

But financial managers also face the reality that the budget crunch will last for years to come. The Justice Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, for example, is trying to "right-size" its workforce to support the job it has to do, CFO Vivian Michalic said.

Plans to open 14 offices along the southwest border — funded by several special appropriations from Congress — have been scaled back to nine, and the agency is looking to cut 400 positions by September 2012.

Short-term cost-cutting moves — such as curtailing vehicle purchases for ATF special agents — "are really unsustainable in the long term," she said.

BROUGHT TO
YOUR PAY FROM
BUT YOUR OPT
A DISCUSSION OF STRATEGIES TO PROTECT MOST OF YOUR RESOURCES
REGISTER NOW FOR FREE WEBCAST SEPT 12
PRESENTED BY **Firs**

Most Popular Federal S

Today	Past We
Thousands of TSP participant Fund (4947)	
Budget chaos reigns: 2012, 2013 plans in disarray in wake of debt deal (3774)	
Commerce offers buyouts, ea	
AF is offering buyouts and ea (2559)	
Editorial: Postal Service out o	

helenair.com

Effects of fire retardant on environment assessed

By EVE BYRON Independent Record | Posted: Sunday, May 15, 2011 12:00 am

The U.S. Forest Service is proposing a few changes, but wants to continue using retardant to slow the spread of wildfires, according to a draft environmental impact statement released for public comment Friday.

Glen Stein, who put together the 370-page draft EIS, said they're already working with individual forests where retardant is used to map areas where threatened or endangered plants, fish and animals are present and they will try to avoid those areas.

They're also proposing to limit the use of retardant in waterways unless it's needed for the protection of human life; previously, it also could be applied when the potential damage to natural resources outweighed the possible loss of aquatic life and when alternative fire line construction tactics aren't available. Already, the Forest Service tries to avoid using retardant within 300 feet of waterways.

The Forest Service also said it would start to annually monitor 5 percent of fires on less than 300 acres where retardant has been applied to determine whether any adverse effects occurred, and if so, what to do in the future. In addition, they've laid out steps to take in case of misapplications.

"We feel this does a better job of protecting sensitive resources while allowing us to meet our obligations to protect people and property, and do so safely," Stein said on Friday, adding that their preferred alternative now is different than what they initially proposed, based on initial public comments. "Now we're waiting to see what the public thinks."

The draft EIS is the result of a July 2010 decision by U.S. District Court Judge Donald Molloy, who directed the Forest Service to follow national environmental policies and prepare an EIS to outline the impacts on plants, animals and fish after dropping the retardant. The Forest Employees for Environmental Ethics had filed a lawsuit in 2008, alleging the retardant, which includes ammonia-based fertilizer, is toxic to fish and threatens rare plants.

Molloy ruled in July 2010 that it "is probable that substantial questions are raised hereas to the environmental impact of the annual dumping of millions of gallons of chemical retardant on national forests." Last month, he ordered the federal government to pay \$95,000 to FEEE for court costs and attorney's fees.

In a press release, Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell defended the use of the retardant, and noted that from 2000 through 2010 it was applied only on about 8 percent of wildfires on National Forest lands. In addition, during the past decade, on lands managed by the Forest Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, and the states, only one of every 5,000 retardant drops has impacted waterways.

"The use of fire retardant, in concert with firefighters on the ground, allows the Forest Service to safely protect landscapes, resources and, most importantly, people's lives," Tidwell said. "Research and experience demonstrate that aerially applied fire retardant, used in an appropriate manner, reduces wildfire intensity and the rate of spread, which increases the effectiveness of our fire suppression efforts on the ground."

But Andy Stahl, FEEE executive director, argues that the Forest Service's research in laboratories can't be applied to real wildfire conditions, where heavy winds often created by the fire can make it rapidly spread. After a quick read of the draft EIS, Stahl said what was important to him was what the document didn't include.

"The Forest Service makes no effort to show that fire retardant use changes the outcome of wildfires in terms of houses destroyed, lives threatened or acres burned," Stahl said. "Tables in the draft EIS show scores of national forests use no retardant — never did — and they don't show any different outcomes. They don't suffer from lack of that."

He added that while acknowledging the environmental harm, the document also doesn't calculate any significant benefits.

"I think they're going to be compelled to do somewhat better than this," Stahl said. "If they're proposing to build a dam or highway, or log a forest, there are some environmental downsides but also some kind of economic pluses. What the Forest Service has not done is told us what the pluses are when using the retardant."

He added that state firefighting agencies, like those in Florida and Texas, don't use retardant on wildfires and there's no significant difference. In the West, though, he said it's often used on fires on federal lands.

"In Florida and Texas, where forest fires are ubiquitous, retardant isn't used because the federal government isn't paying for it because they don't have federal national forests," Stahl said. "This is a federal boondoggle. State firefighting agencies without the federal treasury behind them never found retardant to be cost effective, and that the benefits outweigh the costs."

Stein said they plan to continue to use retardant on wildfires this summer, and Tidwell will decide what course to follow after the final EIS is completed. The EIS must be completed by 2011, under Molloy's ruling.

"We don't know what will happen next year," Stein said. "It depends on how this is received by the court."

The release of the draft environmental impact statement begins a 45-day public comment period, and it can be found in this story online at helenair.com.

Reporter Eve Byron: 447-4076 or eve.byron@helenair.com

http://missoulian.com/news/local/tidwell-appears-poised-to-stay-on-with-forest-service/article_0aefe417-efbb-5cf9-88b4-97f40fe60192.html

FEATURED

Tidwell appears poised to stay on with Forest Service

ROB CHANEY rchaney@missoulian.com 3 hrs ago



ROB CHANEY rchaney@missoulian.com

Buy Now

U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell, left, talks with former Seeley Lake District Ranger Tim Love during a conference in Missoula last summer. Tidwell has led the Forest Service since 2009 and appears interested in retaining his post after Donald Trump assumes the presidency.

U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell has not announced any intention to retire with the coming change of presidential administrations, which is another way of saying he appears to intend to continue in the job he's got.

"We can't speculate on the chief's intentions," Forest Service spokesman Byron James said on Monday. "He is a career employee, not a political appointee. There is no need to reapply for the position when an administration changes. As a career employee, he will continue to serve."

Tidwell was Region 1 Forester headquartered in Missoula before taking the job of chief of the Forest Service in 2009. That position reports to the undersecretary of Agriculture, which reports to the Secretary of Agriculture – a member of the president's cabinet. Both the secretary and undersecretary positions are appointed positions that receive Senate confirmation.

"Once the secretary and undersecretary are appointed, if they want to make a change, they do. And in most cases, the chief decides to retire," said Dale Bosworth, himself both a former Forest Service chief and Region 1 forester. The incoming administration can put them in a different job, and who wants to do that?

"My guess with Tom is he would stay for a while, and if he's asked to leave, he'd leave," Bosworth continued. "I think he'd welcome the opportunity to work with the new administration. He's a career Forest Service employee. Whether you're a Republican or a Democrat, you want to do the best job for the Forest Service."

President-elect Donald Trump is reportedly considering Idaho Gov. Butch Otter for Secretary of Agriculture after earlier speculation faded about appointing North Dakota Democratic Sen. Heidi Heitkamp. Other people in contention for the Agriculture post include Nebraska businessman Charles Herbster, former Deputy Agriculture Secretary Chuck Conner, Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback, former governors Sonny Perdue of Georgia and Dave Heineman of Nebraska, and Texas Secretary of Agriculture Sid Miller.

Neither of Montana's senators, Democrat Jon Tester or Republican Steve Daines, had any update on Monday on who might get sent to the Capitol for cabinet confirmation.

"As the new administration takes shape, it's critical that whoever heads up the Forest Service understand that Montana's forests are economic drivers for timber, conservation and recreation," Tester wrote in an email. "I will continue to work with whoever heads up the agency to improve forest management and fix the way we pay to fight wildfires."

Get news headlines sent daily to your inbox

Email

Sign Up!

Tester added he was pleased at Tidwell's recent decision to restore trail maintenance funds slated for cuts, but was frustrated at a slow response from the Forest Service when it comes to getting the farm bill forestry projects off the ground.

"I have confidence that President-elect Trump will actively support robust solutions needed to increase forest jobs and improve forest health in Montana," Daines wrote in an email Monday afternoon.

Tidwell has worked in the Forest Service for 38 years.

MORE INFORMATION



Daines calls for litigation, logging changes in energy bill

Forest Service chief looks to partnerships for forest management

Forest stakeholders round up Montana ideas at workshop