

**PROPOSED BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2012 FOR
THE FOREST SERVICE**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
UNITED STATES SENATE
ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION
TO
CONSIDER THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSED BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR
2012 FOR THE FOREST SERVICE

MARCH 3, 2011



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**PROPOSED BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2012
FOR THE FOREST SERVICE**

THURSDAY, MARCH 3, 2011

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:36 a.m. in room SD-366, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Jeff Bingaman, chairman, presiding.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JEFF BINGAMAN, U.S.
SENATOR FROM NEW MEXICO**

The CHAIRMAN. Why don't we go ahead and get started. Senator Murkowski is on her way here but asked us to proceed without her.

Today's hearing is to consider the President's proposal for the Forest Service's fiscal year 2012 budget. We welcome Chief Tidwell, who has been before this committee many times before. We welcome him back. We appreciate him coming to testify.

The budget is tight. This proposal would cut the Forest Service's discretionary budget by nearly \$180 million. It would significantly impact a number of important programs and cut staffing levels to the lowest level in decades.

I commend the Administration for its proposal to fund the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program and also the FLAME Wildfire Suppression Fund which are important programs that were recently enacted with strong support of this committee. The proposal to create an Integrated Resource Restoration Account has been improved from last year and would be a positive step to increase land management efficiency and effectiveness.

I also support the Administration's commitment to the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which will enable high-priority land acquisition projects to proceed with broad local support in the large majority of the States that are represented on this committee. However, I also have concerns with some of the proposals in the budget. One of those is the proposal to use discretionary program funds for County Payments instead of mandatory funding which we, of course, have had in recent years.

I'm also concerned about the cut to the chronically underfunded Land Ownership Management program, which funds work on land exchanges, on boundary surveys, rights-of-way for electric lines and pipelines and communication lines and other critical infrastructure.

I have a number of questions related to some of these issues which I will hope to get to during the question period. Let me see

if Senator Murkowski wanted to make any statement before we call on you, Chief Tidwell.

**STATEMENT OF HON. LISA MURKOWSKI, U.S. SENATOR
FROM ALASKA**

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Chief. My apologies for being tardy this morning.

I want to welcome you to the hearing, Chief Tidwell. I must tell you how glad I am that you came through your medical scare and apparently are doing well. Hopefully we won't chase you out of here too hard. I know that your job is not an easy 1. I know that the challenges that face the Forest Service and your leadership team are fairly daunting.

Once again your agency is recommending some changes to the budget structure including the combination of a significant number of programs in an integrated resource restoration account. But, given the difficulty the Forest Service seems to be having accomplishing work under the existing FY10 and FY11 budget formulation, perhaps I can be persuaded that this year's proposed formulation makes sense.

I'm concerned that the proposal to take seven line items and turn them into one called the "IRR" will make it much more difficult to figure how or where the funding is spent.

I'm concerned about preeminent reauthorization of the stewardship contracting, which last year you proposed to replace commercial timber sales, and your failure to provide the four 10-year timber sale contracts in Roscoe that were promised.

I'm also concerned about your proposal to combine the forest planning and inventory and monitoring line items together into one line item that may facilitate your draft Forest Plan rule but will make forest planning more expensive and perhaps more unworkable.

We know that since 1997 over 41 million acres of national forest land has been damaged or destroyed by insect activities. Your science advisors expect that activity to continue, I understand, for the next decade. That equates to 19 percent of all the forested acres within the 13 intermountain States and as high as 33 percent in some States.

We know that in FY10 the Forest Service treated less than two-tenths of 1 percent of the bark beetle impacted areas. Spending over \$101 million of funding to treat 59,000 acres makes me question whether the Forest Service is ready to be trusted with a "big bucket" approach like that which is called for in your integrated response restoration proposal. Considering the apparent difficulty the agency is having responding to the bark beetle epidemic, I would suggest that now is not the time to be acquiring new lands while cutting the fire assistance program and other programs that rural communities depend upon. The last thing your agency needs is the added burden of having to manage yet more lands during periods of declining budgets.

In a number of places your budget recommends zeroing out entire programs but suggests that the work done in the past in those programs will be accomplished through other budget line items. But the budget provides no additional specifics. Given the difficulty

most of the programs have had meeting the accomplishment goals in the past year, I hope that you'll have an opportunity this morning to more fully explain which employees and programs will cover the work of the programs you are recommending to be eliminated.

In your testimony that was presented, the written testimony, you have a portion titled, "Jobs in Rural Communities". As you know I was born down in Ketchikan in the Tongass Forest. I was down in Ketchikan in January again visiting, and I would suggest to you that there's a level of cynicism and certainly skepticism about the promises there.

In Southeast, as you know, the big mills were gone years ago. But this year the second largest remaining mill in Southeast closed. It's gone from over 600 employees down to 6.

The sole remaining large mill is desperately worried about its timber supply. The second largest timber related construction company is gone. The largest is now down to 4 employees. So I can tell you, Chief, they do not believe in the "Jobs in Rural Communities" program and the 6 point vision plan for growth. They're not buying into it anymore.

We recognize that in Southeast, 98 percent of Southeast Alaska is owned by the Federal Government—98 percent. The vast majority of that is in the Tongass National Forest. Income is declining in Southeast. It's the only region of our State where the population is declining and getting older. That is a direct result of what we have seen from the policy and management changes coming out of the Forest Service.

I want to work with you to reverse these trends. We've had a chance to discuss it. I look forward to your comments on the budget here this morning. But please know that I remain very, very concerned about the sustainability of our communities within the Southeastern region and how within the Forest Service we can work to revive them.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to the testimony this morning and again, thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Chief Tidwell, why don't you go right ahead with your testimony and then we'll have some questions?

**STATEMENT OF TOM TIDWELL, CHIEF, FOREST SERVICE,
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

Mr. TIDWELL. Mr. Chairman, members of the Subcommittee, once again it's a privilege to be here today to discuss the President's 2012 budget request for the Forest Service. I'm joined here today with Kathleen Atkinson, our budget director.

I want to thank this committee for the support you've shown the Forest Service in the past. I look forward to continuing to work with you to provide more of the things that American people need and want from their national forests and grasslands. The President's budget is designed to support the Administration's priorities for maintaining and restoring the resiliency of America's forests.

Additionally this budget request reflects our commitment to fiscal restraint with significant reductions to some very important programs. But that is to ensure that we are spending efficiently

and focusing on the priorities of the American public. The budget supports these priorities through 4 key objectives.

First is to restore and sustain the forests and grasslands by increasing the collaborative efforts to build support for the restoration activities and create jobs. The budget requests full funding for the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Fund. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to thank you again for your leadership with this program.

It also increases the emphasis on protecting and enhancing watershed health with a request for 80 million for a new priority watershed and job stabilization initiative that will fund large scale projects that will focus on watershed restoration and job creation. It does propose a revised integrated resource restoration budget line item to align our budget structure with the work that's being done on the ground. This will facilitate a much more integrated approach to developing project proposals that will result in more work and in more jobs.

We will continue to track our traditional targets such as board feet, stream miles improved. But we will also track the overall outcomes of restoration so that we can show that we're making a difference on a landscape scale. Then we'll continue to incorporate climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies to determine how our management needs to change to increase the ecosystem's resistance to the increased frequency of disturbances like fire, insect and disease outbreaks, invasives, flood and drought.

The second objective is the budget provides for funding for our wild land fire suppression. This includes a level of preparedness that will continue our success to suppress 98 percent of wild land fires during initial attack. It calls for a realignment of preparedness and suppression funds that more accurately displays costs. It provides for the FLAME fund to increase accountability and transparency and reduce the need to transfer funds during large fires. It also increases the emphasis on hazardous fuel projects to reduce the threat of wild fire to homes and communities by doing more work in the wild land urban interface.

The third objective is to increase support for community based conservation with the America's Great Outdoors Initiative. We'll do this by helping America reconnect with the outdoors by increasing conservation education programs and our volunteer opportunities through our youth programs. It'll build on the success of our 28 job corps centers by supporting a creation of a 21st century conservation service corps program to create more skills, to build skills, provide work experiences for more of our youth.

We'll continue to work with our States to use our State and private forestry programs to promote conservation and to help keep private forests forested. The budget requests an increase in our LWCF funding in our Forest Legacy program to use conservation easements and acquisition to protect critical forests but also protect public access that's being threatened by land conversion.

The fourth objective is to further support the economic opportunities in rural America by supporting the recreational opportunities that not only add to the quality of our lives, but support these communities with an annual expenditure of about \$13 billion that is spent by our recreation visitors every year in these communities.

We also would encourage biomass utilization and other renewable energy opportunities and continue to explore ways to process oil and gas permit applications and energy transmission proposals more efficiently than we have in the past.

Then it also proposes a framework for a 5-year reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools Act with \$328 million in our budget request to fund the first year. Now we want to work with the committee to consider options for mandatory funding for this program and also for the legislative proposal. Our goal is to increase the collaborative efforts to encourage greater public involvement in management of our national forests and grasslands.

We want to maintain and restore healthy landscapes. We need to take care of the ecosystem. But we also need to support healthy, thriving communities and provide jobs in rural areas.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to address the committee. I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Tidwell follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF TOM TIDWELL, CHIEF, FOREST SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, it is a privilege to be here today to discuss the President's Budget request for the Forest Service in fiscal year (FY) 2012. I appreciate the support this committee has shown the Forest Service in the past, and I look forward to working together in the future to ensure that stewardship of our Nation's forests and grasslands continues to meet the desires and expectations of the American people. I am confident that this budget will allow the Forest Service to support this goal, while also reflecting our commitment to fiscal restraint and ensuring we are spending efficiently.

As the Secretary testified earlier this week, we need to take some serious steps to reduce the deficit and reform government so that it's leaner and smarter for the 21st century. The FY 2012 budget USDA is proposing reflects the difficult choices we need to make to reduce the deficit while supporting targeted investments that are critical to long-term economic growth and job creation. To afford the strategic investments we need to grow the economy in the long term while also tackling the deficit, this budget makes difficult cuts to programs the Administration cares about. It also reflects savings from a number of efficiency improvements and other actions to streamline and reduce our administrative costs. It looks to properly manage deficit reduction while preserving the values that matter to Americans.

A healthy and prosperous America relies on healthy forests and grasslands and the benefits they provide: clean air and water, carbon storage, renewable energy, food and fiber, fertile soils, wildlife habitat, and recreation opportunities. The Forest Service delivers incredible value to the public by protecting and enhancing these benefits through forest health restoration, research, and financial and technical assistance to partners. Our national forests and grasslands help to sustain 224,000 jobs in rural areas and contribute an estimated \$14 billion to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) each year through visitor spending alone.¹ In addition to managing 193 million acres on 155 national forests and 20 grasslands in 44 States and Puerto Rico, the Forest Service helps improve stewardship of lands outside the National Forest System. The agency partners with and provides technical assistance to other Federal agencies as well as Tribal, State and local governments; private landowners; and non-profit organizations for the betterment of the Nation's forests and grasslands. Furthermore, the agency is a leader in cutting-edge research on climate change, bioenergy, wildfire management, forest pests and diseases, ecological restoration and other conservation issues. The agency works to efficiently maximize limited resources and create a high return on investment for the American taxpayer.

The FY 2012 President's Budget request for the Forest Service totals \$5.1 billion in discretionary appropriations, a \$178 million decrease from the FY 2011 annualized continuing resolution, and a \$239 million decrease from the FY 2011 President's Budget request. This decrease is achieved through several program re-

¹USDA Forest Service. National Visitor Use Monitoring Results. <http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/nvum/>

combinations that streamline operations and increase efficiency and through major reductions in programs, including Roads, Facilities and National Fire Plan programs and associated State and Private Forestry Programs. In addition, the FY 2012 budget includes \$44 million in targeted cost saving measures for the Forest Service through reduced travel and improved acquisition management procedures. These actions will allow us to focus limited resources on programs where we can achieve the greatest impact and that are of highest priority to the American people. Our budget priorities respond to the public's desire to make smart Federal investments that will allow us to pass on to future generations the beauty, wildlife, water and natural resources that we have today.

The FY 2012 budget for the Forest Service supports President Obama's America's Great Outdoors (AGO) initiative, the goals of the USDA's strategic plan, and Secretary Vilsack's "all-lands vision." It aims to maintain and enhance the resilience and productivity of America's forests through four funding priorities: Enhancing Water Resources, Responding to Climate Change, Community-based Stewardship, and Jobs in Rural Communities.

Climate change, severe wildfires, disease and pests have all contributed to declining forest health. With the current forest health crisis threatening the future of our forests, ecological restoration² is a key component to our FY 2012 strategy. We need to ensure that our forests are resilient in the face of future uncertainties. To most effectively address this forest health issue, we must work across landscapes and ecosystems, as well as across ownership boundaries. The Forest Service also aims to create jobs in rural areas, more actively involve local communities in caring for their land, and improve access to natural areas. Ensuring the sustainability of rural communities and increasing community collaboration in natural resources management are critical to the success of restoration efforts and the continued provision of goods and services from forest ecosystems. Finally, using forest biomass byproducts from ecological restoration activities as a source of renewable energy can help enhance U.S. energy security, economic opportunity, environmental quality, and global competitiveness. In FY 2012 we aim to strengthen biomass utilization efforts through our work with other agencies and our programs that encourage market development for woody biomass.

Our four key funding priorities highlight how we as an agency are continually working to ensure that we are responding to the needs of the American public.

ENHANCING WATER RESOURCES

One of the most important services that the American people receive from forested landscapes is the provision of clean and abundant drinking water. An adequate supply of clean water is integral to the health and prosperity of the United States. Over half of the Nation's freshwater supply originates on public and private forest lands, and is the source of drinking water for more than 200 million people. The National Forest System (NFS) alone provides fresh water to approximately 66 million people, or one in five Americans. In addition, healthy rivers, lakes and streams are crucial to sustaining aquatic life, supporting terrestrial ecosystems, and providing high-quality recreation opportunities. Maintaining an adequate supply of clean water will be one of the biggest challenges of the 21st century as our forests and communities continue to deal with climate change, severe wildfires, invasive pests, severe storm events, and development pressures.

In June 2009, the Administration implemented the High-Priority Performance Goal (HPPG) initiative, asking agency leaders to deliver results on a limited number of priorities that are of high value to the American public. Ensuring that our national forests and private working lands enhance our water resources and are conserved, restored, and made more resilient to climate change is a USDA HPPG. In order to achieve this goal, the Forest Service in collaboration with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Services Agency (FSA) will be working to implement high-impact targeted practices that are expected to have the greatest impact on protecting water resources on over 6 million acres in priority landscapes. These priority areas include targeted acreage on national forests and private working lands in the Chesapeake Bay Basin, Great Lakes, Mississippi River Basin/Gulf of Mexico, and California Bay Delta/Sierras.

²By restoration, we mean the process of assisting the recovery of resilience and the capacity of a system to adapt to change if the environment where the system exists has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed. Ecological restoration focuses on reestablishing ecosystem functions by modifying or managing the composition, structural arrangement, and processes necessary to make a terrestrial and aquatic ecosystem sustainable and resilient under current and future conditions.

The Integrated Resource Restoration (IRR) budget line item, first proposed in the FY 2011 budget request, will allow us to effectively integrate interdisciplinary restoration treatments that will protect and improve our water resources. The FY 2011 budget request proposed to combine the Forest Products, Vegetation and Watershed Management, and Wildlife and Fisheries Management budget line items from previous years. In addition to these programs, Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration, Legacy Roads and Trails, road decommissioning, and post-fire Rehabilitation and Restoration have also been added to IRR for the FY 2012 request. Moreover, the portion of hazardous fuels management funding work outside the wildland urban interface (WUI) has also been added to IRR for the FY 2012 request as the agency works toward restoring historic fire regimes on the non-WUI portion of NFS lands. Restoration projects require the integration of various stewardship activities. Thus, combining these programs will allow us to use resources more efficiently and will also create the vehicle that will allow the Forest Service to move toward restoring watersheds as a top priority. A new watershed condition metric will be used to evaluate improvements in watershed health using a national standard and provide clear accountability for the IRR program area. Specifically, we are proposing an \$80 million Priority Watershed and Job Stabilization initiative that will use the Watershed Condition Framework, State Forest Assessments, costs, and input from local communities to prioritize projects to fund to make progress toward improving watershed condition class. Proposed projects will be developed by the Forest Service and will come from the Action Plans created for the priority watersheds identified as part of the Watershed Condition Framework. We will also continue to use some of our established targeted measures, as well as continue to track outcomes related to past measures. FY 2012 restoration projects will maintain and improve water quality and watershed function, improve fish and wildlife habitat, and integrate forest products production into stewardship and watershed restoration activities.

RESPONDING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change jeopardizes the benefits that the public receives from America's forests and grasslands, including clean air and water, forest products, and recreational opportunities. Many of the management challenges that we have faced over the past decades have been exacerbated by climate change, including catastrophic wildfires, changing water regimes, insect infestations, and disease. In FY 2012, the Forest Service will continue to focus on incorporating climate change adaptation into multiple program areas, which includes making ecosystems more resistant to climate-related stressors, increasing ecosystem resilience to disturbance driven by climate change, and facilitating landscape-scale ecological transitions in response to changing environmental conditions. This priority is again tightly tied to restoration and our IRR budget line item. Restoring key functions and processes characteristic of healthy, resilient ecosystems allows them to withstand future stressors and uncertainties. Examples of IRR projects include decommissioning roads to reduce the risk of erosion from severe storms, reducing fuels outside the WUI to reduce the risk that severe wildfire will damage resources near important watersheds or critical habitat, and reforestation to stabilize critical watersheds and soils impacted by natural events and to increase long-term carbon sequestration capacity.

The Forest Service has developed a Roadmap for Responding to Climate Change in order to guide the agency in achieving its climate change goals. The Roadmap focuses on three kinds of activities: 1) assessing current risks, vulnerabilities, policies, and gaps in knowledge; 2) engaging internal and external partners in seeking solutions; and 3) managing for resilience, in ecosystems as well as in human communities. The agency has implemented a scorecard to measure progress made by each national forest and grassland. The scorecard assesses agency capacity, partnerships and education, adaptation, mitigation, and sustainable consumption.

Our commitment to responding to climate change is underscored in the proposed Planning Rule, published for comment in the Federal Register on February 14, 2011. The Forest Service will begin to operate under the proposed Planning Rule in FY 2012 after it is finalized, emphasizing citizen collaboration and an all-lands approach to management planning, ecosystem restoration, and climate change mitigation. A new budget line item, Land Management Planning, Assessment and Monitoring, has been proposed for FY 2012. Combining the previous line items Land Management Planning and Inventory & Monitoring highlights the clear tie between gathering information through monitoring and making management planning decisions. This combination better aligns program funding with the objectives of the proposed Planning Rule, ensuring that planning, monitoring, and conducting assessments are coordinated across the landscape.

Our climate change research program will continue to help clarify how climate change is expected to affect our ecosystems and the services they provide and to inform decision-makers as they evaluate policy options. With two decades of climate change research, the USFS is the authority on how forest and range management can be modified to address the challenges of global change.

COMMUNITY-BASED STEWARDSHIP

Working with local communities is critical to the success of restoration efforts and increasing ecosystem resilience across the landscape. Increasing collaboration with stakeholders can move conservation efforts from a scale of thousands of acres to hundreds of thousands of acres. Most importantly, working together with stakeholders from project planning to implementation helps build citizen support for ecosystem restoration projects. The importance of getting citizens and communities more connected and involved with the outdoors has been emphasized in AGO. AGO seeks to empower citizens, community groups, and local, State and Tribal governments to share in the stewardship responsibility for protecting, improving, and accessing natural areas and their resources, with the end result of a healthy, vibrant outdoor legacy for generations to come. The agency is committed to achieving greater community-based stewardship in pursuit of resilient forests as outlined in the America's Great Outdoors Report. The FY 2012 budget strategically allocates resources to support exemplary local stewardship models and to catalyze new partnerships and innovations. The Forest Service will work towards the goals of AGO through multiple program areas.

Building on the sentiments of the American people, the AGO initiative seeks to maximize use of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), which directs a portion of revenue from offshore oil and gas leases to conservation projects. The LWCF funds the Forest Service's Forest Legacy and Land Acquisition programs and provides local communities the opportunity to cost-share the conservation of priority forest land. The FY 2012 budget request funds LWCF at the fully authorized amount, which constitutes an increase of \$59 million for the Forest Legacy program and an increase of \$26 million for the Land Acquisition program from the FY 2011 annualized continuing resolution. Forest Legacy works with States, private landowners, and other conservation partners to protect environmentally critical forests threatened by land conversion through conservation easements. Project funding is based on a nationally competitive process. To date, the Forest Legacy program has leveraged more than \$630 million in non-federal matching funds to conserve over 2 million acres of non-Federal forest land. In FY 2012, 48 projects have been proposed for funding in 38 states. Forest Legacy projects keep working forests working, which keeps jobs in rural areas. Forest Legacy projects also provide public access to recreation in many areas. Land Acquisition supports a similar function. Its primary focus is on land acquisitions and donations on land adjacent to national forests. In FY 2012, 38 nationally prioritized lands have been proposed for funding. Recreation on national forest lands results in a boost to local economies and the creation of jobs. This budget request includes an increase of \$5.4 million for Recreation in support of AGO.

Protecting land that borders NFS lands and acquiring in holdings abates the threat of development. Subdivisions and houses being established immediately adjacent to our wild areas increases costs to the agency, particularly for programs such as fire suppression. We have invested in protecting wildlife for over a century. By fully funding LWCF, our budget will maintain our historic investments for the American people. In addition to LWCF, we also have other tools to increase our management efficiency and become better neighbors with our adjacent landowners and will use these as well. I would like to also draw the Committee's attention to the pilot land exchange program proposed in the landownership management budget line item, which will accentuate the benefits of consolidated land tenure on one of our National Grasslands.

In FY 2012 the Forest Service will commence implementation of the 2008 Farm Bill's Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program. This program provides eligible Tribal governments, local governments, and qualified non-profit organizations cost-share grants for creating community forests through fee-simple acquisition. This budget request includes an increase of \$4.5 million for the Community Forest and Open Space Program. These forests will be able to provide public access and recreational opportunities, as well as protection of vital water supplies and wildlife habitat, demonstration sites for private forest landowners, and financial and community benefits from sustainable management.

The Forest Service will continue to expand community engagement in restoration efforts on National Forest System land through the Collaborative Forest Landscape

Restoration Program (CFLR). Under the IRR budget line item, CFLR will provide for the continued implementation of the ten long-term projects selected in FY 2010 and will provide for the selection of additional long-term projects. CFLR projects are proposed through multi-stakeholder collaborative planning at a local level, and priorities are suggested by a Federal Advisory Committee. In 2010, CFLR funded 10 community restoration projects in Idaho, California, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Montana, Washington, Oregon, and Florida.

Conservation education and volunteer opportunities will be a priority for the Forest Service as we implement AGO recommendations. We already have a variety of programs that have successfully connected youth to the outdoors, and we will continue to find opportunities for engaging youth in conservation efforts in FY 2012. The Lake Tahoe Generation Green program works with local community groups to engage at-risk high-school students in outdoor leadership and forest management activities. The Kids in the Woods program at the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest is another example of a successful locally-based outdoor education program that has taught over 5,000 participants about a wide range of topics, including invasive species, water conservation, and responsible off-road vehicle use. The Chugach Children's Forest in Alaska connects village, rural and inner-city youth with a nearby national forest, while motivating local District Rangers to work alongside community officials and school superintendents, integrating community youth challenges with outdoor solutions. Volunteer opportunities will also expand across the Forest Service, including wilderness stewardship, trail clearing, restoration of historic structures, and campground host duties.

Finally, the proposed Planning Rule establishes a framework that emphasizes a collaborative approach to land management planning, assessment, and monitoring. The Forest Service will work with the public, Tribes and other partners to develop, revise and amend land management plans, conduct assessments and develop and implement monitoring programs. Collaborative approaches build citizen support in identifying needs, establishing desired conditions, crafting alternatives for future management, and identifying information and monitoring needs.

JOBS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

In August 2009 in Seattle, WA, Secretary Vilsack spoke of the need for a "shared vision" that not only focuses on forest conservation, but also on supporting a forest economy that creates jobs and vibrant rural communities. The Forest Service is not only committed to providing benefits to the American people in the form of clean air and water, fish and wildlife habitat, timber, and recreation opportunities, but also in the form of jobs and sustainable rural communities.

Forests and grasslands are an important source of employment and rural development. More than 2.5 million Americans have forest-related jobs in fields ranging from ecological restoration to outdoor recreation services to the forest products industry.³ The Forest Service provides service contracts for many types of activities including tree planting, timber harvesting, noxious weed control, culvert replacement, and road reconstruction. Recreation on national forest lands also bolsters local economies and creates jobs. The 2010 National Visitor Use Monitoring Report found that spending by recreation visitors in areas surrounding national forests amounts to nearly \$13 billion each year.

Over the past year the Forest Service has worked to create and retain jobs in rural communities through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. The Forest Service received funding for two programs. Capital Improvement and Maintenance received funds to restore infrastructure that supports public, administrative, and recreation uses, while minimizing impacts to ecosystem stability and conditions. In addition, Wildland Fire Management received funds to protect communities from large fires and to contribute to the restoration of fire-adapted landscapes. Final completion of all ARRA projects is expected to occur in the next two fiscal years. However, the agency will continue to have a jobs focus. Job creation and rural development will be a priority in FY 2012.

One of the highlights of the IRR budget line item is creating job opportunities in rural areas. Creating job opportunities through landscape-scale restoration projects is a key component of the Priority Watersheds and Job Stabilization Initiative under IRR. Stewardship contracts and agreements will be a significant method for carrying out restoration efforts, and attention will be given to new and emerging markets for the wood removed during restoration activities, as well as the traditional uses for these products. Building a forest restoration economy will create new jobs

³USDA, Forest Service. 2010. Draft National Report on Sustainable Forests. <http://www.fs.fed.us/research/sustain/>

in rural communities and help diversify the forest products industry to support the sustainability of local communities and the forest contractor infrastructure needed to perform restoration work. Also, we are working to further build a forest restoration economy around wood utilization by targeting grants to assist small businesses. Since 2005, the Woody Biomass Utilization Grant Program has awarded a total of \$30.6 million to 123 grant recipients in 21 States, including small businesses, non-profit organizations, Tribes, and State agencies, to further innovations in the wood products sector that lend to job creation.

The Forest Service has also invested in job creation for youth through Job Corps, a partnership with the Department of Labor. This program helps people ages 16 through 24 improve the quality of their lives through technical and academic career training. With Department of Labor funding, we operate 28 Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers across the country that provide approximately 6,200 students per year with the skills they need to become employable and independent so that they can find meaningful jobs or further education. In March 2010, Secretary Vilsack unveiled a green Job Corps Curriculum that will help train underserved youth for jobs in the emerging green economy using national forests and grasslands as training sites for solar, wind and biomass energy demonstrations.

America's Great Outdoors hopes to build on the success of programs like Job Corps by creating a 21st Century Conservation Service Corps program that will remove barriers to employment and improve career pathways to jobs in natural resource conservation. This includes use of the Public Lands Corps Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2005, which expanded youth service opportunities while addressing important conservation and societal objectives. The Forest Service has a long-standing commitment to recruiting employees that contribute to workforce diversity; providing opportunities for disadvantaged youth to pursue natural resource careers; and creating the next generation of land conservationists. The Forest Service will expand on AGO Goal A (to develop conservation jobs and service opportunities that protect and restore America's natural resources) through the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC). This summer employment program aims to accomplish needed conservation work on public lands, provides gainful employment for 15-through 18-year olds from diverse backgrounds, and develops in them an understanding and appreciation of the Nation's natural environment and heritage.

To continue supporting the communities that we work in, the FY 2012 President's Budget proposes a five-year reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools Act, named Payments to Communities, and includes \$328 million of discretionary funding for FY 2012. This Act provides annual payments to counties for schools and roads, forest restoration/protection, and fire assistance. The proposal modifies the existing framework to emphasize enhancing forest ecosystems, improving land health and water quality, and increasing economic development activities. The Administration is open to working with Congress to fund either through discretionary or mandatory appropriations.

WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT

The FY 2012 budget request continues to reflect the President's commitment to responsibly budget for wildfires, ensuring fire management resources are used in a cost effective manner in high priority areas. The 10-year average of suppression costs is fully funded, and the allocations between Preparedness and Suppression funds have been adjusted to ensure that readiness needs are fully funded for this fiscal year. The budget request includes a two-tier system for fire suppression. The Suppression account will be the primary source of funding for responding to wildfires, covering the costs of initial and smaller extended attack operations. The FLAME reserve account will provide better accounting of funds to cover fires escaping initial attack that are large and complex, as it did last year. This system ensures that funds are available to fight fires without diverting funds from other critical Forest Service programs and activities.

CONCLUSION

This President's budget request for FY 2012 takes a comprehensive, all-lands approach to conservation that addresses the challenges that our forests and grassland currently face, while also taking into consideration the need to reduce spending and to find the most efficient way to do our work.

The future of our country's forests and the valuable ecosystem services they provide depend on our ability to manage for an uncertain climate and uncertain market. This means landscape-level restoration, working across ownership boundaries, relying upon a foundation of strong science to guide decisions, and collaborating with Tribal, State, local, private, and other Federal stakeholders to achieve common

goals. A comprehensive approach to restoring unhealthy ecosystems will help make our forests more resilient to stressors and disturbances related to climate change and protect our vital water resources. At the same time, we can significantly contribute to economic recovery and job support by building a forest restoration economy. Greater involvement of citizens and communities is key to successfully implementing restoration efforts at large geographic scales. Our vision in creating healthy landscapes not only includes creating healthy ecosystems, but also creating healthy, thriving communities around our Nation's forests and grasslands and providing jobs in rural areas. The FY 2012 budget request highlights these priorities.

I look forward to sharing more with you about our FY 2012 priorities and working with you in shaping the proposals laid out in this budget. Thank you for your time and attention, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much. Let me start with a couple questions.

One is on the whole issue of fighting fires which is a big part of what your agency winds up having to do each year I understand. We've had a circumstance over many years where in order to get the funding needed to fight fires you had to go in and steal the money essentially or borrow the money from other accounts. According to the figures I've got there's about \$417 millions that over the years was borrowed from other accounts to fund emergency wild fire suppression operations.

This budget proposes to rescind \$192 million in unobligated balances from previous years which I gather is essentially saying that \$192 million of the money that was borrowed from these other accounts we're now going to rescind and never spend and since they restore that to the Federal treasury. Shouldn't that money be used for the projects that were funded by Congress and the Administration rather than just rescinded at this point? It seems to me that the action or the proposed action by the Administration is contrary to what Congress already voted to do and the President agreed to.

Mr. TIDWELL. Mr. Chairman, first I want to once again thank you for your leadership and support of the FLAME fund. That act now will do a lot to reduce the need for us to borrow funds in the future from our other accounts to pay for suppression.

With our budget request to rescind \$192 million that's to help offset our current budget request. Based on the last couple years of a fairly light fire season we have not needed all the suppression funds that you've provided over the last couple years. So we have not only the FLAME fund, but we also have suppression carry over accounts. We believe we don't need that money at this time and we feel that a better opportunity would be to rescind some of that money to basically offset our budget request for 2012.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me ask also about the proposal you have there to prevent new capital construction starts. General Accountability Office and others have reported concerns that the agency is spending more on high lease and maintenance costs than it would have to spend if it went ahead with some construction of new facilities. Does it make any sense to have a blanket policy that prevents the agency from constructing facilities when the facts in particular cases would indicate that the taxpayer would be better served if we did?

Mr. TIDWELL. Mr. Chairman, our budget represents some really tough decisions that we had to make as far as our request in realizing we needed to reduce spending in some areas. One of those is our construction of new facilities. So we feel that the best use of

the money that we're requesting in 2012 would be to complete the ongoing projects before we start any new projects.

No doubt there's some expensive leases that we have that we would like to be able to provide different opportunities there to reduce our overall costs. But at the same time we feel that the best use of these funds is to finish up the work that's started now and not do any new starts in 2012.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me ask one other issue here. Your budget proposes to eliminate the budget line for a number of programs. One is in my State, the Valles Caldera National Preserve. You propose to eliminate that.

You propose to eliminate the budget line for international forestry and also for some subsistence programs in Alaska.

With regards to the Valles Caldera National Preserve, as I understand it the budget proposes that you maintain the same level of funding that you had in fiscal year 2010. But you do it through 4 different accounts and eliminate the particular line item account for the Valles Caldera which has been there for quite some time now.

What's the justification for that?

Mr. TIDWELL. Mr. Chairman, you're correct that we anticipate to do the same level of funding for all 3 of the programs that you've mentioned with our 2012 budget. But by eliminating separate line items it just reduces the accounting that has to be done on relatively small budget line items. Each of these have a treasury symbol that we have to track to that line item.

By eliminating the line items, but still fulfilling our responsibility and commitment to fund these programs, it just reduces some of the accounting part of our business that we need to do.

The CHAIRMAN. But you're still going to be able to demonstrate through your accounting. I assume that you have spent the level of funding that you indicate you're planning to spend on these items? Right?

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes, we'll be able to show you how much money we spent in these 3 areas through our accounting system. We just will not have to have a separate treasury symbol for each budget line item.

The CHAIRMAN. I don't really know how it simplifies things to have to keep track of how much is being spent from 4 different accounts to achieve the purpose which otherwise would be achieved by maintaining one account. But maybe there's some alchemy here that I'm just not understanding.

Senator Murkowski.

Senator MURKOWSKI. I'm not sure I'm understanding it either, Mr. Chairman.

Chief, I want to ask you a couple questions relating to the Tongass Timber Program. Back in 2008 the Forest Service committed to preparing an offering for 10-year timber sales with volumes of 150 to 200 million board feet each in the Tongass National Forest. We both know the history behind it and why this action was taken. Congress has repeatedly made available pipeline funds to allow for the Forest Service to prepare these 10-year sales and other 10-year sales.

Now we're told that the agency plans to convert 2 of the 10-year timber sales to stewardship contracts, to offer only half of the promised volume and to offer that reduced volume, in small parcels. The question to you is: what has happened to the commitment to four 10-year sales?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, our commitment is to be able to sustain the communities in Southeast Alaska. An integrated wood products industry is just essential for that. So when I look at what we've been doing in the past in Alaska, it has not worked. We spent more time in court than we have actually been out on the ground getting work accomplished.

So we've changed our approach to be able to work with the communities, work with the villages, work with folks there in Southeast Alaska to build support around the work that we can get accomplished. Our first stewardship contract that we'll be awarding later this spring is a step forward. I recognize we're not getting enough work done.

But I look at what we we're doing in 2008 and 2009, and I look at what we accomplished in 2010, and what we plan to accomplish in 2011, what we plan to accomplish in 2012, and the trend is in the right direction.

We're building support so that we can actually move forward and get the work accomplished on the ground. Right now, as you well know, the industry is almost on its last legs. I just don't feel we can take a risk on maybe some large projects that we can end up being in court over verses being able to get work through that we can go ahead and implement.

So that's our focus. To be able to ensure that we can continue to provide work, continue to provide timber sales so that the existing infrastructure can stay in place. Then over time, to be able to build some credibility that through this program, through our stewardship contracts, through our timber sales, that folks will feel better about investing in the future.

Senator MURKOWSKI. We've had this conversation before. Investing in the future makes it very difficult if everybody who has been a participant in this industry is no longer around. We keep talking about this transition to second growth. I have suggested that there's not going to be anybody left to conduct that transition.

I mentioned this in my opening comments. You say that the trend is improving. Going from 600 employees to 6 employees is not a trend that I want to see. Recognizing that we have only one remaining large mill, the second largest timber related construction company is gone. These are not trends that I want to continue. I want to reverse these trends.

I'm concerned because we had a commitment from the government, particularly from the Forest Service, to have these four 10-year contracts. Now we're down to 2. These are stewardship contracts, as you stated.

I don't disagree with you that we've been hung up in litigation. But I'm also not certain that this new approach frees us from the litigation and puts us on a better track. Again, I've got to speak for the people of Southeastern Alaska who feel that they've been given a promise, given a commitment, and the Federal Government

has not kept that promise. It's been to the detriment of the people who live in the region, live in the Tongass.

Let me ask you whether it is correct that the timber sales that involve any old-growth timber have to be approved personally by the Secretary of Agriculture and his staff.

I would also like to confirm whether or not any timber sales that involve the inventoried roadless areas have to also be approved by the Secretary of Agriculture.

Is that true in both of those cases?

Mr. TIDWELL. With timber sales that involve old growth, no. Those decisions are made at the forest level or at the region level as they always have been.

Secretary Vilsack does have an interim directive in place when it comes to road less due to the current situation with the ruling in the 9th circuit and the 10th circuit. So until that's resolved he does consider those and we recommend the projects. So far we've been able to move forward with the projects that reach him.

Senator MURKOWSKI. What does that do to cause delay in the process? The Secretary is very busy. How tuned-in is he to looking at a sale in a particular part of the country? How much of a delay does this create by having to run everything all the way up to the Secretary of Agriculture?

Mr. TIDWELL. It usually takes about an hour to brief me. Then we take the information across the street to his staff and have a briefing on it. Usually we get these through in a relatively short period of time.

Senator MURKOWSKI. I don't know that we do that so effectively anywhere else in the Federal Government. If it's actually a matter of hours, who am I to complain? But I worry about the fact that we are taking an issue to the Secretary level, when it should be able to be resolved within the regions.

My time is expired. I'll wait for round 2. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Wyden.

Senator WYDEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chief, good to have you here. Let me pick up on this point that Chairman Bingaman began with. With respect to the Timber Payments Law which as you know was written here in this committee, written twice.

What troubles me about the Administration's approach now is you all are turning a historical obligation into a year to year gamble. That's essentially when you strip down what's going on. What's going to happen?

I think that is very troubling. It is exactly the opposite of what the President rejected when he was in Oregon and other places in 2008. I know Colorado and a number of States heard essentially exactly the same thing.

So my first question to you is what are you all going to do to address what the President talked about which is getting these rural communities off this roller coaster of uncertainty? Because what I get out of this budget now is the historical obligation which is 100 years old, which was, as you know, right at the heart of creating the National Forest system. The country would enjoy parks and places like the wonderful communities I represent to get help for

schools and roads and basic services seems that it's not only being chipped away. It's being replaced, literally taking the historical obligation and making it a year to year gamble.

What are we going to do to help honor what the President talked about in 2008?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, I share your concern. You know, the importance of reauthorization of this act. As you well know it's something that's just essential. This is not the time to be eliminating this program.

So that is why we have put \$328 million of our discretionary funding to dedicate that to the first—

Senator WYDEN. Taking a program that was mandatory. It was part of a historical obligation and as you've said, made it discretionary.

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes. Senator we want to work with you on finding options for mandatory funding. We understand the concern.

I've worked with counties throughout my career. I've worked on the original act. I understand the importance of being able to provide that certainty so that counties can plan over a period of time and not have to be dependent on what happens each year.

So we want to work with you on finding mandatory funding. We want to work with you on those considering that. Then also we need your support to be able to put together the legislative proposal that will also be essential for how this will actually work over the next 5 years.

Senator WYDEN. You aren't going to have any trouble getting me to work with you to do a 5-year proposal. As you know, Chairman Bingaman, Senator Murkowski, many of us put together the last one. It certainly required a little bit more creativity than people might have thought. It now, of course, includes PILT and other approaches and we'll do it.

But we just cannot put rural communities in this place where a, I don't think a lot of them are going to survive. They're simply not going to make it. They're walking on an economic tightrope today. They're just not going to make it.

But second, the inability to be able to plan or predict what's going to happen is just devastating to them. That gets me to the second area that I touched on. It's almost the flip side of the Timber Payments legislation is that as you look at the historic obligation and recognizing that times have changed.

The question is what are we going to do to get these communities into areas where they can be more supportive of activities in the private sector? Grow their private sector economy which is why we want a lot of the mills to be able to do more thinning? Now you all are cutting the hazardous fuels accounts by my calculation somewhere in the—overall about \$10 million. It's a little bit hard to kind of follow the way the money is moving.

But perhaps more troubling is according to those charts that you all gave the staff. We're not hitting the targets now for the thinning that needs to be done. This goes back to when this committee basically saved the Healthy Forest Restoration Act.

As you know the bill came over from the House. It was dead. A big group from this committee largely worked pump new life into

it. We said one area we agree on is we've got to have more thinning.

Not getting the thinning done that's needed today to hit those targets. The budget is going to go down. So how we going to see anything other than less thinning this year compared to last year based on your own chart?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, you know, I share your concern about the amount of work we're getting done. Last year we did exceed our timber target. We've actually increased that for this coming year.

Senator WYDEN. You exceeded your thinning target last year?

Mr. TIDWELL. We exceeded our forest products target.

Senator WYDEN. I'm looking at a chart. I guess it is goal one. Key performance measures. I can't tell what page it's on. It says 3-9.

But it looks like it terms of acres you're at 59 percent. So you're saying that exceeded the previous year? That was less than 59 percent the previous year? You got it up?

Mr. TIDWELL. The board feet target that we had is what I was referring to. There's no question there is a need to do significantly more thinning. That is one of the things we're going to continue to focus on.

It's one of the benefits that I hope to achieve through the Integrated Resource Restoration budget line item to be able to create more efficiencies within the way we design projects. Be able to actually get more work accomplished.

Senator WYDEN. I'm over my time.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Barrasso.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome to the committee. It's good to see you again. Appreciate you being here. I just wanted to talk about a couple things.

I'm concerned about the Administration's infatuation with limiting multiple use on public lands and obtaining more land at the same time. There seems to be a general theme of expanding control within the America's Great Outdoors Initiative, the Treasured Landscapes and the BLM Secretarial Order designated de facto wilderness. The rush to acquire more Federal land seems to be in evidence by the Forest Service's proposal to increase land acquisitions by 42 percent from last year.

So I'm just curious in these times of debt and deficit does it just make more sense to reduce the deficit enable the Forest Service to concentrate on properly managing its existing lands rather than continue to go out and acquire additional lands?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator I understand your concern with this additional request for more LWCF funding. But that request is based on what we've heard from the public. When we did, I think, close to 50 listening sessions around the country last year on America's Great Outdoors this was one of the things that we heard across the country that there was more and more support for the land conservation and support for full funding for LWCF.

The way that we use these funds and the majority of our increase is in our Forest Legacy program that is for conservation easements. The purpose there is to be able to help people stay on the land, for those folks that are in a situation where they're having trouble to make it on their land. Often a conservation easement

can allow them to stay on their land, that ranch, that farm, their forested lands, to stay productive and be able to continue to have working open space.

The other advantage of it is for access. As it just seems like there's a trend across the country for folks that have private land to start to lock gates and to keep the public from crossing their land to be able to get to public land. So this is another key focus for both the Legacy program and our Acquisition program.

The other thing is that both, especially the Acquisition program, help reduce the cost by eliminating land line locations that have to be maintained. It makes it easier for us to manage if you have a consolidated block of land. It's easier to do projects on that versus if you're dealing with these small parcels of private land. It also provides benefit for wildlife habitat.

I understand these are difficult decisions. But as I look at the benefits of this program and especially in the economic times that we have, it seems to be more and more folks that are really struggling to be able to stay on their lands. So by increasing the opportunity for conservation easements there's a direct benefit to not only help them to stay on the land, but also provide the other benefits for the public.

Senator BARRASSO. You're talking about letting people stay on their land? I'm looking at what the Forest Service draft planning rule is. It quotes, "planning for landscape scale and broader landscape." The definition, when you take a look at how you define these things: ecosystems, land forms, plant communities across a defined area irrespective of ownership or other artificial boundaries."

So following up on that last answer. How do you envision the Forest Service managing at the landscape level and under your definition, "irrespective of ownership or other artificial boundaries?" Do you believe the private property lines are artificial boundaries? How does that all fit in?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, I respect private property boundaries and we all do in the Forest Service. The concept behind taking a landscape scale approach within our planning rule is that any decisions that are made in a forest plan revision is for the National Forest System lands only. But what we want to do and when we start the assessment to really consider the changes we need to make in current management, we need to factor in what's going on on the adjacent landscapes.

We need to work with the States. We need to work with the counties to understand what their needs are so that our management is in alignment more with what's going on with their lands. So that we can work together.

For instance, when we're dealing with, as you're well familiar with, bark beetle. The idea to stop a project at a boundary line versus having the opportunity to be able to look at the entire landscape and be able to work together with the States, maybe the private landowners so that we do one project that maybe covers all of that at the same time. That's the sort of thing that we want to do more of.

It's to be able to understand what's going on with the adjacent lands. Then factor that into the management decisions that we're making on the National Forest System lands.

Senator BARRASSO. I appreciate your comments on the bark beetle because I have a Good Neighbor Forestry act to allow people to do that. We met with a little bit of resistance in getting additional hearings and having that as part of additional discussion. But I think it's critical.

I do want to recognize the work and the research and the funding that the Forest Service has dedicated to bark beetle infestation. It seems that the problem is getting ahead of us though in terms of the resources that we've had verses the now 3.6 million acres of mountain pine beetle infestation in Wyoming alone. We see what they were able to do in Alberta. It made a big difference.

So with such a success story in other places we're hoping that we can get some more actions planned for the treatable acres to help restore resilience to our forests here. I'd love to hear what your thoughts are on that.

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, we share your concerns of course about what's going on with the bark beetle infestation throughout the West. Traditionally we have infestations that come and go. It's part of our pine types and a native pest. But we have never seen this level of infestation before. We've never seen the spread occur at this level before.

So we recognize that we need to move forward with this and dedicate additional resources. We have—the process of completing a bark beetle strategy that will lay out our plans for the next few years. I'm hoping that's in final clearance now. We should be able to share a copy with you in the foreseeable future, in the near future.

One of the things that that strategy calls for is an increase in the dedication of our current budgets to deal with this problem. That we plan to dedicate over about \$100 million a year to focus on dealing with bark beetle in these States. This is expanding. With the current environmental conditions, the current climate that we have, it's just very, very favorable for bark beetles.

I tell you until we get an extended cold winter, especially early winter, we're not going to see this infestation really slow down until we run out of trees. So we recognize we need to increase our current efforts. So that's one of the things you'll see in the strategy is that that's going to be the level of dedication of our funding to deal with this problem.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Udall.

Senator UDALL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me pick up, if I might, Chief, on Senator Barrasso's comments and before I go there, welcome and thank you for taking the time to come to the Hill today.

As you know, Colorado's forests have been severely affected by the beetle infestation. I think we have more acres than any other State infested at this time. The bad news is that other States are going to reach the level of infestation we're experiencing.

As you know, it's not just about dead trees, but it's about the safety of those who travel and recreate near our forest. Falling trees can affect the safety of those who travel on roads and trails, power lines are at risk, campgrounds, and of course they stand there as potential fuel for forest fires.

One report suggests it's a phenomenal number. But I've had it confirmed a number of times that 100,000 trees a day are falling. It's a number I can't quite wrap my mind around.

But we need funding to mitigate these affects. I understand that it may be possible for the Forest Service to reprogram existing funds to address bark beetle mitigation in Region Two, the region that Senator Barrasso and I both are a part of. Do you support reprogramming funds to address the bark beetle epidemic in Region Two?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, we did send a request up late last year to reprogram \$70 million of carryover suppression funds that we believe would have been better used to be able to increase our response to the bark beetle. The last time we had a serious infestation it was—and this one is much larger than what we had, you know, in Southern California a few years ago. But at that time Congress was able to appropriate significantly more money outside of our strain. I think we received close to about \$130 million additional dollars to address that infestation.

As much as I'd like to be able to say we can deal with this one within our current budget constraint, we'll not be able to do all the work that we need to do. So that was one of the reasons that we sent up the reprogramming request. We appreciate the Senate Appropriation Committee's support of that request.

Senator UDALL. I would hope the other body would take note of what's happening in the West. That the wiser and cooler heads would prevail there as well. Because these are moneys that are, in effect, in hand and would be put to very good use. If our focus in the Congress should be on jobs and our economy, these dollars have a direct connection, particularly in our Western economies.

On that note let me turn to another subject since Senator Barrasso has stepped out. But he and I have worked along with many members of this committee on legislation that we've recently reintroduced that would clarify your authority when it comes to permitting non-snow and summertime sport activities on Forest Service land. This would be focused particularly at the ski industry.

As you know, the bill—I think I can use these words—wildly popular, passed this committee unanimously last year. Passed the House. We were within a few inches of the goal line here in the Senate as the year ran out.

With this in mind will you be prepared to begin permitting summertime activities when the bill is passed in the coming months? What action can you take in the interim to prepare for that eventuality?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, thank you for your leadership to provide this legislative solution to a situation where we need your help. Our current authorities do not allow us to permit summer activities that we feel would be a much better use to the infrastructure that exists at our ski resorts. So I just want to thank you for your leadership.

What we're working on right now is to be positioned so that we'll have our manual direction in place so that when this legislation passes we can quickly move forward and provide the direction on how to follow this to the field. Normally it takes anywhere from a year to maybe 2 years for us to complete our process. So one of the things we want to do is to expedite that and actually get working today.

Depending what comes out of the final legislative process we'll be able then to amend. But we're working on it right now so that we can move much quicker than we have in the past to be able to get the direction to our field.

Senator UDALL. That's excellent, and again, as you know, there was no real objection to the bill. It was in a package that we were characterizing as an Omnibus Public Lands package.

There were objections to other legislative initiatives in that package. But we must be ready to go. Again, if our focus in this Congress ought to be on jobs and the economy, this helps rural communities that have shoulder seasons where people are laid off and where the activity level isn't what it should be to maintain those economies. This would be very helpful.

If I might on my remaining few seconds, I just—Senator Barrasso has stepped out. He and I have worked together on the previous 2 topics I raised. He and I may have a slightly different points of view on LWCF.

I want to commend you for the work that you've done. I also want to remind the committee that those LWCF dollars which are a form of a payback to taxpayers for assets that are developed that are finite. They have never been fully directed into protecting our public lands and our urban parks and our urban forests, all the various areas in which LWCF operates.

I think we would keep faith to the taxpayers if we saw all of those dollars directed into LWCF needs. There is a significant backlog. It's a place where Senator Barrasso and I might agree when it comes to conservation easements, existing infrastructure and the like with those dollars, could be directed.

Finally I don't think you intended to suggest that the government is going to tell private property owners what to do when it comes to conservation easements. What you were saying was that whether it's another tool that could be made available to private property owners to maintain open spaces, wildlife and the like, if those private property owners want to take advantage of those funds and those resources. So I just wanted to put that point of view on the record.

I thank you for being here. Thank you for your service.

Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Mr. TIDWELL. Senators, thank you for, you know, correcting. If I misspoke it's with both of our—

Senator UDALL. No, I don't think you did. I just wanted to speak my mind as well.

Mr. TIDWELL. OK.

Senator UDALL. But I don't think you did.

Mr. TIDWELL. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Franken has been here since the beginning. Let me call on him and then Senator Hoeven and then Senator Johnson and then Senator Manchin.

Senator FRANKEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you, Chief for your testimony.

One of the funding increases in this budget is for the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration fund. There have been some really good projects funded under this program. So I don't mean to discredit any of the projects that were funded in 2010.

But I'd like to ask about how you determined the geographic distribution of these awards because I notice that none of the awards went to the upper Midwest. The Minnesota Chippewa and Superior National Forest submitted a proposal under this program last year. I'd like to see that funded in the next round of funding.

Can you tell me more about what you consider when decided which of these projects to fund?

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes, Senator. We have an advisory committee that's in place that the project proposals first go to. Then they look at multiple factors as far as what's being proposed, the level of support, the matching funds that are required. Then they make recommendations to me as to which projects should go forward.

Then I take a look at their recommendations. Also we take a look at their projects again and then based on that we go forward with the selection. The problem we had, and which is a really good problem, is this is such a popular program because it will allow folks to be able to do work on much larger landscapes, be able to have more assurance that funding will be there for multiple years so that they can really take on more of a long term contracts, etcetera.

So the response just exceeded what our capability was with the first year's funding. It's one of the reasons we've asked for full funding. So that we'd not only be able to maintain the projects we selected last year, but be able to then look at the new proposals and especially the one that you refer to. It's an excellent project.

In fact every project that was submitted ideally should be funded. But there's just competition for it. So we look forward to hopefully getting—

Senator FRANKEN. You spoke to my next question which is should Congress fund this program at \$40 million for FY2012, as you've requested, will it fund ongoing projects only or will you be able to fund new projects like the one in Minnesota?

Mr. TIDWELL. If we receive full funding we'll be able to do both. We'll be able to continue funding with the projects we selected plus be able to have funds available for new projects.

Senator FRANKEN. Thank you.

One of the 4 priorities you mentioned in your testimony is creating jobs in rural communities. We've been talking about that. I'm glad that you've prioritized the research on biomass.

I was just up in Morris, Minnesota where they have a biomass gasification combined heat and power pilot project. They use a direct energy system to heat the whole campus and provide electricity. It's a great system. We need to do more of this kind of biomass projects around the country.

I think woody biomass has an important role to play. Because when you manage forests sustainably woody biomass is a huge op-

portunity for renewable energy and job creation. We've got a lot of this up in northern Minnesota. I just think we need to do more R and D and more pilot projects like this one in Morris at the university there to figure out better and more efficient ways to use woody biomass.

Can you tell me more about the Woody Biomass Utilization Grant program and what you plan to do with the proposed increase in this budget for FY2012?

Mr. TIDWELL. In our budget request we're asking for \$5 million for our Woody Biomass Utilization Grant program to be able to provide funding for these various facilities you're referring to be able to get some additional infrastructure in place. We need the ability to be able to make use of this material that needs to be removed. I'm not talking about the saw log material. I'm talking about the residual material that often we have the choice of either paying someone to pile it and then burn it verses being able to remove it and make beneficial use out of it.

So converting biomass to energy is one of the areas that we feel will help not only make use of the material. But it will offset the cost of the work that needs to be done. So we feel that this grant program is one way that we can encourage some additional infrastructure.

We're also working on 48 different facilities with the Department of Energy and Rural Utility Service and Rural Development to be able to put packages together to help encourage additional infrastructure.

Senator FRANKEN. Thank you. I agree that we should be using this. I mean, it is really, you know, has a zero carbon footprint because the CO₂ that it takes to grow the stuff is what it releases, so. The gasification plants are very, very efficient. So thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Hoeven.

Senator HOEVEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chief, thank you for being with us today.

In North Dakota we don't have quite as many trees as some of our sister States like Minnesota, although good wind like Minnesota as we were discussing yesterday.

[Laughter.]

Senator HOEVEN. But fewer trees than many other States. But we do have the National Grasslands and not sure how in the course of history the Forest Service ended up with the grasslands rather than perhaps some other division of USDA. But there's some unique challenges in managing the grasslands.

As you know we have ranchers out there. Certainly that creates, I think, a different situation for you than you would face in terms of managing forests. One of the questions I have for you is the—clearly you manage for multiple uses. But the ranchers feel that when there is a dispute with Forest Service that they'd like to be able to go to ag-mediation.

Our farmers and ranchers are used to going to ag-mediation services. They feel that that would be a good way to have arbitration or dispute resolution and management with the Forest Service. They feel that would be a fair venue.

Please give me your thoughts on using the ag-mediation service for that process.

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, our decisions on the grasslands are covered by our appeals process. If we're making a decision that results in the suspension or a cancellation, a reduction in the number of cattle that's being grazed then we do go—we do use the mediation procedures. But if our decisions are not of that level of significance than we go through our appeals process and that's available to the ranchers.

So on more significant decisions definitely we go through mediation before we move forward with that. But on more of the routine decisions then we use our appeals process that's available for the ranchers if they disagree with the decision.

Senator HOEVEN. So you say you are going through North Dakota ag-mediation services for some of the decisions?

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes. If it's a decision that results in a suspension or a reduction in the number of cattle that's being grazed we do go through mediation.

Senator HOEVEN. I think the concern—and from the rancher's standpoint they're out to make they live there. They work there. They're making a living there. They recognize multiple use. They're good stewards of the land.

Their concern is if they go through your internal process. How is that in essence, an arbitration or a fair hearing process, where both sides are, you know, have the same relative standing? So that's their concern with going through a mediation service rather than through an internal service of the Forest Service.

The other thing is since USDA has a national appeals division why not use the national appeals division that everyone else throughout USDA uses? That would certainly provide a fair venue and a venue again, where you have both parties feeling like they're getting fair treatment. What about that approach?

Mr. TIDWELL. You know, Senator I feel our current approach is the mix of the 2 processes. That there's been a lot of support for our appeals process from everyone that we deal with because I think it's proven to be a fair process. If a decision is made by the Grassland Supervisor, his decision is appealed then to the regional office. So it's a different set of people that look at it. So I feel that our appeals process is very fair.

When we're talking about a more significant decision that would have an effect on the rancher's operations as far as reducing the number of livestock they can run, then we do use the mediation process. We also, before we make decisions, want to focus on working with folks up front.

So we actually can reach agreement on what needs to be done ahead of time before we make that decision. I mean, that's what we really want to focus on so that there's actually less time spent after the decision has been made but more time making a better decision. That's where we want to just focus our time.

Senator HOEVEN. Chief, are you telling me you're willing to use either ag-mediation services or the national appeals division for all of these decisions? Are you willing to do that?

Mr. TIDWELL. I'm just willing to use the mediation process for decisions that result in any reductions or temporary suspensions or changes to the number of livestock that they operate. But the other

decisions that we make I feel that our current appeals process is a better way to address those.

Senator HOEVEN. I'd like to follow up with you on this because the perception is that's an internal process so it's not a fair hearing process. So I'd like to do some more work with you on that process.

Then also and I may have to save this for the next round, but talk to you a little bit about using range scientists for some of these determinations too. I'll go into that on a follow up round then.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Johnson.

Senator JOHNSON. Welcome to Chief Tidwell. Until the last century our bark beetle problem was kept in check by periodic burning, all intensity burning. Have you got the funding available for thinning to keep the pine beetle in check?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, you are correct that in the past we've had more success to reduce these infestations through thinning and actually some harvest and prescribed burning. There in South Dakota in the Black Hills we are in a little better position than we are in some of the other States. Because your Ponderosa Pine type there allows us to be able to get out in front of the infestation. So that's one of the things that we're currently focused on is as soon as we start to see a new outbreak occur there to be able to quickly jump on that to remove the infested trees in trying to reduce the spread.

The other key part of it is the burning, prescribed burning that we need to use and then thinning of the forests. So you're correct that those are the right tools that we need to go forward with.

I feel that the budget request that we put in front of you will provide an adequate level of work for us to be able to continue along with the additional resources we are going to dedicate from all the various budget line items that we can use when it comes to bark beetle.

Senator JOHNSON. There is both good and bad involved in the Black Hills. It's true that Ponderosa Pine is predominant although there is a high level of interface between the population and the trees.

I was pleased to see the emphasis on conservation and outdoor recreation in the Forest Service budget. I was especially pleased that the budget request would include a forest blazing program funding for the Blood Run site in southeastern South Dakota.

On the National Grasslands the checkerboard mix of ownership can complicate and add cost for both Federal and private landowners. A key tool that the Forest Service has to address these challenges is exchange of public and private lands. This has a benefit of consolidating both public and private lands without the expense of acquiring new Federal lands.

Your testimony highlights a proposed pilot land exchange program to demonstrate the benefits of consolidating land ownership within a National Grassland. Could you elaborate on how such a program might work your National Grasslands as efficient resources to address other management challenges like noxious weeds?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, in our budget request we include a new concept of a pilot approach there on the grasslands where we could take a very focused effort to see if we can't improve the efficiency

of our land exchanges. They normally take many years to complete and what we want to look at through your pilot idea is to be able to take a focused effort to see if that couldn't really make a difference by focusing on different geographical areas in the country instead of our current approach where we're trying to do it everywhere at the same time.

So I'm optimistic that with this pilot idea that we can actually show a way to increase our efficiency to get these done quicker for everyone. It benefits not only the private landowner and their management, but it definitely reduces our costs, our Administrative costs, the cost of our project development if we can consolidate these lands across the country. The grasslands is one of the areas where we still have quite a bit of a checkerboard land pattern.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Chief Tidwell.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Manchin was here. If Senator Lee does not mind, I'll have him go ahead with his questions and then have you.

Go ahead, Senator Manchin.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you. Thank you, Chairman.

First of all let me thank you for being here and I appreciate it very much. I come from West Virginia which is probably the most forested State per acre of any State in the Nation. It's a tremendous hard wood.

With that being said, you know, we have some concerns. I've been working with the Forestry division on that. But I think as a broad question I would ask with the continuing resolution what effect does that have on you being able to commit and complete and be able to plan for the jobs you need to do as far as what Congress has asked you to do? How is it affecting your mission?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, for us to operate under a continuing resolution we're constrained to basically the amount of funding that we used for the same period of time during 2010. The way that most of our work occurs it's the larger projects that occur later in the year during more of the summertime. So under a continuing resolution it inhibits us to be able to put together our projects, actually start to award contracts even for work that will be done later on because we can't go forward with it.

We cannot go forward with any of our large construction projects. We can't go forward with any of our Forest Legacy projects that we proposed. So we do everything we can to kind of minimize the impact.

But the reality of it is that it really reduces our ability to do the planning we need to do. Get the project prep done so that contracts can be awarded later this year and people can go to work.

Senator MANCHIN. You've shared that with, I'm sure.

Mr. TIDWELL. I have when I get asked.

[Laughter.]

Senator MANCHIN. Hopefully we can resolve that for you.

Also in West Virginia we had a tremendous problem with Gypsy Moths. I think you know about that. Ours is we don't have the public lands that some States have.

Most of ours is all fee simple. But the aerial program it just moves through our entire State, especially eastern. Has there been more of an effort to work with the States on that?

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes, Senator. You know, the approach to a pest like Gypsy moth we have to take this all lands landscape scale approach and especially in places like your State where we work together not only with the States but all the other Federal programs. So we can bring all the resources together. With the Gypsy moths we've been having some success by taking this approach.

It just doesn't work for any one land owner.

Senator MANCHIN. Right.

Mr. TIDWELL. Or for the Federal Government to just deal with the issue on their lands when you have the infestation that's just across the boundary.

Senator MANCHIN. Also we had in a lot of our pines and I can't think of the blight that hit the pines, but I'm sure you might know about. We were having problems with that also. I don't know if you all have been involved in that process of working with our States?

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes. We talk a lot about the bark beetles out West. But we definitely have bark beetles in the South and in the East too.

We've been having a little more success in this part of the country because of our restoration work that we're doing in the forests. We've been able to kind of stay ahead of it. That's one of the things when I get asked about well, could we move funding from some of our Eastern forests out to our Western forests to deal with the bark beetle infestation out there?

The problem with that is that if we slow down the work that we're currently doing in this part of the country you'll see the bark beetle infestations that occur on the East and the South start to increase. I know some would like to see us have that level of flexibility, but we're not about to slow down what we're doing right now because we're at a good maintenance level.

We're getting the restoration done. We're being able to kind of hold the beetles in check. So that's just one of the challenges that we have because we have these problems everywhere. I don't want anyone to believe that we don't have pest issues here in the East.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Lee.

Senator LEE. Welcome, Chief Tidwell.

It's my understanding that you had a role in changing the way that recommended wilderness areas on the forest lands, the way that they're managed in Region One before you became Chief that you had a role in that. Would explain how Region One dealt with the recommended wilderness areas? Tell us what plans the Forest Service at the Headquarters level has, if any, to address recommended forest areas—wilderness areas?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, when I was the regional forester in our Northern region we continued with some guidance. It was just guidance to our forest supervisors that when they were going through the planning process to consider which areas should be recommended to Congress for consideration as wilderness. Our guidelines encourage them to look at the current ongoing uses and to factor that into their decisions.

If you had a lot of established motorized use, a lot of snowmobile use that was in that area, and even though there were strong wilderness characteristics for those lands, that you should factor in

those current, ongoing uses into your recommendation. Then based on a decision and based on the public input that if the recommendation was for certain lands to be considered by Congress for wilderness that we're required to be able to maintain those wilderness characteristics until some time when Congress would act.

So we want to do a better job on our recommendations to make sure that what we are recommending was something that not only Congress should consider. But definitely held wilderness characteristics and then to be able to maintain those. To the point not to encourage non-compatible use until Congress can act.

I've seen some situations where we've made decisions that there was in some cases quite a bit of motorized activity in these areas. We went ahead and made a decision to recommend that. Then by the time Congress has the opportunity to look at it the controversy is so great you really don't have a lot of decision space left.

I think it's a better approach to factor that into the front end in our recommendations. Then we make a recommendation to be able to discourage non-compatible uses until Congress can have the opportunity to consider these recommendations. Ideally, and it would be my desire, that as soon as the forest completed their Forest Plan revision that those recommendations would come to Congress. Congress could act on that.

I think by having a lot of areas that are recommended for wilderness, lot of areas that are under wilderness study areas that go on for years, I think it just adds to the overall controversy about wilderness. I think if we could find a way to be able to work in a way that it would be a little bit, I guess, earlier for Congress to be able to consider these I think it would go a long way to resolve some of the conflict around these recommendations.

Senator LEE. So as to allow the decision to be made by Congress rather than at the Administrative level, in other words?

Mr. TIDWELL. Only Congress can designate wilderness.

Senator LEE. Great.

The Forest Service's proposed budget includes \$90 million for additional land acquisition. This is very troubling to me because I come from a State where the Federal Government owns two-thirds of our land. Then exempts itself from taxation on those lands.

So this proposal raises some consternation. Especially at a time when we're running an annual deficit estimated to be in the range of \$1.6, \$1.7 trillion in the hole. But it raises additional concerns in my State given that as you acquire more land that's even less land that we can tax.

We are 51st in the Nation in terms of per student school funding and there are a number of causes for that. But one of the biggest contributing factors, if not the biggest is that we can't tax two-thirds of our land because it's owned by the Federal Government. So how many additional acres is the Federal Government proposing to purchase?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, I'll get you that number what we would plan to accomplish with our request.

[The information referred to follows:]

THE FOREST SERVICE PLANS ON ACQUIRING 33,156 ACRES WITH THE FISCAL YEAR 2012 BUDGET REQUEST OF \$90 MILLION FOR THE LAND ACQUISITION PROGRAM.

Senator LEE. But you've got to have an acreage figure in mind because you've got a specific dollar amount in mind.

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes, we also include a list of projects that's part of our request. So we submit a list of projects for Congress to consider. We don't move ahead with any of those projects unless Congress agrees on that.

Senator LEE. Can you tell me on average how much it costs for the Forest Service to maintain an acre of land?

Mr. TIDWELL. You know we manage 192 million acres of National Forest System lands along with our, you know, State and private programs. So and we do that with the budget that we receive each year. So I guess, if there was a—I think as far as to how much the cost per acre. It varies depending on the activities.

It's not, you know, it's more of what occurring on that land, the level of restoration activities, the construction activities that are occurring, you know. That's what determines, you know, the price.

Senator LEE. Sure. Sure. I understand.

Just like land generally. The price of land is going to vary from one acre to another. Not all acres are created equal. It's going to cost a different amount of money to manage one acre than another.

But I would like to know. It may take you some time. You can respond later if you'd like. Would like to know what the average management cost is so if you take into account the total management related budget that you've got verses how many acres that you manage. That would be good to know.

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, we'll get back to you with that.

[The information referred to follows:]

IN FISCAL YEAR 2010, WE SPENT AN AVERAGE OF \$26 PER ACRE TO MANAGE NATIONAL FOREST LANDS. THIS FIGURE TAKES INTO CONSIDERATION THE TOTAL FISCAL YEAR 2010 APPROPRIATION MINUS RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT, STATE AND PRIVATE FORESTRY EXCEPT FOREST HEALTH, LAND ACQUISITION, AND UNSPENT FLAME FUNDS. THIS FIGURE IS ONLY THE AMOUNT SPENT IN FISCAL YEAR 2010 AND IS NOT THE TOTAL AMOUNT NEEDED TO MANAGE NATIONAL FOREST LANDS ON A PER ACRE BASIS.

Senator LEE. Thank you. I see my time is expired.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Murkowski.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a few quick follow-ups, if I may.

Chief, I had asked about the delay in decisions. The fact that things go up to the Secretary level as they relate to inventoried roadless areas. My staff has reminded me that even though you've indicated it only takes a couple of hours possibly to make decisions, in Alaska we've seen 2 situations recently: it took about a year to win a simple permit for a microwave tower that was to be placed by a phone company in the Chugach National Forest, and then a similar period of time for a mine outside of Juneau to get approval for a permit in a roadless area.

It used to, apparently, take a couple weeks which I think would be reasonable. But I'm told it's taking longer. I think that that is the point that we were trying to make. We don't need continued delays. If it has to go up to yet another level it causes varying degrees of complication and frustration.

I wanted to ask you about the Alaska Subsistence Program the Chairman had mentioned in one of his questions. This was one of those programs where the program is being defunded in your budget here. Can you explain to me how and by whom the work within the Alaska Subsistence Program will be performed if we're eliminating the program? How are we going to do this?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, the same people that have been doing this work in the past will continue which are many of the folks I mean, not only Forest Service folks, but then we also hire folks to help, you know, local people in the villages to do this work. So the program implementation will stay the same. The only difference is that there just wouldn't be a budget line item for the program.

So all this is is an accounting process that just helps our accounting system a little bit better. But as far as on the ground activities they will not change the people that worked in this program last year, the year before, the year before that. We'll continue to do that. As you well know this is an essential program that we will continue to provide the level of funding.

The other advantage of not having a separate budget line item is if something occurs that's unforeseen at this time, and we need to actually use more funding. In the past having a separate line item we'd have to then—we could spend right up to that zero amount and then we could use some of our other funds to do the other work.

It just creates an additional accounting process for—we cannot overspend \$1 of any budget line item even on these relatively small ones or we're subject to anti-deficiencies. So it just provides some accounting flexibility. We can work with a budget line item like we always have in the past. We could make that work. But, you know, as far as on the ground there will be no changes.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Let me ask you this because you gave that explanation to the Chairman. His inquiry was about the Valles Caldera. There are 3 programs that are defunded, so to speak. But you're telling me that the work will still get done, and it's just an accounting situation.

Will the funds that I hope to be directed for the Alaska Subsistence program come from Senator Bingaman's Valles Caldera operational account? It seems to me that the funding has to come from somewhere. It must be reflected somewhere.

I don't want to get bogged down in the weeds here on accounting issues. But if it means that this is a little bit of smoke and mirrors when it comes to the budget I think that's important for us to know. If it means that we're going to be robbing from Peter to pay Paul, or robbing from Jeff to pay Lisa, for programs within our States, I think we need to understand that as well.

At this point in time I'm still not clear as to how this would actually work. Perhaps you can work with our staffs a little bit to provide a little more clarification.

I wanted to ask one more question related to access. In response to Senator Barrasso's question on land acquisition, how can you as an agency, when you're not able to maintain the lands that you have currently, acquire additional lands?

You spoke about the issue of access, saying you want to be providing access. We have problems in Alaska regarding access and my constituents are contacting me about it.

We've got some small placer miners in the State that have been informed that the Forest Service is planning to restrict motorized access to some mining claims that are located in the Chugach, and also within the Tongass. While some of this may be the result of closing some old logging roads that aren't needed any longer, some of the complaints appear unconnected to budgetary concerns.

I guess I would like to hear from you what you believe the reason is for denying these mining operators within the Chugach their opportunity to access their lands. Because this is, as you know, this is a big deal for these smaller operators within the State there.

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, I will look into that situation there in the Chugach and get back to you.

[The information referred to follows:]

Land Management Plans are completed under authority of the requirements of the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended by the National Forest Management Act of 1976. The Chugach National Forest closed a number of roads and trails to motorized access in 2002, as directed by the unit's Land Management Plan, which was revised that year. Those roads and trails were closed based on environmental and economic concerns and were done so with the appropriate level of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance. Motorized access to mining operations in areas otherwise closed to motorized use on the Chugach National Forest is routinely allowed for mining purposes by written authorization under a Mining Plan of Operations, per 36 CFR 228.4.

Prior to mining activities, the miners must develop and submit a Plan of Operations, which will address access needs. The Plan of Operations requires NEPA compliance and will enable the Forest to identify reasonable access pursuant to the proposed mining activities. Stipulations may include restrictions seasonally to protect resource values such as road or trail improvements with due consideration of the particular and unique needs of the mining operating plan.

Forest visitors are subject to the same motorized access restrictions, including those engaged in nonprofit recreational mining. However, the Forest has provided maps to the Gold Prospectors Association of America (GPAA) showing locations open to the public that are easily accessible near open roads and/or that can be accessed with off road vehicles. The Forest has also provided hundreds of GOLD PANNING brochures (2010 version) to the association.

But, you know, we recognize we have a responsibility to provide reasonable access. Whether it's to a mining claim whether it's to the private property, you know, we have a responsibility to do that. So I'll look into this situation and get back to you.

It's, I mean, access is important. It's essential to private landowners. It's essential to mining operations. But it's also really essential to recreationists.

What I was referring to with our LWCF acquisitions is that there's a lot of places in parts of this country where the private landowner, for whatever reason, and sometimes they have good reason, that they shut the gates and don't allow people to cross their property to get onto the National Forest system lands. That's what we try to focus on is to be able to work out with a conservation easement to be able to work with the landowner. Or sometimes it's just that it takes acquisition to be able to acquire that property so that the public can still have access to the National Forests.

So all access is important. We hear just constant requests for us to be able to do more to be able to maintain the access along with

our legal responsibility to provide it for private landowners and for mining operations.

Senator MURKOWSKI. I'd like to follow up with you on this to make sure that we're not embarking on a policy now or what would appear to result in a policy where we're further restricting access. As you point out we're obligated to provide that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Shaheen, we're into the second round and you have not yet asked a first round of questions. So go ahead and ask any questions you have. Then we'll continue with the second round.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chief Tidwell, I apologize for missing your testimony this morning and much of this hearing. I had another hearing. But I did want to be here to ask some questions that I think are important to my home State of New Hampshire.

Because New Hampshire is the second most heavily forested State in the country biomass and our timber industry are very important to the State. They are becoming increasingly important as we look at what options we have in New Hampshire and Northern New England to replace oil. We have about 50 percent of our households that are dependent on oil to heat. It's even higher in the State of Maine.

So we're looking at what alternatives we have. So I'm particularly interested in what your department is doing about biomass and how you're working with other agencies to address that. I was pleased to see the budget proposal was not the deep reduction that I thought it might be.

But particularly if you could address the Community Wood Energy program that was established in the 2008 Farm bill and it's designed to help local communities with using wood energy systems. We have a number of communities in New Hampshire that are very interested in that. So can you talk about what you're doing and whether the proposed budget that the President has requested meets the needs that you're seeing out there in the States and communities?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, our request, our budget request does include \$5 million under this program that was provided in the 2008 Farm bill. This will be the first year that we've been able to use that authorization. So these funds along with our other programs that provide grants to help encourage new facilities to help make use of the biomass.

The biomass that you so well know is that we're not talking about the saw logs. We're talking about the residual material that we have to find a way to use it or just pay somebody to pile it and burn it and put smoke in the air. That's what we're really focused on.

So any way that we can make better use of that material and thus offset some of our demand on fossil fuels. But at the same time it also reduces the cost of the restoration work that has to occur to be able to maintain these forests that your State enjoys.

Senator SHAHEEN. Can you also talk a little bit about how or if you're working with other agencies to encourage looking at the uses for biomass?

I had the opportunity to talk to Secretary Chu when he was here talking about programs within the Department of Energy. It wasn't clear to me that there was real coordination going on around potential uses of biomass. It seems to me that it's a huge resource that we could really be using much better.

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes, Senator.

We work with the Department of Energy, the Rural Utility Service and Rural Development and also with Farm Services to be able to put together proposals that we're using all the various government programs that are available right now to be able to kind of put that together in a package. We're currently looking at the opportunity for 48 different facilities around the country with the Department of Energy so that we can find the best way the government can work together to help support, encourage the establishment of this additional infrastructure. So we can show people that this is a good thing to do and to be able to help them to get started on it. So that's the effort that we're doing together.

It's one of the things that we recognize we need to do more of. It's just essential that we bring all the Federal programs together at once. Whether it's the Forest Service working with one community or it's the Department of Energy.

Whoever has that lead needs to be able to bring all the programs together to make it a lot easier on these communities instead of having five or six different meetings. They should have to have only one. We should be able to deliver all the programs.

Senator SHAHEEN. Good. So if we call your office, you can tell us how to get to that.

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes.

Senator SHAHEEN. That coordinated effort.

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes.

Senator SHAHEEN. OK. Thank you.

Let me just ask one final question. The Androscoggin Headwaters Land Conservation project in Northern New Hampshire is very important to the watershed throughout the State. It's a key priority for our conservation community.

There is funding in the current budget request for that project. But as I'm sure you know that the continuing resolution that we've seen passed in the House would make significant cuts to the Land and Water Conservation program that will help fund that. Can you just talk about how the cuts that are being proposed to LWCF what impact that would have on local projects like our Androscoggin Headwaters project?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, thank you for your leadership with this project. This is another example of multiple Federal agencies working together, not only with the Forest Service but some of the Interior agencies are a partner along with the communities in this project. For the FY11 Forest Legacy priority list it was ranked at No. 8. So it's ranked very high. Again for 2012, the second phase it is ranked No. 9.

If there's significant cuts to Forest Legacy it will not be able to go forward with these projects. As you are well aware under a CR we're not able to move forward with it even in FY11 until we do have a budget.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Hoeven.

Senator HOEVEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just following up on using ag-mediation services in the national appeals process and USDA, our mediation service people indicate that under the Forest Service rules it doesn't allow you to go to ag-mediation when you're negotiating long term grazing agreements. Are you willing to look at your rules so that you can and will go to ag-mediation when negotiating those long term grazing agreements?

Mr. TIDWELL. You know Senator, I do believe that our process that we have in place does work very well if there is a disagreement with a decision, especially with our grazing agreements. It's just essential that we're able to work together. With the Grazing Association to be able to sit down with the Forest Service and we'd reach agreements about what needs to be in that agreement and then they'd be able to move forward.

Grazing agreements do not have any effect on the number of cattle that are run. It doesn't result in any reductions and in livestock that are permitted out there. It's just more of a basically, an agreement about how we're going to work the roles and responsibilities of the Grazing Association, the expectations, what the association can expect from the agency. So it's essential that we have those in place especially with our Grazing Associations.

But I do think the best approach on that is to be able to insist that people come together. They work out their differences before the agreement is put into place verses to have another process—because I think that would just discourage people from working together on the front end of it if you have another process that you can go to. So that's where I feel our current process works.

I would just want to continue to encourage our ranchers to be able to come together. If it takes a little more time to sit down and work out those differences of opinion that's the best place. That's the best time verses having anything whether it's going through an appeal process or going through mediation.

If you really want folks to be able to work together I think they just need to take the time to work it out. Then we can reach agreement. Then we can move forward in a way that I think it will be much more productive for everyone involved.

Senator HOEVEN. I appreciate that. No question that's what should be done on the front end. Then if they're not able to reach resolution are you willing to go to either mediation services or to the appeals process that USDA has? That's my question to you.

Mr. TIDWELL. We'd have to change our regulations to do that.

Senator HOEVEN. Are you willing to look at doing that or that something that we would have to try to do legislatively then?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, I'd like to work with you on this and maybe to gain a little more understanding. I have a lot of experience dealing with ranchers throughout my career. I worked in the northern region. I'm very familiar with grazing agreements and the Grazing Association.

But I would like, if you'd be willing to, I could work with you to have a better understanding of this issue. Then we could maybe based on that be able to move forward.

Senator HOEVEN. I would very much appreciate that including extending an invitation for you to come out to our State as well and visit with some of the ranchers and so forth. That may be helpful too. But let's do that including perhaps—would you be willing maybe to come out to the State and even discuss this issue with our ranchers?

Mr. TIDWELL. I'd love the opportunity to get out into the field. That's why I started work in the Forest Service. It seems it's pretty rare now the days I ever get to go out. So I'd appreciate an invitation to come out.

Senator HOEVEN. Great. That'd be good. I hereby extend that to you. We'll work with you on that.

The other thing is in going through the scientific process for rangeland management the other thing I'd like to, I guess, to put out there for you to respond to is at North Dakota State University we have incredible rangeland scientists. Talk about using those individuals in the process with your own experts. I think that brings credibility and help and maybe a feeling of reaching out to our ranchers when you include our rangeland scientists. Obviously, I mean, they're experts.

Your reaction to that?

Mr. TIDWELL. I agree with you that's an excellent approach. I mean we do a lot of work not only at your universities, but also throughout the country the universities and colleges. I think that that is the best way to be able to bring people together. So that we have the science there and if it's the folks that are from North Dakota, often there is additional benefits that if they're hearing it from people that are there in North Dakota that it often helps resolve some of these issues.

Senator HOEVEN. I appreciate that.

The other thing is working with NRCS. I think, you know, given that this is ranchland. That this is the grasslands rather than a forest both from the standpoint of our farmers and ranchers as well as bridging with your own people, NRCS can be helpful as well.

Your thoughts?

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes. Just another example of where the Federal Government needs to do a better job to work together. So like your ranchers whether it's the Forest Service or NRCS that they're visiting with or working with whoever it is from the Federal Government should understand all the programs that are available. So we're working together because especially up in your State those ranching operations they're not solely dependent on just the grasslands.

It's also on their own private land. So we've got to be able to work that together so that it works for them over time. That means we've got to have the flexibility as if we had a fire that goes through either their private land or through the National Forest, we've got to be able to work together to have that flexibility so that they stay in business.

You know one of the greatest benefits we have from our ranching community is the wildlife habitat, the open space that they provide verses having their lands being converted to some form of development. So it's just essential that we work together to keep those folks on the landscape.

Senator HOEVEN. Appreciate that, Chief. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Murkowski, did you have additional questions?

Senator Hoeven, did you have anything else you wanted to ask before we adjourn the hearing?

Senator HOEVEN. The only other thing I would just comment on, Chief, is I think the other helpful aspect of perhaps having you come out and having that dialog is that I think ranchers, county commissioners and others that live out on the grasslands can also come up with ideas that you may agree with that can help you save dollars too in these times of tight budgets. So I think that may be an added benefit of that whole discussion.

Mr. TIDWELL. I would appreciate that. Thank you.

Senator HOEVEN. OK. Thanks, Chief.

The CHAIRMAN. Chief Tidwell, thank you very much for your time. We appreciate your good work. That will adjourn our hearing. [Whereupon, at 11:15 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

[The following statement was received for the record.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JAN POLING, VICE PRESIDENT, GENERAL COUNSEL & CORPORATE SECRETARY, AMERICAN FOREST & PAPER ASSOCIATION

INTRODUCTION

The American Forest & Paper Association is the national trade association of the forest products industry, representing pulp, paper, packaging and wood products manufacturers, and forest landowners. Our companies make products essential for everyday life from renewable and recyclable resources that sustain the environment.

The forest products industry accounts for approximately 5 percent of the total U.S. manufacturing GDP. Industry companies produce about \$175 billion in products annually and employ nearly 900,000 men and women, exceeding employment levels in the automotive, chemicals and plastics industries. The industry meets a payroll of approximately \$50 billion annually and is among the top 10 manufacturing sector employers in 47 states.

Declining federal timber harvests have adversely affected many rural communities, resulting in thousands of jobs lost. Actions are needed to restore and increase federal timber harvest to help ensure adequate fiber supply and address forest health priorities. Within the jurisdiction of this committee, we urge you to direct the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to help sustain the forest products industry and the vital jobs it supports. Specific suggestions follow.

NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM, FOREST PRODUCTS

The President's Budget Request for the National Forest System (NFS) again proposes to create an "Integrated Resource Restoration" account, incorporating NFS programs previously funded under a slew of line items into a single \$864 million dollar line item. AF&PA understands the Administration's desire to "accelerate the refocusing of national forest management to forest ecosystem restoration project work, including global climate change adaptation and mitigation." However, we do not feel that specifically delineating \$80 million from IRR for Priority Watershed Projects is appropriate without further explanation of how this fund would be used. We also question why the Administration has designated \$40 million for the Collaborative Forest Restoration Fund (CFLRF); the CFLRF originally was intended to be funded with "new" money, not through diversion from other program funding.

To create forest industry jobs, more federal timber should be made available for sale.—At a time when most Americans are concerned about jobs and the economy, studies indicate that the USFS timber sale program could produce over 6,000 direct and indirect jobs with an annual infusion of \$57 million into the forest products line item while improving the health and reducing the fire risk of forest ecosystems.

FOREST INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

Targeted research and data collection is needed to support forest productivity, forest health, and economic utilization of fiber. The Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program within Forest Service Research and Development (R&D) is the back-

bone of our knowledge about the nation's forests, and is a vital technical resource that allows assessment of the sustainability, health, and availability of the forest resource. FIA is utilized by a large swath of stakeholders interested in the state of America's forests: forest resource managers at mills, land managers, conservation groups, and State and Federal agencies all look to the program for data about our nation's forests.

The Administration has demonstrated an interest in a sustainable renewable biomass industry through actions in many agencies. With an increased focus on utilizing woody biomass, we do not understand why the administration is proposing to cut funding to the very program that allows managers to determine sustainability of the forest resource? We oppose these unilateral cuts to this valuable program.

The Forest Resources Information and Analysis (FRIA) program under the Cooperative Forestry budget compliments the FIA by providing cost-share assistance through State contributions to the FIA program. This assistance allows states to improve the ongoing FIA assessments offered through R&D by improving sampling resolution, increasing sampling frequency, and tailoring assessments to address State-specific forest resource needs. Reducing FRIA would hinder the abilities of States to implement Renewable Portfolio Standards while ensuring the sustainability and productivity of forests.

The full funding level needed for these programs is \$76 million for the FIA program and \$5 million for the FRIA program, which would allow the Forest Service to cover 100 percent of U.S. forest lands, expedite data availability and analysis, and support our growing data needs in the areas of bioenergy and climate mitigation.

INTERNATIONAL FORESTRY

AF&PA's believes that full and effective implementation and enforcement of the 2008 Lacey Act amendments will reduce the destructive impacts of illegal logging on tropical forests, enable American forest product companies to compete on a level playing field, and contribute to one of the least expensive ways of cutting global greenhouse gas emissions—reduced deforestation and unsustainable forest management. A 2005 AF&PA report on illegal logging found that up to 10 percent of global timber production could be of suspicious origin and that illegal logging depresses world prices for legally harvested wood by seven to 16 percent on average. The report also calculated that if there were no illegally harvested wood in the global market, the estimated value of U.S. wood exports could increase by over \$460 million each year.

The USFS International Forestry program lends critical technical assistance for Lacey Act implementation and to improve sustainable forest management practices in developing countries which help reduce illegal logging overseas. The International Forestry program has been completely cut from the Administration's FY 2012 budget. Although the Administration claims the Forest Service will conduct its highest priority international work under existing Forest Service authorities, it is unclear if funding for Lacey related activities will continue to be available and where it would be derived. Despite a budget allocation for USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Lacey Act account in the President's FY 2012 for the first time (\$1.5 million), AF&PA believes cuts to the International Forestry accounts could be detrimental to full Lacey Act compliance and enforcement efforts.

STATE AND PRIVATE FORESTRY

AF&PA applauds the Committee's sustained support for USFS State and Private Forestry programs. With ongoing droughts, invasive species infestations, and significant forest health problems, private forest resources remain vulnerable to damage from threats that do not respect public/private boundary lines.

As you know, private forests provide the bulk of the nation's wood fiber supply, while also sequestering huge amounts of carbon from the atmosphere, providing millions of acres of wildlife habitat, and supplying clean drinking water for millions of Americans. USFS State and Private Forestry programs protect these resources from threats beyond the capability of small landowners to effectively combat. Therefore, we urge funding at no less than their FY2010 enacted levels of \$49 million for Cooperative Forest Health, \$39 million for Cooperative Fire Assistance, \$29 million for Forest Stewardship, and \$76 million for Forest Legacy.

APPENDIX

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

RESPONSES OF TOM TIDWELL TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR BARRASSO

Question 1. Managing grazing allotments and completing NEPA analysis on grazing allotments is vital to grazing permittees. Last year only 53% or 248 of the targeted 460 allotments received NEPA analysis. This year the Forest Service target is to complete 360 NEPA allotments. However, the proposed budget is cutting \$5.2 million from Grazing Management. Given the backlog of allotments needing NEPA analysis and the difficulty in completing them, why are resources being cut?

Answer. a)“Given the backlog of allotments needing NEPA analysis and the difficulty in completing them, why are resources being cut?”

Tough budget times call for tough budget choices. The FY 2012 President’s Budget proposes \$45,445,000 for Grazing Management. Funding at this level balances multiple public priorities that are provided by the Forest Service. Range Management maintains two activities: managing livestock grazing on approximately 90 million acres of national forest system land and completing National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis on grazing allotments in accordance with the NEPA schedule established under the provisions of the Rescissions Act of 1995 (P.L. 104-19, section 504).

b) “Do you believe you will complete the 360 targeted NEPA allotments?”

Answer. In FY 2010, the Forest Service completed National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis for 248 allotments of the targeted 460 allotments. Several factors contributed to the shortfall in NEPA accomplishments, including increased complexity of analysis, increased workload associated with appeals and litigation, and increased costs of gathering comprehensive resource condition and trend data to support decisions.

Based on field input and past performance the NEPA analysis target was realigned in FY 2012. The target is to complete NEPA analysis for 360 allotments in FY 2012. We believe we can achieve this target, but this will be impacted by challenges similar to those the Forest Service has previously faced and are likely to continue in FY 2012.

Question 2. The President’s recent speech and press release promoting his Great Outdoors Initiative included comments to provide more “access” for the public to reconnect to the outdoors. Yet, the Administration’s budget proposal calls for a \$3 million reduction in the Trails budget and \$79 million to decommission 2,185 miles of road. These two proposals do not appear to be consistent with the Initiative. Why reduce the trails budget and decommission more roads—thus eliminating access—when the stated objective is increased public access and connectivity to our public lands?

Answer. A reduction in funding does not equate to a reduction in “access”. The discussion around access in the Great Outdoors Initiative is focused on land acquisition, the forest legacy program, and community forests and open spaces. Your question specifically addressed the type of access provided by roads and trails. The FY 2012 President’s Budget request provides funds to continue to operate and maintain our network of National Forest System (NFS) trails. The regions and forests work together to set priorities for maintaining and improving trails. We understand the importance of Forest Service trails to provide access for the public to the national forests. We continue to seek opportunities with partners to leverage resources to maintain trails in order to establish a new generation of trail stewards.

Currently the Forest Service has approximately 370,000 miles of system roads. Each year, we decommission less than 1% of this total. Many of the roads we decommission are user-created routes that are not part of the designated system, or are not needed for access to the national forests, and are causing significant environmental damage.

Decommissioning unneeded roads and trails eliminates adverse environmental effects and actually contributes to keeping our ability to maintain other access points. Decommissioning is essential to operating a safe and sustainable transportation system.

Question 3. Wildland fires are extremely detrimental to watersheds and local communities. Increased erosion, loss of habitat, species and economic opportunities are the result. There are currently millions of acres of dead and dying timber in the west due to the bark beetle. With such a perilous scenario, what is the justification for cutting 19% or \$396 million from Wildland Fire Management?

Answer. The Forest Service is committed to redeeming its wildland fire management mission and responsibly budgeting for wildland fire management. The agency's Wildland Fire Management budget request provides sufficient funding to manage wildfires and maintain prior-year readiness levels, and provides funding for other high priority projects in the federal government. The President's budget is formulated to balance the important activities of different program areas, with some program reductions necessary to exercise appropriate fiscal prudence.

The budget also recognizes the importance of integrating fire as a critical natural process in land and resource management plans and activities, reintroducing fire into ecosystems, managing wildfire across landownership boundaries, and applying the best available science. To this end, a portion of the \$396 million reduction (22%) is actually due to the shift in non-WUI hazardous fuels and Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration funds to the Integrated Resource Restoration (IRR) account. The bulk of the remaining reduction amount is due to the cancellation of prior year unobligated suppression funds. Because the FY 2009 and FY 2010 fire seasons were less severe than usual, significant funding was carried over from suppression and FLAME into FY 2011. Carryover may also occur in FY 2012 and, as such, this budget proposes a rescission of some of the anticipated carryover in FY 2012 to help provide funding for other high priority projects in the federal government. Even with the proposed reduced funding in suppression and FLAME, and the proposed rescission, the suppression and FLAME levels proposed in FY 2012 fully fund the 10-year average.

Since the submission of the President's Budget bills specifying a rescission of \$200 million in Suppression carryover from P.L. 112-6 and a rescission of \$200 million in FLAME carryover in the C.R. funding the government for the remainder of the year (P.L. 112-10) have been enacted. Funding in Suppression and FLAME for FY 2011 and the new appropriations requested in FY 2012 remains sufficient to cover the 10-year average.

RESPONSE OF TOM TIDWELL TO QUESTION FROM SENATOR BINGAMAN

Question 1. The acquisition of the Vallecitos High Country Ranch has been a high priority for New Mexicans and the Forest Legacy Program in recent years. The project is a three-phase project, with phase I already completed using FLP funds and Phase II proposed for funding in your FY 2011 FLP budget as the #16 project in the nation (out of 38 total). Yet, with a proposed programmatic increase in FY 2012 of \$59 million and an increase in the total number of projects funded to 46, completing the Vallecitos High Country Ranch is not listed on your priority list for FY 2012. Can you explain why completing that project is not a priority for the Administration and how the Administration plans to work with the landowner if the project is suspended before it is complete?

Answer. The Forest Legacy Program project priority list is developed each year through a national competitive process. The objective of the process is to identify the best projects in the country submitted for consideration in a given year. Previous funding is not a guarantee of future funding as new phases of a project must compete with different projects than the previous phases. Another consideration that could impact where a project is on the list is that the scoring guidance, which guides how projects are ranked in the competitive process, is adjusted each year based on lessons learned from the previous year's competitive process. This adjustment and clarification of scoring criteria could have an impact on how competitive a project is.

The Vallecitos project is a State and not a Federal project. The funds are provided to the State through a grant, and it is the State that has the lead in working with the landowner to bring the project to completion if that is the State's objective.

RESPONSES OF TOM TIDWELL TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR MURKOWSKI

Question 1. Tongass Timber Program: In 2008, the Forest Service committed to preparing and offering four 10-year timber sales with a volume of 150 to 200 million board feet each in the Tongass National Forest. The purpose of these timber sales

was to provide sufficient assured volume for a single-shift at four medium size manufacturing facilities. Without the volume assurance, the industry cannot make the investments necessary to upgrade their existing mills or to construct a facility that could process the low-grade timber in the region. Congress has repeatedly made available pipeline funds to allow the Forest Service to prepare these 10-year sales and other timber sales. Now we are told that the agency plans to convert two of the 10-year timber sales to Stewardship contracts and to offer only half of the promised volume and to offer that reduced volume in small parcels. Do you realize that when the Forest Service walks away from the commitments that it makes to Congress, you risk Congress walking away from funding many of the priorities the agency hopes to pursue?

Answer. In response to Under Secretary Mark Rey's direction in September 2008 to develop a work plan and proposed budget to offer four ten-year timber sales, each averaging 15-20 million board feet per year, the Tongass National Forest identified several areas to analyze for 10-year sale programs. The agency shares the same objective in keeping a viable forest products industry in place in southeast Alaska, a necessary ingredient to achieve the Secretary's restoration goals and the Transition Framework.

The agency will work to provide viable levels of board feet over the course of five years to ensure the industry remains solvent. In both FY 2009 and FY 2010, the Alaska Region received appropriations sufficient to fund two of the four timber sale projects. The two 10-year timber sales funded by pipeline funds are currently in the planning stages, including NEPA compliance, and will continue to move forward in FY 2012 and FY 2013. Opportunities to incorporate restoration activities within the project areas are being explored and, where it is economically and logistically feasible, a stewardship contract may be used to implement those harvest and restoration activities. Stewardship contracting is one of the available tools that managers have at their disposal to implement resource management activities and to meet the resource objectives. The volume of timber to be sold with these two projects, including volume from stewardship contracting, is currently being estimated as a part of the NEPA analysis that is ongoing. These two projects are part of the overall Transition Framework for Southeast Alaska announced by the Department of Agriculture in May, 2010.

ALASKA SUBSISTENCE PROGRAM

Question 2. How will the work that those individuals performed in recent years be impacted by the new duties they will be expected to take on?

Answer. At this time, there are no changes being implemented for the Alaska Subsistence Program. The Subsistence Program delivery in FY 2012 would be similar to that implemented in FY 2010. The Subsistence Program is a Federal inter-agency responsibility administered by the Forest Service, Fish & Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Forest Service will continue to meet its Subsistence Program management responsibilities under Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). The same people will be performing the same work, just with different funds.

SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY SELF-DETERMINATION ACT

Question 3. As I understand it, you are proposing to take on the Bureau of Land Management's payment responsibilities for their lands in Western Oregon under the Secure Rural Schools program. Is the BLM going to make contributions to the Forest Service to help cover the cost of the program and if so, how much? If not, are they planning to turn over management responsibilities on those lands to your agency so that the Forest Service can help generate the revenues it will need to cover the cost of the payments to the O&C Counties from the O&C Lands timber program?

Answer. The Administration's proposal for reauthorizing the Secure Rural Schools Act would not transfer the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) administration of the O&C lands currently administered by the BLM, and would not transfer the responsibility for BLM's payments to counties. The proposal is shown in the budget under the Forest Service merely for the simplicity of showing it in one place. Inter-agency transfers would be made to ensure that both the Forest Service and the BLM continue covering their respective share of the payments. The proposal would not fund payments from receipts generated from these lands, continuing the current arrangement under the Secure Rural Schools Act.

RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Question 4. About two weeks ago, we sent a bipartisan letter to the Secretary of Agriculture urging him to give final approval to the Resource Advisory Committees for the 14 remaining Resource Advisory Committees that have not been finalized. Can you tell me if the Secretary has approved the candidates that were nominated by the counties?

Answer. We are pleased to report that as of March 11, 2011 the Secretary of Agriculture has appointed members to all of the Secure Rural Schools Act resource advisory committees chartered under the 2008 re-authorization.

FOREST LAND ACQUISITION

Question 5. The Department has testified to Congress that the Forest Service has 60-80 million acres of unhealthy productive forestland at risk to insects, disease, and wildfire. It has become increasingly apparent through missed targets, reduced outputs, increased reliance on managed fire (leaving more acres vulnerable to wildland fire damage), and a shift away from active forest management that the Forest Service cannot take care of the 193 million acres it already has.

a. Can you give me any reason to use land acquisition rather than land exchanges to acquire important parcels inside National Forests?

b. Several of your LWCF acquisition recommendations appear to include lands outside the National Forests. Can you provide the Committee with detailed descriptions for each of the proposed acquisitions that show where the lands are relative to other nearby Forest Service Lands?

c. Also, what is average cost per acre expected to be? Could you have your staff provide a list of lands considered "excess" in the most recent forest plan document for each forest involved in each proposed acquisition?

Answer a). Land acquisition can reduce management costs by consolidating land-ownership, avoiding further fragmented development within forest boundaries which can exacerbate fire, insect, and disease management challenges. Land acquisitions sought by the Forest Service have broad support by stakeholders at the local level and ensure water quality, recreational access, wildlife habitat, and other public benefits. The Forest Service actively engages in land exchanges where there are opportunities to adjust federal ownership patterns while conveying lands to non-federal entities. However, land exchanges are not always viable options, either because suitable lands are not available or because the complexity or controversy associated with an exchange makes the exchange impractical. Land exchanges, acquisitions, right-of-way acquisitions, and limited sales of Forest Service facilities and adjacent land are all important land adjustment tools to promote the long-term health and sustainability of the national forests and grasslands.

b). "Several of your LWCF acquisition recommendations appear to include lands outside the National Forests. Can you provide the Committee with detailed descriptions for each of the proposed acquisitions that show where the lands are relative to other nearby Forest Service Lands?"

In total, 33 out of 38 acquisition projects requested for FY 2012 are completely within National Forest Administrative boundaries. Of the remaining five, two are within congressionally designated areas. One of these projects is within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act gives the Forest Service the authority to acquire lands in Special Management Areas (16 U.S.C. Sec. 544 G). The second of these two congressionally designated areas is the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. The Forest Service is the Administrator for the Trail and has authority to acquire lands and interests in land for the purposes of administering the trail (16 U.S.C. Sec. 1244 (a) (2)). The remaining three projects are directly adjacent to a national forest boundary and provide important recreational access and habitat connectivity to other federally administered or otherwise protected lands, especially in riparian areas. Please see the attached details below.

USDA FOREST SERVICE
NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM
LWCF Land Acquisition List
President's FY2012 Budget Recommendation

Date: February 14, 2011

Final Rank	Project	State	National Forest	Location of Forest/Congressional Boundary	Recommended Funding Amount
1	Hells Canyon NRA	OR	Wallowa-Whitman	100% inside	\$1,417,500
2	Salmon—Selway Initiative Area	ID	Salmon-Challis; Sawtooth	100% inside	\$3,500,000
3	Rocky Fork	TN	Cherokee	100% inside	\$5,000,000
4	Shield Ranch	AZ	Coconino	100% inside	\$1,500,000
5	Tenderfoot	MT	Lewis & Clark	100% inside	\$5,040,000
6	Mont. Legacy Completion	MT	Lolo; Flathead	100% inside	\$5,000,000
7	Cube Cove	AK	Tongass	100% inside	\$500,000
8	Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail	CA	Multiple	100% Congressionally Designated Trail System	\$2,939,500
9	Pacific NW Streams	OR/WA	Multiple	100% inside	\$2,265,000
10	North Carolina Threatened Treasures	NC	NFs in NC	100% inside	\$3,576,000
11	Great Lakes/ Great Lands (upper)	MI	Hiawatha; Ottawa	100% inside	\$1,500,000
12	Ophir Valley	CO	Uncompahgre	100% inside	\$4,040,000
13	Unita-Wasatch-Cache	UT	Unita-Wasatch-Cache	100% inside	\$1,200,000
14	Washington Cascade Ecosystem	WA	Wenatchee	100% inside	\$1,500,000
15	Miranda Canyon Property	NM	Carson	100% Adjacent	\$3,442,000
16	Hoosier	IN	Hoosier	100% inside	\$2,100,000
17	Bonneville Shoreline Trail	UT	Unita-Wasatch-Cache	100% inside	\$1,600,000
18	Georgia Mountains & Rivers	GA	Chattahoochee-Oconee	100% inside	\$2,000,000
19	Missouri Ozarks	MO	Mark Twain	100% inside	\$1,500,000
20	Mitchell Lakes	CO	San Juan	100% inside	\$1,300,000
21	Hurdygurdy	CA	Six Rivers	100% inside	\$1,750,000
22	Misty Fiords NM In holdings	AK	Tongass	100% inside	\$500,000
23	Deer & Mill Creek Project	CA	Lassen	80% inside 20% adjacent	\$1,500,000
24	Fleming Ranch	CA	San Bernardino	100% inside	\$1,500,000

USDA FOREST SERVICE—Continued
 NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM
 LWCF Land Acquisition List
 President's FY2012 Budget Recommendation

Date: February 14, 2011

Final Rank	Project	State	National Forest	Location of Forest/Congressional Boundary	Recommended Funding Amount
25	Sierra Nevada Inholdings	CA	Tahoe; Eldorado	100% inside	\$2,000,000
26	Upper Lochsa	ID	Clearwater	100% inside	\$1,000,000
27	Pole Gulch—Greater Yellowstone Area	MT	Gallatin	100% inside	\$1,100,000
28	Minnesota Wilderness	MN	Chippewa; Superior	100% inside	\$1,400,000
29	Mississippi Riverfront Forest	IL	Shawnee	100% inside	\$1,000,000
30	Columbia River Gorge NSA	WA	Gifford Pinchot; Mt. Hood	100% inside National Scenic Area	\$1,230,000
31	Greater Yellowstone Area	ID*	Caribou; Targhee	100% inside	\$1,100,000
32	Fiddleback Ranch	WY	Thunder Basin; Medicine Bow	100% inside	\$1,500,000
33	Wisconsin Wild Waterways	WI	Chequamegon-Nicolet	100% inside	\$1,000,000
34	Rockcastle River Watershed	KY	Daniel Boone	100% inside	\$1,000,000
35	Alabama Tracts	AL	NFs in Alabama	100% inside	\$1,000,000
36	SC Landscape Protection	SC	Francis Marion; Sumter	100% inside	\$1,000,000
37	Plum Creek Tract	LA	Kisatchie	100% inside	\$1,000,000
38	Suwannee Wildlife Corridor	FL	NFs in Florida	100% adjacent	\$1,000,000
	Total Purchase				\$72,500,000
	Acquisition Management				\$12,000,000
	Critical Inholdings/Cash Equalization				\$5,500,000
	Total				\$90,000,000

*Correction from FS Budget Justification

c.1) "Also, what is average cost per acre expected to be?"

For FY 2012, the approximate average purchase price is estimated to be \$2,177 per acre. Purchase price is determined by standard federal appraisal methods. The Forest Service cannot pay more than the value determined by the appraisal. The range among anticipated purchase price can vary significantly based upon geographical location and market conditions. For example, on the Land and Water Conservation Fund Land Acquisition List for FY 2012, Shield Ranch in Arizona, riverfront property between two national forests, is about \$28,000 per acre. While the Fiddleback Ranch within the Thunder Basin National Grassland in Wyoming is about \$714 per acre.

c.2) "Could you have your staff provide a list of lands considered "excess" in the most recent forest plan document for each forest involved in each proposed acquisition?"

Forest Service plans do not delineate lands that are considered "excess". National forest land is not excess to agency needs or for public purposes of the National Forest System. When the Forest Service sells land or facilities we do so under limited authorities for purposes specified under Federal laws, such as the Small Tracts Act, Education Land Grant Act, or the Forest Service Facilities Realignment and Enhancement Act (FSFREA).

Question 6. Have you seen the Wall Street Journal article citing a booming market for timber sales in Asia? Alaska and the Pacific NW could be part of this. But you are not putting up sales even though U.S. Forest Service policy now permits some export of federal timber. Are you aware of how great the timber market is in China for Alaska timber?

Answer. We are evaluating timber export options. In 2008 the regional forester for the Alaska Region recognized that the decline in domestic market demand and prices for forest products posed a significant threat to the stability and longevity of the remaining forest products infrastructure in Southeast Alaska. The export timber policy for Region 10 was modified to allow purchasers to ship up to 50% of the sale volume to the most advantageous markets outside of Alaska. Records indicate that a majority of the Federal timber volume shipped from Region 10 is going into the Chinese markets.

Question 7. Last year your team promised a new transition for timber in Alaska. So far, we have seen nothing of this transition. Why not? What is the status?

Answer. The Transition Framework for Southeast Alaska was announced by the Department of Agriculture in May 2010 as a joint effort by the Forest Service and Rural Development. As part of the Transition Framework that relates to forest management, the Tongass National Forest has developed an integrated 5-year program of work that will facilitate transition in Southeast Alaska from a forest management regime that depends primarily on harvesting mature old growth trees to one based increasingly on young forest management and restoration activities. This plan is posted on www.tongassfutures.net. The program of work will further the goals of the USDA Transition Framework, which is much broader than timber alone and includes the development of sustainable diversified economies throughout the region that are based on forest restoration, renewable energy, fisheries and marine aquaculture, subsistence, and tourism/recreation, while sustaining and transitioning a viable timber economy. An economic mapping study was completed in December of 2010 and the broader strategic Transition Framework is due later this summer, as previously promised.

Question 8. In 2008, the Forest Service committed to preparing and offering four 10-year timber sales with a volume of 150 to 200 million board feet each. The purpose of these timber sales was to provide sufficient assured volume for a single-shift at four medium size manufacturing facilities. Without the volume assurance, the industry cannot make the investments necessary to upgrade their existing mills or to construct a facility that could process the low-grade timber in the region. Remember, the Forest Service has monopoly power over the timber supply in the region. Congress has repeatedly made available pipeline funds to allow the Forest Service to prepare these 10-year sales and other timber sales. Now we are told that the agency plans to convert two of the 10-year timber sales to Stewardship contracts and to offer only half of the promised volume and to offer that reduced volume in small parcels.

The 2008 Tongass Land Management Plan (TLMP) provided an opportunity for the timber industry to harvest up to 267 million board feet per year, but the most recent timber sale schedule (which has been renamed a vegetation management schedule) indicates that Region 10 will be preparing and offering for sale only 128 million board feet in 2012. Does your proposed budget for region 10 provide the funds necessary to prepare and offer this amount of timber?

Answer. The FY 2012 expected National Forest System timber output is 2,616 million board feet based on the President's proposed budget. The Regional allocations including, Region 10, are currently not finalized, making it difficult to predict with certainty the expected forest products outputs. Fluctuations in timber values and the Region's ability to transition to young stand management will influence final timber outputs levels. The FY 2012 President's budget proposes \$854,242 million for the National Forest System's integrated resource restoration (IRR) program. This budget line item brings together key management resources necessary for maintaining and restoring watershed and forest health under one umbrella and directs funding to achieve priority work in the most important places. Established performance measures such as timber volume, road mileages, acres treated for haz-

ardous fuels, and other outputs will continue to be used. Funding for IRR is pivotal to achieving increased timber targets, as well as other vegetation management targets. As a part of the FY 2012 proposal for Integrated Resource Restoration we will assign specific targets to each region. Line officers are held accountable, through performance reviews, for meeting assigned targets. As described above, in both FY 2009 and FY 2010, the Alaska Region received appropriations sufficient to fund two of the four timber sale projects and some may be considered for stewardship contracting. We will continue to work through Transition Framework to provide these sales.

Question 9. The Region 10 5-year timber sale schedule indicated that the agency would be preparing and offering 152 million board feet of timber sales in fiscal year 2011, but the most recent periodic timber sale announcement indicates that only 38 million board feet will be offered this fiscal year. Are we likely to see a similar shortfall in timber sales offered in FY 2012?

Answer. Timber sales offered in FY 2012 will vary due to many factors, and the periodic timber sale volume for FY 2012 has not yet been finalized.

The forest will focus on achieving the goals and outcomes identified in the FY 2012 budget. This includes a more integrated approach that involves bringing key management resources together for maintaining and restoring watersheds and forest health. All management activities are subject to the National Environmental Policy Act process. The Tongass National Forest is focused on achieving FY 2012 targets and outcomes commensurate with available funding, prevailing economic conditions, and situations at given local levels.

Question 10. The timber industry reports that the ongoing timber sale shortfalls are due in large part to constraints on available timber that were imposed by the 2008 Tongass Land Management Plan. Further, the Secretary of Agriculture has withheld permission to offer timber in roadless areas even though roadless areas comprise half of the timberland available under the 2008 TLMP.

The Forest Service has told us that they will not be permitted to construct any timber sale roads in Region 10 and further, they have been directed to destroy many miles of road. These roads were constructed at significant cost to allow access for timber harvest, land management activities and recreation. I understand the concern about costly road maintenance but remember, the timber industry has traditionally provided the necessary road maintenance in Region 10 and it is only because of the lack of timber sales that the industry is no longer performing road maintenance. It would be unnecessary to destroy these roads if the timber sale program in the region, and the thousands of jobs that accompanied the timber sale program, were restored.

The Forest Service controls over 90% of the timberland in Southeast Alaska but, as a result of ongoing timber sale shortages, there is only one medium-size sawmill still operating in Region 10. What is your agency doing to correct this crisis?

Answer. The Forest Service, USDA Rural Development, and the Economic Development Administration (EDA) of the Department of Commerce are working together on a Transition Framework, which was outlined in a previous response. More information can be found about the Transition Framework at www.tongassfutures.net. Domestic and international market conditions over the past several years have made it difficult for domestic processors to operate in a profitable manner. Costly litigation has also added to the difficulties in successfully delivering timber sales. A new path, beyond timber sales, is needed. The Transition Framework, which is much broader than timber alone and includes the development of sustainable diversified economies through the region that are based on forest restoration, renewable energy, fisheries and marine aquaculture, subsistence, and tourism/recreation, while sustaining and transitioning a viable timber economy is due later this summer.

In 2008 the export timber policy in Region 10 was changed to allow purchasers to ship up to 50% of the sale volume to the most advantageous markets outside of Alaska. The agency fully realizes the importance of the forest products industry in the delivery of forest management objectives.

The Alaska Region is working diligently to prepare and offer timber sale volume in compliance with the 2008 Tongass Land Management Plan and the 2001 Roadless Rule. The Secretary of Agriculture has the authority to allow road construction and reconstruction in designated roadless areas, per Secretary of Agriculture's Memorandum 1045-155 of May 28, 2010. The Tongass National Forest is adapting the way it manages roads to reduce resource impacts while allowing for future usage. The Forest is putting many of its roads in a stored condition as part of its travel management planning, which provides opportunities for public input. A stored road is one that the Forest Service intends to use again in the future, but that is temporarily closed. Placing roads in a stored condition allows the Agency to mitigate many of the environmental impacts that can occur due to lack of mainte-

nance, while making the roads available for future land management activities. The FY 2012 President's Budget request includes approximately \$158 million for Road Construction and Maintenance, including an estimated \$32 million for engineering support to vegetation projects. Of that, nearly \$9 million is specifically planned for new road construction (approximately 4 to 6 miles) on the Tongass National Forest.

Question 11. Would you please explain "species of conservation concern" as discussed in the draft Land Management Planning Rule? It seems from the definition provided in the draft that a 'responsible official' might have overly broad latitude to deem any number of species as a "species of conservation concern" without undergoing sufficient scientific review.

Answer. The intent of the provisions in the new draft Planning Rule is to provide for plant and animal diversity, and to keep common species common, contribute to the recovery of threatened and endangered species, conserve candidate species, and protect species of conservation concern. Responsible officials would be required to develop components in plans, using a two-pronged approach of overall habitat (ecosystem and watershed) maintenance or restoration combined with targeted measures designed to address the needs of specific species. In including these requirements, the draft rule recognizes that there will be circumstances outside of the Agency's control that may impact particular species. The Agency believes that the proposed approach is both more reflective of the NFMA, and more implementable than the 1982 rule.

As part of the requirements included in the section on "diversity of plant and animal communities," the proposed rule would require that,

(219.9) Within Forest Service authority and consistent with the inherent capability of the plan area, the plan must include plan components to maintain the diversity of plant and animal communities, as follows:

(b) Species Conservation. The plan components must provide for the maintenance or restoration of ecological conditions in the plan area to:

(3) Maintain viable populations of species of conservation concern within the plan area. Where it is beyond the authority of the Forest Service or the inherent capability of the plan area to do so, the plan components must provide for the maintenance or restoration of ecological conditions to contribute to the extent practicable to maintaining a viable population of a species within its range. When developing such plan components, the responsible official shall coordinate to the extent practicable with other Federal, State, tribal, and private land managers having management authority over lands where the population exists.

(219.19) Species of conservation concern are defined in the proposed rule as "Species other than federally listed threatened or endangered species or candidate species, for which the responsible official has determined that there is evidence demonstrating significant concern about its capability to persist over the long-term in the plan area."

The proposed rule requires that the best available scientific information be considered throughout the rule-making process, and the responsible official would have to document how the most relevant, reliable and accurate science was appropriately interpreted and applied, including in determining which species are "species of conservation concern" for the unit. Forest Service Directives would contain specific criteria for selecting species of conservation concern. For example, state lists of endangered, threatened, rare, endemic, or other classifications of species, such as those listed as threatened under State law, may be used to inform the selection of species of conservation concern for the unit.

The proposed rule's requirement for species of conservation concern would be to maintain or restore ecological conditions to maintain viable populations of species of conservation concern within the plan area, within the Agency's authority and consistent with the inherent capability of the plan area. Where a viable population of a species of conservation concern already exists within the plan area, the appropriate ecological conditions needed to maintain the long-term persistence of that species would continue to be provided.

The responsible official would identify ecosystem-level plan components to provide the overall ecological conditions needed by a species of conservation concern: for example, restoration of mature longleaf pine habitat for red-cockaded woodpeckers. In addition, the responsible official would identify specific ecological conditions needed by a species: for example, providing artificial nesting cavities for red-cockaded woodpeckers while longleaf pine stands that can provide natural nesting cavities are being restored.

At times, factors outside the control of the Agency will prevent the Agency from being able to maintain a viable population of species of conservation concern within the plan area: for example, some of our southern forest units are too small to provide nesting habitat for the number of pairs needed to provide for a viable population of red-cockaded woodpeckers solely within the boundaries of the unit. In such cases, the proposed rule would require that the Agency provide plan components to maintain or restore ecological conditions within the plan area for that species, and by doing so to contribute to the extent practicable to a viable population across its range.

Additionally, the responsible official would be required to reach out beyond NFS boundaries, to coordinate management with other land managers for the benefit of a species across its range. This requirement does not impose any management requirements or attempt to impose management direction on other land managers—rather, it imposes a duty on the responsible official to reach out to work with others and to coordinate management to the extent practicable. This requirement recognizes that species move across the landscape, and as habitat and ecological conditions change, greater cooperation among land managers will be necessary to conserve individual species.

Question 12. What is meant by “Landscape Planning” in the Land Management Planning Rule?

Answer. The proposed rule takes an “all-lands” approach to planning. What this means is that the responsible official would need to understand the context for management within the broader landscape, to determine the best management plan for a specific unit within the National Forest System.

In the assessment phase, responsible officials would draw on information from many sources to understand the social, economic, and ecologic conditions and trends relevant to the plan area, and to identify the distinctive roles and contributions of the unit in providing various multiple uses or benefits to the local community, region and nation. In the planning phase, responsible officials would provide opportunities for other government agencies and land managers to participate, would review the planning and land use policies of other governmental entities where relevant to the plan area, and would coordinate with other planning efforts to the extent practicable and appropriate. In the monitoring phase, responsible officials would assess information and data from monitoring on both the unit and the broader landscape to determine whether any change to management within the boundaries of the plan area might be warranted.

This approach recognizes that management of national forests and grasslands can both impact and be impacted by management or conditions on the lands that surround the unit, and that management can be improved by understanding that context and communicating with other land managers.

Question 13. How do you envision the Forest Service managing at the “landscape” level, “irrespective of ownership or other artificial boundaries”? And, do you believe that property lines are “artificial boundaries”?

Answer. While the proposed rule would require an understanding of the context for management of NFS lands within the context of the broader landscape, the proposed rule explicitly recognizes and affirms that Forest Service management authority applies only within National Forest System boundaries. Agency managers do not direct or control management of lands outside of the National Forest System, nor will they conform management on the unit to meet non-Agency objectives or policies. In this way, the proposed rule recognizes the importance of respecting ownership and jurisdictional boundaries.

Rather, the framework for collaboration, information sharing, and engagement created in the proposed rule encourages responsible officials to work with other land managers to address the many natural resource and land management issues that cross ownership and jurisdictional boundaries, for example: water, fire, wildlife, and invasive species. The Forest Service intends to continue to work cooperatively and collaboratively with adjoining landowners and communities to address these issues. As described in the response to Question 12, the proposed rule would require that responsible officials understand landscape-scale conditions and trends relevant to the unit and invite the participation of other land managers and members of the public throughout the planning process for the unit.

a. How do you envision the Forest Service managing at the “landscape” level, “irrespective of ownership or other artificial boundaries”?

This “all lands” approach recognizes that management issues do not stop and start on a property, political, or other boundary line. The primary trends and threats that face our Nation’s forests such as: forest fragmentation, increased urbanization and conversion of forestlands, the effects of climate change, severe wildfire,

and the spread of invasive species cross all jurisdictional boundaries. To be successful in addressing these issues we must work with landowners and interested parties to conserve, protect, and enhance the Nation's forests.

Forest Service land management authority applies within national forest boundaries, and the Forest Service manages lands within the National Forest System and its authorities. Consistent with Federal law, the Forest Service does cooperate with adjacent landowners, local government entities, and others on a range of land management issues, including fire suppression, invasive plant control, law enforcement, recreational use and access, and other shared priorities. The Forest Service, through its planning process and through project specific management actions, consults and coordinates with adjacent landowners to improve the health, sustainability, and productivity of national forests and surrounding lands.

The Forest Service also provides technical and financial assistance to landowners and resource managers to help sustain the Nation's urban and rural forests. The Forest Service works with our State partners to address those priority landscape-level issues that they identified in their Statewide Forest Resource Assessments and Strategies through cooperation and coordination across jurisdictional boundaries. The primary trends and threats that face our Nation's forests such as forest fragmentation, increased urbanization and conversion of forestlands, the effects of climate change, severe wildfire, and the spread of invasive species cross jurisdictional boundaries. To be successful in addressing these issues we must work with landowners and interested parties to conserve, protect, and enhance the Nation's forests.

b. And, do you believe that property lines are "artificial boundaries?"

The Forest Service respects all boundaries, private property rights, and the limits of the Forest Service's land management authority. National Forest System employees survey, mark, manage, and protect national forest and grassland boundaries in order to protect the public's investment in the national forests and grasslands. Property lines are legal landownership boundaries whose location and extent is defined by the legal land title ownership of the United States and the adjoining landowners. The Forest Service does not assert Federal management authority on other Federal, State, tribal, county, local, private, or corporate lands lying within the exterior perimeter boundary of the National Forest System. The Forest Service does actively seek opportunities to work cooperatively and collaboratively with adjoining landowners and communities to protect both public and private estates.

Question 14. How far from FS boundaries do you think your agency's influence should extend?

Answer. The Forest Service respects all boundaries, private property rights, and the limits of the Forest Service's land management authority. The primary trends and threats that face our Nation's forests (such as forest fragmentation, increased urbanization and conversion of forestlands, the effects of climate change, severe wildfire, and the spread of invasive species) cross jurisdictional boundaries. To be successful in addressing these issues we must work with landowners and interested parties to conserve, protect, and enhance the Nation's forests.

Forest Service State and Private Forestry, Research and Development, and International Programs provide technical assistance, grants, and other support to non-Federal forests and grasslands throughout the United States and internationally, consistent our authorities and direction. Together Forest Service programs improve forest health, sustainability, and productivity, whether in an urban forest in Chicago, on private forest land in northern New England, or in the rainforests of Africa, and the benefits to the American people of these investments are substantial. Likewise, the long-term health and resilience of national forests and grasslands directly affect surrounding non-federal lands, communities, and waters that are adjacent or downstream. Therefore, we implement management decisions to improve the long-term health of broader ecosystems and watersheds as well as respecting private property rights and the broader interests within communities, states, and regions.

GREAT OUTDOORS INITIATIVE

Question 15. The President had a recent speech and there was a recent press release promoting the great outdoors initiative including a comment to provide more "access" to public lands. We don't understand why the 2012 Administration budget proposal calls for a \$ 3 million reduction in the Trails budget and \$79 million to decommission an additional 2,185 miles of road. These two programs do not appear to be consistent with the Initiative.

a. Why decommission more roads (eliminating access) and reducing the Trails program that has millions in deferred maintenance to existing trails?

b. What impact do you believe the America's Great Outdoors Initiative will have on the management of Forests?

c. It is clear that many of the same concepts included in the Land Management Planning Rule are also a part of the report. What role did you or others at Forest Service play in drafting the report?

Answer a). "Why decommission more roads (eliminating access) and reducing the Trails program that has millions in deferred maintenance to existing trails?"

A reduction in funding does not equate to a reduction in "access". There is much to do to ensure the public has the access they need to public lands. The discussion around access in the Great Outdoors Initiative is focused on land acquisition, the forest legacy program, and community forests and open spaces. Your question specifically addressed the type of access provided by roads and trails. The FY 2012 President's Budget request provides funds to continue to operate and maintain our network of National Forest System (NFS) trails. The regions and forests work together to set priorities for maintaining and improving trails. We understand the importance of Forest Service trails to provide access for the public to the national forests. We continue to seek opportunities with partners to leverage resources to maintain trails in order to establish a new generation of trail stewards.

Currently the Forest Service has approximately 370,000 miles of system roads. Each year, we decommission less than 1% of this total. Many of the roads we decommission are user-created routes that are not part of the designated system, or are not needed for access to the national forests, and are causing significant environmental damage.

Decommissioning unneeded roads and trails eliminates adverse environmental effects and actually contributes to keeping our ability to maintain other access points. Decommissioning is essential to operating a safe and sustainable transportation system.

The Forest Service will continue to conduct travel analyses, including working with the public to determine which roads are needed for access, and which can be decommissioned or put in a stored condition so that they are available for future land management activities.

b) "What impact do you believe the America's Great Outdoors Initiative will have on the management of Forests?"

Answer. The America's Great Outdoors (AGO) initiative supports and advances the "all-lands approach to conservation" articulated by Secretary Vilsack and Chief Tidwell. The AGO report recognizes that communities and partners need to work across boundaries to sustain the landscapes we all share, including National Forest System lands. The AGO report outlines some processes for bringing together landowners and stakeholders across boundaries to identify common goals and long-term outcomes for managing shared landscapes. These processes will assist the Forest Service in meeting the challenges of ecological restoration, invasive species, watershed degradation, fire and fuels. It will also enable us to accomplish more work on the ground by focusing our efforts at the landscape level, improving our use of stewardship contracts and establishing a consistent planning framework for the agency. Through landscape-scale conservation, the Forest Service will be able to meet public expectations for the environmental, economic, and societal benefits of forest and grasslands.

c) "It is clear that many of the same concepts included in the Land Management Planning Rule are also a part of the report. What role did you or others at Forest Service play in drafting the report?"

Answer. The Chief of the Forest Service, Tom Tidwell, directly engaged with USDA executive leadership on all ten of the major components of AGO to provide advice and counsel on the Forest Service programs that complement the AGO goals. He personally attended four public listening sessions across the country to interact with stakeholders about their ideas especially about connecting people to the land via landscape scale restoration, community jobs and youth opportunities.

Forest Service employees served on writing teams to draft the initial America's Great Outdoors report and Forest Service Senior Executives served in leadership positions, in conjunction with agency leaders from across the Executive Branch, on these teams. The report underwent several revisions which were reviewed and commented on by members of these teams. Jim Hubbard, Deputy Chief for State & Private Forestry, served as the Forest Service's Executive Lead for the AGO effort.

Question 16. Access to Alaska Lands: Just recently small placer miners in Alaska have been informed that the Forest Service is planning to restrict motorized access to a host of mining claims in Alaska in the Chugach National Forest and also in

the Tongass National Forest. While some of this may be the result of the Forest Service moving to close the use of logging roads no longer needed for future timber sales based on a 2008-09 study, some of the complaints appear unconnected to budgetary concerns about the lack of funding for maintenance of traditional access routes. Clearly access across lands protected by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act is protected by the 1980 law, but the complaints about access denial for mineral operations in the Chugach National Forest is rapidly increasing. What exactly is the reason for the attempt to close access, under exactly what scope of authority is the Service moving to deny access, and exactly how can small miners access their valid claims to minerals under national mining law without having the right to motorized access on routes they have used for many decades?

Answer a). "What exactly is the reason for the attempt to close access, under exactly what scope of authority is the Service moving to deny access, and"

Land Management Plans are completed under authority of the requirements of the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended by the National Forest Management Act of 1976. The Chugach National Forest closed a number of roads and trails to motorized access in 2002, as directed by the unit's Land Management Plan, which was revised that year. Those roads and trails were closed based on environmental and economic concerns and were done so with the appropriate level of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance. Motorized access to mining operations in areas otherwise closed to motorized use on the Chugach National Forest is routinely allowed for mining purposes by written authorization under a Mining Plan of Operations, per 36 CFR 228.4.

b.) "exactly how can small miners access their valid claims to minerals under national mining law without having the right to motorized access on routes they have used for many decades?"

Answer. Prior to mining activities, the miners must develop and submit a Plan of Operations, which will address access needs. The Plan of Operations requires NEPA compliance and will enable the Forest to identify reasonable access pursuant to the proposed mining activities. Stipulations may include restrictions seasonally to protect resource values, such as, road or trail improvements with due consideration of the particular and unique needs of the mining operating plan.

Forest visitors are subject to the same motorized access restrictions, including those engaged in nonprofit recreational mining. However, the Forest has provided maps to the Gold Prospectors Association of America (GPAA) showing locations open to the public that are easily accessible near open roads and/or that can be accessed with off road vehicles. The Forest has also provided hundreds of GOLD PANNING brochures (2010 version) to the association.

Question 17. Pacific Northwest Research Station Expansion: Last year the Alaska Delegation urged the Forest Service by letter to consider expanding the size of a co-located new Pacific Northwest Research Station Laboratory that is being built at the University of Alaska Southeast in Juneau, Alaska. A larger lab facility at that site is cost effective since the University of Alaska has funded infrastructure costs and because the lab can handle the needs of other federal agencies in Southeast Alaska such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Geological Survey and the National Park Service, besides handling the research needs of the Forest Service's own new Heen Latinee Experimental Forest located in Juneau. Has the Forest Service considered, and is it willing to expand the size of the research station's laboratory building in Juneau, perhaps either through its FY 12 or FY 13 budget, and what is the status of funding and construction of the facility that is already underway in Juneau?

Answer. The Forest Service has carefully considered the option of expanding the size of the Juneau Forestry Sciences Laboratory to accommodate related federal agencies. Our response is documented in the letter that was sent to Senator Murkowski October 21, 2010. The difficulties of expanding the current building are due to design challenges, environmental concerns, and the lack of authority for the Forest Service to build space for other agencies. Expanding the current building would also result in delays of 1 to 2 years in construction due to the need to redesign the foundation, mechanical systems, and amend the environmental assessment. Nevertheless, the Forest Service is open to consider co-location of other facilities on the Laboratory property. Co-location with a connection to the laboratory building would provide benefits similar to expanding the existing building.

For the currently planned structure, Congress appropriated \$4.95 million in FY 2010 for construction of Phase 1 of the Juneau Forestry Sciences Laboratory and a design build contract was awarded in August 2010. The design is in the final stages and construction is expected to start in May 2011. The FY 2011 President's

Budget requested \$4.96 million for Phase 2 which will finish out the space for the Forest Service needs, if appropriated. Neither the Forest Service or the Fish and Wildlife Service have requested funds in FY 2012 for a building expansion.

Question 18. Air Tankers: Would the advanced avionics that the C-130J aircraft carry that allow them to fly night missions address some of the concerns raised about the response to the Station Fire? Given the liability concerns regarding flights, would you ever expect the agency to authorize such night flights?

Answer. The C-130J does provide for the ability to fly night missions, as do other aircraft. However, much consideration must be given to the cost/benefit of flying large airtankers at night and the ability to do it effectively and safely. Training and equipment requirements must be considered. A thorough risk assessment to address collision avoidance and safety of firefighters on the ground must be conducted before the Forest Service would consider implementing night aerial firefighting. This is a course of action the Forest Service is exploring.

Question 19. Can you provide the Committee with the numbers for the remaining operational service life of each of the large airtankers currently in the fleet?

Answer. Over the last few years we have averaged 19 available airtankers. Current estimates based on airtanker contractor input show that there will be a 50% reduction in total number of legacy (P-2V and P3 aircraft) airtankers in the next 10 years. In order to sustain these aircraft, contractors will have to continue a strict maintenance and inspection program approved by the Federal Aviation Administration for the airtanker mission.

- P-2V attrition is estimated to begin in 2017.
- P-3 attrition is estimated to begin in 2029.

Question 20. In 2004, the Forest Service grounded the large airtanker fleet for half of the fire season to develop better safety protocols. Backfilling with helitankers and heavy lift type 1 helicopters added \$80 million to that season's aviation costs. If you reconfigure your current fleet to use these types of helicopters after the large airtankers are retired, how much would that approach add to your annual aviation costs?

Answer. It is safe to say that costs would increase, but it is difficult to answer that question with any certainty as it all depends on fire season conditions, the number and type of helicopter and many other variables.

Question 21. The large airtankers are primarily an initial attack resource. Eighty-five percent of your annual fire suppression expenses are consumed by the roughly 2% of the fires that escape initial attack and become expensive, large incident fires. Without large airtankers how would your initial attack success rate change?

Answer. We believe we would be able to maintain initial attack success provided the ability to backfill with other air resources is achieved. A variety of factors influence our ability to contain fires. Large airtankers provide a unique combination of speed, range, and high load capacity which can be of critical importance during the initial response to wildland fires. In some cases, large airtankers provide the only tool available until other assets can be deployed to the site.

Question 22. Based upon the cost figures from previous fire seasons, it appears that every 0.1% improvement in initial attack success rate would save about \$110-120 million in suppression expenses. Does that sound about right to you?

Answer. In general, there is no direct link that can be established between initial attack success and overall suppression expenditures for a given year. A variety of factors influence our ability to contain fires within initial attack including overall fire activity both regionally and nationally which influences the availability of other suppression assets: management objectives for any particular unplanned fire; and, weather and fuels conditions.

Question 23. Since the release of the NTSB report in 2004 and the Forest Service's response to NTSB's recommendations, it has been a known fact that the imposition of an operational service life on the large airtanker fleet would result in the current aircraft eventually being retired from active service. How quickly has the industry moved in 7 years to bring newer aircraft models into the fire fighting mission to replace the existing large fixed wing airtanker models?

Answer. A recent request for information on next generation airtanker platforms received over ten responses. The agency continues to develop opportunities for the vendor community to transition to more modern aircraft.

Question 24. What steps has the Forest Service taken that might encourage the industry to invest money in developing such an aircraft?

Answer. The agency has transitioned from three year option contracts to five year fixed price contracts. This has provided greater financial stability for the vendor which allows them to make investments in newer aircraft. The agency sponsors a biannual Airtanker Forum to engage with the vendors in identifying obstacles to

modernization, business best practices, and collaborative efforts that can meet the agency's needs. Agency staff members regularly meet with contractors on these issues. The agency has worked with contractors to perform tests to certify new airtanker capabilities.

Question 25. Do the FARS regulations allow the Forest Service to enter into 10 year contracts when it comes to acquiring air craft services for these planes? If not, would such authority increase the likelihood of the current industry wanting to invest the funding needed to develop alternative aircraft?

Answer. Current FAR regulations do not permit the Agency to enter into 10-year contracts to acquire aircraft services. It is difficult to ascertain what the industry might say.

Question 26. In addition to this report, will you provide the Committee with an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of each of the options listed at the end of the large fixed wing airtanker strategy?

Answer. This response is based on the NIAC Interagency Aviation Strategy, Appendix 12: Wildland Fire Large Airtanker Strategy. The airtanker options listed in Appendix 12 are contractual operational models.

OPTION/ MODEL 1: GOVERNMENT-OWNED, CONTRACTOR-OPERATED BUSINESS MODEL.

The USDA Forest Service (FS) would own the airtankers and contract for operations and maintenance from private industry. Government ownership of these aircraft will result in control over maintenance and safety.

Strengths

Private industry reduces capital investment risk.
Private industry has operations and maintenance contracting opportunities.
Potential for reduced operating cost over existing contracted airtankers.

Weaknesses

Acquisition cost is very high.
Private industry would be excluded from airtanker ownership and operations.

OPTION 2-MILITARY-OWNED, MILITARY-OPERATED BUSINESS MODEL.

UPDATE—Since this option was developed in 2008, the model has changed based on discussion with the Department of Defense. The Forest Service would own these aircraft and the military would operate and maintain them. The modular retardant tank system would be upgraded to next generation beyond MAFFS 2, which could increase retardant payload and effectiveness.

This option would be an extension of the military C-130 program known as the Modular Airborne Firefighting System or MAFFS. Outside of the fire season, the Air Force/ Air National Guard would have access to the aircraft for traditional military missions.

Strengths

Coordination between the Forest Service and the Department of Defense.

Weaknesses

Acquisition Cost of C-130Js is very high.
Private industry would be excluded from airtanker ownership and operations.
Operational costs would be high based on the MAFFS program historical use and operations.
War and Homeland security issues could impact availability of airtankers in this model.

OPTION 3-CONTRACTOR-OWNED, CONTRACTOR-OPERATED MODEL.

UPDATE—Since this option was developed in 2008, private industry has expressed the desire to remain in the airtanker business and modernize their fleet of aircraft. A recent contract request for information (RFI) for newer technology airtankers netted over ten proposals. Several new technology airtankers may be operational this year within the existing contract. The follow on contract Request for Proposal to the RFI above is intended to contract for newer airtankers. Private industry may be able to provide a majority of the future airtanker fleet.

Strengths

Private industry remains a viable part of the business.
The Forest Service does not own large airtankers (low initial costs to the government).
The MAFFS program remains a viable wildfire surge asset.

Weaknesses

Current contracts are for five years. A longer contract period could provide reduce financial risk and improve return on investment.

Question 27. Can you help the Committee understand what other programs you will propose to cut to pay for the C-130J aircraft that your staff seems to prefer?

Answer. USDA and the Forest Service are still reviewing all options for air support. It is premature at this time to speculate on funding.

Question 28. Please provide the Committee with the following information: 1) expected total cost of the replacement aircraft; 2) how many would need to be purchased each year and for how many years the purchases would continue; 3) what the expected annual cost of operations of each aircraft would be; and 4) compare those costs against the alternatives including the re-winged of the existing P-3 Orion aircraft.

Answer.

1). The agency has not yet selected a replacement aircraft model. Nor has it been determined whether the aircraft will be contractor owned or government owned.

2). It has not been determined whether the aircraft will be contractor owned or government owned. However, to, at a minimum, replace the current fleet 19 aircraft would need to be purchased by either contractors or the government.

3). Most aircraft models being evaluated cost about \$5,000 per hour to operate and approximately \$10,000 per day for fixed costs.

4). The Forest Service has analyzed the costs of refurbishment of not only the P-3 but military surplus C-130H aircraft. The aviation industry estimates that complete refurbishment costs could be 80% the cost of a new aircraft of the same make and model. Even with refurbishment, these aircraft will have limited operational life 60% less than a new aircraft. Operating costs of a refurbished P-3 or C-130H could be 60% higher than a new aircraft, but would be less capable (i.e. speed, payload and other capability) because of their older design, engines and flight management technology.

Question 29. 2008 Farm Bill, Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP): This program has great inconsistency, coupled with a start (2009) stop (Feb 2010) schedule and a precipitous decline in funding since inception. How can you provide an incentive to utilize wood by-products for biopower and biofuels when there is no consistency and predictability to the program? The 2011 OMB budget request for BCAP was \$196 million. The Administration's 2012 budget proposal is to slash the Matching Payment Program to a capped \$70 million. Why is this program being singled out in the Farm Bill for major budget reductions? Why hasn't the Guidance Document been completed and issued to local FSA officials to implement the Matching Payment Program when the Rule was issued Oct. 27, 2010?

Answer. The following answer is provided by the Farm Services Agency.

The Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP) was enacted as part of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill). As enacted, the 2008 Farm Bill provided the open-ended appropriation of "such sums as necessary" for all expenditures of the program. At the time the 2008 Farm Bill was enacted the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimated that BCAP expenditures would total \$70 million over the life of the Farm Bill. On June 29, 2010, Congress enacted the FY 2010 Supplemental Disaster Relief and Summer Jobs Act (P.L. 111-212) which capped expenditures for BCAP at \$432 million. While the FY 2011 President's budget included estimated expenditures of \$196 million for BCAP the only limitation on spending was the cap imposed by Congress. The FY 2012 President's budget includes a proposal to cap the Matching Payments portion of BCAP at \$70 million (the same amount CBO originally estimated for the entire cost of BCAP); the Establishment and Annual payment portions of BCAP would only be capped by the limitations previously imposed by Congress. Efforts to limit expenditures under the Matching Payments portion of BCAP have been driven, in part, by concerns expressed by Members of Congress and the wood products industry regarding resultant market distortions. All guidance documentation for the local FSA officials has been disseminated. Instructions on applications for Qualifying Biomass Conversion Facilities were issued to FSA county offices on December 15, 2010, instructions for Project Proposals on December 17, 2010, and instructions for requesting matching payments on January 7, 2011.

Question 30. State and Private Forestry: The Forest Service has adopted an "All Lands" landscape scale approach to address the insect, disease, and wildfire risk to productive forest lands on the National Forests. Yet, both last year and this year's 2012 Budget Proposal calls for substantial reductions to:

Forest Health Mgt—Fed. Lands and Coop Lands: \$-6.3 million
 State Fire Assistance: -\$5.946 million
 Volunteer Fire Assistance: \$-7 million
 Economic Action Program: \$-5 million

a. Please explain how you incentivize an “All Lands” approach with these State & Private Forestry cuts?

b. Do you agree that these funds are the heart of incentivizing private land, restoration, and fuels reduction and partnering with state and local fire assistance?

Answer a). Please explain how you incentivize an “All Lands” approach with these State & Private Forestry cuts?

The US Forest Service is committed to the Secretary’s “All Lands” vision for forest conservation and recognizes the need for greater collaboration across federal, state, and private forestlands and the importance of maintaining working forest landscapes for rural economies. The agency will incentivize this “All Lands” approach by utilizing a mix of programs to conduct work to address insect, disease, and wild-fire risk on federal lands and to expand this work on all lands while also involving programs beyond these budget line items. We will continue to build and strengthen our relationships with state and private landowners and leverage those partnerships, increasing our effectiveness by focusing funds particularly on those priorities identified by states and territories in their statewide resource assessments and strategies. The Volunteer Fire Assistance program is not reduced in the FY 2012 proposal.

b) “Do you agree that these funds are the heart of incentivizing private land, restoration, and fuels reduction and partnering with state and local fire assistance?”

Answer. The State Forest Resource Assessments are at the “heart” of the all-lands approach and are more integral than funding levels. The US Forest Service recognizes the important work that is done in cooperation with our State and local partners through these cooperative programs. The President’s budget is formulated to balance the important activities of different program areas, with some program reductions necessary to exercise appropriate fiscal prudence in these difficult economic times.

Question 31. National Forest System: Proposal for an IRR budget line item: Since the Chief told us that we needed more mechanical treatments even if it means accomplishing less acres burned, why didn’t all \$86 million go to mechanical thinning? (An \$86 million increase in mechanical thinning would raise the forest products target from 2.4 to 3.1 bbf)

The 2010 budget levels for vegetation Budget Line Items was:

NFTM—\$336 million
 NFWF—\$143 million
 NFWV—\$187 million
 Total = \$666 million

The 2011 IRR proposal added:

Priority Watershed Projects—\$50 million
 CFLRA stewardship contracts—\$40 million

The 2012 IRR proposal calls for:

An increase in Priority Watershed Projects to—\$80 million
 Road decommissioning 2,185 miles at \$75 million
 Shift non-WUI Hazardous Fuels (WFHF) to IRR—\$86 million

A Total increase of \$200 million over the 2011 proposal

Performance standards propose:

2.1.a—Increase the forest products target from 2.4 bbf (2011) to 2.616 bbf (2012)

2.1.b—2.7 million green tons of by-product (obtained by permit, contract, partnership, etc.)

a. We do not understand why the Forest Service does NOT view 2.1.b as a target. Can you help us understand what you view as hard targets?

b. We are not sure why the NFTM, NFWF, and NFWV BLIs should be combined; can you help us better understand why this should be done by describing the added accomplishments that would occur in each area that is combined in to the IRR account?

c. 2010 NFVW was \$187 million; why not simply provide performance focus on the priority watershed projects (\$80 million) coming from NFVW?

d. We do not understand targeting additional road decommissioning CMRD-\$75 million) when that funding is needed to provide engineering support to the vegetation (fuels reduction and mechanical thinning) projects?

e. We believe adding the WFHF shift (\$86 million) to NFTM could provide the ability to increase the forest products performance standard 2.1.a target to 3.1 bbf of solid wood and performance standard 2.1.b target of 3 million green tons for fuelwood and biomass thereby sending the right signal to the Regions and Forests to step up mechanical thinning even if it means less prescribed burning. Can you explain why this should not be done?

Answer. In response to your question as to why all \$86 million did not go towards mechanical thinning, mechanical thinning is only one of several tools used by the agency to restore landscapes. The IRR structure as proposed in the FY 2012 President's budget puts forth restoration opportunities as the best approach to increasing products and services. This integrated approach will allow the agency to accomplish more on the ground work that moves towards the forest health and water quality improvement. It emphasizes collaboration and stewardship contracting, but also recognizes the vital role traditional timber sales play in achieving restoration goals. For example, timber volume sold in FY 2011 is expected to increase from 2.4 million board feet (MMBF) to 2.6 MMBF in FY 2012. These proposed activities will also lead to improving watershed conditions, decommissioning of roads, and restoring or enhancing streams. Increasing the forest products output, alone, from 2.4 to 3.1 MMBF would decrease project integration, create unnecessary conflict with user groups, and would make it more difficult to meet our forest health and water quality improvement goals.

a) "We do not understand why the Forest Service does NOT view 2.1.b as a target. Can you help us understand what you view as hard targets?"

Answer.

The proposed targets identified in the President's FY 2012 budget for Integrated Resource Restoration will also supply 2.7 million green tons of woody biomass from Federal lands. However, because of economic challenges such as limited access, distance from processing centers, and profitability, it is difficult to predict if industry will have the ability to acquire or use this material.

	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Target
Integrated Resource Restoration							
Number of watersheds in Condition Class 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4,280
Number of watersheds in Condition Class 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	6,831
Number of watersheds in Condition Class 3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3,440
Acres treated annually to sustain or restore watershed function and resilience	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2,560,000
Volume of timber sold (million board feet (MMBF))	1,610	2,384	2,415	2,546	2,592	2,400	2,616
Miles of roads decommissioned	402	1,290	1,778	1,519	2,549	1,450	4,370
Miles of stream habitat restored or enhanced	1,542	2,346	3,498	2,600	3,577	2,800	2,670

b) "We are not sure why the NFTM, NFWF, and NFVW BLIs should be combined; can you help us better understand why this should be done by describing the added accomplishments that would occur in each area that is combined in to the IRR account?"

Answer. The integrated resource restoration (IRR) program will enable the Forest Service to undertake larger projects and achieve more results. The IRR budget line item will focus on holistic results, not resource by resource. The IRR budget line item brings together key management resources necessary for maintaining and restoring watershed and forest health under one umbrella and directs funding to achieve priority work in the most important places. The proposed budget structure will allow us to do more work and create more jobs. These large scale projects help maintain existing manufacturing and workforce infrastructure, support biomass facilities to meet existing capacity, and stimulate emerging business opportunities.

IRR moves away from the traditional approaches that are centered on localized small scale resource solutions, and moves the agency toward evaluating and implementing environmental restoration on a broader landscape scale. Funds will be directed to reestablish watershed, forest and grassland health, fire-adapted landscapes, and ecosystem function. Healthy forests provide for long term utilization of materials while improving water quality and reducing the risk of catastrophic fires.

All of this work will support wood products infrastructure and create by-products off of the forests.

Combing the authorities of the existing programs gives line officers the ability and flexibility to meet a wider range of ecological, economic and social values than possible under the current structure. This process emphasizes collaboration with stakeholders, internal multi-disciplinary planning and efficiency efforts, and a well-crafted accountability system that will result in better designed restoration projects, more community support, fewer appeals, and more work accomplished on the ground.

Performance will be addressed through a combination of outcome measures that reflect expected accomplishments toward IRR's restoration and maintenance goals at the forest and regional levels over time, as well as targets tracking current outputs and reporting items, such as board feet, from the former budget line items. This approach will provide consistency and transparency about the use of appropriated funds under the IRR budget structure.

Established performance measures such as timber volume, road mileages, acres treated for hazardous fuels, and other outputs will continue to be used. As a part of the FY 2012 proposal for Integrated Resource Restoration we will assign specific targets to each region. Line officers are held accountable, through performance reviews, for meeting assigned targets.

c) "2010 NFVW was \$187 million; why not simply provide performance focus on the priority watershed projects (\$80 million) coming from NFVW?"

Answer.

A core tenet of the IRR framework is that we need to adapt our work in new ways. More of the same old approaches, and line items will not get us to more work accomplished. The FY 2012 President's Budget request includes a number of budget structure changes designed to increase efficiency in program administration, delivery, and to reduce redundancy while continuing to support this Administration's highest priorities. The FY 2012 President's Budget request will consolidate budget line items (BLI) including Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Management, Timber Management, Legacy Roads, National Forest System Vegetation and Watersheds, the non-Wildland Urban Interface part of Wildland Fire Hazardous Fuels and road decommissioning activities.

Consolidation of these activities will facilitate a holistic approach to landscape management. Singling out any one activity will have the effect of minimizing product outputs. A fully integrated approach is what is needed. Collectively four components make up the IRR framework: 1) Restoration and management of ecosystems; 2) Priority Watershed and Job Stabilization; 3) Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration program; and 4) Legacy Roads and Trails.

Consolidating the BLIs into the IRR structure improves upon traditional approaches centered on local, individual small scale resource solutions and will move the Forest Service toward evaluating and implementing environmental needs on a broad landscape scale, and concentrating activities in priority watersheds. Funds will be directed to reestablish watershed, forest and grassland health, fire-adapted landscapes, and ecosystem function.

d) "We do not understand targeting additional road decommissioning CMRD-\$75 million) when that funding is needed to provide engineering support to the vegetation (fuels reduction and mechanical thinning) projects?"

Answer. This budget supports both; the FY2012 President's Budget includes approximately \$158 million for Road Construction and Maintenance, including \$32 million for engineering support to vegetation projects. This includes support for the construction of new roads, as well as maintenance and reconstruction of existing roads.

The President's Budget is proposing to move the Legacy Roads and Trails program (\$50,000,000) to the new Integrated Resource Restoration program. The focus of the Legacy Roads funding will remain the same as it was in previous years: urgently needed road and trail decommissioning, and repair, maintenance, and associated activities. This includes the restoration of aquatic organism passage and the mitigation of other environmental impacts of roads. In addition, the Forest Service proposes to move \$25 million for priority road decommissioning from the Roads Construction and Maintenance program to the Integrated Resource Restoration program. Together, these funds will constitute the Legacy Roads and Trails component of the Integrated Resource Restoration program.

e) "We believe adding the WFHF shift (\$86 million) to NFTM could provide the ability to increase the forest products performance standard 2.1.a target to 3.1 bbf

of solid wood and performance standard 2.1.b target of 3 million green tons for fuelwood and biomass thereby sending the right signal to the Regions and Forests to step up mechanical thinning even if it means less prescribed burning. Can you explain why this should not be done?"

Answer. The FY 2012 budget proposes a shift of WFHF to a proposed fund NFRR (Integrated Resource Restoration). IRR does emphasize mechanical thinning while addressing larger landscape goals. For example, timber volume harvested is expected to increase from 2.4 million board feet (MMBF) in FY 2011 to 2.6 MMBF in FY 2012. However, prescribed burning is also a critical component for meeting many forests' restoration objectives.

Further, a significant board foot shift such as suggested would create unneeded conflict, appeals, and litigation. There will be time to increase IRR outputs and this program will eventually reach higher levels, but not in the first year. Therefore, the proposed IRR structure balances commercial output opportunities with restoration needs. This integrated approach will allow the Forest Service to accomplish more on the ground work that implements our forest health and water quality improvement goals. These proposed activities will also lead to improving watershed conditions, decommissioning of roads, and restoring or enhancing streams.

Question 32. Capital Improvement and Maintenance: The Administration's FY2011 Budget proposes a \$79 million reduction in the roads program which eliminates the engineering support needed to accomplish the vegetation projects. Why is it shown again in 2012?

Answer. The FY 2012 President's Budget request shifts funding for road and trail decommissioning, as well as road and trail repair and maintenance for the mitigation of environmental impacts of roads and trails associated with restoration work to the Integrated Resource Restoration budget line. Shifting these activities to IRR will allow the Forest Service to accomplish vegetation projects more efficiently. The FY 2012 President's Budget request includes \$158 million for Road Construction and Maintenance in the following activities: \$124 million for Operation and Maintenance; \$25 million for Reconstruction of Existing Roads; and nearly \$9 million for New Road Construction in Alaska. These amounts include an estimated \$32 million for engineering support to vegetation projects. This includes support for the construction of new roads, as well as maintenance and reconstruction of existing roads for vegetation projects.

Question 33. Wildland Fire Management: We can understand why the Agency wants an increase in Most Efficient Level (MEL) of fire preparedness. But we don't understand why the Administration doesn't require the fire crews to be out doing hazardous fuels work and accomplishing targets. Can you help us understand why under-utilized fire crews couldn't or shouldn't be doing this type of work when not on fires?

Answer. The agency takes fire readiness seriously and has requested the funds to maintain an efficient level of preparedness. Fire crews can, and often are assigned, project work that directly accomplishes fuels reduction or other land management work. We want to take advantage of this dual role where we can so please do let us know where we can optimize specific fire crews on the ground. The agency manages the Wildland Fire Management programs collaboratively and coordinates the deployment of firefighting resources to meet fire management objectives. Over the past few years, the Forest Service has taken steps to improve performance and reduce costs, such as to align field units to better capitalize on shared resources, management oversight, and support functions.

Question 34. We do not believe there should be any increase in Preparedness, rather Preparedness crews should be held accountable for accomplishing fuels reduction work (WFHF) when they are on standby waiting for the fire bell.

Answer. The FY 2012 budget does move funds from suppression to preparedness. However, the cost burden for the restructured resources is also shifted. There is no effective increase in Preparedness. In past years aviation and cost pools related to preparedness were paid out of the suppression account in order to maintain initial attack suppression capability. Unfortunately, this procedure artificially inflated the 10-year average cost of fire suppression. Therefore, the Forest Service has now properly re-aligned the budget to ensure that preparedness costs are fully identified separate from suppression. This will affect future computations of the 10-year average.

The agency takes fire readiness seriously and has requested the funds to maintain an efficient level of preparedness. Fire crews can, and often are assigned, project work that directly accomplishes fuels reduction or other land management work. We want to take advantage of this dual role where we can so please do let us know where we can optimize specific fire crews on the ground. The agency manages the Wildland Fire Management programs collaboratively and coordinates the deploy-

ment of firefighting resources to meet fire management objectives. Over the past few years, the Forest Service has taken steps to improve performance and reduce costs, such as to align field units to better capitalize on shared resources, management oversight, and support functions.

Question 35. As was mentioned under S&PF above, with an “All Lands” landscape level approach to management, why is there \$ 41 million of cuts proposed to NFP Forest Health, State Fire Assistance, and Volunteer Fire Assistance?

Answer. The agency is committed to the Secretary’s “All Lands” vision for forest conservation and recognizes the need for greater collaboration across federal, state and private forestlands and the importance of maintaining working forest landscapes for rural economies. The agency will incentivize this “All Lands” approach by utilizing a mix of programs to conduct work to address insect, disease, and wild-fire risk on federal lands and to expand this work on all lands while also involving programs beyond these budget line items. However, the President’s budget is formulated to balance the important activities of different program areas, and some program reductions are necessary to exercise appropriate fiscal prudence in these difficult economic times. Regarding the proposed reduction in Wildland Fire Management State Fire Assistance program, the President’s Budget proposal of \$45,564,000, while down from the FY 2010 enacted level, is generally consistent with prior appropriated funding levels for this account.

RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS AREAS

Question 36. Everyone is aware of the order Secretary Salazar released regarding so-called “Wild Lands,” which are nothing more than de facto Wilderness Areas designated on BLM lands without Congressional approval. Chief Tidwell had a role in changing the way Recommended Wilderness Areas on Forest Lands are managed in Region 1 before he became Chief. Would you explain how Region 1 dealt with Recommended Wilderness Areas, and tell us about the plans the Forest Service Headquarters has, if any, to address Recommended Wilderness Areas?

Answer. When Chief Tidwell was Regional Forester in Region 1, he implemented the National Forest Service policy (Forest Service Manual—FSM1923.03) which states: “Any inventoried roadless area recommended for wilderness or designated wilderness study is not available for any use or activity that may reduce the wilderness potential of an area. Activities currently permitted may continue, pending designation, if the activities do not compromise wilderness values of the area.”

Then-Regional Forester Tidwell advised National Forest System units to carefully consider the characteristics of these, recommended or designated areas while completing their land management plans. When a forest system unit issued a draft recommendation for an area, the unit’s management designation of appropriate uses was to reflect these findings. The draft recommendation for uses was then to be put forth by the forest unit, during the public involvement process required for land management planning, prior to the Forest Service finalizing decisions on the plan.

The Forest Service has received letters from citizen organizations and some members of Congress expressing concern about the management of recommended wilderness areas. The letters have raised the issue of whether recreation uses, such as all terrain vehicles and mountain bikes, that would be prohibited if an area is designated as wilderness may be allowed to continue pending Congressional action on the recommendation. These interim recreation activities may ultimately influence whether or not an area is available for wilderness designation by Congress.

In order to thoroughly consider these concerns, we have assigned a review team to analyze the implementation of the current Forest Service policy. This team expects to complete its work by the summer of 2011. Upon completion of the review, the Forest Service will contact interested parties, including Members of Congress, with the results and options for area management. The Forest Service will analyze any proposed change in policy through a public process.

RECREATION

Question 37. The Notice of Intent to develop a Land Management Rule mostly ignored recreation. The Draft Rule focuses much more on recreation. Why was recreation left out of the NOI, and what emphasis should recreation be given by the Forest Service in the final Land Management Planning Rule and by Forest personnel?

Answer. We intended for recreation management to be incorporated in principle five of the notice of intent (NOI), “...plans could foster sustainable NFS lands and their contribution to vibrant rural economies.” We realize now that a more explicit recognition of recreation would have been better.

The proposed rule does recognize the importance of recreation to the American people and require the unique needs of the recreation resource to be addressed

throughout the process of assessment; plan development, revision or amendment; and monitoring. This process will allow each NFS unit to identify unique recreational roles, create plans that provide sustainable recreational opportunities and uses, and require monitoring of progress toward meeting recreational objectives.

The proposed rule recognizes the importance of sustainable recreation as a multiple use. Sustainable recreation is defined in the proposed rule as the set of recreational opportunities, uses and access that, individually and combined, are ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable, allowing the responsible official to offer recreation opportunities now and into the future. Recreational opportunities can include non-motorized, motorized, developed, and dispersed recreation on land, water, and air.

The proposed rule requires plan components designed to provide for sustainable recreation opportunities and uses, which will contribute to the social and economic health of communities. The proposed rule recognizes the importance of recreation as a multiple use, and would integrate recreation concerns and provide for the unique needs of the recreation resource throughout the planning process, including in the assessment and monitoring phases. The proposed rule requires that plan components provide for sustainable recreation. It also requires the responsible official to take sustainable recreation opportunities and uses into account when developing plan components to contribute to social and economic sustainability.

We look forward to reviewing input from the public on the proposed rule in order to develop our final rule.

Question 38. As you look to the future use of our National Forests in the next 100 years, what is your vision on how these lands should be used by the American people?

Answer. The mission of the USDA Forest Service is to “sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation’s forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations”. Over the next 100 years climate change will impact forests and grasslands, diminishing the benefits they provide. Climate change affects individual species and the stressors and disturbances that shape ecological processes and functions. Climate change is not the only driver of the changes we have been seeing across America’s landscapes. Urban growth, markets for wood, a legacy of fire exclusion, loss of open space, fire and fuels, invasive species, the spread of forest pests and disease, and other factors are also driving change. We will face a whole host of challenges over the next 100 years.

Our commitment to land stewardship and public service is the framework within which the national forests and grasslands are managed. The Forest Service’s Strategic Plan specifies seven agency goals: 1. Restore, sustain, and enhance the Nation’s forests and grasslands; 2. Provide and sustain benefits to the American people; 3. Conserve open space; 4. Sustain and enhance outdoor recreation opportunities; 5. Maintain basic management capabilities of the Forest Service; 6. Engage urban America with Forest Service programs; and 7. Provide science-based applications and tools for sustainable natural resources management. Recently the Forest Service proposed a new planning rule that would provide a framework to guide the collaborative and science-based development, amendment and revision of land management plans that promote healthy, resilient, diverse and productive national forests and grasslands.

In 2010 the President introduced America’s Great Outdoors (AGO), which will help to shape the future of how the Nation’s forests will be used by the American people. The AGO action plan was created with input from some 20,000 Americans, through 56 listening sessions held across the United States, and another 150,000 comments received electronically. The American people care deeply about their outdoor heritage and are willing to take an active role in protecting it now and for future generations. Our role is to advocate a conservation ethic, promoting health, diversity, and productivity of forests and grasslands while listening to and responding to the diverse needs of the American people.

Question 39. How do you view motorized recreation, and how do you see the implementation of the Travel Management Rule progressing?

Answer. Motorized recreation is a long standing and appropriate use of National Forest System lands when properly managed and in the right places. Implementation of the motor vehicle use maps is progressing steadily. As of the end of FY 2010, approximately 68 percent of Forest Service administered units had implemented Subpart B of the travel management rule and published a motor vehicle use map (MVUM). Subpart B, Designation of Roads, Trails, and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use, requires each administrative unit to designate those NFS roads, NFS trails, and areas on NFS lands that are open to motor vehicle use and identify those designations on MVUM. The agency anticipates that nearly all MVUMs will be completed

by December of 2011. The remaining units will implement Subpart B on a schedule determined by available resources and competing priorities.

The Forest Service prepared a Route and Area Designation Implementation Guide in May 2010. The purpose of the guide is to assist Forest Service employees with implementing route and area designations made under the travel management rule, as well as managing off-highway vehicle use at the field level.

Question 40. Do you intend to direct Forests to dedicate the necessary funds to adequately and fairly implement the Travel Management Rule?

Answer. The majority of Forest Service administrative units (68%) have already completed route and area designations under the travel management rule and produced a motor vehicle use map. The Forest Service is committed to funding implementation of the travel management rule in a targeted, efficient manner.

FIRE AVIATION PROPOSAL

Question 41a. Does the Forest Service wish to acquire new C-130J aircraft for fire-fighting?

Answer. The agency has not yet selected a replacement aircraft model.

Question 41b. How much will each plane cost?

Answer. The agency has not selected a replacement aircraft model nor has it determined whether the aircraft will be contractor owned or government owned.

Question 41c. How many planes will you need and how soon?

Answer. To replace the current fleet 19 aircraft would need to be purchased by either contractors or the government.

Question 41d. And in declining budget what programs are you willing to cut to free up funding to cover the cost of acquisition?

Answer. Funding decisions will be made when a specific airtanker proposal and type of ownership is settled upon.

Question 41e. Finally, please explain why your fire and aviation experts have not been willing to look at other alternatives, such as putting new wings on the existing Lockheed P-3 Orion aircraft which I am told can be accomplished at about 1/5th the cost of a new C-130J?

Answer. The Forest Service has evaluated other alternatives including re-winged a P-3. The Forest Service acquired 3 military excess P-3Bs in 2006. The intent was to inspect 1 aircraft and repair it in accordance with US Navy structural inspection requirements which are much less stringent than those needed for the airtanker mission. It became apparent that the aircraft would require much more repair than originally estimated to meet airworthiness requirement for the airtanker mission. The Forest Service has since abandoned this effort due to the extreme costs and has transferred 1 of the 3 aircraft to another government agency. The aviation industry estimates that complete refurbishment costs could be 80% the cost of a new aircraft of the same make and model. Even with refurbishment, these aircraft will have limited operational life 60% less than a new aircraft. Operating costs of a refurbished P-3 or C-130H could be 60% higher than a new aircraft, but would be less capable (i.e. speed, payload and other capability) because of their older design, engines and flight management technology.

RESPONSES OF TOM TIDWELL TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR STABENOW

Question 1a. Chief Tidwell, I've heard concerns about the consolidation of line items in the National Forest System budget into the proposed Integrated Resource Restoration account. This new account will constitute more than half of the discretionary funding for the National Forest System and will cover functions previously funded through 6 separate budget line items. How will Forests with relatively successful timber sale programs plan for their land management programs under the Integrated Resource Restoration budget?

Answer a). "How will Forests with relatively successful timber sale programs plan for their land management programs under the Integrated Resource Restoration budget?"

Timber targets will continue under the IRR proposal and will provide the planning framework. Integrated resource restoration (IRR) will facilitate the Forest Service to increase accomplishments on the ground to support identified forest health and water quality improvement goals. The new IRR structure emphasizes collaboration and stewardship contracting, but also recognizes the vital role traditional timber sales play in achieving restoration goals. Combining the authorities of the existing programs will allow line officers the ability to meet a wider range of ecological, economic and social values than has been possible under the restricted budget structure of the past. The IRR structure will enable larger projects and thus

more goods and services to be produced. It will encourage multi-faceted restoration work with a lower likelihood of appeals and litigation because of the collaborative emphasis used to define projects and the landscape-level objectives of the projects and activities. In this way IRR structure works in concert with the new Proposed Planning Rule, which is similarly anticipated to promote integration of various forest restoration and watershed protection activities contributing to the resilience of ecosystems and landscapes.

b) "What assurance do we have that Forests with successful timber sale programs will continue to meet their timber targets under the IRR program?"

Answer. Timber targets will continue to be applied. Performance will be addressed through a combination of outcome measures that reflect expected accomplishments toward IRR's restoration and maintenance goals at the forest and regional levels over time, as well as targets tracking current outputs and reporting items, such as board feet, from the former budget line items. This approach will provide consistency and transparency about the use of appropriated funds under the IRR budget structure.

Established performance measures such as timber volume, miles of roads decommissioned, acres treated for hazardous fuels, and other outputs will continue to be used. As a part of the FY 2012 proposal for Integrated Resource Restoration we will assign specific targets to each region. Line officers are held accountable, through performance reviews, for meeting assigned targets.

Question 2. As Congress evaluates our renewable energy policies, it's important to me to ensure that we incentivize the sustainable use of renewable biomass from both public and private forests.

Answer a). "If Congress were to adopt a renewable electricity standard using the definition of renewable biomass contained in the 2007 EISA, what would the impact be on communities near the National Forests?"

It is difficult to accurately predict what the impacts would be to communities near national forests and grasslands if Congress adopted a renewable electricity standard. Assuming that a renewable electricity standard would include wood to energy, such a standard would improve markets, reduce management costs, and put people to work. In general, communities assessing the feasibility of biomass utilization have relied on supply studies to determine quantities and availability of biomass materials. Those data have been used by communities to determine if operations can be sustained. This information is not available for all communities near national forests and grasslands, and is essential to accurately determine the impacts and feasibility.

The EISA places limitations on eligible biomass materials. Under the EISA, biomass generated through forest management activities such as slash and pre-commercial thinning residue, is eligible as a renewable fuel only if removed from non-federal forestlands. Materials from federal lands do not qualify.

b) "What about the ability of states like Michigan with substantial acreage of naturally regenerating forests to meet an RES using biomass?"

Answer. Locations with substantial acreage of natural regeneration could possibly assist in meeting a Renewable Electricity Standard.

RESPONSES OF TOM TIDWELL TO QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR WYDEN

COUNTY PAYMENTS

Question 1. In the Administration's proposal to reauthorize the county payments program, there is no funding for the county payments program in the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) budget. Under the existing county payments program, the BLM makes payments to Oregon's O&C counties. That obligation arises from the O&C lands that BLM administers and for which a timber receipt sharing obligation exists under the law that established these lands. My staff has been told that the BLM's role in providing county payments to the O&C counties has been handed over to the Forest Service, who also appears to be solely funding the program from its discretionary budget. I still have not received details from the Administration on how much funding in the proposed 5 year reauthorization will be used for the BLM payments and how such a determination will be made. Can you provide me the amounts, under the Administration's proposal, of the county payments program funding that will be provided to cover payments to the O&C counties for each of the five years of the proposal, how the allocation of funding for Forest Service and

BLM lands will be made and how the Forest Service intends to make payments to cover BLM obligations?

Answer. The Administration's proposal for reauthorizing the Secure Rural Schools Act would not transfer the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) current administration of the O&C lands, and would not transfer the responsibility for BLM's payments to counties. The proposal is shown in the budget under the Forest Service merely for the simplicity of showing it in one place. Inter-agency transfers would be made to ensure that both the Forest Service and the BLM continue covering their respective share of the payments. We understand the concern about this proposal being funded from the agencies' discretionary budgets. The Administration is open to working with Congress to fund either through discretionary or mandatory appropriations.

Determination of the Forest Service and BLM payments would be made using the same formula as in the current Act. This formula calculates a county's adjusted share and applies it to the full funding amount. The proposal identifies separate full funding amounts for each of the proposal's three purposes: payments for schools and roads; economic investment and forest restoration; and, wildfire assistance.

The proposed funding for each purpose by each agency is shown in the following table:

Purpose	(In \$ million)				
	FY2012	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016
Payments for Schools and Roads	\$255	\$230	\$131	\$81	\$49
Forest Service (schools and roads)	[227]	[205]	[117]	[72]	[44]
Bureau of Land Management (county general fund)	[28]	[25]	[14]	[9]	[5]
Economic Investment & Forest Restoration/Protection	64	64	64	64	64
Forest Service	[57]	[57]	[57]	[57]	[57]
Bureau of Land Management	[7]	[7]	[7]	[7]	[7]
Wildfire Assistance	9	0	0	0	0
Forest Service	[8]	[0]	[0]	[0]	[0]
Bureau of Land Management	[1]	[0]	[0]	[0]	[0]
Total	\$328	\$294	\$195	\$145	\$113

COUNTY PAYMENTS RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Question 2. I also understand that the Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) appointments under this program have still not been completed, as the program heads into the final year of the current reauthorization. This has been a very successful part of this program and gets projects and funding out on the ground. Without completed RACs, these projects and use of these funds is getting held up. What is holding up these appointments and can I get your assurance that you will move these out soon?

Answer. We are pleased to report that as of March 11, 2011 the Secretary of Agriculture has appointed members to all of the Secure Rural Schools Act resource advisory committees chartered under the 2008 re-authorization.

HAZARDOUS FUELS

Question 3. As I indicated in the hearing, I am troubled that hazardous fuels funding in the overall budget has been cut about \$10 million when there remains a strong need to increase the amount of this work getting done. As you mentioned in the hearing yesterday, the Agency was successful in meeting its timber targets last year. However, in terms of acres treated, the agency has fallen short of meeting its goals. For example, in the Forest Service FY2012 budget justification on page 3-9, the agency only treated 59% of the acres in its target for improving the condition class and reducing the risk to communities.

To me this indicates that the agency is not meeting its own acreage targets even when it had more money. And many would say these acreage targets themselves are far below what actually needs to get treated. So it seems we're taking a step in the wrong direction.

I want to be clear that I support some of the hazardous fuels work that will occur in projects under Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration and I appreciate that the Integrated Resource Restoration may help find some efficiencies.

However, when health of the federal forests in Oregon and elsewhere continues to decline and when the agency itself acknowledges the need to scale up the acres treated and the projects implemented but notes the lack of sufficient funding, it

seems that cutting the hazardous fuels funding is simply the wrong place to make cuts. Chief Tidwell, can you explain to me how the agency is going to be able to make progress in treating the necessary acres, getting more projects completed and restoring forest health under this budget proposal?

Answer. There is a strong need to continue fuels reduction work on National Forest System lands. There is also recognition of the importance of integrating fire as a critical natural process in land and resource management plans and activities, reintroducing fire into ecosystems, managing wildfire across landownership boundaries, and applying the best available science. The FY 2012 budget proposes a reduction in hazardous fuels but this is mainly due to a shift of funds into the Integrated Resource Restoration (IRR) account. Funding in IRR will still be available to accomplish fuels reduction work, and we intend to treat a similar number of acres as occurred in the past. Those funds in the hazardous fuels account will be focused on the highest priority acres in the wildland-urban interface (WUI) to reduce risk to communities and help keep firefighters safe.

In FY 2010, the Forest Service treated over 1.9 million of WUI high priority acres and almost 1.3 million of other priority acres, well exceeding the agency target for fuels treatment. However, the figure reported on acres treated to restore fire-adapted ecosystems, which you cited from page 3-9, is accounting for when acres change condition class, i.e. when all restoration work has been accomplished such that the acres treated are within the natural range of variability of vegetation characteristics: fuel composition; fire frequency, severity and pattern; and other associated disturbances. To change condition class often takes multiple treatments over a number of years. For example, a site may need to be thinned, the slash piled, and then burned to change the condition class. This may take three field seasons for all the work to be completed. Further, acreage alone is not a great measure of accomplishment. The priority of these acres is perhaps more important. More often than not the priority acres are more expensive (near community infrastructure) and therefore we see smaller acreage figures in many areas as well.

PRIORITY WATERSHEDS AND JOBS STABILIZATION

Question 4. One of the new proposals the Administration made last year and again this year is the Priority Watersheds and Jobs Stabilization Initiative. This proposal appears to have shifted a bit in this year's proposal to focus specifically on implementing action plans under the Watershed Condition Framework. Can you tell us more about what these action plans are, what forests already have these and what steps are being taken for other forests to develop them, and finally, what type of work you envision will be performed under this program?

Answer. While many national forests implement a variety of activities to improve watersheds, the process for developing watershed action plans is new. The first Watershed Restoration Action Plans (action plans) will be completed by the end of FY 2011.

Action plans will identify specific projects required to maintain or improve the watershed condition class of priority watersheds. These documents identify specific problems affecting watershed conditions, determine appropriate projects to address these problems, and propose an implementation schedule with project sequencing and potential partners. The action plans will help us to link project priorities to National goals and strategies. The action plans will also facilitate implementation and tracking of watershed condition improvements in a consistent manner.

The Forest Service has classified approximately all 15,000 watersheds, with substantial Forest Service management responsibility, at the sixth-level Hydrologic Unit Code. Classification of watersheds is the first step in the Watershed Condition Framework and is the necessary precursor to prioritizing watersheds. In the next step, units will identify their priority watersheds, and action plans will be created for priority watersheds for improvements. By the end of fiscal year 2011, the identification of priority watersheds and the development of the action plans designed to move priority watersheds to an improved condition class will be completed for an estimated 200-300 high priority watersheds throughout the National Forest System. Accomplishments will vary depending in part upon; geography, partner contributions, the complexity of land management issues, and landownership patterns.

In order for a priority watershed to be considered for the Priority Watershed funding, the local unit must have used the Watershed Condition Framework to identify their candidate priority watersheds and identified the essential suite of restoration projects for each of these watersheds. This eligibility requirement will be an incentive for the local units to complete the prioritization/essential project process.

Each action plan will contain a list of essential projects that are an integrated suite of management activities focused on maintaining and restoring watershed

health and thereby improving watershed condition class. The options selected may draw from the entire suite of actions included in the restoration toolbox but are actions focused on addressing the limiting factors associated with one or more of the 12 watershed condition indicators that are not in properly functioning condition. Potential activities include: treating sediment sources from old trails, restoring wet meadow habitat to moderate stream flows, replacing undersized culverts to restore fish passage and reduce habitat fragmentation, reestablishing native fish to historic habitat, reestablishing native vegetation to protect stream banks, decommissioning roads, ripping old log landings and trails to reduce soil compaction, conducting prescribed burns to reduce fuel loading, reestablishing forest vegetation on burned areas, improving grazing practices to maintain grassland ecosystems, containing and treating invasive weeds, and treating insect and disease outbreaks in forested stands.

CUTS TO LANDOWNERSHIP MANAGEMENT

Question 5. I noticed the Landownership Management account is proposed for a 10% cut. I know cuts are needed and this certainly looks like a very obscure place to easily make cuts. However, it is from this account that the day to day work of surveying—for example for new wilderness boundaries—or completing land exchanges takes place. The agency is incredibly backlogged on much of this work. Using the Mt. Hood Wilderness legislation as an example—2 years after the bill became law the land exchanges implemented under that legislation are still slowly working their way through the process. A draft EIS isn't even expected until the coming fall, with many more steps to follow. I'm told it will be many years before the agency completes the surveys of the new wilderness boundaries as well. It seems that these kinds of cuts are hurting the basic work the agency needs to get accomplished to manage its resources. How do you think the agency can keep up, much less catch up, on this backlog of work if the resources funding this work continue to be cut?

Answer. Tough budget times call for difficult budget choices.

Current surveying and proper line marking activities address the most critical and highest priority needs to support litigation, to support trespass and encroachment resolutions, to aid in resolving title claims or critical survey support for acquisitions and mapping, and for describing specially designated area boundaries such as Wilderness or Wild and Scenic Rivers. We will continue to target available funding toward similar high-priority management needs.