

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2009

TUESDAY, APRIL 1, 2008

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met at 10 a.m., in room SD-124, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Dianne Feinstein (chairman) presiding.

Present: Senators Feinstein, Domenici, Bennett, Craig, Allard, and Alexander.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FOREST SERVICE

STATEMENTS OF HON. MARK E. REY, UNDER SECRETARY FOR NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT, DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

ACCOMPANIED BY:

ABIGAIL KIMBELL, CHIEF, FOREST SERVICE

LENISE LAGO, BUDGET DIRECTOR, FOREST SERVICE

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR DIANNE FEINSTEIN

Senator FEINSTEIN. The subcommittee's oversight hearing on the administration's fiscal year 2009 budget request for the Forest Service will come to order.

I would like to welcome Mark Rey, the Under Secretary of Natural Resources and Environment at the USDA, and Forest Service Chief Gail Kimbell. They are accompanied by Lenise Lago, the Budget Director for the Forest Service. Thank you, three of you, for joining us, and we look forward to hearing your testimony.

Because the Forest Service manages 20 percent of the land in my State, California, this agency and its budget are incredibly important to the State from an environmental protection, recreation, and public safety perspective. Keeping that in mind, I would like to note that overall the administration's request totals \$4,109,000,000. Now, that's a cut of \$379 million. Now, that's a full 8 percent from the 2008 level. In reality, though, the cuts are much deeper.

If you factor in the \$77 million needed to fund fixed increases, and the \$148 million needed to increase needed to cover the 10-year fire suppression average, and the Forest Service budget is \$600 million less than what is needed just to do that, bottom line

here is that under the administration's proposal, the way we look at it, the Forest Service is being cut nearly 15 percent.

I might say for me, and what we look at as the future in my State, that's unacceptable.

Specifically, firefighter readiness is cut 13 percent; hazardous fuels reduction work is cut 4 percent; Law Enforcement programs are cut 12 percent; capital improvement and maintenance programs are cut 14 percent; recreation programs are cut 8 percent; and research programs are cut 10 percent.

I don't know how anyone could really consider this a serious budget proposal, so rather than take time here to go through the budget line by line, let me say for the record that I hope to work with my distinguished ranking member, Senator Allard, and the other members of the committee, including Senator Domenici, who has had such a long-standing interest in this. The three of us all come from States that are critically affected by this budget.

I hope we can undo these cuts, and I hope we can restore the Forest Service budget to a reasonable level.

I'd like in my questions to talk about what progress the agency is making on Lake Tahoe restoration; what's happening with respect to firefighter retention, particularly in the southern California effort, and what can be done to overcome the challenge of implementing the Quincy Library Group pilot project. Those are three big issues in my State, and, as you know, a Governor's commission has just found that the three forests adjoining Lake Tahoe are in immediate threat of catastrophic fire. So we have big problems.

I would like to turn to our distinguished ranking member, Senator Allard, for any opening remarks he might care to make.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR WAYNE ALLARD

Senator ALLARD. Thank you, Madam Chairman. I agree with many of your comments that you made. I would also like to just take this opportunity and welcome the Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, Mark Rey, and the Chief of the Forest Service, Gail Kimbell, to the subcommittee today.

I hate to get too sour about this budget but to tell you that I do feel that is a budget that has me very deeply concerned. The proposed fiscal year 2009 budget for the Forest Service is more troublesome to me than any other in the bill, and my record on fiscal restraint I think is pretty clear; however, I believe the proposed reductions in the Forest Service just simply are not justified.

We're facing a forest health crisis in this country unlike anything I've ever seen in my lifetime; however, your budget proposes to reduce the forest health programs of the agency by nearly half. The issue, of course, health, is very personal to me and to my constituents. We have a pine beetle epidemic in Colorado that is beyond description. You simply have to see it with your own eyes to understand the magnitude of the devastation.

Experts say that within 5 years all of Colorado's remaining lodgepole pine forests could be wiped out—that's 6 million acres—over the next 5 years. I simply can't support a budget that slashes support for programs that address these problems.

Mark, I appreciate that you have agreed to testify at a field hearing in Colorado that this subcommittee will hold in May on the pine beetle epidemic, and I hope that we can come up with some better strategies for dealing with the forest health problem than those that are reflected in this budget.

Other proposed cuts in the agency's budget are similarly without merit to me. For example, the Fire Preparedness is cut by \$77 million. The real cut in terms of program delivery is actually \$88 million because you have not provided for mandatory salary increases and other fixed costs that must be paid.

With fire seasons becoming worse each year, I can't understand why we would reduce the funds that go to train and equip our firefighters. This will lower the agency's initial attack capability and lead to more catastrophic fires. It is essential that we have a robust initial attack capability to catch fires when they are small so that they don't escape containment and become the catastrophic fires that we see on the nightly news every summer. It is these large fires that end up consuming the lion's share of the fire budget. In my view, reducing the preparedness budget will ultimately increase costs.

I also don't understand why your budget documents how you can cut fire preparedness by 13 percent, yet claim that through efficiencies you will maintain the same number of firefighters, hot shot crews, and engines in the field. I'm all for efficiency, but I've watched firefighting costs skyrocket over the last few years. So forgive me if I am a bit skeptical and you've suddenly found this level of efficiency in your operations.

I could go on with the litany of all of the cuts in this budget that I find objectionable, but I won't take up the committee's time. To me, the crux of the problem with the Forest Service budget boils down to this: There is a fundamental difference in the way that the Office of Management and Budget treats the Forest Service compared to other land management agencies at the Department of the Interior.

The Bureau of Land Management, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service are not singled out consistently for dramatic cuts each year as the Forest Service continues to be. I believe this disparate treatment is explained by the fact that as the tenure average for the Forest Service firefighting program rises, this year by \$148 million, OMB has taken the position that these costs must be borne on the back of the agency's other programs.

Apparently, OMB believes that this will provide incentives for the agency to reduce its firefighting costs, and I, fundamentally, disagree with this approach. No one would disagree that the Forest Service fire program could also strive to maintain costs, but escalating costs shouldn't come at the expense of the agency's other programs.

Indeed, many of these increasing costs can be traced to issues that are beyond the control of the agency: More development adjacent to Forest Service lands, persistent drought in the West, forest health programs like the pine beetle that have reduced entire forests to tinderboxes and the lack of active forest management caused by endless lawsuits.

Perhaps even more troubling is that OMB slashing of other agency programs to fund firefighting has led to many well-intentioned, but in my view misguided, proposals in Congress to move parts of the fire program off budget. As an appropriator and as a fiscal conservative, I find these proposals unacceptable. Moving parts of the fire program off budget is tantamount to giving the agency a blank check which will lead to abuses and take away any incentive to control costs. There is no reason that the fire program can't be provided with the funds it needs each year on budget, and the other Forest Service programs be provided with the funds that are necessary to run effectively.

Forgive the pun, but I believe it is critical that we, as the Appropriations Committee, hold the agency's feet to the fire each year to justify their requests for firefighting and be ever vigilant about containing costs.

I noticed with some interest last week an article in The Washington Post, about a GAO study which is analyzing whether the Forest Service should be moved from the Department of Agriculture to the Department of the Interior. While I have not had the opportunity to fully consider the implications of such a reorganization, when I look at the unequal treatment of the Forest Service compared to the Department of the Interior, then when it comes to the budget, it makes me wonder whether such a move might be worth some serious thought.

Thank you for joining us. I look forward to listening to your testimony and asking you some questions later in the hearing. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Senator FEINSTEIN. Thank you very much for that, Senator Al-
lard.

The committee will follow the early-bird rule, and we will go to 7-minute rounds of questions when the time comes. The next person up is the distinguished Senator from New Mexico.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR PETE V. DOMENICI

Senator DOMENICI. Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. This can be my opening statement, not questions, right?

Senator FEINSTEIN. It's your opening statement, if you wish.

Senator DOMENICI. Thank you.

I have two issues that I want to bring up. There are many others, and I thought that these two were very important:

First of all, we all know that the cost of wildland firefighting is consuming too much of our Forest Service's discretionary budget, and it's likely to get worse. We know that dealing with environmental documentation, appeals and litigation is stopping hazardous fuels cleanup in many areas, work which could reduce the intensity of fires and reduce the cost of fighting these fires. I believe these problems have to be dealt with. Failing to do so will only hasten the day when our national forests become a wasteland, and no one will be proud of them.

We have also failed, and we have also allowed the job of our Federal firefighters to expand into areas where they never were meant to deal with. I guess when I said one, I have three. I just gave you one, that we have to address the issues of documentation and appeals. You all know what that's doing; that's adding 1 full year

minimum, sometimes 2 or 3, to any activity going into an area that has been burned to see what you can do to clean up and revitalize the forest.

We ought to be bold and just change that, and just a few words would fix it where they couldn't use this process. This process is being abused.

My second position has to do with something that has happened to us where, over time, we are letting our Federal firefighters move into areas that they were never meant to deal with. We send a significant number of personnel on emergencies like cleaning up after major disasters, and now it seems that we may be turning our firefighters into first responders for traffic accidents.

That may be going on, Madam Chair, in the State of California. All of these efforts are laudable, but all of them cost money, and I would urge that this committee review this mission creep and refuse to let it continue by refocusing the job of wildland firefighting back into the primary mission. I don't know how much that would be, but it would be some, and, certainly, what I have just described is right and fair.

In our efforts to ensure the highest standards of safety, we impose reporting and training requirements. My third point has to do with training requirements. Our actions have unintended consequences. We imposed additional training requirements, and the agency has been attempting to provide that training.

But the Office of Personnel Management, Madam Chairperson, is not questioning whether the additional training is acceptable and wants it to be provided as part of an accredited college curriculum. Confusion between OPM and the Forest Service human resources specialists is causing people who have invested time and money to give up applying for positions in fire because no one knows which courses are acceptable to the OPM.

The result is that we are on the cusp of having several hundred highly trained and experienced wildland firefighters quit because they feel that the rules have been changed unfairly. Thus, we may be filling key positions with recent college graduates who have little or no real wildland fire experience, but who have the sheepskin being demanded by the OPM. I hope this committee will step forward and keep this from happening.

Madam Chairman, I would have liked to have spoken about some of the funding requests in this budget that concern New Mexicans and myself, but they pale in comparison with the need for the committee and Forest Service to deal with wildland fires and wildland firefighters.

Thank you for the opportunity, and, hopefully, we can work together on this problem.

Senator FEINSTEIN. Thank you very much, Senator Domenici.

The order is Senators Alexander, Craig, and Bennett, and no one need feel compelled to make an opening statement if you don't choose to do so.

Senator Alexander.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR LAMAR ALEXANDER

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Madam Chairman. I will try to make a succinct opening statement.

Number one, Mr. Rey, I want to thank you for making, as a priority, an additional \$4 million in Federal funding for the acquisition of Rocky Fork in Eastern Tennessee.

That's a very important project. There's broad support for that, and the Federal Government's role in that is a big help, and there may need to be some discussion in order to make it all work; to discuss something I usually don't support, but which would be to do some land swap of less desirable Forest Service land in order to get the 10,000 acres of Rocky Fork. I'm not ready to propose that at the moment, but we would only do that in conjunction with the conservation fund and other environmental groups that are involved in this and make sure that it was a big net plus in terms of conservation environment and Forest Service protected property.

So I just wanted to make you aware of that, and thank you for making that a priority.

Second, I'm interested in your comments today on what's already been discussed about fire protection, and the other functions in the Forest Service. We don't want to just make the Forest Service into a fire service, as important as the fire service projects are.

Senator Allard has spoken eloquently about how he thinks that should be done. I would like to hear from you, perhaps, during your testimony about whether we ought to separate a fire suppression service into a separate account, or separate budget, or separate agency even, so that we don't continue to run the risk of damaging the traditional functions of the Forest Service by taking money away for fighting fires.

The Forest Service superintendents in Tennessee say the increase in fire suppression funding at the expense of Forest Service operations and programs is one of the biggest problems they face. So, if you could in your testimony talk about some of the pros and cons of separating the functions or consolidating them, I'd be very interested in that. Thank you for being here.

Senator FEINSTEIN. Senator Craig, I think you're the next up.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR LARRY CRAIG

Senator CRAIG. Madam Chairman, it isn't by accident that Western Senators and even a Southern Senator is focused on fire, and fire suppression with the Forest Service and our chief today. It is without question a front issue to all of us in public land States and large forest States who have gone through the last decade of a fire scenario that ramps up on an annual basis, Chief, and a real concern, not only about the actual fires themselves.

But, as I have lamented in working with Mark Rey over the years, and as Senator Alexander just lamented, the old style of funding fires doesn't work anymore because you don't have cash flow. That went out the door with the green sales a decade ago, and you are now an agency that, in my opinion—and I say it rather publicly—is bankrupt: bankrupt on the standards and the payments and the cash flows of a century of green sales, and a timber program that largely doesn't exist today in a comparable way to two decades ago, which then means that if you're still borrowing from accounts that do all these other things, and we are not replacing the money, those accounts go wanting. The true needs of the

management on the ground of our Forest Service goes wanting, and in my opinion, that's happening.

Last week, I met with the supervisor of the Sawtooth for a variety of reasons. It was kind of a typical exchange between a policymaker and an agency head as to how we manage and what we do. We talked about bighorn sheep and how you manage those with domestic livestock grazing. Forest Service letters actually said a decade ago: We want to put sheep in where they once existed, but they in no way will conflict with domestic grazing.

Now that the sheep are there, we're kicking the domestic grazers off the land through court action and indecision on the part of the Forest Service. It just so happens on the Sawtooth, they probably got it under control, because they haven't been sued yet, and they're trying in a proactive way to avoid these interrelationships between domestic livestock and wildlife, and I hope it works.

But I can't imagine that when you have a tradition of public grazing, and you write a letter and you make it policy that we will in no way displace the domestic sheep, but we want to try this experimentally. Then the experiment works. In come the lawsuits and out go the domestic sheep, and down goes a couple of ranchers, and down goes the economy in local communities because of a public policy not effectively managed by the Forest Service.

We also talked about something that is very typical of wildland firefighting that Senator Domenici talked about, that Lamar has talked about. As you know, in the Castle Rock fire last year out in Idaho, we had an unprecedented situation. Large wildfire started on our public land, started on the Forest Service land, and ultimately threatened the Sun Valley, Ketchum area, the grand old ski resort known as Sun Valley worldwide. We fought and you fought, and you had your best people in there to save that community, and so did we.

Now, the fire started on your land. The fire then moved to threaten private property, and we are now negotiating a \$5 million fire bill with the city of Ketchum. You know, it's awfully hard for me to understand when we don't manage the public land and the public land threatens private property, then we bill the private landowner.

Now, there's going to be a lot of negotiation going on between State and community and the Forest Service, and I'm going to hold my tongue for a time. But it is typical of the situation we now find ourselves in, and that is that you, the Forest Service, are spending more time protecting private property than you are saving natural resource watershed wildlife habitat in this wildfire scenario.

Of the 10 million acres last year that burned, 2 of them were in Idaho, and our skies were full of smoke all summer, and our air quality was dramatically lessened. The beautiful, clear blue skies of our State were gray and smoky all summer. You were violating clean airspace and clean air everywhere you went, and I'm always appalled that we slap the private sector when they damage air quality, but we say the public sector, when it damages air quality, is simply a natural event. That gets my ire up a little bit when we just oh-ho-hum, as a public attitude—you don't, and I'm not suggesting you do.

Madam Chairman, I have questioned the Forest Service before the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and the last time we visited was a month ago. As of December 1, 2007, we've had 28 mill closures across the United States. Since we visited, I've lost another mill, 60 employees down, won't come back. They're going to tear it down.

They had planned to take it down in a couple of years, but the timber issue is so bad that I don't know that you've let a sale, or there's been a successful sale of timber in Idaho off the public lands yet in 2008, and this mill is now down not to come back. They say it won't come back to the market for at least 2 years, more than likely, based on inventory both of logs in yard and dimensional in yard.

My point is, we struggle to fund our country schools and the Craig-Wyden bill hasn't been fully funded. We have hundreds of school districts across the United States whose budgets are being cut anywhere from a quarter to a third with no way of raising new dollars. Now we have a flat timber market; even the best expectations that we all might have for some slight increases may well go out the window. It's very hard to come to a Congress today that's so dramatically in deficit and try to find the kind of money we need for these thousands of schools districts.

Well, Madam Chair, tough issues with an agency that I know that the parties in front of us, both the Chief and the Deputy Secretary worked awfully hard at making work, but I think I agree with Senator Alexander. I know that Mark Rey and I have had those conversations.

We've got to think out of the box about new methods of funding fire and doing a lot of other things, because, in my opinion, you're broke. You no longer have a cash flow. You have to come begging before the general fund, a grand old agency that used to fund itself and have surplus money that it put into the general fund is today in a very different environment than it was simply a decade ago.

Thank you.

Senator FEINSTEIN. Thank you very much, Senator Craig.

I don't see Senator Bennett, but if he comes back we'll allow him some time, and I'd like to begin with Mr. Rey now for his testimony, and then the Forest Service.

How long do you believe you need, Mr. Rey?

Mr. REY. Oh, I think that—

Senator FEINSTEIN. I beg your pardon?

Mr. REY [continuing]. I can be done in the usual 5 minutes.

Senator FEINSTEIN. That would be excellent if we could do that. I think for this hearing the questions, really, are the most beneficial, so thank you very much.

Mr. REY. Sure, and I will summarize for the record—

Senator FEINSTEIN. If we could begin the clocks, please. Thank you.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF HON. MARK E. REY

Mr. REY. What I'll touch on in my testimony is three issues: First the Wildland fire programs and management reforms; second, the proposal for reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools legislation; and, third, the State and Private Forestry programs.

The 2009 budget proposes a total of \$1.97 billion for Wildland Fire Management programs, including \$994 million for suppression, \$588 million for preparedness, and \$297 million for hazardous fuels.

Senator FEINSTEIN. Could you speak up, please? I think your mike's on, it's just hard to hear you.

Mr. REY. I'm not sure that the mike is live, actually. Is it?

Senator FEINSTEIN. It's working.

Mr. REY. Okay.

Senator FEINSTEIN. We need you to—

Mr. REY. I'll try to get in to it closer.

Senator FEINSTEIN. Maybe because it's a bad budget, you don't want to speak too loudly.

Mr. REY. I'm speaking softly.

Additionally, the Forest Service is adopting significant management reforms to ensure equitable fire suppression cost-sharing between Federal and other firefighting entities. We are fully implementing the Risk Informed Appropriate Management Response and an acting cost-containment accountability throughout the Wildland Fire program.

Despite having more fires in 2007 than we did in 2006 and a 49 percent increase in acres burned, the cost of suppressing fires was \$127 million lower in 2007 due to aggressive implementation of appropriate management response and other cost-containment measures.

In southern California, you may recall that when we testified on December 13, we compared our experiences in the 2007 southern California fire season with our experiences in the 2003 season, noting that in almost every available index our performance was superior in 2007 even given more dire circumstances.

We have recently completed a draft of the annual report for the Fire and Aviation Management program, and I will submit that for the record.

[The information follows:]

DRAFT FIRE AND AVIATION MANAGEMENT YEAR REVIEW—FISCAL YEAR 2007¹

LETTER FROM DIRECTOR TOM HARBOUR

The greatest accomplishment of fiscal year 2007 was being safe and successful. Human safety is, and always will be, our first priority as we strive to protect and manage the public lands entrusted to us. I am thankful every day that in 2007 we have not had to mourn the loss of any Forest Service firefighters on the fireline. We, in the Fire and Aviation Management program, have faced many challenges this year and made measurable accomplishments. We are strategically preparing for the years to come.

Fire and Aviation Management is at a crossroads. Critical analysis of the program's function and purpose over the past 10 years has led to various documents, policies, management reviews and the integration of fire with ecosystem manage-

¹The U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Direct, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD), USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

ment. As the agency looks forward to the next decade, Fire and Aviation Management must significantly increase efficiency, manage organizational structure and lead the charge to improve land conditions.

We are continually challenged by the growth of communities into previous wildland areas—80 percent of our population lives in urban environments; and as the Chief has pointed out, they need to understand the connection of natural resources to their homes and communities, as well as the effects of climate change, the importance of protecting water resources and of maintaining healthy forests. Fires are a natural part of forested landscapes; but each year, wildfires come earlier and last longer. Fires burn hotter and bigger; they have become more damaging and dangerous to people and property.

As wildfires and their associated risks increase, controlling the cost of fighting wildland fire continues to be one of our greatest challenges. Gone are the days of “throwing everything but the kitchen sink” at each and every fire. We are making the transition from “overwhelming mass” applied to every fire to using the doctrinal approach of speed, agility and focus. Make no mistake, I am not suggesting that overwhelming mass will cease to be an objective for some fires, but I am suggesting that a variety of wildland and prescribed fire will benefit from the application of a doctrine which considers speed, agility and focus.

To accomplish this transition, we and our interagency partners have adopted management efficiencies, focused on wildfires, which were categorized into the areas of Leadership, Operations and Management. These management efficiencies were practiced with some great success during the 2007 fire season—realizing a savings of approximately \$200 million. This, coupled with the doctrinal approach to wildland firefighting, will allow us to create an organization guided by well-stated doctrinal principles which represent the reality of the work, the environment and our mission.

Finally, the basis for our accomplishment is anchored in people. Partnerships among Federal, State, tribal, and local firefighting agencies continue to expand and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of wildland fire management across agencies and boundaries. We need to incessantly build a strong, well-trained workforce who can teach others, think and react to the future in a professional, trustworthy manner, and always, with integrity.

As public servants, we are accountable to those who trust we will do our jobs and do them prudently, professionally and effectively, in collaboration with our other Federal, State, tribal, and local partners. This publication is intended to be a reflection of the year past—a report card of sort, which will detail some of the challenges we’ve faced, as well as our accomplishments and successes. It will be centered on certain “themes,”—the goals identified in our National Fire and Aviation Strategic Plan which ties back to the Forest Service Strategic Plan. Those goals include: technology and science; protection of life, property, natural and cultural resources; hazardous fuels and restoration; community assistance; effective communications; and promoting workforce capacity and diversity. We recognize our future is decided with people and that having strategic goals and a doctrinal approach to managing wildland fire is vital. We will continue to work toward those goals.

The challenges are many; but with our talented, dedicated employees and the support of our partners, we will continue to progress. I look forward to working together to meet the challenges in the years ahead.

TOM HARBOUR,
Director.

PART I.—2007 FIRE SEASON DISCUSSION

Agency suppression expenditures have increased in recent years due to the effects of the wildland urban interface and climatic and ecological changes. As a result, protection of life, property and natural resources from wildland fire has become more complex, demanding and expensive.

In fiscal year 2007, the Forest Service continued implementation of an aggressive hazardous fuel reduction program, accelerated the use of risk-informed management, initiated operational efficiencies and adopted rigorous management controls. More specifically, these actions included:

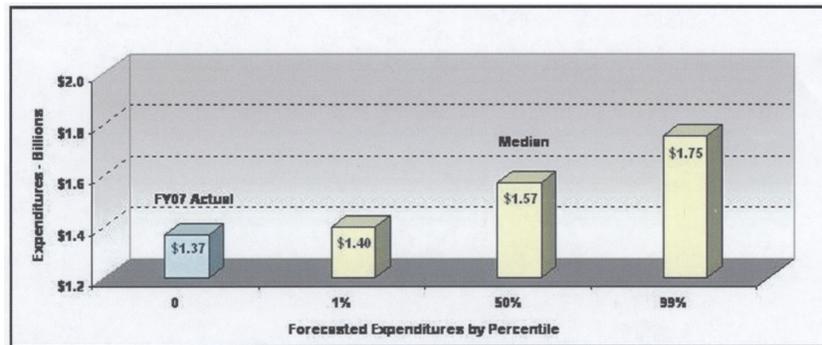
- focus on hazardous fuels treatments in wildland urban interface areas and in fire-adapted ecosystems that present the greatest opportunity for restoration;
- accelerated development and deployment of decision tools similar to the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) to support risk-informed incident management;
- implemented operational efficiencies such as management of national and critical resources for maximum flexibility and expanded the use of Exclusive Use aviation contracts; and

—the execution of management controls akin to the establishment of the Inter-Deputy Group, the Chief Principle Representative, the Line Officer certification process for incident management, and the enhancement of fiscal monitoring and oversight.

Fire and Aviation Management (FAM) has worked aggressively with other agency programs and cooperators to implement these strategies and manage suppression expenditures. These actions resulted in significantly lower suppression expenditures than would have occurred under previously implemented strategies.

Fire Suppression Expenditure Forecast

Fire and Aviation Management utilizes a model developed by the Rocky Mountain Research Station to forecast fiscal year fire suppression expenditures. The model has been used since fiscal year 1998 and relies on Predictive Services' forecasts, historical and current year-to-date expenditures to estimate future expenditures. A 2005 analysis indicated this respective model does extremely well forecasting suppression expenditures. The fiscal year 2007 August forecast indicated a range of Forest Service expenditures from \$1.4 to \$1.75 billion with a median forecast of \$1.57 million.



The Forest Service expended \$1.37 billion at the conclusion of fiscal year 2007—below the 1 percent probability forecast of \$1.4 billion and \$200 million below the median forecast of \$1.57 billion, achieving the agency's projected \$200 million of savings in fiscal year 2007. The savings were realized as a direct result of the agency's aggressive implementation of risk-informed management, operational efficiencies and management controls.

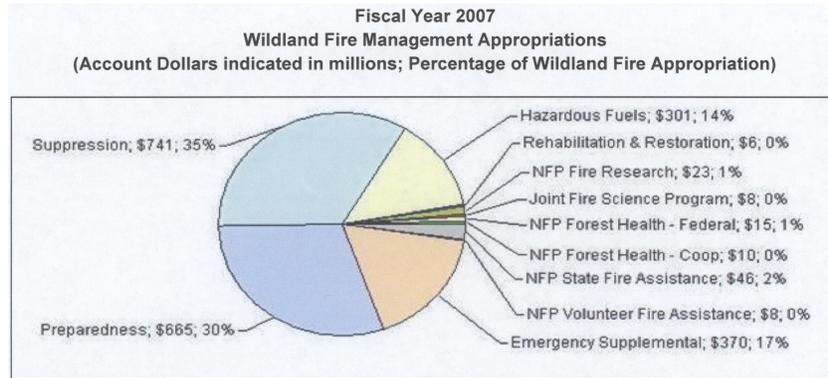
Fiscal Year 2007 Wildland Fire Management Appropriation Highlights

In February 2007, the President signed the Revised Continuing Appropriations Resolution, 2007 (Public Law 110-5), which included funding for the Forest Service through September 30, 2007. The full-year Continuing Resolution sustained all requirements, authorities, conditions, limitations and other provisions of the fiscal year 2006 Appropriations Act with the exception of emergency funding. The act also stripped all earmarks from bill and report language.

The full-year Continuing Resolution included specific amounts for Wildland Fire plus an additional amount for pay-costs—the total Wildland Fire appropriation was approximately \$1.82 billion. In May 2007, an Emergency Supplemental (Public Law 110-28) authorized \$370 million for Fire Suppression bringing the total available Wildland Fire funds to \$2.29 billion. There were several other notable changes from fiscal year 2006:

- Total funds for Preparedness increased by \$5 million. Regional allocations were increased \$29 million to ensure readiness capability was commensurate with congressional intent.
- Funds for Hazardous Fuels increased by \$21 million. Regional allocations increased \$14 million. These numbers do not reflect funds from other programs or appropriations. The agency also initiated use of a newly developed risk based allocation process.
- Total funds for Suppression Operations increased by \$51 million. This increase was based on the inflation-adjusted 10-year moving average of suppression expenditures. An Agency Severity fund limitation of \$35 million was established which included regional limitations.

—The remaining funds for all other Wildland Fire accounts remained relatively constant.



Wildland Fire Management represented 42.1 percent of the Forest Service's Discretionary budget in fiscal year 2007—a significant portion and a 1.4 percent increase over fiscal year 2006. The agency expended \$1.374 billion on fire suppression in fiscal year 2007, necessitating a \$100 million transfer of funds from other program areas.

Fire and Aviation Management aggressively pursued budget planning strategies to enhance efficiency and cost effectiveness through risk-informed allocation of preparedness resources (Fire Program Analysis), alternative methods of funding suppression activities (Fire Partitioning), risk-informed prioritization of hazardous fuel treatments (Ecosystem Management Decision Support), and prioritization of funds to States (State and Private Forestry Re-Design).

PART II.—MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

OVERVIEW

Fiscal year 2007 started where 2006 left off with a volatile, active fire season in southern California that extended well into the winter months. Predictive Services forecasted significant wildland fire potential throughout the 2007 season. Critical conditions influencing the wildland fire outlook were:

- drought conditions expanding and intensifying across large portions of the West and Southeast;
- low snow pack, warmer-than-normal forecasted temperatures and earlier snow melt over most of the West—likely to dry out timber fuels and cause an early onset of fire season in some areas;
- the abundance of new and carryover fine fuels expected to green up and cure early, leading to an active, prolonged grassland fire season; and
- a hotter than normal summer was projected for the West.

These projections were realized early in the season when by the end of June 2007, drought and high temperatures resulted in wildfires burning of over 1.1 million acres in the southern area and more than 161,000 acres in the eastern area of the United States and Canada. Preparedness Level 5 was declared on July 19, 2007, with 61 active large fires occurring across 9 geographic zones.

For the 2007 fire season, the Forest Service secured firefighting forces comparable to those available during the 2006 season and added two interagency National Incident Management Organization (NIMO) teams ready to respond to wildland fire incidents.

Escalating fire suppression costs continued to be a concern, as the wildland fire seasons in recent years have generally lasted longer and acreage figures have grown. In fiscal year 2007, the Wildland Fire Management Appropriation represented 42.1 percent of the Agency's Discretionary budget—a 1.4 percent increase over 2006.

Over the past several years, various studies and assessments dedicated to fire suppression costs have been conducted. As a result of these reviews, several hundred recommendations were made. Fire and Aviation Management has taken those recommendations seriously; and this year, aggressively pursued cost efficiency and management strategies to enhance the efficiency and cost effectiveness of fighting

fire. Management efficiencies were adopted that included cost control measures focused on leadership, operations, and aviation and general management practices. The implementation of these management efficiencies proved effective during the 2007 season, and their components and successes are discussed in further detail throughout this report.

The Successes

Throughout the season, incident managers adopted risk-informed strategies to manage wildfires within the context of the geographic and national situation. They implemented long-term plans with established primary protection objectives, strategies and tactics to achieve those objectives in an efficient, effective manner within the limits dictated by individual fires. The Forest Service realized great successes in the areas of aviation efficiencies and contracting, hazardous fuels treatments—exceeding 3 million acres treated this year across boundaries, partnership accomplishments, international cooperation and input into the National Response Plan. Those endeavors are detailed in the sections that follow. As always, collaboration is expected. Other Federal, tribal, State, and local partners continue to be an integral, vital part of the Forest Service success in meeting the expectations of Congress, as well as those of the American people.

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS AND EFFICIENCIES

Management efficiencies are the cost control measures focused on leadership, operations, aviation and general management practices. These efficiencies were developed after numerous reviews and evaluations centered round fire suppression and large fire costs were conducted by independent, outside sources and other Federal regulatory agencies. More than 300 recommendations were generated from these reviews. These suggestions were integrated into the current management efficiencies—a number were implemented in 2007 with good success, others will be implemented over the long term. When fully implemented they will serve to ensure the following:

- Clear, concise understanding of Appropriate Management Response (AMR) or choosing the best suppression strategy for the resources and values at risk (Policy Transition to Risk-Informed Management).
- Expanded knowledge, skills and abilities for agency administrators responsible for managing large or nationally significant fires (Line Officer Certification).
- Increased oversight from the Regional and Washington offices on incidents of national significance (Chief Principle Representative).
- Increased support in support of the agency administrator in the development and implementation of decisions (Fire Suppression Decision Support).
- Severity funds are used within limits (Severity Authorization Limitations).
- Monitor expenditures and provide oversight on total cost of each incident.
- Critical, high demand resources such as Type 1 firefighting crews, helicopters and heavy air tankers are managed in a more centralized fashion to achieve more flexibility (National Shared Resources).
- Revision of the current aviation strategy ensuring the safe, financially prudent use of firefighting aircraft (Aviation Resource Cost Management).

This segment of the report will strive to describe each of the management efficiencies implemented in 2007 and some of the success experienced by each.

Stratified Cost Index—Performance Measure for Large Fire Suppression Costs

Due to growing fire suppression costs and the lack of a quantifiable performance measure for suppression expenditures, congressional appropriation language in 2005 directed the Forest Service, in collaboration with the Department of the Interior, to develop an interim performance measure for suppression expenditures and to begin reporting on this measure in fiscal year 2006.

The interim performance measure called for by Congress was a stratified cost index (SCI), originally specified in the appropriation language as cost per acre/energy release component. After discussions between the Forest Service, Department of the Interior representatives and economists at the Rocky Mountain Research Station (RMRS), the decision was made that the SCI would assess a variety of factors influencing suppression expenditures, rather than focusing solely on energy release component.

Built using data over the past 10 years of nearly 2,000 large—greater than 300 acres, Forest Service wildfires, the SCI calculates the expected suppression cost of a large fire considering each specific fire's characteristics. The cost calculated by SCI is subsequently compared to actual suppression expenditures.

SCI was incorporated into the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) process during the 2007 fire season. Problems were encountered when SCI considers

complexes—or multiple fires, because part of what the model uses is the ignition point. When you have a complex of fires, rather than a single fire, SCI loses that part of the equation. FAM is reviewing how to deal with complexes from both the management and data standpoint. Additionally, the incorporation of SCI in WFDSS created some concerns considering that the spatial data used for SCI is limited in history.

The Success

Although refinement of SCI is needed, its use this season assisted agency administrators and the Chief's Principle Representatives with evaluating current costs of fires as compared to past fires with similar fuel types and ignition sources. SCI allowed officials to better evaluate the tactics and strategies from an historical cost data viewpoint as compared to today's costs. From that data, officials were able to see if the proposed approach was comparable. If the costs were higher, SCI afforded them the ability to determine the reasons.

The Rocky Mountain Research Station is in the process of evaluating the SCI model and will provide Forest Service leadership feedback after a sensitivity analysis of the model concerning the use of ignition point.

FEDERAL WILDLAND FIRE POLICY

Federal Wildland Fire policy has changed greatly since 1935 when the agency instituted the "10 a.m. Policy," under which all new fires were to be controlled by mid-morning on the day after they were reported. Existing policy gives Federal fire managers a high degree of flexibility in managing wildland fire. Current implementation direction requires that fire managers apply an Appropriate Management Response (AMR) to every wildland fire event, allowing a common sense approach to the management of a fire by applying fire management resources at places and times where they can be effective and efficient. Beginning with the initial response and continuing throughout the incident, all decisions consider firefighter and public health and safety, fire cause, current and predicted weather and fire behavior, fire effects, values to be protected from fire, management priorities, resource availability, cumulative effects of the fire, and cost effectiveness.

In 2007, Forest Service regions applied flexibility afforded by Federal Wildland Fire Policy to develop and implement wildland fire responses commensurate with availability of firefighting resources, protection and resource objectives, coupled with the probability of success. Regional application of the appropriate management response concept freed up firefighting resources for initial attack and focused fire management efforts on critical portions of wildland fire incidents.

Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) Tools

Recently, new tools were developed to assist fire managers and agency administrators in making decisions regarding strategies and tactics on wildland fires. The use of these tools has the potential to improve the understanding of wildland fire decisions and the rationale behind them. This year, they were available for priority fires.

WSDSS—Fire Spread Probability Model (FSPro)

WFDSS-FSPro is a spatial model that calculates and maps the probability of fire spread, in the absence of suppression, from a current fire perimeter or ignition point for a specified time period. Combining data layers that include the standard fuel models, current weather projections, historical weather scenarios, fuel moisture classification, and wind speed and direction, WFDSS-FSPro can project probabilities of fire spread in specified increments of 7, 10, 13, 30, and 90 days. It is not a fire perimeter like a FARSITE map. WFDSS-FSPro assists managers prioritize firefighting resources based on probabilities of fire spread. The model helps to assess a fire's growth potential. Managers can then match appropriate strategies, tactics and resource allocations. The program can also aid in communications with affected partners and the public.

This management philosophy provided greater flexibility in the command and control strategy of moving resources to the critical areas through the draw down of geographic area resources. The strategy engages a certain level of risk, placed on the providing geographic area; however, the risk is mitigated with the ability to quickly redeploy if the situation changes.

—The National Incident Management Organization (NIMO) was assigned to manage large complex incidents and implement long-term fire planning and response, where in prior years, the agency would have had long Type 1 and Type 2 incident management teams rotating in and out every 2 weeks with the same anchor and flank strategy. Where possible, strategies, other than full suppression, were implemented and were successful in mitigating risk to lives, property and communities. The use of the NIMO teams provided opportunities to allow other Type I teams to be available for the shorter duration but highly complex incidents. In addition, part of the cost savings generated above the mobilization and demobilization costs is due to the reduced size of the NIMO teams who operated with less than a full incident management team compliment of personnel.

The NIMO team also provided an opportunity for the New York Fire Department Incident Management Team to shadow and assist on a complex Type 1 incident. This not only provided support to the NIMO team but also allowed the agency to build capacity in support of all-hazard incidents in the future.

—Incident Management Teams in many cases were assigned to manage more than one or multiple fires using a range of wildland fire and response strategies.

The utilization of Fire Use Teams (FUMT) also changed this year to allow for more flexibility in meeting the demand for teams but also saving funds by implementing appropriate management response strategies, whereas a Fire Use Management Team—fully qualified to handle any Type 2 incident, already assigned to an incident would also take on the management of a new incident rather than filling the request with another Type 2 IMT. This occurred several times throughout the season, but was utilized to the largest degree on the Payette and Salmon-Challis National Forests in Idaho.

—Another strategy utilized by NMAC this year was to allow an existing incident management team to manage fire use incidents if they were already managing a wildland fire or multiple fires with the addition of a Long-Term Analyst (LTAN) to their personnel. This provided for increased flexibility in the incident management teams use of existing resources and eliminated the requirement for demobilization of the incident management team and the mobilization of a FUMT and related resources.

The final piece worth noting is that NMAC required the geographic area submit a detailed rationale when a team request was submitted. NMAC would review the request and rationale, respond back with not only the available resources to fulfill the request, but also they would also suggest other items and strategies for managing the situation. This allowed for controlling the number of resources to be assigned in cases where management of incidents/complexes and strategies could be refined.

In applying all the strategies and utilizing appropriate management response and long-term planning the following cost comparisons display the estimated cost savings:

FISCAL YEAR 2007 FIRE SEASON

Incident ¹	Duration (days)	Total acres	Team assigned	Total cost	Cost per acre
Ahron Fire	25	41,260	Type I Team	\$6,500,000	\$157
Rattlesnake	23	29,652	Type II Team	6,200,000	209
Poe Cabin	14	54,500	Fire Use Team	5,400,000	99

¹ The comparisons above display how utilizing the appropriate decision models, current predictive services information, managing resources on a geographic area basis versus incident only basis can contribute to reducing the costs of large fires. The same principles and development of long-term plans and protection points were incorporated into managing the large complexes in Idaho and California, as well.

APPROPRIATE MANAGEMENT RESPONSE (AMR)—SUCCESS STORIES

Prioritizing Scarce Fire Management Resources to Mitigate Risk and Minimize Loss Northern Rockies Geographic Area 2007

The Northern Rockies Geographic Area experienced a fire season setting records for high temperatures, low relative humidity and extreme fire danger. Despite the

conditions favoring the rapid spread and development of high intensity wildfires, initial attack efforts achieved a 98 percent success rate. Fires escaping initial attack due to fire behavior conditions and resource availability would require significant commitment of fire management resources to obtain perimeter control or be managed as long-duration events until a season ending weather event occurred. In order to minimize costs and maintain initial attack effectiveness, a regional strategy for managing these fires was implemented to ensure the safety of all fire management personnel and the public while deploying firefighting resources when and where they would be most effective in mitigating economic and natural resource loss.

In 2007, at a strategic level, the Northern Rockies Multi-Agency Coordination Group (MAC) and the represented agencies adopted a primary strategy of cost effectiveness where learning how to work smarter was emphasized over a cost efficiency strategy of simply working harder. Using this regional strategy, they aggressively implemented the flexibility afforded them by Federal Wildland Fire Policy. The region applied a wide-range of strategic and tactical options to manage wildland fires which met protection and fire use management objectives as described in their respective land management plans.

When planned conditions were met in areas where wildland fire use was allowed, after a Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP) was completed, lightning fires were managed as wildland fire use events to achieve resource benefit. In areas not appropriate for wildland fire use, after the Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA) was completed, long-term implementation plans were developed for fires where assigning additional resources would have little chance for successful perimeter control. Decision support system tools were critical elements used in both the WFIP and WFSA development.

A key component of the Northern Rockies strategy was the approach taken to prioritize and allocate fire management resources. The prioritization process allocated critical firefighting resources to key management action points—not to individual fires. The use of management action points for both wildland fire use events and long-duration events allowed the precise application of resources to key sections of a fire where the consequences of management actions were greatest and did not allow commitment of resources to the “siege” fire events where effectiveness and outcomes were uncertain.

Priorities were established through the use of a decision model which used defined criteria, evaluated the relative importance of the criteria and rated potential management actions accordingly. Key criteria used in the evaluation included values at risk, probability of success and duration of commitment of firefighting resources. The decision model process enabled open discussion of evaluation criteria by leadership and facilitated documentation of decisions regarding prioritization and allocation of resources.

Long-term management strategies were developed for over 20 incidents, and Wildland Fire Implementation Plans were created for more than 64 wildland fire use events. The geographic area monitored fire management costs and accomplishments for individual wildfires and fire use events. This type of monitoring allowed further evaluation and understanding of the effectiveness of these strategies and the utilization of resources, thereby providing a basis for future fire management operations.

CHIEF'S PRINCIPLE REPRESENTATIVE (CPR)

An incident becomes one of national significance when it has the potential to reach a magnitude and intensity that will capture national attention and/or could become a significant drain on response personnel, resources and budget. Wildfires, projected to exceed \$10 million in total cost, are generally considered to be of national significance.

In the infrequent situation where an incident reaches national significance or when requested by a Regional Forester, a Chief's Principle Representative (CPR) is assigned and available to assist agency administrators in reaching incident management decisions that will achieve safe, effective and efficient operations commensurate with local protection objectives and national priorities. The CPR assists the agency administrator to assure appropriate management and fiscal controls are in place and functioning.

Roles and Responsibilities of CPR

The agency administrator continues to carry incident decision authority associated with their respective position; however, the CPR is responsible for:

- providing assistance and advice to the Regional Forester relative to national policies, budgetary objectives and incident management priorities;
- sharing risks associated with incident decisions; and

—providing advice to the Regional Forester relative to line officer certification and incident management performance.

The CPR reviews decisions made and decision support information previously developed on the incident. They review scarce or critical resources deployed on the incident along with the availability of or need for those resources nationally. The CPR will provide a national perspective to the risk-informed decision process and priority deployment of resources for consideration in future agency administrator decisions on the incident. They assist in development of public information products to ensure that risk-inform decision logic and discussions of national priorities are incorporated. Throughout the incident, the CPR will document activities associated with the incident, provide fiscal oversight, assist the Regional Forester in developing a budget for the incident and ensure that effective, positive communications occur across all levels of the agency and organization.

Deployment

A flexible approach to meeting the needs of each individual situation applies to the deployment of a CPR. In some cases, the CPR will be sent to the incident to work directly with the agency administrator and Regional Forester. In other cases, the CPR may work remotely through telecommunication means. The CPR may be accompanied by a small decision support group staffed to provide support not already available on the incident.

Chief's Principle Representatives were deployed to eight incidents of national significance during fiscal year 2007.

CHIEF'S PRINCIPLE REPRESENTATIVE (CPR)—SUCCESS STORY

During fiscal year 2007, eight Chief's Principle Representatives were deployed to incidents of national significance throughout the United States. Each was responsible for preparing a report at the conclusion of their assignment. Collectively, these reports were reviewed and the following reveals some common observances by the Chief's Principal Representatives:

- The CPR concept is an excellent idea. Assigning a member of the National Leadership to represent the Chief and to assist agency administrators in reaching incident management decisions that will achieve safe, effective and efficient operations, commensurate with local protection objectives and national priorities and to help the agency administrator assure that appropriate management and fiscal controls are in place and functioning should be continued.
- Appropriate Management Response and the use of Wildland Fire Decision Support System tools are the keys to cost efficiency when managing wildland fire.
- The use of a CPR on incidents affords the opportunity for the mentoring of line officers with limited fire experience.

LINE OFFICER CERTIFICATION

All line officers will meet enhanced qualifications prior to being designated as the responsible official for an incident. The certification process has been developed and is designed to improve decision-making and risk management on large fires. Certification will be at three levels. In addition, a mentoring network has been established of experienced line officers to provide training and share experience to enhance performance skills.

AVIATION EFFICIENCIES AND CONTRACTING

A full-time National helicopter coordinator is in place to provide interagency national oversight for the assignment and positioning of helicopters. This year, the Forest Service shifted to more "exclusive use" (EU) versus "call when needed" (CWN) contracts for helicopters. This change in contracting procedures greatly reduced large fire suppression costs with the potential cost savings in the tens of millions of dollars per year. The agencies are pursuing longer term aviation contracts for all aviation resources with increased performance-based contracting.

The National Interagency Aviation Committee (NIAC) has prepared an overarching strategic plan to address the interagency strategic direction. The NIAC plan was constructed with input from participating interagency partners. This strategy contains an overview of aviation doctrine, mission requirements, currently available aviation assets, the role of Federal and State governments in the utilization and management of aviation assets, and future infrastructure and technology needs.

The National Interagency Aviation Committee (NIAC) has prepared an overarching strategic plan to address the interagency strategic direction. The NIAC plan was constructed with input from participating interagency partners. This strategy contains an overview of aviation doctrine, mission requirements, currently available

aviation assets, the role of Federal and State governments in the utilization and management of aviation assets, and future infrastructure and technology needs.

The Forest Service and other agencies involved with the plan development realized the need for more specific strategies to address individual agency needs. The Forest Service has developed a supplement to this plan to bring the overall inter-agency strategic direction to the agency level. The Forest Service supports this national strategy with the following initiatives:

- Safety remains the highest priority. A detailed plan to complete airworthiness assessments for all Forest Service firefighting aircraft in compliance with NTSB recommendation A-04-29 will be formulated by January 31, 2009.
- Control of the escalating cost of aviation assets is the second priority. Centralized management of airtankers and Type 1 helicopters, pre-positioning of aircraft and a greater reliance on speed and accuracy will be used to operate more efficiently and maintain adequate delivery capacity without sacrificing safety. Work together with other firefighting agencies to share aircraft, intelligence and other resources in a more collaborative manner.
- Rebuild the aging fleet of firefighting aircraft is the third priority. The Forest Service is measuring the loads incurred by firefighting aircraft and developing structural specifications that will identify appropriate aircraft sufficient to carry out the mission in a firefighting environment for the long term. Rebuilding toward a smaller, stronger and more agile fleet that takes advantage of modern technology is a part of this priority.

AVIATION EFFICIENCIES AND CONTRACTING—SUCCESS STORY

Exclusive Use Contracting for Aircraft Saves \$14,475,000

The 2007 fire season was extremely active requiring activation of all aviation assets on contract. Exclusive Use (EU) helicopter contracts were utilized, yet there was a need for additional helicopters—requiring Call When Needed (CWN) helicopters to supplement the fleet of EU helicopters. The following demonstrates common practices utilizing EU helicopters before CWN and identifies points that indicate when and why CWN resources may be used.

- Pre-season placement of EU helicopters in areas with higher fire potential can lessen the need for last minute CWN resources. EU Helicopters are utilized under their pre and post-season option to limit the activation of the more costly CWN resources.

The National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC) dispatches helicopters based on:

- date/time needed,
- emerging fire or existing large campaign fire, or preposition,
- estimated duration of incident,
- mobilization cost,
- daily availability rate, and
- hourly flight rate.

The length of need is also addressed at each step of the ordering process to ascertain which resource could be utilized most efficiently for the lowest cost. The WildCad dispatch analysis program calculates cost of resource, length of need, proximity to the incident and determines the lowest cost option to meet the need. There are instances when ordering a CWN helicopter is significantly cheaper than activating an EU asset. In those instances, CWN helicopters were ordered.

Incidents routinely cycle out CWN resources when EU helicopters are available if it provides a better value to the incidents needs—the NICC Helicopter Coordinator assisted in this transition.

When the need reaches a level where nearly all helicopters on contract are required, EU resources were utilized first to assist in the success on initial attack incidents. The complement of personnel on an EU resource makes this an excellent use of the resource. On the other hand, CWN helicopters do not come with personnel and are better served on large incidents rather than initial attack if they are used at all.

The Helicopter Coordinator position works to utilize EU helicopters whenever possible instead of CWN resources, finds aviation personnel to assist incidents, and tracks aircraft movements and utilization daily to ensure and realize the greatest efficiencies.

Exclusive Use helicopters are contracted to guarantee their availability for the duration of the time period contracted. The average national EU contract period is 90 days. CWN aircraft have the ability to work for us one day and someone else the next; there is no commitment from the vendor under the CWN.

The efficiencies identified above led to an estimated cost savings of \$14,475,000 for the fiscal year based on utilizing the aircraft under exclusive use. Total cost savings estimate for entire life of the contracts is \$26,441,486.

HAZARDOUS FUELS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The hazardous fuels treatment and ecological restoration job that lies before Federal land management agencies, tribes, States, counties, and local communities is enormous. The best opportunity to protect communities and valuable resources in the event of a problem fire is to reduce hazardous fuel accumulations through active management, aligning programs and leveraging resources to bring the full capability of the agency and partners to bear on the problem. Despite an extremely busy fire season, the Forest Service was able to reduce hazardous fuels on over 3 million acres from all vegetation management programs in 2007.

The Forest Service remains committed to the reduction of hazardous fuels adjacent to communities. Since the National Fire Plan was instituted in fiscal year 2001, nearly two-thirds of all hazardous fuel reduction funds have been invested in the wildland urban interface (WUI), treating more than 7 million acres directly adjacent to communities—an area comparable in size to the State of Maryland. In 2007, the Forest Service treated 1.4 million acres of WUI. Fuel reduction in the WUI is the most complex, costly work done, balancing the risk, weather conditions, access, smoke concerns, and important but intricate, collaborative relationships with communities, stakeholders and partners.

Forest Service hazardous fuels reduction accomplishments	Fiscal year							
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Total Acres Treated-								
HF	772,400	1,361,600	1,248,300	1,453,300	1,803,400	1,663,700	1,454,300	1,725,400
WUI Acres		611,600	764,400	1,114,100	1,311,000	1,187,900	1,045,100	1,138,500
Non-WUI Acres ...		750,100	494,000	339,200	492,400	476,000	409,200	586,900
Other Programs:								
Restoration					550,200	730,300	839,500	821,200
SFA Grants			40,100	136,300	146,000	76,600	82,000	216,000
Wildland Fire Use	37,900	62,600	59,400	290,900	60,900	251,100	171,700	264,100

HAZARDOUS FUELS PRIORITIZATION AND ALLOCATION SYSTEM

Increased numbers and frequency of large fires have drawn attention to the agency's hazardous fuels reduction program and the method by which areas are prioritized for treatment and funding. In order to identify high priority areas and integrate hazardous fuels treatments, the agency developed a consistent, spatially relevant process to inform funding allocation decisions. By implementing this system, the Forest Service is able to more effectively implement hazardous fuels projects and funding in order to have the greatest impact.

The prioritization and allocation methodology for the hazardous fuels reduction program is now used by both the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior. Nationally-consistent geospatial information is modeled to prioritize Regions for hazardous fuels funding. The following decision criteria determine the priorities:

- wildfire potential (based on fuels potential, weather potential and large fire occurrence potential);
- negative consequence associated with catastrophic fire (values at risk); and
- past performance and other opportunities (other funding sources and restoration objectives).

LANDFIRE is a 5-year, multi-partner project producing the only consistent and comprehensive national vegetation and fuel maps covering all ownerships in the United States. In its fourth year of development, the project continues to make good progress with anticipated completion of the continental United States by fiscal year 2008. A contract will be awarded to continue the development process for Alaska and Hawaii. LANDFIRE products help land managers prioritize areas for hazardous fuel reduction and ecological restoration, and are routinely used to support wildland fire suppression decisions.

LANDFIRE products are used by the Hazardous Fuels Prioritization Allocation System, Fire Program Analysis, Wildland Fire Decision Support System, and the State and Private Forestry Redesign Analysis Tool. It will also feed directly into the Southern States Wildfire Risk Assessment. The project has an approved Operations and Maintenance Plan, and is on time and on budget.

HAZARDOUS FUELS—SUCCESS STORIES

Fuel Treatments Help Firefighters Save 100 Homes on Tin Cup Fire, Darby, Montana

Hazardous fuel treatments on public and private lands significantly contributed to the success of firefighters when containing the Tin Cup Fire, outside Darby, Montana, during the 2007 fire season. The fuel reduction projects resulted from partnerships between the Forest Service, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, the Bitter Root Resource Conservation and Development Area, Incorporated, and private landowners. The locations of these treatments were guided by priorities established in the Bitterroot Valley's Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

The Bitterroot National Forest treated 214 acres during the months preceding the fire; and the Bitter Root Resource Conservation and Development, working through grants from the Forest Service and the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, assisted five landowners in treating an additional 102 acres during the previous 5 years.

PREPARATION SPARES COMMUNITY DURING GRASS VALLEY FIRE, SAN BERNARDINO NATIONAL FOREST, CALIFORNIA

Tammy Hopkins awoke just after 4:30 a.m., on Monday, October 22, 2007, to hear her 8-month-old son crying and realize the power was out to her home. As the Lake Arrowhead area resident scooped her son out of his crib, flashlight beams raked her darkened walls; and she heard the honking of a neighbor coming down the road. Back in the master bedroom, the sliding glass doors, normally opened to a panoramic view of the canyon, revealed a red glow that could only mean one thing—a fire and a big one at that.

The firefighter's wife was only concerned with protecting the young couple's two sons. She knew she had to do it alone. Her husband had been called to a fire that began earlier in the recent siege of southern California fires. She gathered her things and headed to her husband's grandparents down the block to help them.

In the 15 minutes it took to alert the elderly couple and get them into the car, a power line had fallen across the exit route; and the group had to retreat, heading back toward the fire in order to reach another roadway. "At that point, I could see flames from the canyon below my house," Tammy relates. "But the engines were coming down the street, and we had the fuel break."

The fuel break Tammy makes reference to was a 150-foot wide clearance, or ground fuels treatment, funded by the Forest Service through the California Fire Safe Council. It had been something of an experiment. Fire Chief George Corley summarized the project by saying, "We wanted to use our grant to show that you could do a little work along the edge of the interface and get paid extensive dividends. We trimmed up trees and removed ground fuels on the slope beneath the homes."

The experiment worked. In the aftermath of the 1,247-acre Grass Valley Fire, Chief Corley recounted, "What we did gave fire crews enough time to anchor off it (the fire from the fuel break). Firefighters didn't have to struggle with fires in the backyards, so the structure protection units were able to keep moving down the street. Unfortunately, the first house outside the project area burned to the ground. But that's how you know this works; you can stand here and see it. This project only cost \$40,000, but it saved millions of dollars worth of homes."

CAL FIRE's San Bernardino Unit Chief Tom O'Keefe added, Arrowhead Fire Safe Council and San Bernardino County Fire "prevented these losses 6 months ago."

WILLIAMS TRAIL FUEL BREAK TESTED DURING THE GALION FIRE, HURON-MANISTEE NATIONAL FOREST, MICHIGAN

In an effort to protect a small subdivision from wildfire, a shaded fuel break was constructed adjacent to homes along Williams Trail in 2002. The fuel break was about one-half mile long and 200 to 300 feet wide. The construction consisted of tree thinning to increase the distance between the tree crowns, and several homeowners prepared for potential wildfire events by establishing defensible space around their homes and thinning flammable tree species such as jack and red pine.

On August 30, 2007, the Galion Fire erupted to the south of the Williams Trail subdivision. The fire quickly transformed into a running crown fire heading toward the Williams Trail subdivision; however, once the fire hit the fuel break, its intensity reduced to a ground fire. Although the ground fire continued through the fuel break and into the subdivision and destroyed several structures, most remained damage free; home owners who had prepared ahead of time suffered little or no damage to their homes or outbuildings.

The fire stopped later that day as the weather moderated and ran into the moister, riparian area of Silver Creek. In total, 557 acres burned. Two homes were lost in the subdivision adjacent to the fuel break.

The fire was controlled with assistance from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources; the Grant Township; Tawas City, East Tawas and Plainfield Township Fire Departments; Michigan State Police; Iosco County Sheriff; United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the United States Forest Service.

Camp Caloosa Project, Lee County, Florida

Camp Caloosa is an 80-acre property located in Lee County, Florida, and is designated as a high wildfire risk area. The camp is owned by the Southwest Florida Girl Scouts and is used as a residential camp and instructional retreat. Most of the 80 acres are pine flatwoods with a significant accumulation of dense palmettos reaching 10 to 12 feet tall and areas with dense melaleuca growth.

Efforts to reduce the hazardous fuels began in the area following a request by the local fire department in 2006. The fire department responded to a small wildfire and experienced difficulty accessing the property. They were concerned about the dense vegetation and the need for additional fuels management of the camp. Following a meeting with Scout staff at the camp, a management plan for the property was developed that included a comprehensive mitigation plan.

During the initial phase of the mitigation plan, walking trails through the camp were widened by the Intermountain Region Mitigation Team. The widened trails were used to define prescribed burn units for the next phase of the work.

On April 4, 2007, a wildfire burned into the northwest boundary of the camp. The widened trails served as firebreaks that stopped or slowed the fire enough for suppression equipment to work effectively. The trails were also wide enough for brush truck access. As a result, the fire burned only eight acres before it was contained.

The cost of this project, including Intermountain Region team personnel, equipment and local district personnel working jointly on the mitigation project was approximately \$9,000; however, the project protected 21 structures with an estimated value of \$3,675,000 in the face of wildfire. The per structure cost in order to provide this additional protection was only \$426.

EFFECTS OF VEGETATION TREATMENTS ON THE VINCENT FIRE, APACHE-SITGREAVES NATIONAL FOREST, ARIZONA

The Vincent Fire started on the morning of May 29, 2007, outside the treatment units contained in White Mountain Stewardship Projects Dutch Joe A and Dutch Joe B. These projects were designed to reduce the threat of wildfire to adjacent private lands. Aggressive thinning and slash removal had been completed in 2006 under the Dutch Joe A project; similar actions were in progress under the Dutch Joe B project.

In each project unit, the understory was thinned and trees up to 18 inches in diameter were removed. Remaining slash was chipped and transported to be burned at a 24 mega-watt biomass plant. Large diameter trees were retained, but tree spacing was increased and ladder fuels (branches in the lower part of the trees) were removed.

Once ignited, the Vincent Fire grew rapidly in size due to dense forest conditions, low humidity and moderate winds. The ground fire quickly moved into the canopy of untreated ponderosa pine stands, and tree torching and running crown fires were observed.

Once the fire reached the area treated by the Dutch Joe A and B projects, it dropped from the tree crowns (upper portions of the trees) to the ground, demonstrating that thinning and slash treatments are effective tools to moderate fire behavior—far easier and safer to control.

PARTNERSHIP ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Partnerships program identifies, develops and coordinates with other organizations to achieve shared goals. The result is a synergistic approach to issues such as wildland urban interface fire, national emergency response, fire prevention, fire in the ecosystem, State and local unit cooperation and coordination, and many other issues that affect a wide variety of national interest groups.

By collaborating with groups such as the National Association of State Foresters, International Association of Fire Chiefs, Federal Emergency Management Agency, National Fire Protection Association, and many others, the agency facilitates a cooperative course of action that yields integrated solutions to common issues.

The Partnerships Program includes Cooperative Fire Protection which deals with Volunteer Fire Assistance, State Fire Assistance, and Federal Emergency Personal

Property. It also includes Fire Prevention, Firewise, the Wildland Urban Interface Fire program, and All-Hazard Emergency Answer. The Partnerships program also coordinates any requests for international programs and cooperation for Fire and Aviation Management.

PARTNERSHIP—SUCCESS STORIES

Cooperative Fire

The Forest Service Cooperative Fire program provides support and grant opportunities to assist State and local agencies prepare for and respond to wildland fire. The two most important grant opportunities include the State Fire Assistance and Volunteer Fire Assistance programs. Many other important initiatives are supported either through collaborative efforts or grants. Examples include grants provided to the National Association of State Foresters, International Association of Fire Chiefs, The Advertising Council, and National Fire Protection Association, as well as collaboration with the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The Forest Service is continuing our commitment, as detailed in a Memorandum of Understanding, to work with the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of the Interior to coordinate wildland fire grant programs. Another important achievement of the Cooperative Fire program was the coordination with interagency partners to gain approval of an updated template for preparing cooperative wildland fire agreements with the States. The new template was approved by the National Fire and Aviation Executive Board in January 2007 and will help improve efficiency and facilitate coordination during wildland fire and also Stafford Act emergency responses.

State Fire Assistance

Forest Service funding in 2007 provided in excess of \$79 million for technical and financial assistance to the States for all fire management activities, including training, planning, hazardous fuel treatments, and the purchase and maintenance of equipment. State Fire Assistance funding assisted 33,332 communities in the form of risk assessments, fire prevention programs, fire management planning, and hazardous fuel mitigation projects. An emphasis in funding was placed on wildland-urban interface (WUI). The State Fire Assistance program provides key support to successful community programs such as Firewise Communities/USA and Fire Safe Councils, as well as support for an expanded national public service fire prevention program. In addition, many communities and local fire departments, in collaboration with State foresters, developed community wildfire protection plans (CWPP's) to prioritize hazardous fuels treatments and reduce structural ignitability in communities that receive support from State Fire Assistance funding. State Fire Assistance grants treated approximately 215,000 acres of hazardous fuels in the WUI, helping to protect over 6,000 communities at risk from catastrophic wildfire.

Community Wildfire Protection Plans and Communities at Risk

In fiscal year 2007, assistance was provided for hazard assessments and funding was provided for Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP's) for communities at risk (CAR). CWPP's address issues such as wildfire response, hazard mitigation, community preparedness, and structure protection. They provide communities with a tremendous opportunity to influence where and how Federal agencies implement fuels reduction plans on Federal lands and how additional Federal funds may be distributed for projects on non-Federal lands. State Foresters evaluate the progress made at reducing risk in communities at risk (CAR). A CAR may be considered at reduced risk by the State Forester if the community has mitigated high priority fuels according to the CWPP, has achieved Firewise or equivalent recognition, or has enacted mitigation or fire prevention ordinances. The following chart illustrates the current status of CWPP's, as well as Communities at Risk.

STATUS OF COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLANS—COMMUNITIES AT RISK

NASF region	States with CAR list/map	Total CAR	Communities covered by CWPP's	CAR at reduced risk
West	17	6,169	3,145	1,412
South	13	40,984	1,160	888
Northeast	19	4,459	457	1,514
Total	49	51,612	4,762	3,814

Volunteer Fire Assistance

The Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) program provides grants to rural and volunteer fire departments which serve communities of fewer than 10,000 people. The grants are made by the State foresters and funded at a 50/50 cost share. Generally, most grants are for less than \$5,000 and average \$2,000 for a fire department. The grants are used for training, firefighting equipment, and safety equipment, including personal protective equipment. They are also used for organizing fire departments. Application for these funds is made by the fire departments to the respective State Forester. In fiscal year 2007, the VFA program accomplished the following:

- increased firefighting capacity by providing technical assistance, training, supplies, and equipment to approximately 10,157 small, rural communities;
- provided nearly \$14 million for technical and financial assistance to States to enhance firefighting capacity at State and local levels; and
- supported the organization or expansion of 53 fire departments.

VFA SUCCESS

West Virginia uses Volunteer Fire Assistance Funding to Train Wildland Firefighters

Rural fire protection in the 20 States served by the U.S. Forest Service Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry relies heavily on volunteer fire departments (VFDs) and their members. While State forestry agencies are legally responsible for the prevention and suppression of wildland fires, local VFDs provide the initial attack capabilities on most wildland fires. For the local communities and the State forestry agencies, a well-trained, equipped workforce is critical to the suppression of these fires.

In 2003, the West Virginia Division of Forestry (WVDOP) developed a program to train volunteer firefighters in the suppression of wildland fires. Using funding from the Volunteer Fire Assistance Program, the WVDOP trains VFP personnel and university students in three courses that will enable them to fight wildland fires more safely and effectively—Basic Incident Command, Fire Weather Behavior and Basic Firefighter training. Upon successful completion of these courses, firefighters each receive a set of personal protective equipment—Nomex yellow shirt and green trousers. Firefighters are also eligible to take the work capacity test; and if successful, they receive an incident qualifications card—“red card,” enabling them to participate on out-of-state fires with the WVDOP.

Since 2003, the WVDOP has trained more than 390 wildland firefighters under the VFA Training Grant. This includes members from more than 83 fire departments, 49 students from the Forestry Department of the West Virginia University and 28 members of the West Virginia Air National Guard. The WVDOP has been able to increase its firefighting workforce while instilling proper wildland firefighting techniques and safety procedures in their firefighters.

This training program has increase personnel available for the WVDOP's wildland fire crews for both in and out-of-state fire assignments. Since 2003, the WVDOP has conducted eight pack tests and issued more than 180 “red cards.” In addition, the firefighter training program has become a permanent part of the West Virginia University's School of Forestry curriculum.

Prevention

Smokey turned 63 years old in 2007, and his message is still needed. Many wildfires are carelessly started by humans each year, including the Angora Fire near Lake Tahoe, California, during the 2007 fire season. The Angora fire ignited when an illegal warming fire was left unattended. It burned more than 3,100 acres, cost \$12.7 million to suppress, and destroyed more than 250 homes.

Fire Prevention Education Teams were deployed throughout the Nation before and during the 2007 fire season. The Southern Region leads the Nation with more than 400 trained prevention team members.

The teams produced public service announcements (PSA's) for television and radio, created fliers and posters, and conducted Firewise Awareness workshops. One of the most notable team achievements was the PSA developed Georgia for national comedian Jeff Foxworthy who stated “Even a 5th grader knows you shouldn't start a wildfire. Cut it out!” The PSA's were aired throughout the Southern Region during their busy fire season.

The prevention message across the country stressed the role of individuals in protecting homes and public lands from wildland fires. Prevention teams worked with partners at the University of Nevada—Reno Extension, to develop a ‘one-stop-shopping’ website to educate residents on creating defensible space.

The Fire Prevention Branch continued the partnership with the Ad Council and Radio Disney to increase the awareness of the Ad Council campaigns. The Smokey

Bear Fire Prevention Campaign remained at the top of Radio Disney's list of campaigns.

More than \$12.9 million in media services were donated in the first quarter of 2007. Radio and outdoor/transit (billboards, bus signs, etc.) media accounted for 62 percent of total donated media support. Highlights of the media campaign's first quarter, when compared to the same quarter a year ago, include the following:

- 378 percent increase in newspaper-donated media;
- 187 percent increase in magazine-donated media;
- 687,801,976 impressions (each time a target audience member is exposed to the message) on the internet, including the New York Times, National Geographic, and Google websites; and
- Spanish and English radio activity dominated air play with the public service announcements Smoke :60 and Sprinkler :60.

Smokey Bear was the only PSA costumed icon at the "Move it! Summer 2007," mall tour, in 42 major markets during July through August. Smokey Bear was one of only six PSA campaigns featured at the Eisner Museum of Advertising and Design in Milwaukee. The exhibit continues through March 2008 and is estimated to be viewed by over 20,000 visitors.

The Southern Region, with help from Eastern and Pacific Southwest Regions, coordinated the Smokey Bear advertisement campaign for the Little League World Series. This Advertisement—American Traditions (Apple pie, the American flag, and Smokey Bear)—was spearheaded with help from the Virginia Department of Forestry; and the ad was located in each region's souvenir program guide. The National Gardens Clubs and the Forest Service annual poster contest reached 300,000 students.

RESTORING FIRE ADAPTED ECOSYSTEMS: A FOREST SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND NATURE CONSERVANCY PARTNERSHIP

The Forest Service, Department of the Interior and Nature Conservancy continue to partner to accelerate fire restoration across the country. Restoring Fire Adapted Ecosystems is designed to advance the common goals of the sponsoring partners, while focusing on collaborative outreach, education, training, and community-based conservation. In 2007, the program centered on developing and promoting a common national fire education message that emphasizes the role of fire in the ecosystem. Fire and Aviation Management funded the public education campaign stressing fire's natural and beneficial role. The campaign complements Smokey Bear's message of preventing unwanted human-caused wildfires. This partnership supports the 10-Year Strategy Implementation Plan and the philosophies behind the Chief's program, "Kids in the Woods," which encourages the education of youth in order for them to understand the link between their homes and the natural resources.

WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE FIRE PROGRAM

The 2007 fire season started early and got big fast with the Sweat Farm and Bugaboo fires in the Southern Region. Once again, wildland urban interface issues took the forefront. Development in the WUI continues to grow exponentially and along with it the cost of fire suppression and the danger to private property. The growth vastly outpaces available resources to protect the structures from wildland fire threats.

Firewise is the best tool for homeowner mitigation of risk from wildland urban interface fires. Partnerships' grant and cooperative agreement with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) supports the program. Its principles, when implemented, significantly increase defensible space and survivability. It provides a layer of safety for structures, homeowners and firefighters. Through this program, the Forest Service encourages and teaches property owners to take responsibility for mitigation on private land. Every dollar invested in the Firewise program yields \$14 in matching funds or in-kind contributions.

In 2007, Firewise principles were implemented in every State of the Nation, and Firewise Communities were in place in 36 States. There are Firewise liaisons in 45 States, and over 300,000 people live in Firewise communities.

Overall visibility and awareness of Firewise and its principles has increased nationwide as a result of targeted outreach to media. Print and broadcast media reached over 30 million people with the Firewise message in 2007 alone. NFPA provided over 150,000 printed or audio-visual items, mostly free of charge, to fulfill orders received through the on-line catalog.

The Firewise web site received an average of 40,000 individual hits per month during the peak of fire season, and those individuals visited an accumulated total of a million times on the site after logging in. More than 8,400 people are registered

on the site to receive monthly Firewise Alerts—e-mails with items of interest and upcoming events such as chat sessions which are held monthly. Online learning enrollment for fire related topics is also increased.

Assessing Wildfire Hazards in the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) training sessions reached many more with train-the-trainer sessions in five locations across the country. The HIZ training sessions were so successful that they will be continued in 2008.

Partnerships piloted a Firewise Hazard Mitigation Team during the 2007 fire season. The concept concentrated on addressing issues resulting from increased growth in the wildland urban interface.

Federal Excess Personal Property Program (FEPP)

The Federal Excess Personal Property (FEPP) program allows the loan of Forest Service owned property, including high demand equipment and supplies, to State foresters in order to assist State and rural agencies and volunteer firefighters in preparedness for suppression and pre-suppression missions on Federal, State, and community lands. The FEPP program provides items from gloves to fire trucks, thereby effectuating substantial savings to the taxpayers.

FEPP Success

In 2007, a total of 393 trucks and 218 trailers were assigned to State cooperators. In most instances, these items were equipped with tanks, generators and pumps to assist firefighters on wildland and brush fires. Approximately 17 pieces of heavy equipment were loaned to State cooperators to help maintain and build fire roads. In fiscal year 2007, the State forestry agencies have acquired nearly \$30 million worth of FEPP. Currently, 49 States and 5 territories participate in the FEPP program.

Department of Defense Firefighter Property Program (FFP)

The Firefighter Property Program (FFP) is a new authority that began in March of 2006. The FFP allows a State to acquire title to excess military equipment and then assign that equipment to rural fire departments. The Department of Defense (DOD) authorized the Forest Service FEPP program to manage the transfer of DOD property through a Memorandum of Agreement.

The major difference between the FFP and the FEPP program is the ownership of the items acquired. All items acquired in the FEPP program remain the property of the Forest Service, while items acquired under the FFP are transferred to the recipient. The FFP property is screened at a higher level, therefore, making better quality and larger quantity of property available for the firefighting agencies. The program also acquires items for emergency services such as search and rescue, hazardous material spills and emergency medical services (EMS) equipment in addition to firefighting equipment, making it beneficial to participating agencies. These functions often fall within the firefighting agencies' responsibilities but are not applicable to the FEPP program.

FFP Success

Currently, 23 States are able to acquire FFP through the program—Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, and Washington. New agreements between other States and the Forest Service are in the process, with most States expected to be signed up within the next 1 to 2 years.

In 2007, more than \$38 million in equipment went to 23 States. North Carolina Division of Forest Resources acquired two backhoes for clearing fire roads, providing a cost savings of more than \$6 million to the State agency and its taxpayers.

The FFP has allowed State cooperators to acquire more than 400 refurbished trucks, equipped with pumps and generators to assist in rural in wildland firefighting in 2007. With an original acquisition cost of over \$18 million, these free-issue vehicles provided an enormous savings to rural and volunteer fire departments not only in resources to fight fire but in the level of protection and safety there are able to provide their communities.

Fire Management Today

Founded in 1936, Fire Management Today has served the wildland fire community for more than 70 years by providing information on new techniques, technologies and ideas. In 2007, a new column was added "Anchor Point," penned by Tom Harbour, Director of Fire and Aviation Management. This column focuses on the challenges and changes to Fire and Aviation Management. Another landmark event occurred in 2007 for Fire Management Today—the initiation of the Forest

Service website (<http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/fmt/>) which has been updated with many previous issues bookmarked to provide ease in finding information.

NATIONAL RESPONSE PLAN

The Forest Service is a land management agency with a unique combination of people, skills and resources that add significant value to the agency's national all-hazard response capability. The agency accepts their all-hazard role under the National Response Plan (NRP) as complimentary to its overall land management mission. In recent years, there has been a major increase in the number and complexity of all-hazard incidents resulting in unprecedented demands on Forest Service employees and its partners in emergency response.

The NRP has been revised and the new draft is called the National Response Framework (NRF), which establishes a comprehensive all-hazards approach to enhance the ability of the United States to manage domestic incidents. It forms the basis of how the Federal Government coordinates with State, local, tribal governments and the private sector during incidents. Partnerships staffs took the lead for agency participation in the revision of the NRP by the Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency (DHS/FEMA).

The Forest Service is the Primary Agency and coordinator for Emergency Support Function 4, Firefighting (ESF4) under the NRP, and this role continues under the NRF. The function of ESF4 is to enable the detection and suppression of wildland, rural, and urban fires resulting from, or occurring coincidentally with, an incident of national significance. ESF4 manages and coordinates firefighting activities, including the detection and suppression of fires on Federal lands, and provides personnel, equipment, and supplies in support of State, tribal, and local agencies involved in rural and urban firefighting operations.

To successfully accomplish this function, the Forest Service has close working relationships with partner departments and agencies. Department of the Interior agencies provide staffing support for ESF4, and wildland fire resource support for mission assignments during all-hazard responses. The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) provides subject-matter experts and expertise regarding structural/urban/suburban fire and fire-related activities. The Forest Service, in conjunction with USFA, is developing a standardized training program for ESF4 personnel and the production of job aids and other ancillary materials for use during ESF4 activations.

There have been many changes to Federal disaster response based on lessons learned from the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons. ESF4 personnel participated in exercises to test the procedures resulting from the changes. Several exercises, involving many Federal departments and agencies, were held during 2007. The Forest Service was an active participant in these exercises at both the national and regional levels.

NATIONAL RESPONSE PLAN—SUCCESS STORIES

Some highlights of the Forest Service's all-hazard support to the National Response Plan during fiscal year 2007 include:

- Kansas tornados—when a tornado destroyed the town of Greensburg, Kansas, in May 2007, FEMA activated ESF4 regionally at the RRCC in Kansas City. ESF4 deployed a Forest Service National Incident Management Organization (NIMO) incident management team and an Interagency Hotshot Crew to establish and manage a base camp for emergency responders.
- Micronesia floods—when salt water intrusion from storm surge and unusually high tides in May 2007 wiped out the subsistence food crops in Chuuk, Micronesia, FEMA activated ESF4 regionally to deploy Forest Service personnel as part of a preliminary damage assessment team and later to establish and manage a food distribution program, providing quality assurance and technical assistance to a USDA feeding program.
- Hurricane Dean—Hurricane Dean was one of the strongest hurricanes on record; and at one point, threatened several U.S. territories and States. As a precaution, FEMA activated ESF4 regionally at the Regional Response Coordination Centers (RRCC) in New York (for Puerto Rico) and Denton, Texas; and at the National Response Coordination Center (NRCC) in Washington, D.C. Logistics Section personnel were deployed to provide expertise, quality assurance and technical assistance to FEMA for the establishment of a base camp.

NATIONAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (NIMS) SUPPORT

The NIMS outlines a standard approach to incident management and response that follows the wildland fire model—one used by the Forest Service and other fire agencies for years. It integrates effective practices in emergency response into a

comprehensive national framework for incident management. In addition, it enables responders at all levels to work together more effectively and efficiently to manage domestic incidents no matter what the cause, size or complexity.

Partnerships took the lead for agency's participation in the upgrade of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) by the DHS/FEMA. Partnership subject matter experts were embedded in the senior steering committee for NIMS and chaired the working group which developed guidelines for resource typing, credentialing, multi-agency coordination, emergency operations centers and an emergency response guide book.

NIMS is of supreme importance for national incident management, but its update will have minimal impact on the agency since the Forest Service's current system is grounded in the NIIMS and has been for years. Impact to the agency includes:

- training of agency personnel (IS-700 and IS-800);
- review of Emergency Plans at the District, Forest, and Regional levels;
- review of agreements to ensure NIMS compliance; and
- resource typing of non-fire assets for disaster service.

Each Region has identified a NIMS contact to assist in coordination of information and to ensure compliance.

Over 600 Federal, State, local, tribal, non-profit, and private company representatives assisted in the process. Partnerships staffs were part of the ten-person final adjudication committee. The upgraded NIMS document was ready for release by the June 1, 2007, timeframe established by the White House. The NRP is awaiting final review and comment.

FIRE AND AVIATION MANAGEMENT INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Over 100 years of wildland firefighting experience has earned the U.S. Forest Service a worldwide reputation. This experience, along with the technical and professional expertise of fire specialists in the Forest Service, provides the basis for FAM's international involvement.

Partnerships staff both coordinate and manage fire requests for international programs. FAM builds and maintains strategic national alliances through emergency firefighting arrangements with Canada, Mexico, Australia, and New Zealand.

Some examples of the success experienced by this program are as follows:

- When firefighting resources became scarce during the 2007 western wildland fire season, Canada provided support through the Canada/United States Reciprocal Forest Fire Fighting Arrangement. The United States also provided firefighting support to Australia in January and February 2007 through the United States/Australian Participating Agencies Arrangement.
- FAM employees traveled to Greece as part of a Disaster Assistance Support Program (DASP) wildfire technical assessment team in September 2007. The team provided technical assistance and support to the government of Greece during their disastrous fire season.
- FAM employees provided instruction in all aspects of fire management on assignments to Mexico, India, Jamaica, and several countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).
- Fire and Aviation Management has been an active member of the Forest Commission (NAFC) Fire Management Working Group (FMWG) for over 40 years. The NAFC is one of six regional forestry commissions of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). NAFC, which was established in 1958, provides a forum for fire policy and technical information sharing for member nations (Canada, Mexico and the United States) to discuss and address North American forest and fire issues. The FMWG, established in 1962, is one of nine working groups under the NAFC.
- In May 2007, Fire and Aviation Management supported the NAFC-FMWG by co-sponsoring the 4th International Wildland Fire Conference in Seville, Spain. FAM and NAFC-FMWG supported the exchange of experiences and technological advances by hosting a study tour Australians and New Zealanders. The tour visited sites and studied current fire management issues throughout Canada and the western and southern United States during September 2007.

PART III.—LOOKING AHEAD FOR 2008

In fiscal year 2008, Fire and Aviation Management will continue to support the Chief's initiatives through the deployment of a program with specific focus areas and planned activities. These emphasis areas and activities, highlighted below, will enhance the program and agency's performance and efficiency. They, and others, will be integral components in Fire and Aviation Management's Strategic Plan.

CHIEF'S INITIATIVE

Fire and Aviation Management will continue to support the Chief's "Climate, Water and Kids" initiative through an integrated program which includes:

- reduced hazardous fuels and the integration of fire within ecosystems;
- expanded use of Appropriate Management Response and Wildland Fire Use;
- protection of vital watersheds during wildland fires and through the restoration process; and
- an education program, reaching all ages, that emphasizes fire prevention, the natural role of fire in fire-adapted ecosystems, and the connection of natural resources to the homes and communities surrounding the national forests and grasslands.

FOCUS AREAS

Management Controls and Operational Efficiencies

Fire and Aviation Management (FAM) will maintain its emphasis on management controls and operational strategies which improve program oversight, delivery, effectiveness and efficiency. Utilizing rigorous management controls such as the Chief's Inter-Deputy Group to provide Executive level fiscal leadership and oversight; the Chief's Principle Representative for fires of national significance; and the Line Officer certification process for incident level oversight will emphasize cost containment. Strategic use and deployment of firefighting resources and implementation of aviation efficiencies such as centralizing aviation services and assets will be underscored.

Risk-Informed Management

The Forest Service will continue to accentuate the importance of decision support technology development for risk informed management strategies to support implementation of Appropriate Management Response and prioritization of hazardous fuels. Development and refinement of systems and services such as the Wildland Fire Decision Support System, the Ecosystem Management Decision Support System and Predictive Services are essential to the agency's success. These systems and other tools will support managers in making informed decisions, thereby increasing the likelihood of success and potentially reducing costs.

Integrated Fuels Management

The Forest Service will continue to work collaboratively with other Federal, State, local, tribal, government and non-governmental organizations, and other partners to ensure the accomplishment of mutual objectives. Program funding will be prioritized and integrated to accomplish Healthy Forests Initiative (HFI) and Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) objectives, efficiently and effectively. Continued emphasis will be placed on the integration of Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) with Federal hazardous fuels mitigation priorities.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES

Readiness Capability and Mobilization

The Forest Service will provide readiness resources comparable to fiscal year 2007, including approximately: 10,480 firefighters, 120 helicopters and 20 airtankers. The agency will use Predictive Services and other resources to analyze potential fire activity to guide strategic placement of resources. All actions will occur with firefighter and public safety as the primary consideration.

Fire and Aviation Management Strategic Planning

FAM continues to develop a Fire and Aviation Management Strategic Plan linked in part to the current Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) Improvement Plan. The strategy will define program components relative to incentives, accountability and cost containment while considering risks and establishing objectives to evaluate if strategies are being achieved in an effective and efficient manner.

Reduce Hazardous Fuels

The Forest Service will continue hazardous fuels reduction efforts by treating approximately 2.9 million acres of hazardous fuel and reducing flammability of the forests, woodlands, shrublands and grasslands including 2 million acres in the wildland urban interface (WUI) and 868,000 acres in areas outside the WUI areas. Additionally, fuel loads will be reduced on approximately 1.5 million acres as a secondary benefit through other vegetation management activities, wildland fire use events, Hazardous Mitigation Grants awarded under the State Fire Assistance program, and activities of southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act.

The Forest Service will continue participation in the Federal Woody Biomass Utilization Working Group to promote and support the utilization of woody biomass and woody biomass products from forest and woodland treatments.

Restoration and Post-Fire Recovery of Fire Adapted Ecosystems

The agency will continue to promote the increase of wildland fire use consistent with land and resource management plans and public and firefighter safety. These acres will be reported annually. On lands that are severely burned by wildland fire in fiscal year 2008, emergency stabilization, rehabilitation and restoration treatments will be implemented. Burned areas will continue to be reforested through a 5-year cost-share agreement with American Forests for Wildfire ReLeaf. Additionally, the Interagency Program to Supply and Manage Native Plant Materials—a long-term strategy to improve nursery and plan material center infrastructure and monitor restoration effects and public/private partnerships, will be continued.

Promote Community Assistance

FAM will partner with the National Fire Protection Association, State, Federal and nonprofit partners to encourage community responsibility for hazard mitigation through land use planning, building codes, landscaping codes, zoning and community fire protection planning through the Firewise Communities Program.

Technical assistance, training, supplies and equipment will be provided to more than 6,500 small rural communities and 5,075 volunteer fire departments. Firefighting capacity will be increased by providing technical assistance, training, supplies and equipment to rural communities through Volunteer Assistance Fire Assistance (USDA Forest Service) program.

Mr. REY. I will also submit for the record of the hearing continued progress in over 40 other areas of cost containment, and, finally, concluding the remarks on fire, we will submit for the record of this hearing the Firefighting Retention Study that the committee requested that we do and that we made available to your staffs earlier this week.

[The information follows:]

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS AND OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES: LEADERSHIP UPDATED—APRIL 9, 2008

Management controls and efficiencies ¹	Benefits ²	Parties involved ³	Action required ⁴	Status
<p>L-1 <i>Appropriate Management Response (AMR)</i>—Promote AMR provisions of 2005 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy in a clear, concise manner. Reaffirm leaders' intent for full implementation of AMR—enable full range of tactical options.</p>	<p>Decision-maker has the greatest flexibility in management of incident from the onset, which can be supported through decision-making tools. Consistent implementation of AMR will lead to greater flexibility in wildland fire management.</p>	<p>Fire and Aviation Management (FAM), Ecosystem Management, Coordination (EMC), interagency partners.</p>	<p>Clearly articulate the policy for consistency across all units. Develop accountability standards for IMT and Line Officer performance. Review policy with interagency partners to allow movement between suppression and WFU as needed. Remove the distinction between WFU and suppression. Develop an AMR Guidebook FAM and budget should modify handbook direction for suppression authority to support WFU.</p>	<p>Letter from the Chief sent to field units regarding policy and AMR, on April 19, 2007. On March 24, 2008, WFLC approved the next step in AMR development to establish WFDSS prototype units for the 2008 fire season. Information collected and lessons learned from those prototypes will be used in the consideration of national policy adjustments for 2009. Agency Savings est. at \$200M total all items.</p>
<p>L-2 <i>Land and Fire Management Plans</i>—Land and Fire Management Plans (LMP and FMP) for each unit should consider a full range of AMR, including point protection as an equally acceptable approach to perimeter control.</p>	<p>Enhanced decision making environment provides support for decision makers who select AMRs that may entail higher risk.</p>	<p>FAM, EMC</p>	<p>Decision by NLT to have FAM and planning work together on FS Manual changes. Provide decision criteria to allow for consideration of investments in reducing or maintaining fuel profiles rather than simply the cost of suppression.</p>	<p>Interagency group developed a FMP template, which includes AMR. Template will be used in revision or future development of FMP's. The template will be distributed to the field for their use May 2008.</p>

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS AND OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES: LEADERSHIP UPDATED—APRIL 9, 2008—Continued

Management controls and efficiencies. ¹	Benefits ²	Parties involved ³	Action required ⁴	Status
<p>L-3 <i>Line Officer Certification.</i>—Enhance skills in incident decision making in high risk environments. Line Officers (LO) core competencies should be certified on criteria including: —Cost containment and Delegation of Authority (DOA). —Incident management and processes ... —Wildland Fire Situation Analysis/Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFSAWFIP) and other decision support tools. —Situational awareness of resource availability and allocation. —Working knowledge of fire ecology and behavior. —Safety —IMT (Incident Management Team) review and evaluations.</p>	<p>Improved decision-making ability at the onset of a new incident when the greatest benefits can be achieved. Enhanced skills in the preparation of DOA, specifically in development of language on how to manage the incident. Line Officers are certified commensurate with the complexity of the incident.</p>	<p>Line Officer Team (LOT), FAM.</p>	<p>LOT team work in conjunction with FAM to reevaluate current policies in manual. Develop Line Officer Certification Process ... Develop a template for RFs (Regional Foresters) to use for interim certification, available for implementation prior to 2007 fire season. (see core competencies framework developed in R9). This interim certification will be used until certification procedures are in place.</p>	<p>Developed and implemented an interim certification. Letter to RF's 6/01/07.</p>
<p>L-3a <i>Line Officer Simulation.</i>—Build Line Officer competency through the use of simulation/sandtable exercises.</p>	<p>Better informed decision-makers at the local level. Practice high risk decisions in low risk environment.</p>	<p>LOT team working with FAM.</p>	<p>FAM to develop proposals for approval by LOT team. Consider LO certification with 420/520 type simulations.</p>	<p>Under consideration with LO items for AAR (xxxx) of successes and gaps.</p>
<p>L-3b <i>Shadow Assignments.</i>—Organize and manage a program to provide support and training for inexperienced agency administrators.</p>	<p>Provide for better decision-making in early phases of incident, as well as increased experience base for future Line Officer assignments.</p>	<p>LOT team, Regional Foresters, FAM.</p>	<p>LOT team is developing shadow protocols ... Regions should develop and maintain a list of qualified line officers for implementation. Incorporate the LO items for increasing their skills and abilities.</p>	<p>Shadow and mentoring program implemented in 2007.</p>

<p>L-3c WFSA Training—Ensure adequate WFSA training for line officers and fire management personnel, focusing on capturing “commanders’ intent” in the development of alternatives as opposed to the technical use of WFSA program³.</p>	<p>Consistent application of WFSA development and alternatives with better decision making and long-term reduction of costs.</p>	<p>FAM</p>	<p>FAM to work with research Identify and develop an implementation strategy to accomplish WFSA training. Consider distance learning and web-based training opportunities. Develop a mandatory one-day module for line officer and fire management personnel.</p>	<p>Regions accomplished WFSA training using centralized methods. Training is incorporated into Fire Management Leadership (FML) for Local Line Officers. Focused on WFDSS implementation.</p>
<p>L-4 (recommendation linked to G0-3) Chief’s Principle Representative (CPR)—Assigned by the Chief to provide decision support on incidents of national significance. This position would be assigned to any fire exceeding or projected to exceed \$10 million of Forest Service (FS) expenditures.</p>	<p>Local units would receive decision support from the national and regional level including the use of a decision support team of experts. Provides opportunity for mentoring of line officers with limited fire experience. Goal is to reduce the cost of long term fires projected to cost over \$10 million.</p>	<p>LOT, National Leadership Team (NLT).</p>	<p>LOT to develop criteria for roles and responsibilities of CPR.</p>	<p>Complete. CPR’s were assigned by the W.O. to all fires over \$10 million. 8 CPR’s assigned in fiscal year 2007.</p>
<p>L-5 Line Officer Authority—Use current benchmarks of \$2 million, \$10 million and \$50 million for Line Officer approval. Tie this to the development of Line Officer competencies in L-3.</p>	<p>Current WFSA process is only authority to spend—once approved, authority still stays with local agency administrator. Consistent with current chain of command established in the manual. Ensures organizational authority commensurate with incident significance. Improve decision-making ability at the onset of an incident.</p>	<p>LOT, NLT</p>	<p>FAM develop policy and criteria for manual change to be approved by NLT.</p>	<p>Anything to add about RFRs for 2007 season.</p> <p>Approving levels were not changed. RFR’s were assigned for fires over \$5 million. LO training provided for complex fire situations.</p>

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS AND OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES: LEADERSHIP UPDATED—APRIL 9, 2008—Continued

Management controls and efficiencies ¹	Benefits ²	Parties involved ³	Action required ⁴	Status
<p>L-6 <i>Decision Support (Current).</i>—Ensure units develop a fully considered Most Cost Effective Alternative in the WFSA.⁶ Emphasis pre-season work for WFSA and WFP development such as fire costs, historic costs and other data layers. This is necessary in order to make initial decisions under AMR. Ensure WFSA strategy implemented is achievable.</p>	<p>Improved decision-making process at all phases of incident, which will reduce costs through the duration of the incident.</p>	<p>FAM, research, LOT, NLT ..</p>	<p>WO letter to the field directing units to do pre-season work for WFSA/WFP requirements. Emphasize designation of analysts and pre-season updates of WFSA data during preparedness reviews. At a minimum, revalidate WFSAs and traditional cost benchmarks when team rotations occur. Ensure that IMT's adequately reflect the selected WFSA alternative and DOA as they report daily in the ICS-209. FAM and LOT work toward FSM modifications.</p>	<p>The April 19, 2007 letter from the LOT included key points for the Line Officers which included their involvement with WFSA. Manual modifications are ongoing.</p>
<p>L-7 <i>Decision Support (Future).</i>—Continue investment and expansion of decision support system technologies; FSPRO, RAVAR, and SCI for use with Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS). WFDSS needs to equally consider Fire Use for resource benefit with other suppression-oriented portions of AMR. WFSA and WFP need to be integrated into one product.⁷</p>	<p>Improved decision-making process at all phases of incident will reduce costs through the duration of the incident. Provides well documented and repeatable protocols that demonstrate the cost effectiveness of suppression strategies.</p>	<p>FAM, research, LOT .. Integrate DOI into this project.</p>	<p>Tie in direction set in WO letter into proposed training module. FAM working with LOT team and research to ensure decision making support is supported (WFDSS) and provide more opportunity to utilize new tools such as FSPRO early on. Establish Decision Support Teams to assist units with development of incident strategies. Require FS PRO and RAVAR on fires projected to cost over \$10 million.</p>	<p>WFDSS and other tools were available to the field and used extensively throughout fiscal year 2007. Investment development is continuing. The Forest Service begins transitioning from WFSA to WFDSS during fiscal year 2008 for full implementation in fiscal year 2009.</p>

<p>L-8 <i>Stratified Cost Index.</i>—Make full use of the SCI for IMT/Line Officer evaluations for cost efficiency, effectiveness and performance. Utilization of SCI to establish an incident budget is required for fires projected to cost over \$5 million.</p>	<p>Sets specific benchmarks for cost containment regardless of the socio-political environment. Data used comes directly from units Provides true incentive for using least cost option under WFA. Provides the ability to analyze spending trends of IMTs.</p>	<p>FAM, NLT, LOT, research ..</p>	<p>FAM develop policy and criteria for manual change to be approved by NLT. Review and develop a guide for implementation of SCI. Establish a system to address the need for additional authority and provide for incentives and disincentives.</p>	<p>SCI is under development. SCI highlighted problems with reporting and tracking dollars. DOI will begin using SCI in the future as well. Should develop an interagency guide if this occurs. Development of performance standards for line officers and Incident Management Teams is in progress.</p>
<p>L-9 <i>Incentives.</i>—Provide incentives related to getting “credit” for acres burned that meet management objectives whether WFO or suppression. IA effectiveness should also be a measurement based on the Stratified Cost Index for a particular unit. Federal Fire Policy must be changed.</p>	<p>Line Officer decisions resulting in lower costs should have the capability of directing a percentage of the savings back to their home unit.</p>	<p>LOT, NLT, research</p>	<p>FAM and LOT with concurrence of NLT to work on policy development. Stratified Cost Index should be incorporated.</p>	<p>Interagency task group established to develop policy. WFLC approved the shift to managing wildland fire as wildland fire use and suppression concurrently 3-24-2008.</p>
<p>L-10 <i>Predictive Services for Line Officers.</i>—Make Line Officers aware of current tools and decision models. Expand the use of new decision models, including FSPRO, earlier in the decision-making process.</p>	<p>Improved early and successive decision making, leads to lower costs on large fires. Better effectiveness for initial attack. Improved national mobilization of resources. Also relates to operational recommendations.</p>	<p>FAM, interagency partners</p>	<p>FAM to propose study on Predictive Services through (NLT). Commit resources to expand predictive capabilities, make services widely available. Expand and redefine the objective of Predictive Services. Include operations staff in discussions.</p>	<p>An interagency review of the predictive Services organization was completed. A national program is developed and a charter was signed this year. FSPRO was used widely in fiscal year 2007.</p>

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS AND OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES: LEADERSHIP UPDATED—APRIL 9, 2008—Continued

Management controls and efficiencies. ¹	Benefits ²	Parties involved ³	Action required ⁴	Status
<p>L-11 <i>Comptroller</i>.—Developed as a National Inter-Deputy Command Group to provide large fire and transactional oversight. Inter-Deputy group is comprised of Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry (SPF), Deputy Chief for National Forest System (NFS), Director of Fire and Aviation Management (FAM), and Director of Program and Budget Analysis (PBA).</p>	<p>Assists Line Officers in managing suppression costs. Transactional oversight will result in cost savings associated with ABCD miscellaneous funds, DOI/FS offset, etc.</p>	<p>Associate Deputy Chief S&PF, NLT.</p>	<p>Establish policy and roles for the Inter-Deputy Command Group. The position will develop a set of accountability measures to be reviewed at all levels..</p>	<p>Complete. Implemented in fiscal year 2007 and continuing in fiscal year 2008. Developed as a National Inter-Deputy Command Group to provide large fire and transactional oversight. Inter-Deputy group is comprised of Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry (SPF), Deputy Chief for National Forest System (NFS), Director of Fire and Aviation Management (FAM), and Director of Program and Budget Analysis (PBA)</p>
<p>L-12 <i>Cost Containment Reviews</i>.—Modify current cost containment review team process. Begin the process at onset of the incident.</p>	<p>Implementation of SCI and AMR may eliminate the need for post-event cost containment reviews.</p>	<p>FAM, fiscal</p>	<p>FAM request fiscal to drop requirement</p>	<p>Cost containment review begins when the incident begins by utilizing decision support tools and predictive modeling, RFR, and CPR. Forest Service developed and utilized a Large Fire Cost Review Guidebook in fiscal year 2007. An interagency guidebook is in review.</p>

<p>L-13 <i>Cost Containment Training</i>—Assess existing training to ensure cost containment is a focus, particularly among cadres currently working on revisions to curriculum.</p>	<p>Ensures consistency of cost containment training nationwide which translates into clearer expectations in the DOA to the IMT from the Line Officer.</p>	<p>Interagency training groups.</p>	<p>FAM (AD for risk management) review LFML curriculum for appropriate level of cost containment.</p>	<p>Regional pre-season meetings held discussing cost containment and decision making specific to fire. Two training sessions for OIG reviewers were held in fiscal year 2007. Two more were held in fiscal year 2008.</p>
<p>L-14 <i>Structure Protection</i>—Evaluate current structure protection policies to determine better utilization of local rural fire departments for increased capacity.</p>	<p>Consistent understanding of roles and responsibilities in the Wildland Urban Interface.</p>	<p>USDA-FS, USDI, State, and local governments.</p>	<p>WO FAM policy discussion with NWCG Develop National Wildland Fire Policy. Define the mission in the Wildland Urban Interface as defined in the National Fire Plan.</p>	<p>A letter was sent to the field transmitting the policy in the FSM on August 13, 2007. This will be discussed at NWCG in fiscal year 2008.</p>
<p>L-15 <i>MAFFS</i>—Over the past 5 years, Modular Airborne Firefighting Systems (MAFFS) operations have continued to increase in cost due to military adding requirements. Explore utilization of MAFFS through different venues such that cost savings can be realized. Pursue cost sharing with military rather than full reimbursement.</p>	<p>The new MAFFS units will provide for an opportunity to streamline operations on both sides and would facilitate additional cost efficiencies. <i>Potential Cost Savings: \$5 million.</i></p>	<p>Department of Defense (DOD), FAM, inter-agency.</p>	<p>Chief discuss with Secretary of Agriculture for potential implementation. Initiate discussion with DOD to identify potential efficiencies in the mobilization, support, and demobilization of the MAFFS operations. Explore venues in the private sector for use with MAFFS.</p>	<p>Task group associated with the aviation feasibility study is reviewing this. Information will be submitted by the end of 2007. MAFFS were not utilized in 2007—discussions occurred at National Multi-Agency Coordination Center (NMACC) to ensure cost savings remained a focus item. Estimated savings of \$955,000 per week for a period of at least 8 weeks.</p>

MANAGEMENT CONTROL AND EFFICIENCIES: OPERATIONS

Management controls and efficiencies	Benefits	Parties involved	Action required	Status
<p>AO-1 <i>National Helicopter Coordinator</i>.—Lack of real time field intelligence for appropriate tracking and assignment of helicopter resources.</p>	<p>Immediate savings through utilization of appropriate helicopter resources. <i>Potential Cost Savings: \$2-3 million annually</i>⁸.</p>	<p align="center">Aviation Operations</p> <p>Dispatch, aviation community, end users.</p>	<p>Assistant Director for Operations to NICC Coordinator. Establish a permanent full-time position for Helicopter Oversight and to manage the Helicopter Cost Efficiency Program (HCEP) database.</p>	<p>Completed. Employee start date 04/27/2008. Total savings estimated \$15-20 million by managing the exclusive use and limiting Call When Needed (CWN).</p>
<p>AO-1a <i>Performance-Based Aircraft Dispatching</i>.—Frequently, dispatched aircraft do not meet operational performance needs in the field.</p>	<p>Best performing resource for field conditions will provide most efficient and cost effective utilization. <i>Potential Cost Savings:—\$1.5 million annually</i>⁹.</p>	<p>Dispatchers, Acquisition Management (AQM), Agency Aircraft Inspectors, end users.</p>	<p>FAM will modify current aircraft dispatching practices to implement best-value aircraft dispatching tool called Helicopter Cost Efficiency Program (HCEP). Develop communication strategy to gain field acceptance immediately.</p>	<p>HCEP program updates identified after beta test currently underway. New version scheduled for field use in 2008.</p>
<p>AO-1b <i>Centralization (C&C) of Exclusive Use Helicopters</i>.—Utilization of aircraft will be based on Predictive Services. All helicopters will be considered national resources rather than National Fire Management Analysis System (NFMAS) model of Most Efficient Level resources.¹⁰</p>	<p>Reduction in severity costs by linking resources to Predictive Services. This would also reduce the use of CWN resources. <i>Potential Cost Savings:—\$1.5 million</i> based on reduction of CWN aircraft mobilization under severity needs.</p>	<p>FAM, dispatch, Predictive Services, Assistant Director for Operations.</p>	<p>FAM Director will initiate decision and begin implementation strategy. Remove regional boundaries for aircraft utilization.</p>	<p>Type 1 and Type 2 helicopters are now consolidated into two national contracts. Managed as national shared resources.</p>
<p>AO-2 <i>Exclusive Use Helicopters</i>.—Utilize the "Wildland Fire Management Aerial Application Study" (August 2005) to determine the number of Type I and Type II Exclusive Use helicopters to be added to the system.</p>	<p>The addition of exclusive use helicopters will increase preparedness costs, but will result in a substantial reduction in suppression costs due to fewer CWN helicopters. <i>Potential Cost Savings: \$39.8 million (\$6.1 million for Type II aircraft, \$33.7 million for Type I aircraft)</i>¹¹.</p>	<p>FAM, AQM</p>	<p>Review Type III costs with intent to add additional Type III helicopters for exclusive use. Reduce CWNs.</p>	<p>Completed. Appropriate number of Type 1 and 2 helicopters determined for maximum cost efficiency based on actual use statistics. Aircraft have been contracted under AO-1b recommendation.</p>

<p>A0-3 <i>Performance-Based Contracts</i>.—Helicopter contracts are currently awarded based on antiquated aircraft typing criteria.</p>	<p>Improved effectiveness of the airframes in the field, resulting in cost reductions in price/lb delivery. We would obtain more modern aircraft with better safety features. Improved customer service and support during dispatching process. <i>Potential Cost Savings: \$581,000</i></p>	<p>AQM, Department of the Interior (DOI), vendors.</p>	<p>Revise the contracting system by implementing the best value helicopter performance-based contracting. FAM submit request for contract action and performance based requirements to AQM.</p>	<p>Completed. Linear optimization model developed for technical evaluation and best-value award for national helicopter contracts.</p>
<p>A0-4 <i>Long-Term Aviation Contracts</i>.—Develop long term contracts to achieve an overall reduction in helicopter and airtanker costs.</p>	<p>Services will cost less due to greater availability of aviation resources. Longer contracts are more cost effective. Provides industry stability, thereby creating a greater incentive to invest in new technology. <i>Potential Cost Savings: \$4.8 million for 180 day contracts, \$24 million for 5 year contracts.</i></p>	<p>FAM, AQM, industry, inter-agency.</p>	<p>FAM submit request for contract action and requirements to AQM. Look at adding additional Exclusive Use helicopters. Explore partnerships across regional and agency boundaries as well as multi-mission capability.</p>	<p>Completed. 2008 large airtanker contract is a 5 year fixed length. National helicopter contracts are transitioning to a 4 year cycle.</p>
<p>A0-5 <i>Limiting Aviation Resources</i>.—Consider limiting/re-evaluating use of aviation resources as an incident increases in scale and duration and costs approach benchmarks.</p>	<p>More resources for initial attack or reassignment. Forces consideration of aviation needs/costs in strategy development on long term incidents. <i>Potential Cost Savings: \$3 million per ¼ incident time.¹²</i></p>	<p>FAM, Incident Management Teams, NLT.</p>	<p>FAM will establish benchmarks for long term aviation use. Justify extended use under WFSA alternative.</p>	<p>Geographic Multi-Agency Coordination Center (GMAC) managed helicopters at the geographic area level in fiscal year 2007. Also, utilized priority setting criteria for moving helicopters around. Established long-term fire plans for incidents to efficiently utilize all resources. Ongoing.</p>
<p>A0-6 <i>Airtanker Base Efficiency</i>.—Airtanker base infrastructure has not changed with the decrease of available large airtankers.</p>	<p>Cost savings as a result of reduced facility expenses and a decrease in FTEs.</p>	<p>FAM, airtanker base personnel, retardant contractors.</p>	<p>Identify appropriate blend of aircraft types for year-round versus partial contract. Convert bulk contracts to full-service contracts for existing bases. Evaluate existing bases for re-designation as mobile or reload bases.</p>	<p>Airtanker base efficiency study completed in 2007. Awaiting decision on implementation.</p>

MANAGEMENT CONTROL AND EFFICIENCIES: OPERATIONS—Continued

Management controls and efficiencies	Benefits	Parties involved	Action required	Status
<p>GO-1 <i>Severity Funds</i>.—Consider applying a cap to approvals of no more than \$1 million per pay period or a percentage of the WFPR allocation for each Regional severity request.</p>	<p>Allows for longest distribution of severity funds over season nationally and displays assertive management. Review of ABCD Miscellaneous accounting will bring everyone to parity and consistent implementation. <i>Potential Cost Savings: \$21 million</i>¹³</p>	<p>Ground Operations Fiscal, FAM</p>	<p>FSM, Letter of Instruction Review use of ABCD Miscellaneous Accounts in lieu of severity requests. Pre-positioned MSRs in lieu of severity when available.</p>	<p>Letter to the field Limiting severity authorizations by Region May, 2007. Allocated a ceiling of \$30 million and moved authority around as needed. Actual severity spent about 2/3 of \$35 million ceiling.</p>

<p>GO-2 <i>National Shared Resources (NSR).</i>—Treat these resources without regional boundaries, and move to areas based on projections by Predictive Services. Depending on planning levels, hold a percentage of NSRs at each level for IA rather than large fire support.</p>	<p>Consistent definition of NSRs. Efficient process of mobilization. Process provides for consistent use of ABCD Miscellaneous funds and reduced severity needs. Simultaneous increase in percentage of resources held for IA with increased planning levels. National level funding ensures consistent use of NSR funds across regions. Increases National flexibility in the assignment of resources. Increases availability of resources by eliminating concentration of resources in a geographic area.</p>	<p>Mobilization System, Fire Operations, MAC Group. While interagency in scope, can be implemented FS—only through Assistant Director for Operations.</p>	<p>Strategy Operations Plan, National Operations Plan. Reconsider definition of National Shared Resources. Centralize funding and management of national cache system. Hold funding for NSRs at the national level instead of distributing to local units. Establish agreements with host units to cover fixed costs.</p>	<p>Included the utilization of national shared resources in the national operations plan. NMAC moved IHC's when needed due to potential activity or critical fire needs. Funding has not been held at the national level yet for these resources or the caches due to the issue of WO ceiling. Discussions need to take place between FAM and PBA. DOA from Chief of FS, Deputy Secretary of Interior, Administrator of U.S. Fire Administration, and President of National Association of State Foresters to NMAC on 6/19/07.</p>
<p>GO-3 (recommendation linked to L-4) <i>National Operational Oversight.</i>—Provide review of incident strategy from organizational level above the Line Officer.</p>	<p>Provides additional expertise to local Line Officers in making strategic decisions on potential mega fires. Early strategic decisions significantly influence long term fire costs.</p>	<p>FAM, Predictive Services, National Incident Management Organization (NIMO).</p>	<p>Immediate direction to NIMO Incident Commanders (ICs) from WO. Develop a national operations decision support group. Supply Chiefs Principle Representative as decision support with team.</p>	<p>Decision Support Group was assigned with the RFR and the CPR. NMAC utilized a support group to provide intelligence for decision making.</p>

MANAGEMENT CONTROL AND EFFICIENCIES: OPERATIONS—Continued

Management controls and efficiencies	Benefits	Parties involved	Action required	Status
<p>GO-4 <i>Incident Complexity.</i>—Many incidents can be managed safely and effectively under a Type III organization. Current complexity analysis occasionally leads to a higher level incident management team than needed.</p>	<p>Keeping an incident at Type III can reduce costs. <i>Potential Cost Savings: \$1.5 to 1.0 million</i> per incident that does not go to T1/T2.</p>	<p>Type III organization: FAM, NLT. Complexity analysis: National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG).</p>	<p>Letter from WO, through NLT, mandating each Forest/sub-geographic area establish a Type III organization. FAM request to NWCG to revise current complexity analysis to reduce ambiguity and better differentiate between various incident levels.</p>	<p>NWCG engaged the IOSWT to review complexity and team typing. NWCG will continue to work on this. Will review the capability in each region this winter.</p>
<p>GO-5 <i>Length of Assignment.</i>—The current 14-day rotation is not optimal for NSRs and IMTs, including Area Command. Manage fatigue in order to gain optimal utilization of resources assigned to an incident. 14-day rotation policy will continue to apply to other resources.</p>	<p>Reduces mobilization costs, improves transportation-related safety issues and promotes better local community relations. <i>Potential Cost Savings: \$1.7 million</i> annually¹⁴.</p>	<p>NWCG, LOT, FAM</p>	<p>FS recommend through NWCG changes to Redbook, Mobilization Guide, FSM, and FSH. IMTs adopt methods to monitor accidents, illnesses, and other safety concerns throughout incidents. Safety Council would assist in monitoring accidents, trends and near misses and facilitate peer-reviews.</p>	<p>Area Commands assigned this season will recommend a review at the NWAC/GMAC end of year meeting. Pacific Northwest (PNW) used longer assignments. NIMO 30 days × 3.</p>
<p>GO-6 <i>Constrained Resources.</i>—Constrain resources to an incident to eliminate concentration of resources on a few incidents and increase resource availability to a wider range of incidents. Assign a set number of resources based on planning levels to an incident. Assignment of additional resources would be approved at GMAC or NMAC levels and only after an analysis assisted by FS Pro and RAVAR that develops an alternative in the WFSA for the specific conditions and duration of use.</p>	<p>Increased efficiency by requiring a true prioritization of actions and assignment of resources by the IMT/Line Officer. Equalizes the use/availability of resources during major weather events across geographic areas. Increases National and geographic area flexibility in assignment of resources. Develops a suppression resource baseline to serve as a foundation for constraining the number of resources made available to an incident.</p>	<p>FAM, NLT, NMAC</p>	<p>Request development and implementation, through GMAC, of a "Stratified Resource Index." Analysis would determine the "average" number of resources that would be assigned to an incident commensurate with conditions and resource values. Develop and implement a "constrained resource approach" in the assignment of firefighting resources to incidents that progress beyond the extended attack stage.</p>	<p>Have not officially initiated this request. However Geographic Areas utilized long term planning relative to their incidents and implemented this philosophy by moving resources internally to assist in managing fires during peak/critical times. Area Commanders will develop a recommendation on a process to be adopted nationally.</p>

<p>GO-7 <i>Coordination Centers.</i>—With full implementation of ROSS, is the need for the current number of Geographic Area Coordination Centers necessary?</p>	<p>Fewer intermediate stops in dispatch system may reduce cost as well as provide for resource order filling efficiencies. <i>Potential Cost Savings: \$650,000 per unit</i>¹⁵.</p>	<p>Mobilization system, interagency partners.</p>	<p>Related to fiscal year 2008 Dispatch Feasibility Study. Consider re-engineering of mobilization system from 3 Tier to 2 Tier Mobilization.</p>	<p>Dispatch Feasibility Study was completed. No decision as of 3/1/08. Outcome of study will help determine where efficiencies will be gained and implemented.</p>
<p>GO-8 <i>Standardization</i>—Identify efficiencies that may be gained through engine standardization. All geographic area needs will be considered in the selection of standard models.</p>	<p>Standardization will reduce long term costs of fleet management, due to standardization of equipment.</p>	<p>Engineering, FAM</p>	<p>FAM to work with engineering to establish a national policy for engine standardization and develop a series of common models to be used nationally.</p>	<p>The Fleet Feasibility Study is completed, but has not been released. FAM will establish a small task group to develop recommendations for fleet make-up and standardization for engines.</p>
<p>GO-9 <i>Review Traditional Operations.</i>—Review traditional organization, use and structure of Area Command, IMTs and NSRS.</p>	<p>Allow all resources to be configured in the most cost efficient manner possible.</p>	<p>NWCG or consider contracting the development and review or utilize NIMO.</p>	<p>Formal FAM request to NWCG Establish a study group to perform review. Consider multi-mission, year-round capability, size, configuration, etc. Consider contracting the development and/or the review.</p>	<p>A request has not been made yet to NWCG.</p>
<p>GO-10 <i>Local Resources</i>—Incorporate local fire agencies into the IA and extended attack organization for each National Forest.</p>	<p>Using local resources would reduce costs related to mobilization of national resources. Local resources provide immediate and often less expensive support¹⁶.</p>	<p>USFS leadership with NASF.</p>	<p>WO FAM policy discussion with NWCG Develop strategy to pilot initial attack support through local government.</p>	<p>Geographic Areas utilized local resources per their established agreements. FAM strategy development is on-going.</p>

MANAGEMENT CONTROL AND EFFICIENCIES: OPERATIONS—Continued

Management controls and efficiencies	Benefits	Parties involved	Action required	Status
<p>GO-11 <i>Contract for Contingency Resources</i>.—Look into development of contracting, buying teams, logistics and planning modules, particularly for all-hazard support.</p>	<p>Contracting provides for additional resources where critical shortages exist. This relates more to resource availability than to direct cost savings.</p>	<p>AQM, GSA, NICC</p>	<p>FAM should identify critical shortages and needs—coordinate with AQM to develop contract packages.</p>	<p>FAM is working with contracting to develop the requirements. Will be submitting a request for contract action in 2008.</p>
<p>GO-12 <i>Smokejumper Program</i>.—Reevaluate smokejumper program and all its support requirements for cost/benefits. Include the number of bases necessary to support a national program with delivery systems.</p>	<p>Greater efficiency for Initial Attack would promote long-term savings.</p>	<p>FAM, DOI</p>	<p>Annually update National Operations Plan .. Complete and Implement ADFF</p>	<p>ADFF was completed in December 2007. Results will feed the NIAC Phase 3 and the aviation feasibility study group for potential strategies and recommendations.</p>

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS AND EFFICIENCIES: MANAGEMENT

Management controls and efficiencies	Benefits	Parties involved	Action required	Status
<p>M-1 <i>Hazardous Fuels Support</i>.—Support hazardous fuel treatments among agencies with internal and interagency resources. Identify more efficient business practices to facilitate this.</p>	<p>Increased productivity, standardization, and efficiencies to both suppression and hazardous fuels organizations. Reduced overhead costs Increased coordination among interagency partners at the local level.</p>	<p>FAM, fire operations, fuels, and interagency partners. FS-only: implement through Assistant Director for Operations and Assistant Director for Fuels.</p>	<p>Identify internal and interagency capability to form and mobilize resources. Expand ROSS capability to meet this need. Initiate discussions with DOI and FS Fire Directors to review cross billing policy to allow for better utilization of resources as the local level.</p>	<p>Have not begun this.</p>

<p>M-2 <i>Return on Training Investment.</i>—Focus training dollars to meet the needs of critical shortage positions. Assign mobilization targets (e.g. 50 percent of re-carded personnel respond to incidents).</p>	<p>Reduced reliance upon administratively Terminated (AD) personnel and contractors to compensate for lack of available resources. Better utilization of training funds for target positions based on needs analysis.</p>	<p>Interagency community, but can be started FS-only immediately.</p>	<p>Risk management AD begin needs analysis for FS in 2007. Develop requirement for personnel to utilize completed training. Require trainees to complete training assignments as early in the season as possible. GACCs will work with their partners to ensure adequate training opportunities on IMTs.</p>	<p>Initiated review of training curriculum and qualifications. Began gathering data relative to number qualified and what positions. Utilized the qualifications system and ROSS in fiscal year 2007 to assist the regions with personnel for assignments.</p>
<p>M-3 <i>Long Term Fire Behavior Analyst (LTAF).</i>—Currently a critical shortage of LTAFs. Long term planning skills are critical for the successful implementation of AMR. Operational decision-making needs to consider the full range of AMR.</p>	<p>Provide skills necessary to evaluate the latest technology for consideration of long term strategies. Increased decision support for AMR. Decision makers will be able to quantify values, costs and benefits, as well as short and long term effects.</p>	<p>FAM, HR</p>	<p>FAM work with HR to consider possibility of incentives to encourage additional LTAF training.</p>	<p>LTAFs were provided with in the national and regional support groups to assist with decision making. Have not initiated anything with HR. Depending on M-2 and the success of fiscal year 2007 season practices, may move forward with HR.</p>
<p>M-4 <i>Mega Fires.</i>—Work with research to evaluate past mega-fires to compare investments to resource protection to identify and establish the thresholds for diminishing returns.</p>	<p>Potential cost savings if early stage decisions can be identified that contribute to mega-fire status.</p>	<p>Research, FAM</p>	<p>FAM to request research focus</p>	<p>On-going project. Results of report will be shared and evaluated for implementation.</p>

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS AND EFFICIENCIES: MANAGEMENT—Continued

Management controls and efficiencies	Benefits	Parties involved	Action required	Status
<p>M-5 <i>Fire and Aviation Facility Realignment.</i>—Develop a process similar to the military's Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) to evaluate on an interagency basis needed facilities and recommend realignment and closures for cost saving benefits.</p>	<p>Eliminate costly facilities that no longer meet our primary needs of rapid mobilization of NSRs. <i>Potential Cost Savings.</i>—\$50 million estimated initial reduction.</p>	<p>National Fire and Aviation Executive Board (NFAEB), engineering, legislative affairs.</p>	<p>Proposal developed and presented to WFLC for action.</p>	<p>Although haven't started this process, some is related to the aviation feasibility study and the priority setting for funding requests for facility maintenance.</p>
<p>M-6 <i>Cost-Benefit of IFPM.</i>—Better understand the true long term costs and benefits of IFPM.</p>	<p>Potential cost savings of training dollars with long term cost savings possible.</p>	<p>Training Officers, FAM</p>	<p>FAM Conduct a cost benefit analysis of IFPM Assess continuing education needs relative to job function. e.g., fire management, Emergency Coordination Center (ECC) managers, safety professionals, etc.</p>	
<p>M-7 <i>Contracting.</i>—Identify the appropriate procurement tool for obtaining contracted resources in order to influence costs by competition and best value.</p>	<p>Reduce overall cost of obtaining equipment and services through pre-planning, formal competition and standardization.</p>	<p>FAM, AQM</p>	<p>Continue work already started by Fire Equipment Services and Supplies Acquisition (FESSA) and NWCC through the Incident Business Practices Working Team (IBPWT). Establish standards, specifications and requirements in order to gain efficiency in procurement and tactical utilization. Develop Virtual Incident Procurement System (VIPPS).</p>	<p>FESSA group established a procurement plan for standardization of equipment for procurement procedures. New program is being developed to facilitate hiring and utilization of contracted services/equipment.</p>
<p>M-8 <i>Medical Standards.</i>—Review Medical Standards Program with an emphasis on reducing costs and complexity. Evaluate the possibility of including the work capacity test under MSP.</p>	<p>Reduce potential redundancy for measuring health capacity.</p>	<p>Interagency, Unions</p>	<p>AD for Risk Management discuss combining requirements to eliminate duplication with Medical Standards Team.</p>	<p>The program is being reviewed on an inter-agency basis. Some changes are being implemented during the 2008 season.</p>

<p>M-9 ASC/ISO Impacts—With the centralization of the ASC, support to fire for critical positions has become a concern (particularly communications and finance support). ASC—Albuquerque Service Center ISO—Information Solutions Organization</p>	<p>Mitigations conducted by fire management are costly and could be reduced through greater partnership with ASC.</p>	<p>Business Operations, FAM, ISO.</p>	<p>Evaluate the true needs of an incident for communication and finance support needs. Preparation of service level agreement</p>	<p>The Branch Chief for Incident Business worked with ASC to facilitate personnel support on incidents. ASC staff toured a couple of fires to gain an understanding. The IBPWT will submit a proposal to NWCG requesting they evaluate current business practices in the Finance section, and identify methods to change the business where efficiencies can be gained.</p>
---	---	---------------------------------------	--	---

¹ Briefly describe the issue followed by the proposed control and/or efficiency. With this protocol other solutions or opportunities might become apparent. ² Describe the benefits. Actual cost savings may be known or possible to gather in this venue but describe how the actual dollar savings would be determined. ³ Who has ownership and who needs to be involved with the coordination. ⁴ Include who, what, and when any documents or manuals, handbooks etc. that would have to be changed would be here. ⁵ All WFSAs recommendations can be cross-referenced to Tribdata report. ⁶ Congressional intent from 2003 Appropriations language. ⁷ Dependent upon changes in Federal Wildland Fire Policy as identified in the AMR management efficiency description. ⁸ Implementing this position as an FTE would also save \$50,000 annually in salary, travel and lodging, or detailers to maintain the helicopter database. ⁹ Based on historic utilization of local CMW. ¹⁰ Supplementing this position as an FTE would also save \$100,000 to \$150,000. ¹¹ This links to the discussion of WFSAs in Operations section. ¹² Based on conversion of 25 Type I and 25 Type II contracts. ¹³ Estimate based on reducing aviation resources every one-quarter of incident time. Figures utilized from Tribdata report. ¹⁴ Calculated using a 2 percent cap per Regional PR budgets. ¹⁵ Estimate based on 30 rotations total with 30 people per team. Estimated cost per mobilization/demobilization is \$100,000. ¹⁶ Estimate based on salary support costs of \$400,000 and \$250,000 rent/utilities. ¹⁷ See 12/2003 NAPA Report "Utilizing Local Firefighting Forces."

FIRE AND AVIATION MANAGEMENT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION ANALYSIS

[USDA Forest Service]

INTRODUCTION

This report is in response to the following language in the Explanatory Statement accompanying the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-161).

“The Appropriations Committees are aware that the Forest Service is facing challenges to recruit and retain wildland firefighters in Region 5, particularly on southern California forests, due to the agency’s vastly different pay scales and personnel policies and the high cost of living in the region. The Forest Service should examine Federal firefighter pay and personnel policies and provide the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations with a proposal to increase recruitment and retention for southern California forests no later than February 1, 2008.”

The Forest Service (FS) appreciates the patience of the Appropriations Committees in allowing Region 5 and the national headquarters to develop a thorough analysis of this complex set of issues. The dynamics studied in this proposal are controversial and will not be solved quickly or easily. For that reason, our proposal includes a series of long term suggestions to address the issues identified above.

It is important to note two things about the national context surrounding this report. First, the efficacy of Forest Service initial attack response has not diminished. The success continues to stay around 98 percent for all initial attack incidents. The agency is committed to maintaining this high level of success. Second, recent increases in Fire Suppression expenditures have been well documented, as has the resulting impact on other agency programs. In response, Forest Service leadership has aggressively implemented cost containment measures, resulting in decreased Suppression costs in fiscal year 2007. It is essential that the proposals related to Region 5 firefighter recruitment and retention support both continued initial attack success and cost containment efforts.

The issues highlighted by this report will continue to be closely monitored.

ISSUES EXAMINED

The issues examined in the report are widely circulated and are frequently polarizing; therefore the methods used to complete the analysis relied on data from a variety of sources. Rates of attrition were from Region 5 records, Forest Service Human Capital records and the Office of Personnel Management. Pay data was from employees’ W-2’s both CAL FIRE and U.S. Forest Service. The reasons for leaving were provided from exit interviews in Region 5.

Forest Service Human Capital Management staff reviewed pay act and authorities and determined there are actions available locally, regionally and nationally. The Regional Forester and other line officers have discretion in the application of these authorities.

There is a perception, as noted by the Appropriations Committees and confirmed through informal employee sensing, the Forest Service faces recruitment and retention challenges in southern California. While a detailed analysis shows the region has some retention challenges, it also suggests the problems are manageable.

A 10-year analysis of permanent fire workforce in Region 5 reveals several important trends.

(1) The total number of permanent Fire and Aviation Management staff in the region nearly doubled between 1997 and 2007, from 1,257 to 2,290. An 82 percent increase indicates successful recruitment efforts, not the opposite.

(2) In 2007 the Region 5 Fire and Aviation Management staff experienced 370 retirements, resignations and transfers. However, recruitment resulted in a net gain of 68 employees, or 3 percent.

(3) The overall Forest Service attrition rate in southern California (9.4 percent) is actually lower than the national Federal attrition rate (13.4 percent).

These statistics indicate that recruitment is outpacing attrition in Region 5. Furthermore, attrition within southern California is well within national averages. Based on these trends, it appears that recruitment and retention are within expected norms. However, there are areas within the statistics cited above which deserve closer examination, and which the proposals of this report will address.

First, the largest component of separations within the Region 5 Fire and Aviation Management organization come at the GS-4 level, where the attrition rate is 46.6 percent. Attrition rates above the GS-4 level do not differ significantly from regional or national averages.

FIGURE 1.—ATTRITION RATES BY GRADE IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, REGION 5, FOREST SERVICE AND FEDERAL SERVICE
[In percent]

Grade	Southern California	Pacific Southwest Region	Forest Service wide	Federal service
GS-04	46.6	32.1	23.6	(¹)
GS-05	8.7	10.9	12.3	(¹)
GS-06	3.9	2.9	2.1	(¹)
GS-07	4.2	2.4	1.5	(¹)
GS-08	1.1	0.7	0.3	(¹)
GS-09	1.1	1.2	0.9	(¹)
GS-11	0.2	0.6	0.6	(¹)
Overall	9.4	7.2	6.3	13.4

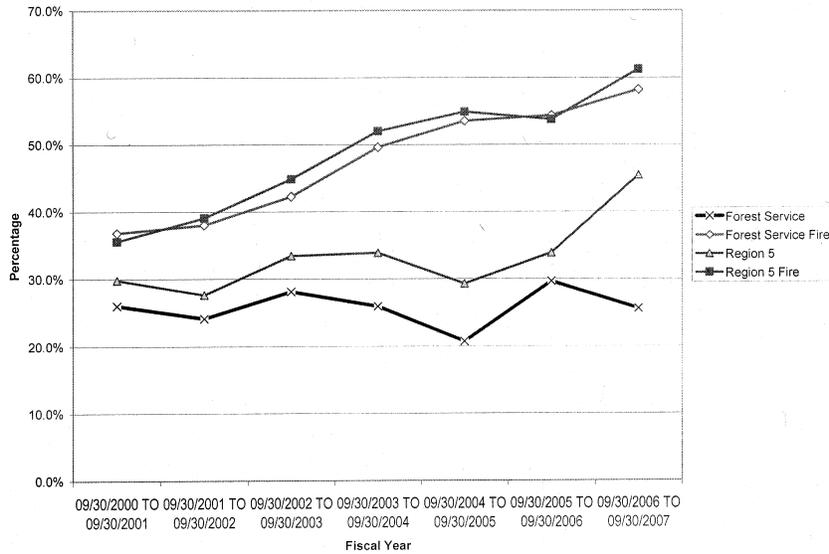
¹ UNK

Notes:

Includes series only 0462 and 0401 both fire and non fire positions.
Data retrieved from NFC Reporting Center.
Southern California includes Angeles, Cleveland, Los Padres, and San Bernardino National Forests.
The rate of attrition for Cal Fire is currently unknown.

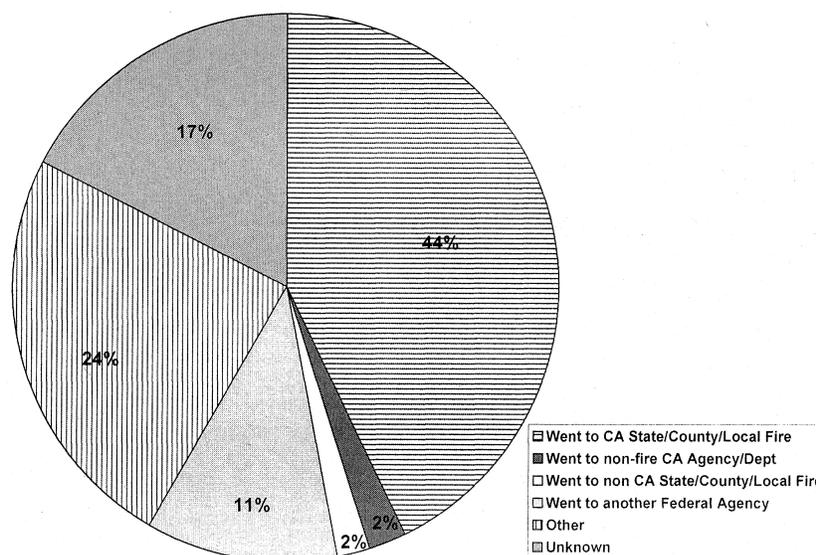
Second, a higher percentage of separations are due to resignations (as opposed to retirement or transfers) than the regional or national average (Figure 2). Exit interviews indicate that 44 percent of those leaving the Forest Service went to CAL FIRE or local fire departments (Figure 3).

Figure 2: Resignations as a Percentage of Total Separations



Third, these trends are most pronounced on the Angeles National Forest and the San Bernardino National Forest, which saw the most resignations of any Region 5 forests. Of the resignations on these two forests in 2007, 45 percent were at the GS-4 level, and 61 percent went to State, county or local fire departments. The attrition rates for the two forests were 12.2 percent and 9.3 percent in 2007, according to Region 5 data.

Figure 3. Reason for Leaving Forest Service



PAY SCALES, COST OF LIVING , AND PERSONNEL POLICIES

Local perception, as noted by the Appropriations Committees, is Forest Service pay scales and personnel policies, coupled with the high cost of living in southern California, make it difficult to attract and retain Fire and Aviation Management workforce in the region. Upon closer examination, the perception of the effects of pay scale and personnel policy discrepancies and high cost of living appears to be unsupported by the data.

Pay Scales

Comparison of Forest Service and CAL FIRE payment and hours worked data for 2007 suggests that actual hourly rates of pay are comparable. It was difficult to determine the appropriate metric for comparison as the pay, staffing and personnel policies differed greatly. Wages as shown on W-2 forms were chosen as a measure. Cal Fire employees on average for the three positions examined worked about 62 percent more hours (4,457 v. 2,768) than their Forest Service counterparts. The comparison of pay and hours is not straight forward due to personnel policy differences, such as portal-to-portal pay and planned overtime that guarantee Cal Fire firefighters more total hours annually.

Nonetheless, when accounting for all hours worked, overtime and hazard pay rates (see Figure 4):

- Average pay of Firefighter II is \$2.81/hour higher in FS than CAL FIRE
- Average pay of Fire Engineer is \$5.36/hour higher in FS than CAL FIRE
- Average pay of Fire Captain is \$7.08/hour higher in FS than CAL FIRE

Although Forest Service hourly pay is equal or higher, staffing plans guarantee CAL FIRE employees more hours and consequently more pay annually. In addition, Cal Fire employees work a 72 hour, three day shift, benefit from 24 hour pay while on fire assignments, and have a more generous retirement plan. Federal wildland fire staffing is closely tied to the threat of wildland fire activity, which occurs within a defined season. To ensure initial attack success and public safety during the fire season at the most reasonable cost to taxpayers, the Forest Service uses variable staffing, seasonal aviation contracting and seasonal employees.

FIGURE 4.—PAY COMPARISON CAL FIRE AND U.S. FOREST SERVICE (HOURS)

	Base pay	Additional base hours included ¹	Planned overtime	Unplanned overtime	Annual compensation	Average hourly rate
Cal Fire FFTR II ²	(2,080)	¹ (676)	(988)	(561)	(4,305)	\$15.04
	\$33,324		\$16,973	\$14,463	\$64,760	
USFS SoCal FFTR II ³	(2,080)	.....	.....	(838)	(2,918)	17.85
	\$35,014			\$21,082	\$56,096	
Cal Fire Engineer	(2,080)	¹ (676)	(988)	(734)	(4,478)	18.50
	\$39,900		\$20,322	\$22,633	\$82,855	
USFS SoCal Engineer	(2,080)	.....	.....	(548)	(2,628)	23.86
	\$44,987			\$17,716	\$62,702	
Cal Fire Captain	(2,080)	¹ (676)	(988)	(844)	(4,588)	20.63
	\$43,776		\$22,296	\$28,572	\$94,644	
USFS SoCal Captain	(2,080)	.....	.....	(679)	(2,759)	27.71
	\$51,360			\$25,078	\$76,438	

¹Included.—Means money is included in base salary number. Cal Fire calculates base pay and overtime (planned and unplanned) in accordance with their bargaining unit agreement.

²Full Time Employee.

³Seasonal Employee.

The data in the table above (figure 4) was developed from actual 2007 W-2 data randomly selected from a sample of Forest Service employees in southern California. It includes overtime and hazard pay. The Cal Fire data is actual 2007 compensation provided by their agency. Cal Fire employees do not receive hazard pay. The average hourly rate is computed by dividing the total compensation by the total hours worked. Unplanned overtime is highly variable for employees of both agencies.

Forest Service employees at the GS-04 and 05 grades are Permanent Seasonal employees either 13/13 or 18/08 (guaranteed at least 13 pay periods or 18 pay period of employment out of a total of up to 26). Cal Fire employees are all full time employees.

Cal Fire employees work a 72 hour schedule each week which is paid as 53 base hours and 19 planned overtime hours. Any time in excess of 212 in a 28 day period is paid as unplanned overtime.

It should be noted the two agencies have very different work schedule expectations and pay rules therefore actual compensation was averaged to determine the unplanned overtime.

Cost of Living

Analysis performed by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) indicates that Federal employees in southern California do experience pay disparities compared to non-Federal workers. However, Los Angeles and San Diego are not the only localities where this is true, nor do they experience the most severe disparities. In fact, the pay disparity in Los Angeles is below the national average, and San Diego's is comparable. Below is a table of 2007 pay disparities for comparison.

Locality	Disparity Percent
Atlanta	23.21
Boston	25.35
Chicago	23.06
Dallas	22.42
Los Angeles	21.82
New York	26.67
Phoenix	25.02
San Diego	25.20
San Francisco	28.62
Seattle	23.39
Washington DC	36.30
Average (all of United States)	22.97

(<http://www.opm.gov/oca/payagent/2007/PayDisparities.asp>)

Personnel Policies

Comparing personnel policies of Federal wildland fire agencies with local and State fire agencies is complex. While it is natural for employees to compare their job descriptions, compensation, and benefits with those of similar workers in close proximity, there are also important distinctions and valid differences between them.

Forest Service fire management personnel in southern California and across the Nation are Forestry Technicians. This title reflects their land management orientation. In the course of their work, they collaborate with State and local employees of fire departments. This is a subtle but key difference. Even though both Federal wildland firefighters and fire department firefighters focus on fire, the mission purposes of the agencies differ, and so too do the roles and responsibilities of their respective personnel. Fire departments generally have an emergency responder role that includes traffic collisions, medical calls and other actions that are not wildland fires. That is to say, the Forest Service is a land management agency that employs wildland firefighters to accomplish land management objectives, while the mission of fire departments personnel focus on preserving life and property. Because of differing responsibilities, it is both impossible and inappropriate for the Forest Service to pay and staff the same way as these fire departments. For example the Forest Service does not allow fire fighters to enter structures to suppress these fires.

The tendency of our employees, partners and the public to compare Forest Service fire management responsibilities to State and local fire departments points to a larger issue the agency is facing regarding the need for a clear mission and definition of responsibilities for our firefighters in the wildland urban interface. Fires in recent years have become larger and more difficult to control due to a variety of factors, including climate change, historic fire suppression efforts resulting in increased density of hazard fuels, and expansion of residences in the wildland urban interface (WUI). This situation is acutely felt in southern California where over 189,000 new homes have been built since 2003 in the Wildland/Urban interface. This growth poses a higher level of complexity on Wildland firefighting in fire adapted ecosystems. Therefore, the agency must clearly express its emergency response role, and clarify distinctions between State and local fire department.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

The analysis outlined above suggests that the perceptions around recruitment and retention in southern California are hard to substantiate based on data. An analysis of available data confirms that while issues regarding perceptions around recruitment and retention in southern California may exist, they cannot be objectively substantiated. Absent such substantiation, recommendations that the Office of Personnel Management depart from standard Federal pay rates or the agency seek other special personnel authorities are unwarranted. Further, such actions may have the unintended consequence of negatively affecting recruitment and retention elsewhere in the Nation.

Accordingly, key actions to be undertaken immediately by the Forest Service will be internal and external communication around these findings:

- Region 5's Fire & Aviation Management recruitment rate is greater than its attrition rate.
- The attrition rate in southern California is below national averages.
- On average, Forest Service hourly pay rates are actually greater than those for comparable CAL FIRE positions.
- Federal workers in southern California are paid less than their counterparts in the private sector, but other parts of the country experience similar or worse rates of disparity.

In the course of this analysis, additional issues outside the scope of the requested report have become evident; clearly there are morale issues which need leadership's attention and action. We refrained from making recommendations addressing these in the report as it is outside the scope of the committee's request. Additionally, these morale issues will take more time to review, validate and resolve. Leadership will focus attention on this important area and will keep the committees apprised of the situation and the progress to resolve the issues.

In addition to increased communication around key issues, the Forest Service will consider specific long-term actions. These recommendations will consider potential morale and budget impacts resulting from providing special benefits solely to firefighters in southern California. Changing public and agency perceptions and ensuring employee morale will require active management over years. The recommendations below may be tools in that process.

- Review and strengthen commitment to Wildland fire mission with Federal, State, and local partners.
- Strategically apply individual retention allowances and/or special pay authorities within the discretion of the agency.
- Encourage use of optional work schedules and tours of duty.
- Improve employee housing and working facilities.
- Improve communications connectivity, training, and access.

- Determine cost and feasibility of special pay in identified high cost areas.
- Renegotiate cooperative agreements to provide more equity for Forest Service employees.
- Monitor issues identified and adjust as necessary.

Mr. REY. The Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 was enacted to provide transitional assistance to rural counties affected by the decline in revenue from timber harvests in Federal forests. That legislation was extended for an additional seventh year under the terms of Public Law 110–28.

The 2009 budget of the Forest Service includes a legislative proposal that provides \$200 million above the current baseline for a 4-year extension of the legislation, and that proposal was included with our budget. The 2009 budget focuses resources on national forest and grassland responsibilities, which we've talked about at length already today, but it also reflects redesigned State and Private Forestry program approach.

Funding is proposed in the 2008 farm bill in addition for purposes and activities similar to those supported by the State and Private Forestry program. The Conservation, Forestry, and Energy titles of the farm bill authorize nearly \$10 billion in incentives to State and local governments and nonindustrial private forest landowners to pursue conservation, forest restoration, and biomass energy.

I will submit for the record a summary of what's included in each, the administration, the House, and the Senate farm bill proposals.

[The information follows:]

2008 FARM BILL USDA/HOUSE/SENATE SIDE BY-SIDE SUMMARY

Item	USDA proposal summary	House summary	Senate summary
T8-1	No comparable provision.	<p><i>Sec. 8001 National Priorities for Private Forest Conservation</i>—Amends Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act (CFAA) to establish 3 priorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Conserving and managing working forests. (2) Protecting and restoring forests from a range of threats. (3) Enhancing public benefits from private forests. <p>Secretary must submit report on outcomes to Congress by 2011.</p>	<p><i>Sec. 8001 National Priorities for Private Forest Conservation</i>—Very similar language to House version.</p>
T8-2	<p><i>Sec. 8002 Comprehensive Statewide Forest Planning</i>—Authorizes up to \$65 million for States to produce comprehensive forest plans that identify critical forest landscapes and set management priorities.</p>	<p><i>Sec. 8002 Long-Term, State-wide Assessments and Strategies for Forest Resources</i>—States must do assessments of forest resource conditions as a requirement to receive funds for all CFAA programs. Assessments coordinated among State forester or equivalent, State forest stewardship coordinating committee, State wildlife agency and State technical committee. Can use up to \$10 million in available funds.</p>	<p><i>Sec. 8004 Comprehensive Statewide Forest Planning</i>—Directs States to do assessments of forest resource conditions as a requirement to receive funds for CFAA programs. Similar to House language, but includes: Establishment clause directing Secretary to create the planning program; specifies that community wildfire protection plans should be considered in the assessment; a plan for achieving the national priorities (sec. 8001); clarifies that the Statewide plan replaces all CFAA planning and assessment requirements; must also coordinate with Federal land management agencies and the State lead agency for the Forest Legacy Program. Authorizes \$10 million.</p>

T8-3	<p><i>Sec. 8001 Community Forests Working Lands Program.</i>—Authorizes up to \$65 million per year in technical and financial assistance for local communities to purchase and manage community forests.</p>	<p>No comparable provision.</p>	<p><i>Sec. 8002 Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program.</i>—Provides financial support for acquisition of community forests and emphasized technical assistance to communities.—The program would be a competitive grant process open to tribes, local governments, or non-profit land trusts. There is a 50 percent cost-share requirement. The community forests should provide economic, environmental, educational technical assistance, and recreational benefits. The program requires that community forests are open to public access and managed consistent with the purposes of the program. Up to 10 percent of program funds are available to State foresters or equivalent tribal officials for program administration and technical assistance.</p>
T8-4	<p>No comparable provision.</p>	<p><i>Sec. 8003 Assistance to the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau.</i>—Amends CFAA by striking, “the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands” and inserting, “the Federated State of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau”.</p>	<p><i>Sec. 8005 Assistance to the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau.</i>—Identical language to House version.</p>
T8-5	<p>No comparable provision.</p>	<p><i>Sec. 8004 Changes to Forest Resource Coordinating Committee.</i>—Modifies and expands the Forest Resource Coordinating Committee at Secretary level to include the chiefs of FS and NRCS and administrators of FSA and CSREES. Non-Federal reps with 3-year terms include 3 State foresters or equivalent, a representative from a State technical committee State fish and wildlife agency, NIPF owner, industry, conservation orgs., land grant university, consultants, and others. Coordinates national efforts to NIPF landowners. Clarifies roles and responsibilities—advises on allocation of competitive funds, and provides annual report to Secretary and Congress.</p>	<p>No comparable provision.</p>
T8-6	<p>No comparable provision.</p>	<p><i>Sec. 8005 Changes to State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committees.</i>—Replaces requirement for a statewide forest stewardship plan with statewide assessment and strategies for forest resources. State committees make recommendations on the statewide assessment. Adds a representative from the State technical committee.</p>	<p>No comparable provision.</p>

2008 FARM BILL USDA/HOUSE/SENATE SIDE BY-SIDE SUMMARY—Continued

Item	USDA proposal summary	House summary	Senate summary
T8-7	No comparable provision.	No comparable provision.	<i>Sec. 8003 Forest Legacy Applications</i> —Amends CFAA by stating applications submitted by Indian tribes do not have to pass through the State coordinating committee.
T8-8	No comparable provision.	<i>Sec. 8006 Competition in Programs Under Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978</i> —Requires a portion of CFAA funds, as determined by the Secretary, be available competitively to State foresters. State foresters are the only eligible entity. Secretary to consult with new forest resource coordinating committee to determine competitive allocation of funds.	No comparable provision.
T8-9	<i>Sec. 8003 Landscape Scale Competitive Grant Program</i> —Authorizes up to \$30 million per year in competitive grants for large, landscape scale forest conservation and restoration projects.	<i>Sec. 8007 Cooperative Forest Innovation Partnership Projects</i> —No more than 5 percent of CFAA funding for innovative national, regional, or local education, outreach, or tech-transfer projects to meet the national priorities. Must have 50 percent cost share, including in-kind donations. Funds eligible to States, tribes, local gov't, land-grant, or private entities.	No comparable provision.
T8-10	No comparable provision.	<i>Subtitle B—Amendments to Other Laws</i> <i>Sec. 8101 Healthy Forest Reserve Program Reauthorized until 2012. Sec. 508. Funding. Authorizes \$10,000,000 in funding.</i>	<i>Conservation Title Sec. 2331 Healthy Forest Reserve Program</i> —Reauthorized through 2012. Changes language from "an easement of not more than 99 years" to "a permanent easement." Authorizes "such sums as are necessary".

T8-11	No comparable provision.	<p><i>Subtitle B—Amendments to Other Laws</i> <i>Sec. 8102 Emergency Forest Restoration Program.</i>—Provides and implementation plans of NIPF owners who have sustained loss or damage to forest from fire, hurricanes, storms, drought, insects, disease, or invasive species. Plan addresses reforestation, restoration, BMPs and stewardship. Up to 75 percent cost-share, but not more than \$50,000/year per owner. Owner has 10 years to use funds. Allows NIPF lands to be eligible for emergency restoration funds if the Secretary determines that insects or diseases pose an imminent threat of loss or damage to those lands. Funding would be through an emergency supplemental. <i>Sec. 8101 Office of International Forestry.</i>—Reauthorized through 2012.</p>	<p><i>Conservation Title Sec. 2398 Emergency Landscape Restoration Program.</i>—Available to NIPF owners to restore landscapes damaged by fire, drought, flood, hurricane force or excessive winds, ice storms or blizzards, or other resource-impacting natural events. Priority for activities protecting human health and safety. Funding subject to appropriation. Up to 75 percent cost share.</p>
T8-12	<p><i>Sec. 8202 Office of International Forestry.</i>—Extends the authorization for appropriations (does not specify amount) through 2012 for the Office of International Forestry (International Programs).</p>	<p><i>Sec. 8101 Office of International Forestry.</i>—Reauthorized through 2012.</p>	<p><i>Sec. 8202 Office of International Forestry.</i>—Reauthorized through 2012.</p>
T8-13	<p><i>Sec. 8203 Rural Revitalization Technologies.</i>—Authorizes appropriations of \$5 million for each fiscal year 2008-2012 for the Forest Products Lab to accelerate adoption of technologies using biomass and small-diameter materials and provide assistance and information to small businesses.</p>	<p><i>Sec. 8104 Rural Revitalization Technologies.</i>—Identical Language—reauthorized through 2012. This authority is used to administer the biomass utilization grants..</p>	<p>No comparable provision.</p>
T8-14	<p><i>Sec. 8201 Renewable Resources Extension Activities.</i>—Authorizes \$30 million for each fiscal year 2008-2012 for the Renewable Resources Extension Program administered by CSRES through State universities to provide technical assistance to landowners.</p>	<p>Included in Research Title. Extends authority through 2012.</p>	<p><i>Sec. 8201 Renewable Resources Extension Activities.</i>—Reauthorized through 2012 at \$30 mil each fiscal year.</p>
T8-15	No comparable provision.	No comparable provision.	<p><i>Sec. 8101 Definitions.</i>—Provides definitions for Indian, Indian tribe, and National Forest System that will be used under Subtitle B of this bill—Tribal-Forest Service Cooperative Relations.</p>
T8-16	No comparable provision.	No comparable provision.	<p><i>Sec. 8111 Forest Legacy Program.</i>—Amends CFAA to allow include Indian tribes to participate in the Forest Legacy Program. Tribes are eligible to receive grants to carry out FLP projects.</p>

2008 FARM BILL USDA/HOUSE/SENATE SIDE BY-SIDE SUMMARY—Continued

Item	USDA proposal summary	House summary	Senate summary
T8-17	No comparable provision.	No comparable provision.	<i>Sec. 8112 Forestry and Resource Management Assistance for Indian Tribes.</i> —Authorizes the Secretary to provide assistance to tribes to access NFS land for religious and cultural reasons, and coordinate resource management. Authorizes conservation education projects and technical assistance on Indian forest lands. Directs Secretary to develop rules within 18 months in coordination with tribes and DOI.
T8-18	No comparable provision.	No comparable provision.	<i>Sec. 8121. Purposes—Cultural and Heritage Cooperation Authority (Secs. 8121–27).</i> —Authorizes reburial of tribal remains on NFS lands, provides access to NFS land and forest products for cultural purposes, and prevents the disclosure of burial site locations and other sensitive information. Authorizes the temporary closure of NFS land for cultural purposes.
T8-19	No comparable provision.	No comparable provision.	<i>Sec. 8122. Definitions.</i> —Provides definitions for terms used in this Subsection.
T8-20	No comparable provision.	No comparable provision.	<i>Sec. 8123 Reburial of Human Remains and Cultural Items.</i> —Authorizes the reburial of human remains and cultural items, including those repatriated under NAGPRA (25 USC 3001 et seq.) on NFS land. Prevents unauthorized disclosure of information on burial sites.
T8-21	No comparable provision.	No comparable provision.	<i>Sec. 8124 Temporary Closure for Traditional and Cultural Purposes.</i> —The Secretary shall ensure access by Indian tribes to NFS land. The Secretary may, to the maximum extent practicable and for the minimum period of time, temporarily close from public access specifically designated NFS land to protect the privacy of tribal activities for traditional and cultural purposes.
T8-22	No comparable provision.	No comparable provision.	<i>Sec. 8125 Forest Products for Traditional and Cultural Purposes.</i> —Authorizes the Secretary to allow, to the maximum extent practicable, access to NFS land by Indians and Indian tribes for traditional and cultural purposes.
T8-23	No comparable provision.	No comparable provision.	<i>Sec. 8126 Prohibition on Disclosure.</i> —Authorizes Secretary to protect confidentiality of certain information, including information this culturally sensitive to Indian tribes.

T8-24	No comparable provision.	No comparable provision.	<p><i>Sec. 8127 Severability and Savings Provisions.</i>—Preserves all existing tribal rights, all existing agreements among tribes and the FS, existing trust responsibilities, and other outstanding rights to use of NFS lands.</p> <p>No comparable provision.</p>
T8-25	No comparable provision.	<p><i>Sec. 8201 Hispanic-Serving Institution Agricultural Land National Resources Leadership Program.</i>—Competitive grants to Hispanic serving institutions for undergraduate scholarship programs in forestry. Promotes professional work in Federal and State agencies in natural resources. Authorized “such sums as may be necessary”.</p> <p>No comparable provision.</p>	<p><i>Sec. 8203 Green Mountain National Forest Boundary Adjustment.</i>—Authorizes small modification of the boundary of Green Mountain National Forest.</p> <p><i>Sec. 8204 Prevention of Illegal Logging Practices.</i>—Amends the Lacey Act Amendment to include trees in the definition of “plant”.</p> <p><i>Sec. 8205 Sale and Exchange of National Forest System Land, Vermont.</i>—Authorizes sale/exchange of certain parcels of land on the Green Mountain NF in Vermont.</p> <p><i>Sec. 8301 Qualifying Timber Contract Options.</i>—Allows the Secretary to cancel or re-determine qualifying timber contracts if the rate at which a qualifying contract would be advertised on the date of an enactment of this language is at least 50 percent less than the original purchased rate of the contract.</p>
T8-26	No comparable provision.	No comparable provision.	
T8-27	No comparable provision.	No comparable provision.	
T8-28	No comparable provision.	No comparable provision.	
T8-29	No comparable provision.	No comparable provision.	
	<p><i>Sec. 8201 Forest Wood to Energy Program.</i>—Mandates \$15 million per year for accelerating the development of renewable energy from woody biomass—including cellulosic ethanol and other bioenergy.¹</p>		

¹ Energy Title.—Similar provisions included in House and Senate Energy Titles.

Mr. REY. I think the point I'm trying to draw here is that, in evaluating the State and Private Forestry budget, you have to put it alongside the farm bill proposal, because what we are proposing to do is to broaden the reach of some of the conservation title programs to make them accessible to serve some of the interests that the State and Private Forestry functions of the Forest Service serve.

So just looking at the 2009 Forest Service budget proposal doesn't give you the full picture of all of that proposed activity.

PREPARED STATEMENT

In closing, then, I'd like to respond to Senator Alexander's question. We have, as have our colleagues at the Department of the Interior, evaluated in the past whether it makes sense to try to establish a separate firefighting agency. What we have concluded is that doing that then separates the firefighting function from the land management function, and probably doesn't buy you much in the way of program reforms or advantages. The issue of appropriate funding for firefighting would still remain even if that kind of change was made.

With that, I'll turn the podium over to Chief Kimbell.
[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MARK E. REY

OVERVIEW

Madam Chairman and members of the subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the President's fiscal year 2009 budget for the Forest Service during today's hearing. I am pleased to join Forest Service Chief Gail Kimbell at this hearing today.

In my testimony, I will discuss three issues that relate to the 2009 budget. First, I will address Wildland Fire programs and management reforms. Next, I will address the need to provide 4 years of further transitional assistance to rural counties that received benefits under Secure Rural Schools and Self-Determination Act of 2000. Finally, I will discuss the redesign of Forest Service State and Private Forestry programs and related Federal investments proposed in the 2008 farm bill.

WILDLAND FIRE

The 2009 budget proposes a total of \$1.977 billion for Wildland Fire Management programs, including \$994 million for Suppression, \$588 million for Preparedness, \$297 million for Hazardous Fuel Reduction, and continued funding for other National Fire Plan activities. Additionally, the Forest Service is adopting significant management reforms to ensure equitable fire suppression cost sharing between Federal and other firefighting entities, fully implement risk-informed Appropriate Management Response, and enact cost containment accountability throughout Wildland Fire programs.

The 2007 fire season illustrated the continued success of the Forest Service fire organization, but also the challenges we face. Fires in recent years have become larger and more difficult to control due to a variety of factors, including climate change, historic fire suppression efforts resulting in increased density of hazard fuels, and expansion of residences in the wildland urban interface (WUI). As a result, fire activity in 2007 was above normal by many standards. Across all jurisdictions, wildland fires totaled more than 78,000 incidents burning over 9 million acres. Thirteen different fires burned over 100,000 acres each, and the Nation was in Preparedness Level 5 for 33 days—the highest level of fire activity during which several geographic areas are experiencing simultaneous major incidents. Despite more fires than in 2006 and a 49 percent increase in acres burned, the cost of suppressing Forest Service fires was \$127 million lower in 2007 due to aggressive implementation of Appropriate Management Response and other cost containment measures.

The southern California fires at the end of the 2007 fire season further exemplified the successful coordination and risk mitigation activities that have made the Forest Service fire organization a model the world over. Compared to similar events in 2003, the 2007 fires had more fire starts (271 compared to 213) and more large fires that escaped initial attack (20 compared to 14), yet much less resulting damage. Only 65 percent as many acres were burned, 60 percent as many structures were destroyed, 60 percent as many firefighters were injured, and 40 percent as many civilian fatalities occurred compared to 2003. Improvements are attributable to pre-positioning efforts, investments in hazardous fuels treatments and community capacity, and coordination with other Federal, State, and local entities.

In spite of these signs of success, the 2007 fire season still resulted in nearly \$1.4 billion of expenditures on fire suppression. As application of Federal firefighting resources on both Federal and non-Federal land has grown, annual suppression expenditures escalate, as does the 10-year average of annual fire suppression expenditures, which determines the program's budget request. The 2009 Fire Suppression request is \$994 million, over \$250 million higher than it was just 2 years ago, and nearly \$150 million more than the current enacted level. The total Wildland Fire Management program, including continued focus on the National Fire Plan, makes up over 48 percent of the agency's discretionary budget request. The Forest Service is adopting substantive management reforms to mitigate this cost trend.

In fiscal year 2009, the Wildland Fire Management program will continue to improve performance through attention to policy, training, oversight, decision support tools, and after action performance analysis. Management policy is set at the national level, and provides clear guidance for the role of Federal firefighters in the Wildland Urban Interface. Management policy also provides strategies of Appropriate Management Response, expectations concerning national shared resources and aviation resource cost management, and limitations to Severity funding. Mandatory training keeps agency administrators up to date on national policy. During an incident, the Chief's Principal Representative provides oversight, while decision support tools such as RAVAR and FSPro offer the incident commander information on fire spread probability, resource values at risk, and historic costs for similar fires. After action reviews, including use of the Stratified Cost Index, provide lessons and best practices to include in subsequent updates to management policy. This performance improvement process resulted in lower than projected suppression expenditures in 2007, and will enable the agency to maintain Fire Preparedness resources within a \$588 million program budget, a decrease of \$77 million from 2008.

Several additional wildfire management reforms are based on recommendations of a USDA Office of Inspector General report that examined large fire suppression costs. The report documented inequitable apportionment of fire protection responsibilities between Federal and local entities in residential areas that abut national forests. In response, the Forest Service is renegotiating master protection agreements to clarify roles and ensure equitable and appropriate allocation of wildland urban interface firefighting costs between the agreement parties. Additionally, the Forest Service will implement a science-based methodology to encourage the cost-effective practice of using unplanned wildfires to reduce hazardous fuels when appropriate.

We expect that the management improvements implemented and underway will make managers better prepared for wildfires; facilitate better decision making during firefighting operations; and provide the tools necessary to analyze, understand and manage fire suppression costs. While the factors of drought, fuels build-up in our forests and increasing development in fire prone areas have the potential to keep the number of incidents and total cost of wildfire suppression high for some time to come, we are confident in our strategy to address wildland fire suppression costs and are committed to action. We believe that the measures discussed today promise to expand efficiency and reduce suppression costs. We look forward to continued collaboration with our Federal, State, local, tribal, and other non-Federal partners to address our shared goal of effectively managing wildfire suppression costs.

CONTINUING TRANSITIONAL SUPPORT TO RURAL COMMUNITIES THROUGH EXTENSION OF SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS PAYMENTS

The Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination act of 2000 (SRS) (Public Law 106-393) was enacted to provide transitional assistance to rural counties affected by the decline in revenue from timber harvests in Federal lands. Traditionally, these counties relied on a share of receipts from timber harvests to supplement local funding for school systems and roads. Funding from SRS has been used to support more than 4,400 rural schools and to help maintain county road systems.

In addition SRS has authorized the establishment of over 55 Resource Advisory Committees (RAC) in 13 States, which has increased the level of interaction between the Forest Service, local governments, and citizens—resulting in greater support and understanding of the agency’s mission. The Forest Service has distributed more than \$2.5 billion under this legislation since 2001 to assist counties in maintaining and improving local schools and roads. Of this amount, \$213 million have been used by RACs to implement more than 4,400 resource projects on national forests and grasslands and adjacent non-Federal lands.

Though the Secure Rural Schools Act expired in 2006, Congress extended payments for a 7th year under Public Law 110–28. The final year of payments were made in December 2007, and included distribution of more than \$389 million in Forest Service revenue to 41 States and Puerto Rico for improvements to public schools, roads and stewardship projects.

The 2009 budget underscores the President’s continuing commitment to States and counties impacted by the ongoing loss of receipts associated with lower timber harvests on Federal lands. The Budget includes a legislative proposal that provides \$200 million above the current baseline for a 4-year extension of USDA and Department of the Interior forest county safety net payments, which will be targeted to the most affected areas, capped, adjusted downward each year, and phased out. For administrative convenience, USDA will make the payments on behalf of both agencies. Offsets for the administration’s proposal are provided within the topline of the President’s Budget throughout the Department of Agriculture and elsewhere. For the 2008 payment (to be made in 2009), the administration continues to be prepared to work with Congress to identify mutually agreeable offsets.

STATE AND PRIVATE FORESTRY PROGRAM REDESIGN

The 2009 budget focuses resources on national forest and grassland responsibilities, but it also reflects a redesigned State and Private Forestry program approach.

The State and Private Forestry program connects the agency’s research and public lands-based programs to those of States and private individuals and entities. Through a coordinated effort in management, protection, conservation education, and resource use, State and Private Forestry programs help facilitate sound stewardship across lands of all ownerships on a landscape scale, while maintaining the flexibility for individual forest landowners to pursue their objectives.

In fiscal year 2007, the Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters agreed to redesign State and Private Forestry. The intent of the redesign is to focus and prioritize resources to better shape and influence forest land use on a scale and in a way that optimizes public benefits from trees and forests for current and future generations. The foundation for the redesign approach is a national assessment of conditions, trends, and opportunities relevant to forests of all ownerships. The initial phase of national implementation has begun, including a new competitive process for a portion of S&PF funds. The Forest Service has committed to monitor implementation of the redesign approach, facilitate an annual review, and implement changes as needed.

As a result, the Forest Service will prioritize work using the best available technology and information focused on three national themes: (1) Conserve working forest landscapes; (2) Protect forests from harm; and (3) Enhance benefits from trees and forests. Comprehensive assessments will be conducted at the State and national levels to identify conditions, threats, and ecosystem services. The assessments will then be used to integrate program delivery with partners through a variety of tools and approaches and ensure appropriate skills and organizational structures are in place to support priority work.

In addition, funding is proposed in the 2008 farm bill for purposes and activities similar to those supported by State and Private Forestry programs. The Conservation, Forestry, and Energy titles of the farm bill authorizes nearly \$10 billion in incentives to States, local governments, and nonindustrial private forest landowners to pursue conservation, forest restoration, and biomass energy. The products and process of State and Private Forestry redesign have helped focus collaborative efforts around important national priorities which will also receive significant attention and support in the 2008 farm bill.

This concludes my statement, I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Senator FEINSTEIN. Thank you very much, Mr. Rey. Chief Kimbell, welcome.

Ms. KIMBELL. Thank you.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF ABIGAIL KIMBELL

Ms. KIMBELL. Madam Chairman, Mr. Allard, members of the subcommittee, it's a privilege to be here today to discuss with you the President's proposed budget for fiscal year 2009 for the U.S. Forest Service. Each of you have in your packets my full testimony, and I'd like to just cover some of the comments from that, but I'd like my full testimony added into the record, if I could, please.

Senator FEINSTEIN. Without objection.

Ms. KIMBELL. Thank you. First I'd like to describe the general context that this budget is presented in. I certainly recognize the Forest Service is just one small part but a very important part to me and to many of you of the Federal budget, and that our requests have to be balanced against competing needs and opportunities across Government for limited funds.

It's important to explain how we, as an agency, crafted the budget proposal in front of you now. It is helpful for me to visualize things in a tangible, practical way, so I see our budget as a bucket. A bucket only has a certain size, it only holds so much, and in our case the bucket is decided after the Nation's highest priorities are taken care of such as supporting the war on terror, strengthening Homeland Security, and promoting sustained economic growth.

With support of those priorities in mind, the Forest Service bucket is \$4.1 billion in size, about the same size as last year's request, and about \$380 million below what was appropriated for 2008. Our bucket starts a little smaller, but it also has to hold some programs that are bigger this year. The fire suppression request is decided by the 10-year average of fire suppression costs, an arrangement agreed to by both Congress and the administration.

The 10-year average this year is \$994 million, \$250 million higher than it was just 2 years ago, and nearly \$150 million higher than the current enacted level. Because fire suppression is the first thing in the bucket, and because it is considerably bigger than the past years, and because the bucket is only so big, other programs are reduced to make up the difference. Rather than simply ratchet all programs down by a similar percentage to make up that difference, this budget reflects a very difficult strategic decision. We are focusing limited resources on core National Forest System programs since we are the sole landlord for these lands. As a consequence, there is significant reductions in the requests for State and Private Forestry programs.

In spite of these difficult cuts, I strongly believe that the Forest Service continues to be a good investment for the funds we receive. In 2007, we received our sixth clean audit in a row. That was no small feat. We have reduced indirect cost to less than 10 percent of our total expenses. We increased partnership contributions to challenge car-share projects by 35 percent over that of 2006. We collected over \$700 million in revenue and receipts.

Forest Service scientists filed two patents. Thirteen Forest Service scientists were recognized with a share of the Nobel Peace Prize for their contributions to climate change research. We maintained 60,000 miles of road and another 26,000 miles of trail. We sold 2.5 billion board feet of timber. We've reduced hazardous fuels on 3 million acres, and we provided fire assistance grants to 62,000 com-

munities. We protected over 88,000 acres of forest land from conversion through the Forest Legacy Program, and the list goes on.

We are positioned to make the most of the resources we receive. Our agency is in the midst of a difficult but necessary transformation which will ensure a higher percentage of funds going into project work. We are encouraging our managers to focus on integrating programs and working with partners to achieve multiple objectives, and we are proposing innovative ecosystem services demonstration projects that will forge important partnerships with States, local governments, tribes, or nonprofit organizations to restore, enhance, and protect ecosystem function on national forests.

The Forest Service is relevant, and we have a leading role in issues affecting the Nation and the world. We have dedicated, professional, and very hard-working employees who come to work every day looking for better ways to solve complex problems. I am confident we add value to the resources with the taxpayer funds you invest in us.

PREPARED STATEMENT

Thank you for the opportunity to describe how our budget was formulated and why I am optimistic about our future. I'm happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Senator FEINSTEIN. Thank you very much.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ABIGAIL KIMBELL

Madam Chairman and members of the subcommittee, it is a great privilege to be here today to discuss the President's budget for the Forest Service in fiscal year 2009. One year ago, sitting here before you discussing the fiscal year 2008 budget was one of my first public acts as Chief of the Forest Service. I am grateful for the support this committee has shown the Forest Service, and over the past year I have been able to see firsthand many of the issues raised by its members. I look forward to our dialogue today.

I can report to you that the state of the Forest Service is sound. The agency continues to sustain and restore the national forests and grasslands. Our researchers continue to push the frontiers of knowledge, and 13 have been recognized by the Nobel Prize panel for their efforts. Our partnerships with other Federal agencies, States, communities, and tribes have broadened and deepened, as together, we have faced growing threats from fire and other disturbances. The outstanding competence and professionalism of our employees is admired by forestry organizations around the world. Entering the second century of service, the Forest Service can reflect with pride on its accomplishments.

Yet for all these achievements, the Forest Service faces significant issues, and can do better. The issues are every bit as challenging as those faced by our predecessors. America's population will likely increase by 50 percent in the next 50 years, and pressures on the land will increase and change. In an era of globalization, the world is shrinking, jobs are growing more complex, and the value of forests and grasslands is greater than ever.

Among the challenges and opportunities facing our agency, three themes stand out in particular: climate change, water issues, and the loss of connection to nature, especially for kids. I truly believe that history will judge my leadership of the Forest Service by how well we as an agency respond to these challenges, and the 2009 budget is crafted with that in mind.

The fiscal year 2009 Forest Service budget request totals \$4.109 billion in discretionary appropriations, an 8 percent decrease from the fiscal year 2008 enacted level. The President's Budget reflects our Nation's highest priorities, including supporting our troops, strengthening our homeland security, and promoting sustained economic growth. The administration's pro-growth economic policies, coupled with spending restraint, are key to keeping us on track to continue to reduce the deficit in the coming years.

Within the framework of the agency's 2007–2012 Strategic Plan and the themes I've laid out, the Forest Service budget for 2009 focuses on core responsibilities, maintaining program effectiveness, and addressing on-going management challenges. The 2009 budget aligns Forest Service spending to reinforce the agency's commitment to caring for the 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands, and providing for the highest priority activities that can demonstrate performance in a transparent manner.

WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT

The responsibility to protect people and property from wildfire is one the Forest Service performs professionally and honorably. Fires in recent years have become larger and more difficult to control due to a variety of factors, including climate change, historic fire management practices resulting in an increased density of hazardous fuels, and residential developments expanding in the wildland urban interface (WUI). As application of Federal firefighting resources on both Federal and non-Federal land has grown, these costs escalate, and so too does the 10 year average of annual fire suppression expenditures, which determines the program's budget request. The 2009 Fire Suppression request is \$994 million, over \$250 million higher than it was just 2 years ago, and nearly \$150 million more than the current enacted level. The total Wildland Fire Management program, including the National Fire Plan, makes up over 48 percent of the agency's discretionary budget request. The Forest Service is adopting substantive management reforms to mitigate this cost trend.

Several wildfire management reforms are based on recommendations of USDA Office of Inspector General report that examined large-fire suppression costs. The report documented inequitable apportionment of fire protection responsibilities between Federal and local entities in residential areas that abut national forests. In response, the Forest Service is renegotiating master protection agreements to clarify roles and ensure equitable and appropriate allocation of wildland urban interface firefighting costs between the agreement parties. Additionally, the Forest Service will implement a science-based methodology to encourage the cost-effective use of unplanned wildfires to reduce hazardous fuels when appropriate.

In fiscal year 2009, the Wildland Fire Management program will continue to improve performance through attention to policy, training, oversight, decision support tools, and after action performance analysis. Management policy is set at the national level, and provides clear guidance for the role of Federal firefighters in the Wildland Urban Interface and the strategies of Appropriate Management Response (AMR). Mandatory training keeps agency administrators up to date on national policy. During an incident, the Chief's Principle Representative provides oversight, while decision support tools such as Rapid Assessment of Values at Risk (RAVAR) and Fire Spread Probability (FSPro) offer the incident commander information on fire spread probability, resource values at risk, and historic costs for similar fires. After action reviews, including use of the Stratified Cost Index (SCI), provide lessons and best practices to include in subsequent updates to management policy. This performance improvement process will enable the agency to maintain Fire Preparedness resources within a \$588 million program budget, a decrease of \$77 million from 2008.

HEALTHY FORESTS

The fiscal year 2009 Forest Service budget focuses resources on maximizing the effectiveness of core national forest and grassland programs. Implementation of the Healthy Forests Initiative and the Northwest Forest Plan are key initiatives which receive increased or similar levels of funding compared to fiscal year 2008 enacted—Forest Products is requested at \$323 million, Hazardous Fuels at \$297 million, and Vegetation & Watershed Management at \$165 million. These investments will yield over 4.9 million CCF (2.5 BBF) of timber volume sold, including 1.6 million CCF (0.8 BBF) of timber volume offered from full implementation of the Northwest Forest Plan. Other priority program outputs include establishing or improving over 2 million acres of forest and rangeland vegetation, and 1.5 million acres of hazardous fuel reduction with an additional 800,000 acres of treatments accomplished by other land management activities to reduce fire risk. Capital Improvement and Maintenance of Roads is requested at \$227 million to provide the necessary infrastructure to support priority program activities and manage the roads system on national forest lands.

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICIENCY & TRANSFORMATION

The Forest Service is continuing its restructuring process that will improve its organizational structure and maximize resources available for on-the-ground mission delivery. Our current organizational structure, designed in the 1950s, does not take advantage of the communication technologies and integrated operating systems available in today's business environment. By the end of fiscal year 2009, the Forest Service will reduce operating costs by approximately 25 percent in the regional offices, the national headquarters, and the Northeastern Area. This will result in a higher proportion of funds going to the field and an organizational structure better equipped to meet the natural resource management challenges of the 21st century.

RECOGNIZING INTEGRATED PROGRAM AND PARTNERSHIP ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Another strategy to ensure maximum on-the-ground achievements relates to accomplishment tracking. In fiscal year 2008 the Forest Service is changing reporting rules to incorporate accomplishments achieved through integration between program areas and/or partnerships with external groups. This change is designed to shift from a program-by-program approach to one that aligns programs and partner organizations to achieve multiple goals. By changing how accomplishments are counted, the agency hopes to change how managers plan and implement their work, increase incentives for working with partners, and ensure maximum value per dollar of Federal expenditure.

I will now discuss the program budget requests for the Research, State and Private Forestry, National Forest System, Capital Improvement and Maintenance, and Land Acquisition accounts.

FOREST & RANGELAND RESEARCH

The Forest Service Research Program is a globally recognized leader developing scientific information and technologies that address the ecological, biological, social, and economic issues challenging natural resource management and conservation in the modern era. Approximately 500 Forest Service scientists conduct this research at 67 sites located throughout the United States. The 2009 budget funds research at \$263 million. This is equal to the 2008 President's budget, and an 8 percent decrease from the enacted level of \$286 million. The budget eliminates funding for congressional earmarks, employs investment criteria to align research projects with strategic priorities, and retains support of the Forest Inventory and Analysis program at \$62.3 million.

Forest Service Research & Development is a world leader on the global climate change issue. Thirteen Forest Service scientists participated in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which shared the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize with former Vice President Al Gore.

The fiscal year 2009 budget includes \$31 million for research on how climate change, air and water pollution, land use, and extreme events affect forest and rangeland sustainability and the associated benefits they provide to society. In addition, the program prioritizes research in the areas of Resource Management and Use (\$79 million), Invasive Species (\$30 million), and Wildland Fire and Fuels (\$23 million).

STATE & PRIVATE FORESTRY

The State and Private Forestry program connects the agency's research and public lands-based programs to those of States and private individuals and entities. Through a coordinated effort in management, protection, conservation education, and resource use, State and Private Forestry programs help facilitate sound stewardship across lands of all ownerships on a landscape scale, while maintaining the flexibility for individual forest landowners to pursue their objectives.

In fiscal year 2007, the Forest Service collaborated with the National Association of State Foresters to redesign the focus, priorities and delivery of the agency's State and Private Forestry programs. As a result, the Forest Service will prioritize work using the best available technology and information, focusing on three national themes: (1) Conserve working forest landscapes; (2) Protect forests from harm; and (3) Enhance benefits from trees and forests. Comprehensive assessments will be conducted at the State and national levels to identify conditions, threats, and ecosystem services. The assessments will then be used to integrate program delivery with partners and ensure appropriate skills and organizational structures are in place to support priority work.

The 2009 budget funds State and Private Forestry at \$110 million, a decrease of 58 percent from the 2008 enacted level. Forest Health programs, including those

funded under the National Fire Plan, will receive almost \$80 million and treat over 450,000 forest and rangeland acres for invasive and native pests with a focus on early detection, evaluation, and monitoring of new invasive species, such as the Sirex wood wasp, emerald ash borer, and sudden oak death. Cooperative Fire programs, including those funded under the National Fire Plan, will receive nearly \$75 million and assist over 18,000 communities through grants to State and local fire agencies. In addition, \$25 million will fund the Forest Stewardship, Forest Legacy, Urban & Community Forestry and International Forestry programs.

NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM

The National Forest System account provides funds for the stewardship and management of national forests and grasslands. The 2009 budget requests \$1.345 billion for this account, which is equal to the 2008 President's budget request, but a decrease of \$125 million or 9 percent from the enacted level. This budget level reflects successful implementation of the organizational efficiency & transformation efforts which will direct a higher proportion of funds to on-the-ground mission-critical work.

The 2009 budget includes a legislative proposal authorizing five Ecosystems Services Demonstration Projects that will bring new partners together with the Forest Service in a broad effort to advance market-based conservation. States, local governments, tribes or non-profit organizations will have the opportunity to provide up to \$10 million of funds or in-kind services for activities that restore, enhance, and protect ecosystem function on National Forest System lands. The projects will also introduce and refine methodologies that may be used in potential or emerging markets to quantify and value ecosystem services related to clean water, carbon sequestration and other critical benefits.

Other important National Forest System programs are increased in the fiscal year 2009 budget. As mentioned earlier, the fiscal year 2009 budget supports full funding for the Northwest Forest Plan within the \$323 million for Forest Products. Land Management Planning funding is proposed at \$53 million, an 8 percent increase from the 2008 enacted level. The additional funds will focus on implementation of the revised Planning Rule, acceleration of work on 35 planned Land Management Plan (LMP) amendments that respond to energy corridor decisions, and completion of 18 LMP revisions currently scheduled for fiscal year 2009.

A number of National Forest System programs will be maintained at the fiscal year 2008 President's budget level including, \$146 million for Inventory and Monitoring programs to facilitate efficient implementation of the 2008 Planning Rule, which establishes Environmental Management Systems on each NFS unit. The Recreation, Heritage, and Wilderness programs are proposed at \$237 million, which will enable completion of travel management plans for 86 percent of National Forest System lands and Recreation Facility Analyses on 74 percent of national forests by the end of fiscal year 2009. Wildlife & Fish Management, funded at \$118 million, will focus on continued partnerships with States, non-governmental organizations and tribes to actively manage wildlife and fisheries habitat for the benefit of the 36 million people that visit national forests and grasslands annually to hunt, fish, or view wildlife. The \$47 million funding request for Grazing Management will support effective management of rangeland resources on approximately 90 million acres of NFS lands and compliance with the Revisions Act schedule for completed grazing allotments. The \$115 million request for Law Enforcement Operations, a \$17 million decrease, will be focused on combating drug-trafficking organizations along the southwest and northern borders, responding to emergency and life-threatening situations, and conducting arson investigations.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT & MAINTENANCE

The Capital Improvement & Maintenance Program maintains the infrastructure for many Forest Service programs, including the transportation networks necessary for management and visitor access; the recreational infrastructure, including trails that serve many diverse populations; and facilities that house Forest Service employees. The 2009 Budget funds Capital Improvement & Maintenance at \$406 million, a decrease of \$69 million from the enacted level, which included a \$25 million one-time transfer from the Purchaser Election Program. The \$120 million proposed in Facilities funding will support maintenance of approximately 22,500 facilities and capital improvement of 34 facilities in fiscal year 2009. The \$227 million Roads program includes maintenance of more than 70,000 miles, reconstruction and capital improvement of 2,000 miles, and decommissioning of approximately 600 miles of Forest Service roads. 17,300 miles of trails will be maintained and 700 miles relo-

cated or constructed with the \$50 million Trails request. Legacy Roads & Trails, established by Congress in 2008, is not included in the budget.

CONCLUSION

I present this budget within a management environment that demands more than dollars to ensure organizational success. The budget supports national priorities of deficit reduction, maintains a safe and effective fire suppression organization, and maintains other high priority programs. Just as importantly, it proposes an ecosystem services approach to on-the-ground work in partnership with key stakeholders to protect watersheds, enhance economic and social values, and improve biodiversity. Combined with State & Private Forestry redesign, Wildland Fire Management reforms, and organizational management transformation, this suite of initiatives will enable the Forest Service to continue to deliver outstanding science and effectively manage the resources of the national forests and grasslands while adapting to the challenges of the coming decades.

FIREFIGHTER ATTRITION IN CALIFORNIA

Senator FEINSTEIN. We will begin the question phase. I just want to point out that this year California will be sponsoring the Tahoe Summit; I'm going to put it together, and deal with forests and forest fires. I'd like to invite both of you to attend and participate. I've asked Al Gore to speak on how fires, forest fires, affect global warming, or how global warming affects forest fires. So I think it should be very interesting. Then we'll hear from all of the fire districts around the Lake. So I hope you will be able to come.

As you know, I wrote you a letter about the very high attrition rate of Federal firefighters in the southern California area. I've just been looking at your answer, and I gather you know the attrition rate in one of your charts is actually above 40 percent. You have a pie chart here which States that the reason for leaving the Forest Service, 44 percent went to Cal State, county, local fire departments. It's a huge attrition rate, and yet you then compare the wages and point out that the wage, federally, is higher.

Now, I mean, these people aren't stupid. They go to local jurisdictions because they get more money. So where is the difference in pay?

Ms. KIMBELL. Senator, the analysis that you have includes the description of the different kinds of work schedules that the employees with the Forest Service have versus employees with Cal State. There is quite a difference in the work schedule.

There's also quite a difference in the mission that these different people perform in their different employment. Our wildland firefighters are not typically, across the rest of the country, involved in the kinds of activities some of the other committee members refer to as first responder and other responses that the Federal firefighters in California, State of California firefighters, and certainly the local firefighters are continuously involved with.

There is a difference in the number of hours that these different employees put in; there's a difference in their work schedules; there's a difference in our firefighters being seasonal and at the lower-graded levels. The State and county firefighters, being year-round employees, results in a difference at year end in how much they make over a year.

Senator FEINSTEIN. I want to stop you because I've got that.

Ms. KIMBELL. Okay.

Senator FEINSTEIN. As you know, Senator Allard and I held a hearing, and Mr. Rey was good enough to be there in San Diego. One of the things that one anticipates in southern California is more catastrophic fire.

You're saying, essentially, that people are going to Cal Fire because they work more hours, therefore they get more pay. Let me ask you this: As we go into the fire season, how many positions will be unfilled in those critical fire areas?

Ms. KIMBELL. We have instituted a new hiring process in California, specifically, with a roster, and over the last year we have hired 1,000 people into the firefighting organization in California. We anticipate to be fully staffed at the funding level.

Senator FEINSTEIN. So we can anticipate that when we come to fire season and I look at this, every position is going to be filled?

Mr. REY. Yes.

Senator FEINSTEIN. I heard that definitive "yes." I appreciate it. It is noted in the record.

Mr. REY. Occasionally, we can give short answers.

ILLEGAL DRUG OPERATIONS IN NATIONAL FORESTS

Senator FEINSTEIN. Excellent. All right, thank you.

We have another problem. Our forests, as you know, are inundated by Mexican drug trafficking organizations growing marijuana, and over the past 2 years I, specifically, added to the Forest Service enforcement budget \$17 million to deal with that.

I see your budget eliminates this increase and funds your program at \$115 million. I supported Operation Alicia and Operation Green Acres, two major interagency drug operations that took place last season that netted literally hundreds of arrests and destroyed millions of marijuana plants.

I met recently with your people as well as DEA. I came away from that meeting not satisfied: Not satisfied with the plan which I believe should be to clean the marijuana out of our forests—out of our parks and forests. I'd really like to get both of you on record as to what the intention is this year.

What I gained from the meeting was that there was going to be much more emphasis on the development of intelligence related to cartel activity than actual strike force activity, and I'm interested, candidly, in the strike force activity.

Mr. Rey, would you like to answer that?

Mr. REY. Sure. We are going to be doing at least four major strike force actions during the course of the summer. For obvious reasons, I don't think I want to describe where they're going to be or when they're going to happen, but there will be a significant stepping up of that kind of activity in cooperation with both DEA and with local law enforcement. I'll submit for the record some of the details associated with those proposals.

[The information follows:]

MARIJUANA ERADICATION EFFORTS IN CALIFORNIA

Forest Service Law Enforcement and Investigations (LEI) personnel will participate in four multi-agency drug eradication operations in Region 5 during fiscal year 2008. LEI officers will work with personnel from DEA, CAMP, HIDTA marijuana investigative teams, local sheriff departments, California National Guard, and the Joint Task Force North in the planning and execution of these operations. Each op-

eration will have between 20 and 40 personnel assigned to it. Between June 15 and October 15, a total of 34 LEI personnel will be dedicated to drug enforcement operations on NFS lands.

The program goals in California for fiscal year 2008 are to increase by 30 percent the number of plants eradicated, sites raided, and felony arrests over fiscal year 2007. The results will be 2.4 million marijuana plants eradicated, 418 garden sites raided, and 94 felony arrests.

Mr. REY. We do not intend to reduce the funding or the staffing that we've developed in Region 5 in California until we've turned the corner in dealing with the drug activity in California. So, while we may be leveling funding in other areas where we don't have this depth of difficulty, we're going to keep the California operations moving forward.

Senator FEINSTEIN. Thank you, I appreciate that very much.

TAHOE REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY

Chief Kimbell, last year I urged you and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency to renegotiate an MOU to better streamline the permitting process to reduce hazardous fuels on Forest Service land in the Tahoe Basin. Can you give us a status update on the negotiations, and what assurances can you provide that this will be done before this year's fire season?

Ms. KIMBELL. We've been working very closely with TRPA, and TRPA provided a draft—

Senator FEINSTEIN. Stay with that: The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency?

Ms. KIMBELL. Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, thank you. Sorry. They provided a draft. It was of concern to a number of people given the amount of process that was included in that redrafting of the MOU.

The Governors of California and Nevada appointed a fire commission. That commission delivered a report on March 21 with a number of recommendations and suggestions. We are reviewing that report from the fire commission right now, and we'll continue working with TRPA. Before the 1st of June, we anticipate having a final memorandum of understanding for signature.

Mr. REY. We have a good three-page summary of where everything's at right now that the Forest supervisor for the Tahoe Basin Planning Unit provided. We'll submit that for the record for the hearing.

Senator FEINSTEIN. I would appreciate that. Are there signs that the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency is being more realistic now in view of the threat of fire in easing some of its regulations so that pine needles can be picked up, so the trees that overhang houses can be reduced in bulk and size, and ground cover reduced?

Mr. REY. There are signs, but it's a long, slow process. I would say that the sharpened focus of thinking that the Angora fire created has sort of been dulled with the winter rains, and I think we've still got a couple of rounds of negotiations with the Regional Planning Authority before we're at the point where we want to be.

Senator FEINSTEIN. Thank you. Well, I'd appreciate that memo, and if you could keep me advised, I'd appreciate that as well.

[The information follows:]

I've been requested to provide information for the Senate Interior Appropriation Hearing. My response will center on the efforts associated with the California-Ne-

vada Tahoe Basin Fire Commission (the “Commission”). Many of the recommendations address the situation and concerns I identified in my August 8, 2007 memo. I’ve combined and summarized the ones that will have the most impact on accomplishing fuels work in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

BACKGROUND

In the aftermath of the Angora Fire, the Governors of California and Nevada established an emergency Commission to look at what happened and what can and should be done to prevent another catastrophic fire in the Basin. The Commission met approximately 19 times and the LTBMU actively participated in all facets of the process. A draft report has been prepared and is expected to be finalized sometime in April. There are 48 findings and 90 recommendations recommended by the Commissioners in the draft report.

The finding and recommendation getting the most attention is the recommendation to declare the Lake Tahoe Basin a state of emergency. The Governors from both States would have to declare separate emergencies and then request President Bush declare a national emergency. When this was voted on, Jim Pena abstained as a Federal official.

The findings and recommendations (“F&Rs”) that will help the LTBMU most are the ones that will:

- Remove the impediments to getting fuels work done
- Allow us the opportunity to work more efficiently which results in cost effective measures
- Potentially change the permitting processes
- Increase the capacity and capability to implement projects
- Address the roles and responsibilities of the regulatory agencies we work with

Based on these criteria, following is a summary of the F&Rs we consider to have the most impact on the Basin. I’ve attached a list of these findings and recommendations summarized for this memo.

A. Revision of Memorandums of Understanding

Immediately after the fire, Senator Feinstein requested information on how we worked with the TRPA and the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board and what could be done to streamline the process. My August 8, 2007 memo that went to Senator Feinstein through the RO and WO addressed those issues. As we streamlined regulatory processes, we continued to provide the appropriate protection for water quality. Since August, progress has been made and I am continuing the dialogues with both agencies and working on revising our MOUs. Specifically:

- LTBMU and TRPA are working to revise the 1989 MOU for fuels projects to apply to all FS projects after completion of the MOU revision
- LTBMU is drafting the language with advice and review from OGC
- TRPA’s October 2007 draft MOU was unacceptable to LTBMU and OGC because of increased bureaucracy
- By June 1, LTBMU will give TRPA another draft that takes into consideration the Commission F&Rs
- LTBMU will revise MOU with Lahontan

B. Reducing Redundant and Complex Permitting

The Commission found that the existing system to permit fuel reduction projects is often confusing, redundant and overly complex. Also, the system used in Nevada is different than that in CA because of an added regulatory layer (Lahontan). The Commission recommended:

- The Governors direct regulatory and implementing agencies to simplify the system, including waiving certain restrictions on use of mechanized equipment and vehicles within SEZs.
- Lahontan and TRPA and land managers develop common list of equipment and accepted best management practices (BMPs) for mechanical work in SEZs.
- TRPA, Lahontan and the FS allow equipment use on slopes greater than 30 percent based on current and future technology.
- Lahontan transfer its water quality permitting responsibility to TRPA for water quality issues relating to fuels reduction projects. This has already been done in Nevada by Nevada Division of Environmental Protection.

C. Reduce Permitting for Mechanized Equipment in SEZs

Several F&Rs identified ways for work to be accomplished in SEZs and still protect water quality and increase cost effectiveness. The Commission recommended:

- Governors direct TRPA to allow use of mechanized equipment in SEZs including revising the Lake Tahoe 208 Water Quality Plan.

- Governors should direct agencies to consider fire hazard reduction an overriding priority with applications for mechanized equipment use.
- Lahontan change its interpretation of regulations and allow pile burning and spreading chipped material in SEZs.

D. Increase Burn Days

In Nevada, air quality agencies do not regulate burn days and leaves it to the land managers' discretion to determine acceptable conditions. Below are elements of F&Rs that will allow us to increase burn days:

- More comprehensive air quality and meteorological information should be implemented and further analyzed at the Basin scale to provide for additional burn days.
- The California Air Resources Board should develop a test program to see if additional burn days can be added to the Basin without adversely affecting the region's air quality.
- Nevada land managers should continue to follow existing practices.

E. Funding the Recommendations

The Commission recognized that the Federal Government is not the only answer to funding the recommendations. It directed the States and local governments, as well as private parties to look for ways to share in funding fuels work in the Basin. However, it was also recognized that additional Federal funding will be necessary to accomplish the needed work. The Commission also recognized that the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) is not the only funding mechanism. With decreasing land sales in Clark County, Nevada, future funding is on a downward trend and funds other than SNPLMA should be identified.

F. What the LTBMU is Doing that Aligns with Findings and Recommendations

Even before the fire, the LTBMU has been working toward better working relationships with regulatory agencies. The Commission identified many things they would like to see happen. We are already engaged in many, including:

- TRPA and LTBMU working together on permitting fuels projects under existing MOUs to prevent delays once NEPA decision is made (i.e. Round Hill, Angora Hazard Tree removal along FS trails/roads)
- TRPA concurred on Round Hill project which authorized 2 different treatment methods:
 - 72 acres of whole tree yarding
 - 3 acres of mechanical treatment in SEZ
 - Total project treatment is 952 acres in NV
- Engaging in a joint process with Lahontan, i.e., working with and going forward at the same time on environmental requirements (NEPA and CEQA) instead of one after the other for our South Shore Fuels Reduction and Healthy Forest Restoration Project:
 - largest fuels project analyzed in the LT Basin
 - 33,000 acres analyzed; 10,000 acres proposed for treatment in CA
 - 550 to 640 acres of mechanical treatment proposed in SEZ
 - 2,100 to 3,800 acres whole tree yarding proposed
- Renegotiating and revising the MOUs discussed earlier

Senator FEINSTEIN. I call on the ranking member, Senator Allard.

Senator BENNETT. Madam Chairman—

Senator FEINSTEIN. You have not had an opportunity for an opening statement.

Senator BENNETT. Yeah, and I have to be called out, so could I make a quick—

Senator FEINSTEIN. A quick—yes.

Senator BENNETT [continuing]. A quick comment?

Senator ALLARD. I'll yield to the good—

STATEMENT OF SENATOR ROBERT F. BENNETT

Senator BENNETT. I apologize to you both, but I simply want to make a comment, Mr. Rey. You've made reference to it in your opening statement about the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Act, and I am pleased that the Depart-

ment is taking steps to provide a safety net for payments to States that they would have received under that act that expired in 2006. But I think we have to do more.

It's an act that's very important to Utah's rural counties. I think we in Congress have to work to reauthorize the act, and these funds are used for all kinds of things—roads, public schools, other important uses that are critical to our western counties. The expiration of the act means that PILT payments will be reduced, so we have to use the rural school payments to offset PILT and stretch all of those funds even more.

So I don't want to let the opportunity pass without making a comment about it, thanking you for your attention to it, and I look forward to working with you on this.

With that, thank you, Madam Chairman. Thank you for your courtesy.

Senator FEINSTEIN. Thank you very much, Senator Bennett.
Senator.

HAZARDOUS FUELS TREATMENT PROGRAM

Senator ALLARD. Thank you, Madam Chairman. You know, there's an axiom in veterinary medicine that prevention is a lot less expensive than treatment, and I think we're seeing the impacts on the Forest Service budget now.

You know, we've disallowed a judicious cutting of trees and thinning of forests and whatnot, and adequate treatment of these forests because of some of the policies we had put in place and right now we're paying the price in less income into the Federal Government because we don't allow the cutting; the more money being spent for fires because disease has taken over these fires. We get more burnable timber out there that burns hotter and faster, and the result is that we're spending a lot more money now in fire suppression and, you know, taking care of fires. I hope that we can move back to a more sensible policy than what we have now.

We have in California and Colorado a pine beetle problem. We have in the southern part of this country a beetle problem. The beetle problem that they have with the spruce bark beetle in Alaska is extremely prevalent up there. They've got some really serious problems.

So my question is, can you explain the large cuts in this particular program with the enormous problems that we have with the pine beetles?

Mr. REY. Well, I don't think we look at what we've proposed in its totality as a large cut. If you look at the Fire Management program in its entirety, both USDA's, Forest Service, and the Department of the Interior, we're proposing a \$927 million program as compared to last year's program, which in regular appropriations was \$962 million.

Now, last year was an all-time record of funding, so we're down a little bit from that record. We have tried to make the implementation of the Healthy Forests Initiative one of our budget priorities, keeping the line items that contribute to that initiative as close to at-record levels as we could.

So, I don't think that we would concur that they are a big reduction. Yes, it's down about \$35 million from last year's levels, but

last year's levels were the highest levels that those programs had ever been funded.

Senator ALLARD. I got that point. Now, if we were to give you additional money, could you give us some idea of how many more acres you could effectively treat, and at what cost?

Mr. REY. Sure. We can break that out for you in, say, \$10 million increments in terms of the acreage comparison for what we would be able to reach. That's of course, assuming that appeals and litigation don't get in the way, obviously. But we can give you a step-wise progression there.

Senator ALLARD. You know, I want to sit down—I want our staffs to work with you a little bit because we come up with different conclusions when we look at the figure that we have here before us under the 3-year summary of the appropriations and whatnot.

Mr. REY. What I was giving you was the documentation on page K-1 of our budget's submission, appendix K.

Senator ALLARD. Okay. Well, we'll review that, and we'll want to continue to have that discussion with you.

FIRE PREPAREDNESS FUNDING

Now, on the Fire Preparedness, you say through efficiencies you'll maintain the same numbers of firefighters, the same number of hot shot crews and engines. Can you describe what the efficiencies are and how that can be so large, and justify so large a reduction in spending?

Mr. REY. I can give you some examples, and then, for the record, we can flesh out, you know, larger numbers of them. But let's take aviation assets, planes, for instance. Last year we did a review of how we contract for aircraft and modified the use of exclusive use contracts, which resulted in a net savings of about \$14 million. The experience that we gained from those changes is going to result in savings that we can carry forward.

We have put cost control measures in place in large incident fires, and it's important in the fire budget to recognize less than 2 percent of the fires would account for 85 percent of the cost. That's where the real cost savings can be found in managing the cost associated with extended attack on large incident fires. So we've added cost-containment staff to those incidents that have resulted in some savings as well.

What we believe is that as a consequence of those savings, we've reduced real expenses from those which were projected by about \$200 million. Now what you're seeing in our 2009 budget proposal is a recognition of those savings in some slight reductions in preparedness.

Now, you've given us the authority that if we fall short in preparedness dollars to use suppression funding if that becomes necessary. So we've got a backstop if we prove to be too optimistic in projecting the effects of some of these savings. If need be, we'll draw from the suppression account to deal with that.

But if we're going to make these kinds of investments in cost savings, then we ought to reflect that in the way we budget. That's what we think.

Senator ALLARD. So you can assure us that at this level of preparedness funding, the agency's initial attack success rate won't be reduced and lead to more catastrophic fires?

Mr. REY. The preparedness budget is built on maintaining the historic initial attack success rate upwards of 98 percent fires suppressed on initial attack.

FOREST PLANNING RULE

Senator ALLARD. Okay, let me just move on. The time is escaping us here. On the forest planning process, under the old forest planning rules the time and expense to complete the forest plans have become incredibly expensive. The plans designed to last for 15 years now are taking 6 to 8 years to complete and cost many millions of dollars. That's for the last 15 years.

This administration streamlined that process with the new planning rule put in March of last year. A Federal court in the 9th District enjoined the agency from implementing the new planning rule.

Can you tell us what the status of your new planning rule is?

Mr. REY. It will be out in "The Federal Register" in a matter of days.

Senator ALLARD. Do you believe you have cured the defects found by the court?

Mr. REY. We believe we have cured the defects found by the court. I daresay we won't get the last word on that, though. It will probably be the court that determines that.

Senator ALLARD. Yes, and how do you anticipate the cost for individual forest plans that were reduced by the new rules? Will they, do you think, add to the cost or reduce the cost?

Mr. REY. I think we'll reduce the cost by a factor of two-thirds from what it was costing us to develop plans under the 1982 regulations.

Senator ALLARD. You feel comfortable that there's been adequate public participation in the new forest planning process?

Mr. REY. I think, if anything, there has been a greater degree of public participation in the plans that have been developed under these new rules.

Senator ALLARD. Well, I think you're rather optimistic, and I appreciate it, but we'll see.

Senator CRAIG. This panel has voted, and we agree.

Senator ALLARD. Okay. I see my time has expired.

Mr. REY. There's a vote there. I'm always looking for the opportunity here.

Senator ALLARD. Thank you.

Senator FEINSTEIN. Thank you very much, Senator.

Senator DOMENICI.

SERVICE OF MR. REY

Senator DOMENICI. First, let me thank all of you for your service, especially Mark, you, for your long service here, and it's been a very difficult job. I was talking to my friend here, Senator Craig about your activities and performance, and we're very lucky to have somebody that stays on this kind of difficult job that has the knowledge that you have. We are glad that you share it with us.

We're very sorry that you can't implement much of it in the field because it is not just Congress and you, the outsiders have a lot to do with what you can do, and they find ways to make it very difficult for you, and we understand that. We have not been able to change that very much.

EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR FIREFIGHTERS

My first question, however, is to you, Ms. Kimbell. I talked to you a little bit about this qualification the OPM has imposed with reference to degrees and courses and qualifications. I understand that the folks out in the field are having some difficult, extremely difficult getting definitive answers regarding this situation from your human resources specialists. Many are very frustrated.

How serious is this problem?

Ms. KIMBELL. I think it's a very serious problem, Senator, and we've put together a team of people working with our fire leadership and with our human resources people in Albuquerque to more quickly process all that different information. That way, we can give employees answers in writing specific to the kind of course work that they've had and which of those courses will or will not qualify them in the 401 Series as per OPM guidelines.

Senator DOMENICI. What percentage of your field managers are at risk of losing their qualifications in 2009?

Ms. KIMBELL. The exact percent, there are 30 people, actually, that we have been granted an extension to be able to get them the course work that they need by June 2009.

Senator DOMENICI. Why did this OPM intervention occur, and do you think the training provided by a college or a university is superior to the on-the-job training, your in-house courses and the experience that your fire managers have gained through their years of fighting fires?

Ms. KIMBELL. Well, that's the larger question with all of this. The course work—the courses that we provide through the Wildfire Coordinating Group—is recognized as world-class. There are people who attend from around the world. It's very practical, it's hands on, it's taught by very experienced, knowledgeable people. Yet those are courses that the Office of Personnel Management hasn't been willing to recognize as qualifying under the positive education requirements.

Senator DOMENICI. Okay. Well, I wanted to say, speaking for myself, I think what's happening is very, very wrong, unfair, and unneeded. I cannot believe that we're going to lose experienced managers and experienced firefighters because OPM says they have to have a certain kind of college degree or effort toward a degree. So, from my standpoint I'd like for you to provide the committee with information as to how we would provide a waiver, a waiver that you sought, and how we would provide that. I think that that would be good for us to have.

Ms. KIMBELL. Senator, we'd be very interested in working with you on that, and we'll also continue working with the Department of the Interior. We entered into this whole arrangement with the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior, and we need to be together as we work through this.

Mr. REY. Yes, there are some Interior firefighters who are in similar situations, so we'll have to readdress this—

Senator DOMENICI. Oh, very good.

Mr. REY [continuing]. With the departments together.

Senator DOMENICI. Very good. So there's more than just you fighting the fight.

Ms. KIMBELL. There are 500 firefighters in Interior who are also affected, and there are an additional 200 Forest Service firefighters who will become affected here shortly.

Senator DOMENICI. Madam Chairman, do you understand how critical this issue is?

Senator FEINSTEIN. I do. We'll take—

Senator DOMENICI. Now, are you willing to work with me—

Senator FEINSTEIN. Yes.

Senator DOMENICI [continuing]. On my—

Senator FEINSTEIN. We certainly are, and we will.

Senator DOMENICI. Thank you very much.

FIREFIGHTER RESPONSIBILITIES IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Under Secretary Rey, I understand that the Forest Service wildland firefighters on at least four southern California forests now respond not only to wildland fire calls but also calls to deal with other emergencies like traffic accidents. Is that correct?

Mr. REY. It's correct, but it's unique to those four forests. It goes to how our memorandum of agreement with the local firefighting authorities are written. So it's not a situation that's comparable anywhere else in the system.

Senator DOMENICI. Well, can you tell me approximately how many of these traffic calls are nonwildfire calls for service? Requests for firefighters' response in 2007? Do you require your wildland firefighters in all States to perform these type of duties?

I guess you've answered the second question. You don't require that they do it in other districts, is that correct?

Mr. REY. That's correct. Based on the records that we have, we responded to about 3,200 nonfire calls from Forest Service stations in those four national forests last year.

Senator DOMENICI. That's a good number, but 3,200 out of what?

Mr. REY. 3,200.

Senator DOMENICI. 3,200 out of what?

Ms. KIMBELL. It's approximately 70 percent of the calls that are nonfire.

Senator DOMENICI. Okay, and yet we're paying for them as firefighting under this Department's budget, is that right?

Mr. REY. That's correct.

Senator DOMENICI. Well, why should we continue this? I mean, it sounds like a nice thing to do for some areas, but—

Mr. REY. Well, this will be one of the things that we look into as we continue to work on the retention issue in southern California. But I guess the simple answer is that as we work through our local agreements with the county fire organizations in southern California, this was something we agreed to do, and in exchange they've agreed to do some things for us. So there is some degree of reciprocity in how we organize ourselves.

Senator DOMENICI. All right. Then are you suggesting, are you saying to the committee that, as the man in charge, you think this is a good practice that ought to continue? Or should it be put in a stage where it's being diminished annually so that it won't remain at this high level forever.

Mr. REY. Well, I think what I would say is that it's something we ought to look at as we move to update the agreements that we have with the local fire authorities. It's not something I think we should change precipitously, if these local authorities aren't capable of picking up the slack, because that means we'll be putting citizens at risk to a less effective initial response.

It's a situation that has evolved because of the unique nature of the fire organizations in southern California. It's like many of our agreements with State and local firefighting agencies. This is one thing that we need to nail down so that the Federal role is clear and appropriate, and that, to the extent that we are doing work that benefits another jurisdiction, that the Federal Government is compensated for that.

Senator DOMENICI. All right. Thank you very much. On the OPM issue we will continue to see what we can do and work with our staff and the chairman on that issue.

Ms. KIMBELL. Yes, thank you.

Senator FEINSTEIN. Thank you very much, Senator Domenici.

Senator DOMENICI. Thank you for the time this morning and your cordiality. I appreciate it.

Senator FEINSTEIN. You're very welcome. Thank you.

Senator CRAIG.

Senator CRAIG. Madam Chairman, thank you very much.

FIREFIGHTING FUND

Chief, if the chairman of this committee and I were to do something we did a year ago against your better judgment, and that was put \$500 million in your fire fund to fight the fires that you fought last summer, would you oppose that against your current budget?

Ms. KIMBELL. I'm not certain I understand the nuance in what you've—

Senator CRAIG. The nuance was we felt you had substantially underfunded yourself for the fire season that was ahead of you.

Ms. KIMBELL. Oh.

Senator CRAIG. The history is now in, and it was shown that you did, and we saw that coming and advanced you some money.

Ms. KIMBELL. We absolutely appreciate the money you advanced us.

Senator CRAIG. Okay. Thank you.

Ms. KIMBELL. We've put it to very good use.

Senator CRAIG. Yes, you did. None of that's disputed.

EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENT FOR FIREFIGHTERS

I'm sitting here listening to this question about the Office of Management and Budget and who's the most talented. There are probably few in this room who have fought fires. I have a young man staffing me as my legislative assistant in this area who was a wildland fire firefighter. He just handed me a note that said if

he had a minor in fire science from a university, he would now be his boss's boss, who might have had 8 or 10 years more experience than he.

When you're out on a wildland fire, I'll opt for experience every day before I'll opt for a college degree. College degrees get burned, tragically enough, if they don't have the knowledge and the experience that goes down the road toward a year-after-year fire knowledge.

I don't know where OMB's coming from other than the green-eye-shade people got way out in front of themselves on this one. And you ought to fight it aggressively and with passion as it relates to experience on the ground. We'll help you there. This is just silliness, absolute silliness on the part of a Government agency run amok on this issue. I don't know of any more dramatic way to say it.

If we're opting for a college degree versus ground experience, and the kind of work and the professionalism you've built into your fire corps over the years, both the BLM and the Forest Service—I see it out at the interagency in Boise—the talent that comes with the experience. We know that the fires we fight today cannot be diagrammed in a textbook. They are hotter, they're more dramatic, you've learned some tremendously tragic lessons over the last good number of years of how to engage, when not to engage, when to step back, where to fight, when to fight, all of those kinds of things.

So let us help you do that.

Ms. KIMBELL. Thank you, Senator.

I'm sitting beside and in front of a number of people who have been wildland firefighters, and I think they'd absolutely agree they'd rather be working for somebody with 8 to 10 years of experience than someone with simply a degree without the experience.

Senator CRAIG. Thank you. I think that's important for the record. OMB, listen: Don't hide your head in a bunch of paperwork.

STATE AND PRIVATE FORESTRY FUNDING

I'm frustrated, Secretary Rey, throughout the U.S. Forest Service's strategic plan for fiscal years 2007 through 2012, references are made to the necessity and the high value of partnerships, especially with respect to State and Private Forestry programs. Please explain how the proposed 58 percent reduction in 2009, in State and private forestry appropriations will help the Forest Service attain the goals and objective set forth in the strategic plans.

Mr. REY. As I said in my opening statement—

Senator CRAIG. It wasn't clear.

Mr. REY [continuing]. We look at the full context of what we're proposing in the State and private forestry area as including not just our fiscal year 2009 budget proposal, but also the proposals that the administration made and that Congress is considering in the 2008 farm bill.

What we've proposed in that farm bill and what, for the most part, the House and Senate bills have carried forward is a substantial broadening of the use of conservation title funding to make it accessible to both State forestry organizations as well as forest landowners. The amount of money in that title, in the conservation title, is substantially greater than the amount of proportional re-

ductions that we've made in the State and private forestry programs.

So in the full context, if you look at those two proposals together, what we would submit is that you're probably seeing an increase in funding available for State and private forestry rather than a decrease. But you have to look at both pieces to get to that point.

Senator CRAIG. Okay. Well, I'll try to look at it from a different approach, then, because I'm not sure that what's in the budget now fits.

SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS FUNDING

Chief Kimbell, in your statement—and I don't mean this as a criticism—you gave a reasonably rosy scenario as it relates to where the Forest Service is today. Let me step back to communities of interest, because there are a lot of communities in my State that are—were, not are today—but were tied directly to the Forest Service because they were dependent upon the Forest Service.

The great minds that created our forest reserves suggested that those communities ought never disengage or be disengaged from that relationship. But we've watched that happen over the last several decades. No longer is the Forest Service or that which flows from the Forest Service lands a majority employer of those communities. There seems to be a growing isolation and frustration from the communities that the Forest Service is no longer the great neighbor and provider and asset that it once was.

No longer does the mill exist, the green sales are gone. Now you're posing—you're developing road plans that are closing as much as a third to a half of the roads, so access to the public lands is rapidly being denied, and it's even suggested that you will enforce them once you've closed them, and you might start arresting people for trespassing in certain areas.

The story goes on and on; Forest Service offices are closed, the number of employees are down, the relationships have dramatically changed. I don't see that as for the better in many instances; I see it as a kind of a growing isolationism between a Federal agency and Federal lands and citizens of a State in a community that are tied to that.

I know that we have struggled on the timber-dependent school and county issue. Of course, we crafted Craig-Wyden, funded it for a time, you heard Senator Bennett speak to it today. If you would, either you, Chief Kimball, or Secretary Rey, speak to how much you currently have in the budget and what we might be able to do to plus that up.

I have school districts that by June are going to have to dramatically cut budgets for the coming year, lay off people, cut programs, diminish the quality of education to their children, struggling with State's and limited resources to see if they can't do some emergency funding because of their dependency upon a relationship with the public land that they are now being denied. Why? Because of public policy.

Could you respond to that?

Mr. REY. Sure. We've proposed in our budget an additional 4-year extension to the Secure Rural Schools legislation, and we have

provided a couple of hundred million dollars over baseline that's available without offsets for that purpose.

It's our judgment that that extension should eventually start to phase down in terms of the guaranteed payments, but, we're happy to work with the committee and with the Congress in deciding what the rate formula for the distribution of those payments are, and in a mechanism for reauthorizing the legislation.

It will require additional legislative activity to continue, because the 2000 legislation has now expired.

Senator CRAIG. Right.

Mr. REY. So we would be eager to work with the committee and the Congress to reauthorize the legislation; to continue the work of the resource advisory committees, which I think have had a material benefit in improving the relationship between local communities and the Federal land managing agencies; and to see the guaranteed payments extended for at least a time into the future.

You know, it's interesting that we are now in the 100th anniversary of the first time that we made payments available to local governments that was enacted with legislation. It was passed by Congress in 1908 in the last year of the Roosevelt presidency. For about the first 50 years, those payments didn't amount to very much, really, in the broad scheme of things.

It wasn't until the early 1950s that the Forest Service became much more active in the timber sales arena, and those payments began to increase. They increased pretty much every year from about 1950 through 1969, and then they leveled off, and the Forest Service endeavored, in a pre-endangered species era, to keep those payments level. They were level from about 1970 until about 1990, and then, of course, they started to decline, precipitously, because of endangered species and other concerns. Now they're starting to trend back up again, slightly.

But, you know, the agreement in 1908 was never that the communities were going to be given x amount of money; it was always that they were going to be given x percentage of whatever the receipts were. We have now extended the highest level of receipts for a period of time 1990 to present as long as the high level of timber receipts that preceded that existed.

Senator CRAIG. Yes.

Mr. REY. So we do think that the communities in some cases have adjusted so that they're not so dependent on it, and in other cases still need some time to adjust which is why we're proposing an extension.

Senator CRAIG. Madam Chairman, it's an issue that, obviously, impacts greatly northern California especially, along with my State, Oregon, Washington, and then, of course, all timber or forested public land States and counties.

Secretary Rey, I appreciate the history. I repeat it often to superintendents and chairmen of school boards only to have their eyes glaze over.

Mr. REY. OK.

Senator CRAIG. Because some of these transitions are difficult to come by. There is a dependency.

Madam Chair, last year Senator Wyden and I crafted a new approach toward just in part exactly what Secretary Rey spoke of: a

scaling down. The community of interest, the association, the group that came together headed by a gentleman from your State understands that, accepts that.

I would really hope that we could match with some money that which Secretary Rey has talked about that's in this budget and possibly extend in at least a 4-year period, a similar formulation that we've talked about that takes us down and sends the message again to these communities that they really have to diversify and change as best they can, as rapidly as they can.

This committee's going to, I think, play a tremendous role in that. You've got school districts that are heavily impacted as do I, and very little ability to offset these losses without some emergency funding from the States.

Senator FEINSTEIN. If we're having a discussion on this, I think we're going to have to get together and do it in the emergency supplemental—

Senator CRAIG. I think you're right.

Senator FEINSTEIN [continuing]. That that's going to be the only way to get this thing done this year.

Senator CRAIG. Oh, I don't think much else will be moving, yes, if we don't do that.

Senator FEINSTEIN. Right.

Senator CRAIG. Thank you, I'd be more than happy, as would Senator Wyden and a good many others, including Senator Bennett to work with you on trying to accomplish something like that.

Senator FEINSTEIN. I realize now. Good.

Senator CRAIG. Thank you.

Senator FEINSTEIN. That would be my intent to try and put something in.

Senator CRAIG. Thank you

Senator FEINSTEIN. In any event, I think we're almost completed.

I have one quick question, if I might. Mr. Rey, perhaps you'll remember we met with the seven fire chiefs—

Mr. REY. Yes.

TAHOE AREA COMMUNITY FIRE PROTECTION PLANS

Senator FEINSTEIN [continuing]. Of Tahoe, and the community fire plans, and my understanding is Secretary Kempthorne put in the money to fund it. Have you had a chance to review that? Are they going well? Are they getting carried out? Is it worth continuing that effort?

Mr. REY. I think it is worth continuing the effort. I think a lot of progress has been made since last summer, and we are getting a lot more of the implementation of those plans completed.

Senator FEINSTEIN. Good. All right, thank you very much. That completes my questions.

Senator, do you have a question?

Senator CRAIG. Madam Chairman, I do have several questions, if I might.

Senator FEINSTEIN. All right. I have to excuse myself. Would you take over and conclude this?

Senator ALLARD [presiding]. I'd be glad to, and I'll wrap it up as soon as—

Senator CRAIG. Can we set funding levels?

Senator ALLARD. We'll not abuse the trust that you've put in—
 Senator FEINSTEIN. I understand that. I understand that, thank
 you.

GRAZING

Senator ALLARD. I want to bring up grazing permits. Senator
 Craig mentioned something on grazing permits in his opening com-
 ments, and I want to follow up a little bit on these grazing permits.

As you will recall, there was the 1995 Recision Act that Congress
 put a schedule in place for the renewal of the grazing permits, and
 the schedule requires the National Environment Policy Act docu-
 ment to be completed on all allotments by 2010. That's only 1 year
 after this budget's completed.

In the fiscal year 2005 appropriations bill, the committee pro-
 vided additional funds to address the backlog of allotments, and
 also at that time they provided a categorical exclusion from NEPA
 for grazing allotments that met certain conditions, and that cap
 was 900 allotments on this authority.

By the end of this year, we have used 900 of these categorical
 exclusions. The answer is yes?

Ms. KIMBELL. Yes.

Senator ALLARD. Okay. Has this been an effective tool in helping
 you catch up on the backlog of grazing permits that must be com-
 pleted?

Ms. KIMBELL. This has been a very effective tool, and it would
 be a great thing to have it extended, if that was possible.

Senator ALLARD. How many short are you in meeting the 2010
 deadline as far as you can tell?

Ms. KIMBELL. We expect to complete 460 this year, and 455 next
 year. We have been working to keep that schedule updated. We
 will be almost 1,800 short of having all of the allotments completed
 with environmental analysis by the end of 2010.

Senator ALLARD. So if we extend these categorical exclusions,
 how far out do you think would be appropriate time on it?

Ms. KIMBELL. We can provide that to you, Senator, with some
 real specifics region by region and project by project. But the cat-
 egorical exclusion has been a very helpful tool and would be a real
 good thing to have to meet those.

Senator ALLARD. We'll have our staff work with you on that.

Ms. KIMBELL. Great. Thank you.

Senator ALLARD. You'll be able to complete the NEPA on these
 allotments consistent with the Recisions Act schedule, you think?

Ms. KIMBELL. Consistent with the schedule, the previous lan-
 guage allowed for a readjustment of this schedule, and we have
 that prepared and ready to present.

Senator ALLARD. Okay. Do you have a follow-up on that, Senator
 Craig?

Senator CRAIG. I would like to follow up, because I had men-
 tioned the issue out in Idaho as it relates to the conflict between
 domestic sheep grazing, in this instance, and the bighorns.

I don't question the need to create some kind of geographical
 buffer to keep these two different animals apart. But what happens
 is the inability of the Forest Service to operate in any timely fash-
 ion to make adjustments. You are, bureaucratically, tied up.

For example, you have a good many grazing allotments in Idaho that are underutilized or not grazed at all. You could propose moving the domestic sheep over to another grazing allotment and creating those buffers and those separations. But you can't do it because you don't have a plan, and it takes years, and that sheep man's out of business.

Yet, and, of course, these lawsuits have been brought by interests who want all grazing off public lands anyway, and you're falling right into their game plan by your inability to move in a timely fashion. You just talked about how long it's now taking you to bring about in a forest plan something that, while we need to be very observant of it and its impact on resource, it appears that the Forest Service really doesn't seem to care about grazing anymore in a timely fashion.

Of course, in many Western States, when you take that ranching community down, you take the community down. Again, I talked about that hostility of relationship or, shall I say, a growing indifference as to your value and your presence. That's part of it. You no longer seem to be able to function.

I guess my frustration is, okay, we've got a problem, the science is still out on the problem, clearly, definitively, so let's avoid the problem by a separation. I know that's what your regional forester in Missoula would like to do, but can't do. How do we deal with that?

Ms. KIMBELL. Senator, the agency remains very committed to our multiple use mission, and grazing is an important part of that mission. This is not an easy issue with the bighorn sheep and the domestic sheep, but we are working with the most current science in Idaho.

With people working together, we really hope for a sheep plan, a sheep management plan, for the State of Idaho that is agreed to by all the many parties who have an interest in sheep grazing and in wild sheep populations. But we remain very committed to our multiple use mission.

Mr. REY. What we've tried to impress on our Forest Service range management and line officers is that the importance of maintaining these ranches is crucial to not seeing them subdivided and converted into developments, subdivisions, and thereby increasing the environmental impacts associated with that, including the cost of firefighting.

So we've gone a long way towards trying to instill in our folks the notion that ranching is a preferred land use as compared to the alternative that we're seeing in large parts of the West.

With the bighorn sheep, what we've got is a problem that's maybe temporary, that's a result of some of the success we've had in bighorn sheep reintroduction, and that may be solved, eventually, by the help of science as we learn more about how to prevent disease transmission between wild and domestic flocks.

So we've got a little problem right now, but—

Senator CRAIG. Mr. Secretary and Chief Kimbell, my only problem is time is not on our side as it relates to the life of that rancher.

June turnout dates are critical; you don't make them, they're gone. There's no other place to go. Once you sell down your sheep

and you're gone, then guess what happens. We subdivide, we build the megahomes, because the last asset that goes is the base property that's private. Then you're going to be fighting fire to protect the megahome built on the private property adjacent to the forested land because you could not act in a timely way to make a decision.

Time is not on anybody's side on this issue, including the life of the rancher and possibly the life of the bighorn.

TIMBER BUDGET

Senator ALLARD. Let me move on. I want to talk a little bit about the timber budget. It's one of the few programs that were not cut, and within this budget you provided full funding for the Northwest Forest Plan, an increase of \$16 million. Even though the regions encompassed by the plan were only capable to accomplish 60 percent of their targeted sales volume last year—now, I acknowledge there are promises that were made to the timber industry in the Northwest Plan—but I wonder whether such a large increase aimed primarily at two regions of the Forest Service, covering Washington and Oregon, is the most efficient use of timber dollars.

I guess the question I have, aren't there still some litigation problems with timber sales in Oregon and Washington which means they'll not be able to spend the dollars we're going to be providing them in the 2010 budget?

Mr. REY. Well, first, they do have the capability to spend that increase wisely and in a way that does result in additional timber outputs.

Second, you're correct, there are still litigation challenges in that region, but then they're not unique in that regard; that litigation challenge is elsewhere as well.

Third, and I guess most importantly, the allocation of those dollars is something that we'll work with the committee on to achieve whatever the most equitable result is.

Senator ALLARD. Well, the point is that they only spent 60 percent of their dollars in the last budget.

Mr. REY. They spent all their dollars; they only hit 60 percent of their accomplishments.

Senator ALLARD. Okay.

Mr. REY. Much of the difference was a result of litigation.

Senator ALLARD. Okay.

Mr. REY. Some of those were sales that were not offered, but that have been freed from litigation and appeals, and will come on line as they work their way through the lawsuits.

Senator ALLARD. Since the overall budget, timber budget is flat, if you look at all the whole budget, you know, including the Northwest, large increases to this section of the country, isn't that an expense to all of the other regions?

Mr. REY. What we endeavored to do in our first allocation was to give that region the largest increase commensurate with our commitment to fully implement the Northwest Forest Plan without disadvantaging any of the other regions. They would be largely where they were at in 2008.

Senator ALLARD. But, you know, we've talked about paying for some of the programs that we have in other parts of the country—

Colorado and Idaho and what not—and yet the response I've gotten back off the record was, you know, we get a large amount of money, it goes to the Northwest and it's not available to you folks.

So I'd like to know if you can quantify for us the cuts being imposed on other regions. Maybe they're not cuts; maybe they're lack of program dollars that need to be made available to meet their program objectives in a region. What is the dollar value to that?

Mr. REY. We can break out the regional allocations for you.

Senator ALLARD. We'd appreciate it.

[The information follows:]

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

[In thousands of dollars]

BU	Fiscal year final allocation	R-1	R-2	R-3	R-4	R-5	R-6	R-8	R-9	R-10	Regional subtotal
NFTM	Forest Products	\$21,877	\$18,320	\$9,157	\$13,472	\$26,416	\$45,970	\$24,763	\$23,801	\$14,519	\$198,295
SSSS	Salvage Timber	8,701	1,007	659	1,028	5,729	6,495	2,652	7,357	762	34,390
CWK2	K-V Forest Products	700	.....	2,000	.....	6,200	2,300	4,900	4,900	.....	21,000
WFHF	Hazardous Fuels	15,290	23,815	35,714	16,531	46,128	28,362	32,838	9,001	944	208,623
WFHF	Emer. Supplemental/Omnibus Earmarks .....	.....	800	2,600	.....	42,000	.....	.....	.....	.....	52,600
PEP2	Sec. 423 Forest Health	2,921	3,011	1,463	1,545	804	910	1,779	2,567	.....	15,000
	Total	49,489	54,153	51,593	32,576	127,277	84,037	66,932	47,626	16,225	529,908

Note.—PEP2 allocation is based upon fire condition class, insect and disease risk, as well as timber sale unit costs.

Mr. REY. We are deeply cognizant that the Congress has a role in making those allocations, so we'll be working with you on that.

Senator ALLARD. I understand. Okay, thank you.

Let's see, we've pretty well covered that.

WILDLAND FIRE OUTLOOK

Now, on the wildland fire outlook for this year, I know you're trying to project the severity of the upcoming fire season, and it's pretty difficult at this point in time. But we're likely to be marking up the supplemental appropriation bill later this month.

With that in mind, can you give us some sense of how severe you might expect this fire season to be, based on what you know now?

Mr. REY. Sure.

Senator ALLARD. About snowfalls and those type of things.

Mr. REY. Our initial predictions were for above average fire activity this year. We're still in a drought situation in the Southeast, so we have predicted that we'd hit the fire season there earlier than normal. We have gotten near record amounts of snowfall in the Northern Rockies and in other parts of the West, so depending on how fast that melts that might modulate what we were predicting as above average fire year.

But at least for right now, we think it's going to be an above average fire year, comparable to the last couple.

Senator ALLARD. So you think you're going to have sufficient resources available to get you throughout the year without having to borrow any massive sums from other nonfire programs?

Mr. REY. Past experience would say that that's not likely.

Senator ALLARD. Can you give us a figure?

Senator CRAIG. I think he's saying past experience with this committee would suggest that we're going to help them.

Senator ALLARD. I'm looking for a figure that we might be able to help you with.

Mr. REY. That would be hard to project in anything but an arbitrary fashion this early in the season. If, you know, we get a cold, wet spring, kind of the same weather pattern that's there now in the Northern Rockies, if that holds for awhile, we could have a relatively mild fire year in that part of the country. But, on the other hand, if we get a hot spell, and that snow just all melts really fast, we'll get a flush of vegetation and that might prove to be a difficult fire year.

POTENTIAL MOVE OF FOREST SERVICE TO DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Senator ALLARD. Mark, you've been with the Department of Agriculture now for 7 years, and I'd like to know what your assessments are on the pros and cons of some suggestion that the Forest Service might be moved to the Department of the Interior. I value your objective observations in this. I wonder if you could share those with the committee.

Mr. REY. You know, we agreed to participate in the GAO study that the House Appropriations Committee asked for, and we're going to do that in as honest a way as we can.

What strikes me, generally speaking, is that most of the issues we've been discussing today aren't issues that lend themselves to

structural solutions. So no matter where the Forest Service is, it's still going to have problems that we've been discussing, and those problems aren't going to change if we change the structure of the agency or who it reports to.

So, what I look at in executive branch governance is the proposition that form ought to follow function, and if you're still arguing about how well the functions are working or what some of the functions should be, you probably ought to resolve that first before you try to fiddle with the form.

But—

Senator ALLARD. That was a nice nonanswer.

Mr. REY. It was about as good as I could give you. What I think we'll find as we get into this study, is: That one of the aspects of level budgets in discretionary spending have forced executive branch agencies to do as much together as they can. So what I think the GAO analysts are going to find is that we're already doing a lot of things together with the Department of the Interior land managing agencies.

We have a unified command firefighting system that's not going to be materially improved by moving the Interior agencies to Agriculture or the Forest Service to Interior.

We have a unified recreation reservation system. We have the Service First Initiative where we share staff with particular technical expertises.

Similarly, if you look at the other direction between the Forest Service and the other USDA agencies, we've unified a lot of functions there. Just, for instance, we have all of the payroll work centralized, done in a centralized institution, the National Finance Center in New Orleans. We have a common computing environment. We have staff that we share with the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

So what you're probably going to find is that, yes, there are some efficiencies by making some changes, but there are going to be some offsetting inefficiencies that are going to be created. Should we decide at the end of that study, for instance, to move the Forest Service to the Department of the Interior, we'll probably be having to figure out how to justify upwards of \$100 million in computer expenses that have already been incurred to unify the computer systems throughout USDA agencies so that we can talk to one another.

Senator ALLARD. Since we are waltzing around this question, I have a couple more for us to dance around.

Mr. REY. Okay.

Senator ALLARD. You know, the one thought that's been expressed is that the Secretary of Agriculture is so busy with the farm programs and what not, he doesn't have the time that he probably ought to be allocating to forest issues and land management issues. The Department of the Interior, Secretary of the Interior, is more experienced in land management issues because of their jurisdiction which they now cover.

I'd like to have you respond to that question. Then the other argument that we hear out there is that, well, if you move from Agriculture to the Interior, you change the mission, where the mission

of the Interior—you subtly change it—where the mission of the Interior has been more towards preservation.

Then we get from the Department of Agriculture more of a multiple use concept, and I think, at least on this side of the aisle, most of the members would like to support the multiple use concept. So I wondered if you'd address those two questions.

Mr. REY. Sure. At least as far as it involves the two incumbent secretaries, they actually have very similar backgrounds and a similar level of interest in natural resources management. They're both Western Governors from States with a substantial amount of federally-owned land. It so happens that Secretary Schafer, being from North Dakota, is much more familiar with the management of the national grasslands, which are part of the National Forest System, because North Dakota has a very small national forest acreage.

Secretary Kempthorne, obviously from Idaho, has a great deal more national forest acreage, but I think at least as far as the two incumbents are concerned, they're both equally interested in natural resources management. It's probably not an accurate summary to suggest that Secretary Schafer doesn't have some background experience and interest therein.

Both Secretaries, obviously have to focus on what's before them at a particular point in time as far as their respective agencies are concerned. I don't know that you can generalize and say that the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture is more or less interested in natural resources management on a continuing basis. At least today, with the two incumbents, I'd say they're equally interested in and pretty much equally versed in it in most respects.

In terms of the agency missions, you know, those are pretty much set by the statutes. The BLM and the Forest Service are going to remain multiple use agencies because the organic legislation directs that as the way they approach the issues that they have to deal with.

The Park Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service have organic missions that are somewhat narrower. In the case of the parks, they have two main initiatives, and that is to preserve the resources that they're entrusted with and to make them available for visitors. So it's a preservation and recreation mission that's somewhat narrower than BLM or the Forest Service.

But I don't think, unless you change those missions as they're embodied in their organic statutes, that you're going to much change the agencies by moving them from one department to another. Just my take on it.

Senator ALLARD. Okay. One last question. Did you have some questions?

Senator CRAIG. I'll only make one observation as to the Secretary's evaluation of this proposal. If you stay in Washington long enough, I think there is a relatively standard axiom that you can accept that bad ideas continue to resurface.

I think when I first got here in the early 1980s, we were talking about the bringing of the agencies together, and I think we did that in the mid-1990s. So you see, the House is really being very creative: They're repeating a bad idea and will study it like mad. We

will not be able to break down all of the stakeholders of interest that, in part, determine the policy and most important, determine the politics of it.

While I think, Senator Allard, there are some commonalities that the Secretary has already spoken to that we can bring together, we have a commonality that's created a unifying resource group out in Idaho called the Interagency Fire Center which pools resources for a variety of broad public firefighting interests. That's fine, but there are very distinctively different missions in some of these that are unique to the BLM and unique to the Forest Service, vis-à-vis Agriculture and Interior.

So when I first began to hear about it, I thought, well, it's probably worth the analysis, but it will conclude in drawing nothing but dust on the shelves, and out of it may come some ideas that are implementable as it relates to cooperative interagency relationships. But beyond that I would seriously doubt that over the last decade a bad idea has become a good idea.

Mr. REY. I can tell you from visiting with the GAO auditors that they are going to take a very thorough approach to the task, and their stated goal is to lay out a variety of alternatives for the Congress—most likely the next Congress—to consider because they're planning on concluding their study sometime late this year.

COHESIVE FUELS STRATEGY

Senator ALLARD. Well, GAO has been somewhat critical about having developed any cohesive strategy that allows us to look at long-term results and effects and what not.

They have also found that the firefighting agencies have yet to develop a better process for allocating fuel reduction funds to the various regions. Despite these calls from GAO, the agencies—you've not developed any cohesive strategy that I'm aware of that would allow us to look at a long-term investment in hazardous fuels funding, for example, and their impacts on the costs of firefighting.

Can you respond to that question?

Mr. REY. Sure. We've been engaged in what I'll call a fairly lengthy ongoing dialogue with GAO about what they think is lacking in our current cohesive fuel strategy which we developed jointly with the Department of the Interior. We are in the process of augmenting that strategy to meet some of the things that they have indicated they'd like to see.

Where I think we still are struggling to reach an accord with GAO is in the question of how much sense it makes to try to project out fuels treatment priorities very far into the future and to put dollars around those priorities in out years.

The reason we take a somewhat skeptical view of the benefit of that is that those fuels treatment priorities are going to change over time by necessity. We're going to have new subdivisions develop in places where they aren't now that's going to elevate a certain area to a higher level of priority for treatment that we can't necessarily predict right now.

But I'd say that we're probably pretty far along the way to closing out disagreement with them. The question isn't whether we have a cohesive fuel strategy or not, we do; the question is whether

it meets all of the standards for information the GAO would like to see in it, and the answer is it doesn't now, but likely will as we add components to it over the next several months.

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT RATING TOOL

Senator ALLARD. We're on the issue of accountability. I'm also one who pays particular attention to the Government Performance and Results Act. It's also known as PART, under the President's plan. I'm going to let you off kind of easy on that question.

I have noticed that there are four programs, I think, that fall on this budget that are classified as nonperforming. I would ask that you submit to the committee and also to my office your explanation of why they're nonperforming. I know there may be some legitimate reasons, and I just want on the record for you to give an opportunity of why you don't—if you don't agree with them, fine; if you see that there are some shortfalls, what you're doing to correct those.

Those four programs—one's the USDA Wildland Fire Management, and the other one is the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program; the third one is the Forest Service Invasive Species Program. Then, finally, one that's very popular with Members of Congress but I think we need some explanation, and that is the Department of the Interior Land and Water Conservation Land Acquisition Fund.

So those four, if we just have some explanation.

Mr. REY. I think we can give you the information on three of the four. We'll have to work with Interior on the last one.

Senator ALLARD. Okay.

Mr. REY. Because it's a joint program.

[The information follows:]

PART RATINGS THAT SEVERAL FOREST SERVICE PROGRAMS RECEIVED FOR
NONPERFORMANCE

WATERSHED CURRENT PART RATING—RESULTS NOT DEMONSTRATED

The Forest Service is responding to the Watershed PART Assessment by developing new policy, protocols, and tools to improve program delivery and effectiveness. The agency has identified a consistent approach for determining watershed condition on National Forest System (NFS) lands, supporting efforts to prioritize watershed improvement activities. The Forest Service has also developed aquatic inventory and monitoring protocols for NFS lands and GIS-based tools to help States identify and prioritize critical forest areas on non-Federal lands. Through these applications and others, the NFS and State and Private Forestry deputy areas are exploring meaningful ways to measure effectiveness of programs pertaining to watershed improvement.

The agency is beginning to implement elements of the PART Improvement Plan to improve the program's rating. These actions consist of (1) developing a nationally consistent methodology for determining watershed condition class as basis for prioritizing watersheds management and (2) developing a national approach to describe and monitor the status and trend of aquatic resources. Additionally, the Forest Service and OMB recently negotiated an "Action Plan for the Development of a Watershed Efficiency Measure and a National Watershed Condition Class Rating System," establishing a process and timetable for improvement.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT AND MAINTENANCE CURRENT PART RATING—RESULTS NOT
DEMONSTRATED

The PART process for Capital Improvement and Maintenance aligned the Forest Service with USDA and OMB's Real Property Initiatives and Asset Management Plans. The performance measures developed as a result of the assessment have improved planning and assessment of the agency's infrastructure, resulting in better

priority setting criteria and project selection. Better planning and assessment supports the agency's effort to determine an optimal infrastructure level, keeping only what is necessary to implement the agency's mission and meet public needs. To further inform infrastructure maintenance, the agency has adopted the industry standards for the Facility Condition Index. The Index is a general metric that tracks national trends in the condition of the agency's portfolio with respect to the deferred maintenance backlog. The Index allows decision makers at the local level to prioritize individual assets for funding, repair, or disposal, based on relative conditions.

The Forest Service is developing long-term outcome-based performance measures that fully cover the program, including safety, condition sustainability and environmental suitability, utilization, and mission dependency. It will also develop and implement a strategy to prioritize road, facility, and trail improvements that reflect investment strategies as common criteria for reducing the deferred maintenance backlog. Finally, the agency has used disposal authorities to convey excess or unneeded properties through the Facilities Realignment and Enhancement Act.

WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT CURRENT PART RATING—ADEQUATE

In fiscal year 2007, the Forest Service addressed the following actions contained in the PART Improvement Plan: refining program delivery, improving procedures for allocating hazardous fuels reduction funds, and improving data to reduce the risk of catastrophic fire.

The Forest Service developed a technical guide that identifies the items and strategic nature of discussions in land management plans in fiscal year 2007, and is currently developing a new Forest Plan template, which should be available by the end of fiscal year 2008.

Several large fire cost containment audit reports were issued in fiscal year 2007. The Office of Inspector General (OIG) issued a report containing 18 recommendations on cost containment needs. The Forest Service has completed actions on two recommendations, including development of a new Master Cooperative Wildland Fire Management Agreement template. Work is ongoing on all open recommendations.

The Forest Service is working with a multi-agency taskforce to develop a cost management strategy formulation process to provide a better picture of fire suppression costs over the life of an incident, establish short-term cost plans for fire resource ordering and procurement, and reaffirm the regional and national role in pricing fire resources (Federal, State, and local, private contractor, and military).

A post-incident recovery team is developing policy, guidance, and tools to provide rapid assessment of rehabilitation needs following fires and other events. These actions will enable the agency to prioritize the rehabilitation work, along with the regular program of work, to ensure the highest priority of work is funded and accomplished.

INVASIVE SPECIES CURRENT PART RATING—ADEQUATE

As a result of the Invasive Species PART Assessment, the Forest Service has focused the program around outcome-based activities that reduce the impact of invasive species on priority Federal and non-Federal forests and grasslands and tie directly to the USDA and agency strategic plans. Performance measures track treatment prioritization based on risk, treatment efficacy, and implementation costs; development, delivery, and use of tools; and customer satisfaction with tools produced. The Forest Service is also implementing an improved system of tabular and spatial record keeping for all invasive species management projects.

New performance measures tracking outputs, outcomes, and efficiencies—developed during the PART Assessment process—help the agency to better determine program success. Field units have been tracking these measures for the past 2 years.

ENERGY CURRENT PART RATING—ADEQUATE

In response to the PART assessment on the oil and gas energy resources program, the Forest Service refined performance measures to track compliance with agency strategic plan goals and objectives, emphasizing the agency's ability to process lease applications in a timely manner. The new performance measures have helped the agency to direct funding and resources to reduce project processing times while assuring compliance with remediation measures. Also a result of the PART assessment, the Forest Service now holds regular coordination meetings with the Bureau of Land Management, with which it manages the energy minerals program. Regular

meetings have eased implementation of MOUs, facilitating more efficient program delivery.

LAND ACQUISITION CURRENT PART RATING—ADEQUATE

The Forest Service has used the PART process to improve land validation, ensuring that land purchases and donations meet the agency's strategic plan goals and objectives. The agency has adopted two new measures for land acquisition into the Performance and Accountability System and Workplan, systems that agency uses to manage and track project funding and performance. The Forest Service has also updated the Agency Land Purchase Digest system to include case-specific information for these performance measures, as well as three new efficiency measures. With these improvements, the agency will be able to more accurately assess program effectiveness.

FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM CURRENT PART RATING—MODERATELY EFFECTIVE

Following its PART assessment, the Forest Legacy Program (FLP) developed seven performance measures and national strategic direction to further ensure that Federal dollars are spent on those projects of highest national importance. FLP revised its national scoring guidance for the annual project selection panel to increase the emphasis on protecting nationally important resources that fit within a larger regional or national conservation landscape level plan. In addition, FLP is reducing the average length of time it takes to complete a project. FLP is also working to ensure timely quality appraisals to reduce the average project completion time.

RECREATION CURRENT PART RATING—MODERATELY EFFECTIVE

The Forest Service is using the PART assessment to focus business planning and improve cost accounting in the developed recreation sites program. The agency is currently going through a Recreation Facility Analysis (RFA) process to prioritize recreation site improvements, to reduce deferred maintenance, and improve cost analysis. Under this analysis, national forests weigh and compare facilities' ability to serve public needs and wants with the forest's capacity to operate and maintain existing structures at desired quality standards. One of the primary goals of RFA is to reduce recreation site deferred maintenance by 20 percent in 5 years on each national forest.

ADDITIONAL COMMITTEE QUESTIONS

Senator ALLARD. Very good. Well, at least from your perspective on the last, if you would, and we'll go to Interior and ask them for their side of it.

There will be some additional questions which will be submitted for your response in the record.

[The following questions were not asked at the hearing, but were submitted to the Department for response subsequent to the hearing:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DIANNE FEINSTEIN

FIREFIGHTER RETENTION IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Question. In your analysis, you acknowledge a morale problem among firefighters on these forests, but your analysis also claims that the "perceptions around recruitment and retention in southern California are hard to substantiate based on data."

Part of your claim is that the overall attrition rate is lower than the average attrition rate of all Federal employees, which is 13.4 percent. However, your analysis also showed that your attrition rate among southern California fire personnel was 9.4 percent last year—49 percent greater than the agency's overall firefighter attrition rate of 6.3 percent. On the Angeles National Forest, you report an attrition rate of 12.2 percent, which is double the Forest Service's firefighter attrition average. It also showed that the Forest Service lost 46 percent of your entry-level firefighters last year in southern California—twice the agency's overall attrition average.

How did the agency compile the attrition rate data presented to the Committee?

Answer. Rates for employees leaving the agency were compiled from a 10-year database of permanent workforce in California. The position series used were 0462 and 0401 for both fire and non-fire positions since there is no way to isolate fire

positions based on the series. The data itself comes from the data warehouse maintained by the National Finance Center (NFC)

Question. You use these data to represent trends in firefighting employment, but acknowledge that the data used in your analysis contain both fire and non-fire personnel. Is it appropriate to make decisions about firefighter retention using data that include an unknown number of other personnel? Did the agency conduct an analysis to see how many non-fire positions were included in the data?

Answer. Because there is not a specific job series for wildland firefighters, it is not possible to easily isolate firefighters among the other job functions included within the 0401 and 0462 job series. However, in Region 5 the majority of employees in the 0401 and 0462 job series are fire employees. We believe using these job series provide the most accurate available data set which encompasses the entire fire organization.

Question. Why did the agency choose to compare the attrition rate of firefighters against the attrition rate for all Federal employees as the basis of determining whether it has the appropriate retention level? Why and how did you decide that was the appropriate baseline?

Answer. The agency did not utilize this comparison as the sole basis of determining whether it has the appropriate retention level. A number of factors were assessed in the report including the change in permanent fire workforce over the period from 1997–2007, which indicated an 82 percent increase in permanent Fire and Aviation Management staff. We also used 2007 data on retirements, resignations and transfers, which indicated a net gain of 68 employees an increase of 3 percent. In short, within Region 5 there are significantly more firefighters today than there were 10 years ago. The comparison to Forest Service wide and all Federal Service were used to illuminate the attrition of firefighters in California in context with broader attrition rates of natural resource professionals in the Forest Service and Federal Government.

Forest Service leadership recognizes that some employees have left the agency and that this is most visible in the fire organization. As noted in the letter to Senator Feinstein from Under Secretary Rey, dated May 6, 2008, the Forest Service has a number of initiatives to address retention in the fire organization.

Question. What are the trends over time for attrition rates of Forest Service firefighters, both in Region 5 and for the four southern California forests? Please provide the Committee with the annual attrition rate of all firefighting employees for each of the Region 5 forests for each of the past 10 fiscal years.

Answer. Data for this question is readily available only from 1997 to 2006 and is based upon calendar years instead of fiscal years. Please see attachment 1. In general, the number of Region 5 permanent firefighters at the end of fiscal year 2006 is more than 50 percent higher than the fiscal year 2000 levels, even assuming attrition.

Attachment 1

Permanent Firefighter Attrition (excluding Apprentices and temporary employees)

Data Source: National Finance Center

Unit	Year	Total Employees	Total Attrition*	Attrition Rate (%)
Region 5	1997	1224	60	4.9%
	1998	1217	54	4.4%
	1999	1207	78	6.5%
	2000	1240	85	6.9%
	2001	1492	97	6.5%
	2002	1710	113	6.6%
	2003	1912	167	8.7%
	2004	1927	151	7.8%
	2005	1867	154	8.2%
	2006	1861	163	8.8%
Grand Total 1997-2006		15657	1122	7.2%

*Total attrition includes all reasons for employees leaving the agency (retirement, resignation, termination, etc.)

Unit	Eff Date	Total Employees	Total Attrition	%
Angeles	1997	110	3	2.7%
	1998	113	4	3.5%
	1999	120	11	9.2%
	2000	126	16	12.7%
	2001	125	11	8.8%
	2002	142	6	4.2%
	2003	176	14	8.0%
	2004	172	10	5.8%
	2005	173	18	10.4%
	2006	177	16	9.0%
Total		1434	109	7.6%
Cleveland	1997	86	2	2.3%
	1998	112	7	6.3%
	1999	103	5	4.9%
	2000	101	2	2.0%
	2001	114	8	7.0%
	2002	128	7	5.5%
	2003	144	13	9.0%
	2004	146	9	6.2%
	2005	142	11	7.7%
	2006	155	11	7.1%
Total		1231	75	6.1%

Eldorado	1997	42	8	19.0%
	1998	41	0	0.0%
	1999	44	1	2.3%
	2000	50	4	8.0%
	2001	64	2	3.1%
	2002	84	10	11.9%
	2003	89	8	9.0%
	2004	86	6	7.0%
	2005	85	10	11.8%
	2006	74	8	10.8%
Total		659	57	8.6%
Inyo	1997	36	1	2.8%
	1998	35	1	2.9%
	1999	33	0	0.0%
	2000	34	2	5.9%
	2001	48	4	8.3%
	2002	53	5	9.4%
	2003	61	7	11.5%
	2004	63	4	6.3%
	2005	57	7	12.3%
	2006	50	6	12.0%
Total		470	37	7.9%
Klamath	1997	71	2	2.8%
	1998	71	1	1.4%
	1999	64	3	4.7%
	2000	64	1	1.6%
	2001	76	4	5.3%
	2002	78	4	5.1%
	2003	102	9	8.8%
	2004	108	10	9.3%
	2005	114	3	2.6%
	2006	116	11	9.5%
Total		864	48	5.6%

Lassen	1997	52	2	3.8%
	1998	52	1	1.9%
	1999	62	4	6.5%
	2000	65	4	6.2%
	2001	73	4	5.5%
	2002	89	7	7.9%
	2003	99	10	10.1%
	2004	95	8	8.4%
	2005	87	6	6.9%
	2006	85	6	7.1%
Total		759	52	6.9%
Los Padres	1997	77	3	3.9%
	1998	76	1	1.3%
	1999	78	3	3.8%
	2000	84	6	7.1%
	2001	92	4	4.3%
	2002	142	3	2.1%
	2003	150	16	10.7%
	2004	143	10	7.0%
	2005	144	9	6.3%
	2006	148	13	8.8%
Total		1134	68	6.0%
Mendocino	1997	45	3	6.7%
	1998	40	2	5.0%
	1999	35	1	2.9%
	2000	34	1	2.9%
	2001	44	6	13.6%
	2002	54	5	9.3%
	2003	60	9	15.0%
	2004	58	7	12.1%
	2005	53	4	7.5%
	2006	55	3	5.5%
Total		478	41	8.6%
Modoc	1997	37	0	0.0%
	1998	35	4	11.4%
	1999	32	2	6.3%
	2000	32	3	9.4%
	2001	42	2	4.8%
	2002	50	2	4.0%
	2003	54	4	7.4%
	2004	53	6	11.3%
	2005	49	2	4.1%
	2006	43	9	20.9%
Total		427	34	8.0%

Six Rivers	1997	36	2	5.6%
	1998	37	3	8.1%
	1999	38	0	0.0%
	2000	41	1	2.4%
	2001	58	7	12.1%
	2002	69	13	18.8%
	2003	66	7	10.6%
	2004	74	4	5.4%
	2005	73	2	2.7%
	2006	79	5	6.3%
Total		571	44	7.7%
Plumas	1997	70	7	10.0%
	1998	68	3	4.4%
	1999	65	9	13.8%
	2000	63	5	7.9%
	2001	80	3	3.8%
	2002	98	9	9.2%
	2003	106	8	7.5%
	2004	104	16	15.4%
	2005	92	7	7.6%
	2006	91	11	12.1%
Total		837	78	9.3%
San Bernardino	1997	116	7	6.0%
	1998	110	8	7.3%
	1999	113	11	9.7%
	2000	124	8	6.5%
	2001	128	7	5.5%
	2002	136	4	2.9%
	2003	169	13	7.7%
	2004	180	22	12.2%
	2005	167	16	9.6%
	2006	167	19	11.4%
Total		1410	115	8.2%
Sequoia	1997	86	4	4.7%
	1998	80	2	2.5%
	1999	75	4	5.3%
	2000	87	7	8.0%
	2001	109	6	5.5%
	2002	126	8	6.3%
	2003	144	14	9.7%
	2004	142	8	5.6%
	2005	135	21	15.6%
	2006	121	7	5.8%
Total		1105	81	7.3%

Shasta-Trinity	1997	82	5	6.1%
	1998	84	6	7.1%
	1999	83	6	7.2%
	2000	84	9	10.7%
	2001	105	6	5.7%
	2002	114	8	7.0%
	2003	119	6	5.0%
	2004	127	7	5.5%
	2005	124	8	6.5%
	2006	129	10	7.8%
Total		1051	71	6.8%
Sierra	1997	75	3	4.0%
	1998	71	4	5.6%
	1999	64	3	4.7%
	2000	63	4	6.3%
	2001	88	3	3.4%
	2002	91	5	5.5%
	2003	98	7	7.1%
	2004	97	8	8.2%
	2005	97	3	3.1%
	2006	104	7	6.7%
Total		848	47	5.5%
Stanislaus	1997	79	2	2.5%
	1998	75	5	6.7%
	1999	70	7	10.0%
	2000	72	3	4.2%
	2001	99	9	9.1%
	2002	106	7	6.6%
	2003	109	12	11.0%
	2004	112	6	5.4%
	2005	109	13	11.9%
	2006	99	7	7.1%
Total		930	71	7.6%
Tahoe	1997	64	4	6.3%
	1998	57	1	1.8%
	1999	64	6	9.4%
	2000	58	3	5.2%
	2001	79	5	6.3%
	2002	76	4	5.3%
	2003	80	3	3.8%
	2004	84	2	2.4%
	2005	87	6	6.9%
	2006	91	7	7.7%
Total		740	41	5.5%

LTBMU	1997	15	0	0.0%
	1998	15	0	0.0%
	1999	16	0	0.0%
	2000	16	1	6.3%
	2001	16	1	6.3%
	2002	27	3	11.1%
	2003	35	5	14.3%
	2004	31	2	6.5%
	2005	28	4	14.3%
	2006	28	1	3.6%
Total		227	17	7.5%
FFAM	1997	45	2	4.4%
	1998	45	1	2.2%
	1999	48	2	4.2%
	2000	42	5	11.9%
	2001	52	5	9.6%
	2002	47	3	6.4%
	2003	51	2	3.9%
	2004	52	6	11.5%
	2005	51	4	7.8%
	2006	49	6	12.2%
Total		482	36	7.5%

Question. What effect has this attrition had on the experience level and the institutional memory of the Region's firefighting corps?

Answer. The analysis indicates that the greatest numbers of employees leaving the agency are at the GS-04 entry level, where employees are in seasonal positions and are more likely to be at the beginning of their careers. Experience and institutional memory principally lie with permanent employees at grade levels GS-06 and above, and there is minimal attrition at that level. Further, because the overall number of firefighters in Region 5 remains over 50 percent above the number of permanent firefighters at the end of fiscal year 2000 even accounting for attrition, the amount of institutional and professional knowledge available to the Forest Service is greater than the pre-2000 levels.

Even as the Forest Service has expanded its permanent firefighter workforce compared to the pre-2000 levels, we share the concerns about maintaining institutional memory and experience into the future and are committed to actions that provide a continuing qualified, knowledgeable, and safe firefighting cadre. Our current recruiting efforts and apprenticeship program are focusing on hiring entry-level employees, and increasing promotion rates into higher ranks and permanent positions by promoting as soon as they acquire the necessary skills and experience. This ensures that new employees have a tangible career ladder and thus create an incentive to remain with the Forest Service. These employees will become our future leaders and will gain experience and institutional knowledge as they continue their careers.

Question. Though it claims that recruitment is outpacing retention, the analysis does not provide data on actual vacancy rates that are caused by attrition or other factors. Please provide data on planned versus actual firefighter employment, by pay-grade and by forest, for each of the Region 5 forests as of April 1, 2008. Please provide specific statistics for both permanent and temporary firefighters.

Answer. Please see attachment 2.

Question. Please provide data on planned versus actual firefighting personnel in Region 5, by forest, for each of the past 10 fiscal years.

Answer. This data is not readily available on a forest by forest basis. Please see attachment 3 for a chart describing planned and actual hires for permanent, apprentice, and temporary employees 2000-2007.

Planned, Current and Vacant Temporary and Permanent Positions as of 04/02/2008
 Data source: R5 Fire and Aviation Management Planning Database

Attachment 2

NOTE: The relationship between apprentices, temporary employees, and permanent GS-05 positions can be difficult to follow. It is recommended that readers go through the footnotes below the chart first.

Fire, Fuels and Aviation Management Personnel Grades 2-5 (Apprentice, Permanent and Temporary) 4-2-08																							
Grade(s)	Appointmen t & Tour of Duty		Angeles	Cleveland	Eldorado	Inyo	Klamath	Lassen	Los Padres	Mendocino	Modoc	Six Rivers	Plumas	San Bernard	Sequoia	Shasta Trinit	Sierra	Stanislaus	Tahoe	Tahoe Basin	Regional Off	Grand Total	
2 3 4	Apprentice Permanent 18/8 PP	Planned	57	46	25	16	40	31	49	23	15	31	32	50	43	36	30	33	30	10	0	597	
		Current	103	73	20	19	49	28	53	26	19	34	30	121	55	55	33	34	35	16			803
		Vacant	-46	-27	5	-3	-9	3	-4	-3	-4	-3	2	-71	-12	-19	-3	-1	-5	-6	0		-206
5	Permanent 18/8 PP	Planned	87	75	40	25	59	50	77	34	25	44	43	78	59	57	46	49	43	16	17	924	
		Current	19	22	10	4	11	5	18	3	2	11	3	2	13	17	22	9	7	2	15	195	
		Vacant	68	53	30	21	48	45	59	31	23	33	40	76	46	40	24	40	36	14	2	729	
2 3 4 5	Temporary 1039 Hrs	Planned	67	55	35	20	59	44	58	29	20	46	48	58	71	50	44	48	44	14	22	832	
		Current	89	81	70	38	98	92	113	57	39	76	90	63	105	71	65	87	75	22	24	1355	
		Vacant	-22	-26	-35	-18	-39	-48	-55	-28	-19	-30	-42	-5	-34	-21	-21	-39	-31	-8	-2	-523	
Sub Total Planned			211	176	100	61	158	125	184	86	60	121	123	186	173	143	120	130	117	40	39	2353	
*Sub Total Current			211	176	100	61	158	125	184	86	60	121	123	186	173	143	120	130	117	40	39	2353	
Sub Total Vacant			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

* Temporary hiring is ongoing. Due to difficulty in assessing exact numbers of temps at a given time and the relative ease of hiring temporary employees at the GS-05 and below levels, these numbers assume all planned temps are currently filled or will be soon.

· Negative numbers in the vacant rows indicate that there are more current employees than were planned for. For apprentices, this is done intentionally in order to ensure that when apprentices graduate each year, the program remains full.

· Table 5 displays the current condition of the permanent and temporary employees in FFAM. The largest numbers of remaining vacancies occur at the grade 5 level. These vacancies are reserved for apprentices that complete their training program and graduate at the GS-05 level. Currently there are 803 apprentices working toward graduating to fill the 729 vacant grade 5 positions. For 2008, 206 apprentices are expected to graduate and be converted into GS-05 positions. Once that occurs, the remaining GS-05 vacancies will be filled by hiring 523 temporary employees leaving no vacancies at the GS-05 and below levels.

Fire, Fuels and Aviation Management Personnel Grades 6-15 (Permanent) 4-2-08																						
Grade (GS)	Appointmen t & Tour of Duty		Angeles	Cleveland	Eldorado	Inyo	Klamath	Lassen	Los Padres	Mendocino	Modoc	Six Rivers	Plumas	San Bernard	Sequoia	Shasta Trinit	Sierra	Stanislaus	Tahoe	Tahoe Basin	Regional Off	Grand Total
6	Permanent 18/8 PP	Planned	48	42	24	15	29	26	40	20	13	25	26	42	34	34	29	36	25	8	16	532
		Current	26	32	14	10	18	10	26	13	5	12	13	28	21	19	18	22	17	4	16	324
		Vacant	22	10	10	5	11	16	14	7	8	13	13	14	13	15	11	14	8	4	0	208
7	Permanent 26/0 PP	Planned	49	44	22	16	33	34	43	21	21	32	32	56	37	38	33	28	22	8	9	578
		Current	48	43	17	11	32	26	32	14	19	24	27	52	31	34	26	24	22	7	8	497
		Vacant	1	1	5	5	1	8	11	7	2	8	5	4	6	4	7	4	0	1	1	81
8	Permanent 26/0 PP	Planned	40	37	16	10	21	19	35	15	13	20	21	38	26	26	21	18	19	7	7	407
		Current	40	36	13	7	19	19	35	14	13	19	19	36	25	23	18	18	18	6	7	385
		Vacant	0	1	3	3	2	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	1	3	3	0	1	1	0	22
9	Permanent 26/0 PP	Planned	25	17	15	6	16	16	22	11	7	17	14	23	21	18	18	13	17	3	29	308
		Current	23	17	14	7	21	14	21	11	8	13	17	22	20	17	18	11	16	3	23	296
		Vacant	2	0	1	-1	-5	2	1	0	-1	4	-3	1	1	1	0	2	1	0	6	12
10	Permanent 26/0 PP	Planned	4		2		2		4	2		2	6	2		4	2	4				34
		Current	2		1		2		1	1		1	3	0		2	0	3				16
		Vacant	2	0	1	0	0	0	3	1	0	1	3	2	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	18

11	Permanent 26/0 PP	Planned	7	5	4	6	10	7	8	4	6	7	5	9	9	8	8	6	7	1	24	141	
		Current	6	5	4	4	9	5	8	3	5	7	6	8	6	8	6	6	7	1	24	128	
		Vacant	1	0	0	2	1	2	0	1	1	0	-1	1	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	13	
12	Permanent 26/0 PP	Planned	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	29	47	
		Current	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	26	40	
		Vacant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	7	
13	Permanent 26/0 PP	Planned	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	13	29	
		Current	1	1	1		0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	13	27	
		Vacant	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	
14	Permanent 26/0 PP	Planned																			2	2	
		Current																				2	2
		Vacant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	Permanent 26/0 PP	Planned																			1	1	
		Current																				1	1
		Vacant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sub Total Planned			175	147	85	54	113	104	154	75	61	105	106	170	129	130	113	108	92	28	130	2079	
Sub Total Current			147	135	65	40	102	76	125	57	51	78	86	148	104	104	88	86	82	22	120	1716	
Sub Total Vacant			28	12	20	14	11	28	29	18	10	27	20	22	25	26	25	22	10	6	10	363	
Fire, Fuels and Aviation Management Personnel Grades 2-15 (Apprentice, Permanent) 4-2-08																							
Sub Total Planned			319	268	150	95	212	185	280	132	101	180	181	298	231	223	189	190	165	54	147	3600	
Sub Total Current			269	230	95	63	162	109	196	86	72	123	119	271	172	176	143	129	124	40	135	2714	
Sub Total Vacant			50	38	55	32	50	76	84	46	29	57	62	27	59	47	46	61	41	14	12	886	
Fire, Fuels and Aviation Management Personnel Grades 2-15 (Apprentice, Permanent, Temporary) 4-2-08																							
Grand Total Planned			386	323	185	115	271	229	338	161	121	226	229	356	302	273	233	238	209	68	169	4432	
Grand Total Current**			358	311	165	101	260	201	309	143	111	199	209	334	277	247	208	216	199	62	159	4069	
Grand Total Vacant			28	12	20	14	11	28	29	18	10	27	20	22	25	26	25	22	10	6	10	363	

***Grand Total Current** includes the 1,355 temporary employees currently being hired.

Attachment 3
Planned and Actual R5 FAM Employees

Data Source: R5 FAM Databases

	Permanent	Apprentice	Temporary
2000			
Planned	1569	n/a	796
Actual	1240	236	796
2001			
Planned	1975	n/a	1196
Actual	1492	225	1196
2002			
Planned	2203	n/a	1448
Actual	1710	204	1448
2003			
Planned	2378	n/a	1613
Actual	1912	201	1613
2004			
Planned	2451	n/a	1504
Hired	1927	874	1504
2005			
Planned	2406	586	828
Hired	1867	826	1412*
2006			
Planned	2530	592	837
Hired	1861	926	1330*
2007			
Planned	2452	597	844
Hired	2152	853	1426*

n/a: Prior to 2005, a "planned" level did not exist for apprentice employees.

*In addition to the planned level of temporary employees, additional temps are hired each year to temporarily fill permanent vacancies at the GS-05 levels and to ensure full staffing during fire season. Temporary employees are used in order to ensure that permanent GS-05 positions remain available for apprentices as they complete their program. The number of additional temporary employees hired each year fluctuates based upon the number of graduating apprentices. This was not tracked prior to 2005.

Question. How will the agency monitor hiring and retention to ensure that its firefighting positions are filled to capacity before the beginning of fire season? How many positions currently remain to be filled? By what date will staffing be complete?

Answer. The agency's goal is to ensure that we have the capacity to meet our wildland fire mission. In the Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5) the Forest Service has planned for 4,432 permanent, temporary, and apprentice positions for the 2008 fire season. It is important to note that staffing in the firefighting organization will fluctuate throughout the season. As the fire season progresses, Forest Supervisors monitor staffing decisions to address the firefighting mission and if extreme fire danger warrants, have the ability to hire additional resources. There are currently 363 vacant positions in Region 5. The region is planning to have another round of fire hiring in early July to fill these vacancies before the California fire season commences in earnest.

Question. While the analysis provides a number of short-term recommendations that may be considered to improve firefighter morale, including retention bonuses, flexibility of scheduling and other quality of life improvements, it fails to provide concrete recommendations as requested by my directive in the fiscal year 2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act (Public Law 110-161). It is essential that your agency take action immediately to improve morale, and additional inducements may also be critical to your efforts to fully staff your firefighting positions for this fire season.

What process will the agency use to determine which of these recommendations will be employed? How will you solicit input from local firefighters?

Answer. Region 5 is taking the lead to address these issues. Four teams, each led by one or more Forest Supervisors and including one or more forest fire managers, have been established to develop recommendations, on four key areas: mission, pay, workplace improvement, and facilities.

Region 5's current recruiting efforts and apprenticeship program are focusing on hiring entry-level employees, where the attrition rate is greatest. The region is increasing promotion rates into higher ranks and permanent positions for these employees as soon as they acquire the necessary skills and experience.

It is recognized that the high cost of living in California is an important factor affecting employees. Region 5 is working with local forests to determine if retention allowances can immediately assist with retaining employees.

Question. When and by whom will a decision on to implement recommendations be made?

Answer. The team's recommendations will be completed by June 30. The Regional Forester will make a decision on the recommendations at that time and implementation will begin immediately.

Question. What is the agency's long-term plan for analyzing the agency's firefighting mission, and for addressing firefighter pay and benefits issues, both in California and agency-wide?

Answer. The agency has begun an assessment of mission related activities and workload within the wildland-urban interface and is assembling the appropriate information for analyzing mission related activities across the Nation, as well as functions that are less congruent with the agency's land management mission. We will review the finding of this assessment and determine the need to make national or regional decisions based on this analysis.

In terms of pay and benefits for fire fighters in California, the Regional Forester has created teams specifically focused on pay and workplace improvement. In addition the region is evaluating and implementing actions related to focused recruitment and retention bonuses ensuring that employees have a tangible career ladder. Beyond California there is currently no indication that significant issues exist agency-wide with firefighter pay and benefits.

FUELS/USE OF HEALTHY FOREST RESTORATION ACT AUTHORITIES

Question. According to your agency's Healthy Forests Report 2007, you have only treated 295,000 acres under HFRA Title I authorities over the past 3 years, while 12.8 million acres were treated using other authorities. You treated 163,000 acres using HFRA authorities in fiscal year 2007, which is a fraction of the agency's authorized HFRA limit of 20 million acres.

Why is the agency still only treating a fraction its acres using HFRA authorities? Why is the pace of implementation so slow?

Answer. Most of the acres treated are being carried out under pre-existing authorities. The planning authorities available under HFRA are important tools to help the agency achieve its goals for restoring forest and rangeland health, reducing hazardous fuels, and creating sustainable conditions to facilitate protection of com-

munities and resources. Land managers and communities are often focused on outcomes and not on the use of a particular authority. While accomplishments achieved under other authorities do not count as “HFRA acres” they nevertheless contribute to the overall objectives of the act.

Question. How many acres will the agency treat in fiscal year 2008 using HFRA authorities? How many acres are planned for treatment under HFRA in fiscal year 2009?

Answer. Each year the number of acres treated using HFRA authorities increases and we expect this trend to continue. In fiscal year 2007, a total of 163,000 acres were treated using HFRA, an increase of 65 percent above the 2006 level. Treatments using authorities under Healthy Forest Initiative accounted for an additional 417,000 acres.

In fiscal year 2008 and fiscal year 2009 we anticipate further expanding the use of HFRA authorities. The use of HFRA and HFI authorities has been on an increasing trend and lands treated under those authorities in fiscal years 2008 and 2009 will meet or exceed the 580,000 acres treated using both HFRA and HFI in fiscal year 2007.

Question. What specific steps has the agency taken to increase the number of acres treated under HFRA authorities in the past fiscal year?

Answer. The Forest Service has taken several actions to support accomplishment of all vegetation treatments that contribute to the overall HFRA objectives. For example:

—*Increased Leadership at the National Office to support use of HFRA authorities.*—The National Office has conducted an assessment of the impacts of the recent U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals decision declaring the Hazardous Fuels Reduction Categorical Exclusion (HFRCE) developed under the President’s Healthy Forest Initiative invalid. The Chief has directed the Forest Service to refrain from approving new projects using the HFRCE, and avoid advertising or awarding contracts to implement decisions made after October 8, 2004 approved under the HFRCE. We expect additional use of HFRA authorities due to this direction.

—*Increased Focus on Improving Communication and Sharing Success Stories.*—Considerable information about the requirements of HFRA, and tools to help in understanding its application are on the Washington Office intranet. One of these tools is a Web Guide that walks the reader through the decision process to determine whether HFRA authorities might be used in particular situations. Another is the *Healthy Forests Initiative and Healthy Forests Restoration Act Interim Field Guide (Field Guide)* providing a wealth of information on the law’s interpretation and application.

—*Increased Use of Strategic Assessments.*—Regions are capitalizing on leadership of States and local government in the development of community wildfire protection plans (CWPPs). Nearly 5,000 communities are now covered by CWPPs.

—*Increased Focus on Training and Reviews.*—Several regions are targeting training to Line Officers, Planners, and Resource Specialists on use of the entire suite of authorities to manage vegetative conditions in collaboration with communities.

—*Enhancing Stewardship Contracting to Build Collaborative Capacity and Accomplish Restoration.*—Many of the successes in our use of stewardship contracting are a direct result of the development and implementation of projects through collaborative partnerships with groups of diverse interests.

—*Forest Restoration Framework and Policy.*—The Forest Service has completed a strategic, science-based framework for restoring and maintaining forest and grassland ecological conditions titled the “Ecosystem Restoration Framework.” This framework has informed the development of an agency wide restoration policy—expected to be released late spring 2008. The policy addresses requirements to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate ecological restoration activities in consideration of current and future desired conditions and the potential for future changes in environmental conditions, including climate change.

—*Release of the Forest Service Woody Biomass Utilization Strategy.*—The strategy describes how Forest Service programs can better coordinate to improve the use of woody biomass in tandem with forest management activities on both Federal and private land.

In addition, the following direction was included in the fiscal year 2007 and fiscal year 2008 program direction to the field: “Project planning and implementation associated with a Community Wildfire Protection Plan must take priority over other projects within the Region or Forest, unless prevented by extenuating circumstances.” A large number of community wildfire protection plans have been prepared under HFRA. The numbers climb each year as managers effectively facilitate

successful collaborative planning efforts, and this approach becomes the planning standard.

Question. Does the agency evaluate each of its proposed fuel treatment projects for possible use of HFRA authorities? If not, how does the agency choose which projects to evaluate for possible HFRA use?

Answer. Every project is evaluated for the suitability of utilizing an HFRA authority. The decision authorities provided by the HFRA are a tool that line officers consider when evaluating the most effective and efficient means of accomplishing their hazardous fuels reduction and ecological restoration objectives.

Question. Your recent Healthy Forests report from December, 2007 indicates that only 16 percent of all acres treated with hazardous fuels dollars last year were mechanical treatments, while approximately 84 percent of acres accomplished were treated through prescribed fire. How does the agency decide how many acres to treat through mechanical thinning versus prescribed burns? Why isn't the agency using mechanical thinning for a greater proportion of its fuels acres?

Answer. Our total hazardous fuel reduction accomplishment includes acres treated by other program areas with a secondary benefit of reduced hazardous fuels, such as mechanical treatment, not just those acres treated with hazardous fuels dollars. When considering all hazardous fuels reduction from all funding sources, 38 percent of the 3 million acres treated in fiscal year 2007 were accomplished using mechanical methods. Accomplishing our hazardous fuel reduction objective includes use of all management tools available to us, including both prescribed burning and mechanical fuel reduction. Managers select the appropriate treatment method based on site conditions; opportunity for commodity recovery via timber sale or biomass removal; accessibility; proximity to wildland urban interface or other high valued resources; and the potential to use prescribed fire safely. Mechanical treatments can approximate the impacts of a natural disturbance regime through fire, but it cannot completely replace fire's beneficial effects on the site which include nutrient cycling, preparation of the seed bed, and selection of fire-adapted plants. Fire must continue to be an important part of our management of fire-adapted ecosystems.

TRAVEL MANAGEMENT RULE

Question. What is the agency's schedule for implementing the travel management rule, which calls for the agency to codify its cross-country motorized vehicle use? Who or what determined this schedule?

Answer. The planned schedule has all administrative units identifying those roads, trails, and areas which are open to motor vehicle use and publishing a Motor Vehicle Use Map by December 31, 2009. The Chief of the Forest Service determined the planned schedule.

Question. Is the agency preparing a travel analysis for each individual National Forest?

Answer. Travel analysis is a pre-NEPA process explained in the 2005 Motor Vehicle Route and Area Designation Guide and in regional training sessions. Proposed directives published in the Federal Register on March 9, 2007 also included proposed direction regarding travel analysis. We expect final directives to be published some time this year. Currently, some national forests are conducting travel analysis as a part of travel management planning.

Question. Is there a standard policy that each forest must follow in order to make travel management decisions? How is the Forest Service ensuring that its policies are being applied consistently?

Answer. Subpart B of the Travel Management Rule at 36 CFR 212 provides direction on how to identify routes and areas open for motor vehicle use. The Rule identifies the requirement for public participation; coordination with Federal, State, county and other local governmental entities, and tribal governments; and criteria which must be considered when making designation decisions. The proposed directives include a process for completing travel management planning. The 2005 Motor Vehicle Route and Area Designation Guide provides a process framework that may be used. To enable consistent interpretation of the Rule and its implementation, regional training sessions were conducted.

Question. Is there a formal process that each forest will use to decide whether to add or remove additional routes? Who participates in this process?

Answer. The Travel Management Rule identifies criteria that must be considered when making decisions regarding which roads, trails, and areas to designate for motor vehicle use. The Rule requires that the public be given the opportunity to participate, and requires coordination with governmental entities and tribal governments.

Question. Is there universal standard for public participation in the travel management decision-making process? What is that standard?

Answer. The Travel Management Rule identified two specific requirements for public participation. First, that the public be allowed to participate in the designation process, and second, that advance notice be given to allow for public comment. Public notification, including publishing of the Motor Vehicle Use Map, is sufficient where motor vehicle use is already restricted to designated routes and areas.

Question. How much funding has the agency spent to date on the travel management planning process? How much will the agency spend in fiscal year 2008 on this process? How much do you propose to spend in fiscal year 2009?

Answer. Over the past 2 years the agency has spent an estimated \$200,000 for national training on route designation, issuance of Forest Service manual and handbook direction, and implementation support. It is estimated that an additional \$25 million per year over 4 years will be spent on the full range of travel planning activities, although these costs are not clearly distinguishable from other program management costs and vary widely from forest to forest depending on the local situation and issues. Funding provided for travel management planning is used to: (1) assemble and review existing motor vehicle travel management information; (2) inventory, analyze, and complete the requirements established by the National Environmental Policy Act for travel management decisions; and (3) publish Motor Vehicle Use Maps.

Question. How many miles of motorized trails do you anticipate that the travel management process will add to the National Forest System trails system nationwide? How many miles will be specifically added in California?

Answer. Decisions on which trails to designate for motor vehicle use are made by local responsible officials. Since most national forests have not yet made their designation decisions, we do not have an estimate as to how many miles may be added to the National Forest System of trails. The same would be true for California.

Question. How many miles of motorized trails have already been added to the National Forest System to date by this process? How many of these are in California?

Answer. Between fiscal year 2006 and 2008 it is estimated that the total miles of National Forest System (NFS) trail open to motor vehicle use increased by 1,400 miles. There are a number of factors which influence this figure. Changes to the miles of NFS trail open to motor vehicle use include both additions and subtractions, and may or may not be a result of route designation decisions. Many of the added miles represent the conversion of NFS roads to NFS trails. Currently no miles of trails open to motor vehicle use have been added for California during this same timeframe.

Question. Do you have any estimates of what additional funding—construction, maintenance, enforcement—will be required for additional routes that have been or will be designated? Please provide the Committee with these estimates, if applicable.

Answer. Implementation of the travel management rule is a Forest Service priority and available funding within the agency's budget will be used to cover travel management decisions. Preliminary budget projections once route designations are completed are shown below. These projections do not include maintenance, decommissioning of routes, road route markers and signs, and law enforcement needs as they are not currently known at this time.

- Route markers and junction signs for trails—\$3–7 million (one time cost)
- Forest Service Educational and Patrol Personnel—\$9–\$16 million/year
- Volunteer Program Management—\$8 million/year
- Bulletin Boards and Kiosks—\$15 million (one time cost)
- Signs at entrance to forest areas—\$6 million (one time cost)
- National educational efforts—\$1.5 million (one time cost)

Question. What role do budget resource considerations play a role in determining what routes may or may not be added?

Answer. The Travel Management Rule requires the consideration of the availability of resources for needed road and trail maintenance and administration. That consideration is one amongst a variety of other considerations including effects to natural and cultural resources, public safety, provision for recreation opportunities, access needs, and conflicts among uses of National Forest System lands.

Question. What kind of analysis is the Forest Service preparing to ensure adding additional trails is not damaging the watersheds, wildlife habitat or other natural resource values?

Answer. The Travel Management Rule requires the consideration of various criteria for designation of trails. The responsible official is required to consider effects to natural resources including, potential damage to soil, watershed, vegetation, and

other forest resources, and harassment of wildlife and significant disruption of wild-life habitats.

OPM FIREFIGHTER CREDENTIALS

Question. What is the purpose or goal of transitioning your upper level fire managers to the professional GS-0401 classification series?

Answer. This effort began several years ago as a result of wildland fire incident reviews. The death of 14 wildland firefighters on Storm King Mountain in 1994 was a turning point. These studies highlighted the fact that we needed more stringent, uniform qualification standards for employees in certain fire management positions to assure firefighter safety. The fire organizations worked with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to establish an appropriate series. The 0401 series is similar to other resource management professional series and stresses a positive education element that strengthens analytical skills and resource management fundamentals. These two elements are essential to both the safety of the workforce and Forest Service resource management mission.

Question. Why did the educational requirements for upper-level firefighters change?

Answer. The change was not the education requirements, rather it was the acceptable standard necessary for meeting the education requirement. This policy change was effective on February 15, 2005.

Question. What was the agency's initial plan to meet these requirements? Did you work with OPM on this? Was a supplemental qualification standard for your fire managers developed and approved by OPM?

Answer. The plan to meet OPM requirements is the Interagency Fire Program Management (IFPM). Yes, OPM was involved in this effort. Among the components of the IFPM Standard is the Office of Personnel Management-approved Supplemental Qualification Standard for GS-0401 Fire Management Specialist positions which was originally issued in July of 2002.

Question. What is the OPM policy change that excludes your in-house courses? When was it implemented? When and how did the agency first become aware of it? When were your field employees notified?

Answer. The specific policy change that excluded our in-house coursework is the revision to Part E.4 (a) of the General Policies and Instructions, located in the Operating Manual for Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions. This policy change was effective on February 15, 2005. The Forest Service became aware of the change in April, 2007 when an OPM representative, and numerous human resources personnel attended an IFPM implementation meeting in order to discuss this change. Informal communication on this issue began almost immediately. A formal letter informing agency employees of this policy was signed and sent May 31, 2007.

Question. Did you request a waiver from OPM to allow your in-house courses to continue to count toward meeting the positive education requirement? If so, how did OPM respond to your request?

Answer. Yes, the Forest Service requested a waiver from OPM asking us to continue using our in-house courses (Technical Fire Management (TFM) and the National Wildlife Coordinating Group (NWCG) classes) toward meeting the positive education requirement. We received an OPM response that stated they could not approve our proposal because that course of action would not resolve the fundamental issue that all Federal employees must meet the educational requirements prescribed by the qualification standard for the series to which their positions are classified, as specified by Title 5, Code of Federal Regulation, par 338, section 301. The OPM response stated the courses requested for waiver do not meet the requirement that all courses must receive credit from an institution with accreditation status from a body recognized by the Secretary of the Department of Education in order to be creditable when determining qualifications for Federal positions.

Question. It is our understanding that the intent of the new OPM policy at issue here is to exclude credits bestowed by "diploma mills" from meeting positive education requirements needed to qualify for Federal employment. In your discussions with OPM, did OPM ever indicate that an analysis had been performed or criteria applied to determine that the exclusion of your in-house courses was consistent with this intent?

Answer. No indication was provided. We defer to OPM regarding their analyses.

Question. How many of your fire program managers have been or are scheduled to be converted to GS-0401 positions? How many have lost credits as a result of the OPM policy change? When will those who do not obtain the required academic credits be removed from their positions?

Answer. From the time of the new policy in May, 2007 a total of 820 employees from the 5 Federal agencies were identified for conversion within the IFPM GS-0401 management positions. We initially estimate 200 Forest Service employees have lost credits. OPM has offered to extend the removal date to October, 2010 for employees who do not meet the requirements. The agencies have requested written confirmation of this offer, given verbally April 11, 2008.

Question. What is the estimated financial cost to the agency associated with assisting incumbent employees in replacing their lost credits? What are the estimated human capital costs, i.e., effects on morale and retention?

Answer. The estimated financial cost is \$1,000 per credit, and an average of 5.5 credits required. The Forest Service has approximately 200 employees in this situation requiring an investment of about \$1,100,000. This is an estimate of the average travel costs which employees may incur. This does not include university fees or employee time. Initial indications showed that this change had moderately to seriously affected employee morale. Over time the situation has improved. There has been no known indication of employee retention problems related to the IFPM program.

Question. How many accredited colleges or universities award a BS in wildland fire program management or an equivalent field of study?

Answer. Very few institutions award a specific Bachelor of Science in Wildland Fire Management degree. A handful of institutions offer minors in fire management. The 0401 series requirements may be achieved through a number of different science programs which may or may not include courses in Wildland Fire Management such as fire weather, fire behavior, and fire ecology.

Question. How many accredited colleges or universities provide courses equivalent to the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) courses originally envisioned as counting toward the GS-0401 basic education requirement? How does the cost of these courses compare to the cost of providing identical training in-house?

Answer. Currently somewhere between 20 and 25 colleges or universities provide these types of courses. The additional expenses range from 20 to 100 percent more expensive than in-house training.

Question. Are there any other barriers faced by employees seeking to meet the GS-0401 education requirement of which we should be aware?

Answer. No, with the 1 year extension provided by OPM employees have both the time and institutional support to meet these requirements.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JUDD GREGG

Question. In fiscal year 2009, the President's budget includes only \$12.5 million for the Forest Legacy Program. This is more than a 70 percent cut in the program from the fiscal year 2008 enacted levels. In addition, there are only three projects recommended for funding nationwide. Yet, my understanding is that this year 45 States submitted a total of 87 projects, including New Hampshire. Again, your budget request seems to contradict the Forest Service's own research reports, "Forests on the Edge" and "Cooperating Across Boundaries." These reports highlight increased development and the loss of open space as significant threats to America's forests which provide substantial environmental and economic benefits to communities across the United States. When the Forest Legacy Program was reviewed by this administration, it received one of the highest scores for success agency-wide. Given the pressing need to prevent forest fragmentation, as your own agency well documents, and the fact that this program is clearly working well, can you please explain the dramatic drop in your funding request this year?

Answer. The agency maintains high regard for the accomplishments of the Forest Legacy Program. We had to make very difficult choices in the fiscal year 2009 budget request and reduced or eliminated programs whose needs can be served using non-Forest Service funds. The administration's proposal for the 2008 Farm Bill explicitly includes forests, forestry, and NIPF landowners and provides new funding for the same key programs for which many cooperators receive funding from the Forest Service.

SUBCOMMITTEE RECESS

Senator ALLARD. Okay. Thank you very much. I don't have any more questions and there are no other committee members here, so I declare the committee recessed.

[Whereupon, at 11:45 a.m., Thursday, April 1, the subcommittee was recessed, to reconvene subject to the call of the Chair.]