

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2996

To provide incentives for the Forest Service to improve its accounting and financial reporting systems by temporarily capping discretionary appropriations for the Forest Service until improvements are made.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 1, 1999

Mr. GOODLATTE (for himself, Mr. GOODE, Mr. COMBEST, Mr. STENHOLM, Mr. TANCREDO, and Mr. CHAMBLISS) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture

A BILL

To provide incentives for the Forest Service to improve its accounting and financial reporting systems by temporarily capping discretionary appropriations for the Forest Service until improvements are made.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Forest Service Finan-
5 cial Accountability Restoration Act of 1999”.

6 **SEC. 2. USE OF INCENTIVES TO RESTORE FOREST SERVICE**

7 **FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY.**

8 (a) FINDINGS.—The Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Section 3521(e) of title 31, United States
2 Code, requires the Inspector General of the Depart-
3 ment of Agriculture to audit the annual financial
4 statements required to be prepared by the Forest
5 Service. As a result of the inability of the Forest
6 Service to produce reliable financial statements, the
7 agency has received four successive adverse opinions
8 or disclaimers from the Inspector General.

9 (2) In January 1999, the Comptroller General
10 submitted a report to Congress that identified the
11 Forest Service as an agency at “high risk” of waste,
12 fraud, abuse, and mismanagement due to the per-
13 sistent and severe weaknesses in the Forest Service’s
14 accounting and financial reporting systems.

15 (3) The Comptroller General has stated that
16 the Forest Service will maintain its high risk status
17 until the agency, at a minimum—

18 (A) receives two consecutive unqualified
19 audit opinions from the Inspector General; and

20 (B) corrects the material internal control
21 weaknesses, identified in the Inspector Gen-
22 eral’s audit reports of the financial statements
23 of the Forest Service, which adversely affect the
24 ability of the Forest Service to maintain ac-
25 countability over its assets on an ongoing basis.

1 (4) Despite initial efforts on the part of the
2 Forest Service to correct deficiencies in its financial
3 management systems, the Comptroller General and
4 the Inspector General of the Department of Agri-
5 culture have indicated that the Forest Service may
6 still be years away from producing reliable financial
7 statements or changing its high risk status.

8 (5) Performance incentives are necessary to ul-
9 timately restore financial accountability to the For-
10 est Service, and such incentives must be structured
11 so as to preserve the ability of the Forest Service to
12 perform its core missions, particularly a sustained
13 reduction of the natural resources restoration and
14 maintenance backlog within the National Forest
15 System, while safeguarding further investments of
16 taxpayer dollars from waste, fraud, abuse, and mis-
17 management.

18 (b) **CONDITIONAL LIMITATIONS ON FOREST SERVICE**
19 **APPROPRIATIONS.**—Subject to subsections (c) and (d), for
20 fiscal years beginning after the date of the enactment of
21 this Act, the total amount appropriated for the Forest
22 Service to carry out discretionary programs and activities
23 for a fiscal year shall not exceed the sum of the amounts
24 appropriated under the heading “FOREST SERVICE” in
25 title II of the Department of the Interior and Related

1 Agencies Appropriations Act, 1999 (as contained in sec-
2 tion 101(e) of division A of Public Law 105–277; 112
3 Stat. 2681–268).

4 (c) REMOVAL OF CONDITION.—The limitations on
5 the level of Forest Service appropriations or obligations
6 specified in subsection (b) shall terminate on the earlier
7 of the following:

8 (1) The date on which the Forest Service is no
9 longer an agency at high risk of waste, fraud, abuse,
10 and mismanagement due to weaknesses in its ac-
11 counting and financial reporting systems, as deter-
12 mined under subsection (d).

13 (2) The end of the fifth fiscal year subject to
14 the limitations.

15 (d) CRITERIA FOR REMOVAL OF HIGH RISK STA-
16 TUS.—The Forest Service shall no longer be an agency
17 at high risk under subsection (c)(1) if the Comptroller
18 General certifies in writing to Congress that Forest Serv-
19 ice financial management is no longer at high risk. The
20 Comptroller General may make that certification only if—

21 (1) the Forest Service receives two consecutive
22 unqualified audit opinions from the Inspector Gen-
23 eral of the Department of Agriculture under section
24 3521(e) of title 31, United States Code; and

1 (2) the Forest Service corrects the material
2 weaknesses identified in the audit reports of the In-
3 spector General regarding the Forest Service's fiscal
4 year 1995 financial statements and all subsequent
5 audit reports of the Inspector General regarding the
6 Forest Service's financial statements published be-
7 fore the date of the enactment of this Act.

8 (e) BACKLOG REDUCTION OUTPUTS.—During each
9 fiscal year identified in subsection (c)(2), the Forest Serv-
10 ice shall maintain or increase outputs, relative to the levels
11 achieved during fiscal year 1999, from programs that di-
12 rectly reduce the natural resources restoration and main-
13 tenance backlog within the National Forest System. Such
14 outputs shall include the following:

15 (1) Acres of forested land treated for reduction
16 of wildfire risk.

17 (2) Acres of forested land treated for reduction
18 of mortality risk from insect and disease infestation.

19 (3) Miles of roads and trails reconstructed or
20 maintained.

21 (4) Number of recreational facilities recon-
22 structed or maintained.

23 (5) Acres of terrestrial habitat restored or en-
24 hanced.

1 (6) Miles of riparian areas restored or en-
2 hanced.

3 (7) Other priority outputs identified by the Sec-
4 retary.

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