



# FEDERAL FOREST

## RESOURCE COALITION

### FFRC Weekly Report for Friday, July 14, 2017

**Interior Budget Clears House Panel: OK's \$2.5 million Increase for Timber:** The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies met Wednesday for a markup on the FY 2018 Interior Appropriations Bill. Other than large cuts to EPA, the bill largely ignored the President's request to reduce spending within the Interior Budget. The bill makes \$824 million in cuts from the current 2017 budget, but is \$4.3 billion above the President's budget request. More than 60 percent of the proposed cuts come from the EPA portion of the bill.

The bill fully funds the 10-year fire suppression average, but does not provide any legislative fix to the long-standing "fire borrowing" problem that plagues both the Forest Service and various Department of Interior agencies. Democrats on the panel were quick to blast this, with Subcommittee Ranking Member Betty McCollum (D-MN) saying "once again, the majority has failed to adopt the common-sense reforms" found in the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act and Full Committee Ranking Member Nita Lowey (D-NY) calling the bill a "disaster."

#### **Key Programs:**

**Forest Products** is increased to \$370.3M, this is +\$2.5M over FY 17 enacted level;

**Hazardous Fuels** is increased to \$392.5M, +\$2.5M over FY 17 enacted level;

**Capital Improvement & Maintenance** is \$354.7M, -\$9.3M from FY 17 enacted level;

**Land Acquisition**: \$25.8M, -\$28.7M from FY 17 enacted level;

**State & Private**: \$198.7M, -\$18.2M from FY 17 enacted level;

**Research**: \$278.3M, -\$10.2M from enacted level.

Overall, the bill funds the National Forest System at \$1.885 Billion for FY 2018, which is an increase of \$372 million over last year's enacted level. The change, however, is entirely the

result of shifting the Hazardous Fuels Reduction line item out of the Wildland Fire Management line item and moving it in to the National Forest System line item.

The full Subcommittee markup and draft of the Interior Appropriations Bill can be viewed [at this link](#). The Full Appropriations Committee will take the bill up next Tuesday, July 18<sup>th</sup>.

**FFRC PAC Corner:** You may have heard: Washington is a tough town. Competing requires financial resources – including funds to support Federal timber champions in Congress. FFRC Political Action Committee (FFRC PAC) is the way we do this. Our 2017 Fundraising Campaign is underway. To learn more about how to support FFRC PAC, contact Bill Imbergamo, FFRC PAC Treasurer, by [clicking this link](#) or calling 202-518-6380.

**Interior Closes Out Monument Review Comment Period:** The Department of Interior's public comment period for the designated national monument review closed on Monday with over 1.4 million comments submitted. On April 26, President Trump released an Executive Order on the Review of Designations Under the Antiquities Act which requires a final analysis from Secretary Zinke by August 24<sup>th</sup>. All 27 national monuments over 100,000 acres designated since 1996 are under review.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is slated to visit the Cascade Siskiyou Monument in Oregon this weekend. The American Forest Resource Council (FFRC's affiliate in the region) filed a lawsuit against the expansion of that monument, which more than doubled in size. The monument scooped up thousands of acres of the Bureau of Land Management's O&C Lands, which have a very clear timber production purpose in their enabling statute.

On Thursday, Zinke announced he was leaving two monuments as is. ""When the President and I began the monument review process we absolutely realized that not all monuments are the same and that not all monuments would require modifications," Zinke said. "Today I'm announcing that the Craters of the Moon (Idaho) and Hanford Reach (Washington) National Monuments review process has concluded and I am recommending no changes be made to the monuments."

An interim report on Utah's Bears Ears National Monument, which was designated in President Obama's last few weeks in office, was released in June recommending revisions to the existing boundaries. Large monuments like Bears Ears and the Cascade Siskiyou monument have drawn sharply contrasting reactions, with national anti-use groups lauding the moves and many locals opposing them. This week saw a rally on Capitol Hill urging all the monuments under review be left as they are. Energy and Natural Resources Committee Ranking Member Maria Cantwell (D-WA) spoke at the event along with five other Western Democratic Senators. Cantwell vowed that "we will fight" changes to the recently designated national monuments.

However, Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee Ranking Member Tom Udall (D-NM) has indicated that he doesn't see a fix through the legislative process, "congress always

has a role to play, but I don't think that they are going to get involved in this," because he believes the courts would step in first should changes be attempted. Meanwhile, House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Rob Bishop (R-UT) does believe in a legislative fix is necessary to reign in overreach by the Antiquities Act. Just as recently as April the Committee held a hearing to review those overreaches where the Chairman expressed his frustration of the designation of the Bears Ears National Monument and the impact it had on local tribes.

The Department of Interior will continue to review the submitted comments and finalize their report for the August 24th deadline.

**OMB's Mulvaney Calls for Priorities in an Austere Budget Environment:** The Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Mick Mulvaney, sent a memo to heads of departments and agencies regarding the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 Budget Guidance. As OMB gears up to draft their budget proposal for FY 2019, they have instructed departments and agencies to continue the proposals included in the FY 2018 Budget, unless otherwise directed. They are also asked to identify any program that would be worth additional investments separate from the budget, however those would have to stay below a 5% increase. These proposals are due by September 11, 2017.

At the same time departments and agencies are asked to submit their Agency Reform Plans and long-term workforce plans at the same time. These are in response to the President's "Comprehensive Plan for Reorganizing the Executive Branch" and the "Hiring Freeze" Executive Orders from earlier this year. There are four categories OMB would like included: eliminate activities; restructure or merge; improve organizational efficiency and effectiveness; and workforce management. Underlined and bold in the memo is that "the FY 2019 budget process will give special consideration to bold reform or reorganization proposals that have the potential to dramatically improve effectiveness and efficiency of government operations." In addition, they ask that strategic plans for FY 2018-2022 be included.

FFRC continues to seek ways of interacting with the Department of Agriculture, which oversees the Forest Service and has to submit reorganization plans by September like every other Federal agency. However, there are still very few confirmed appointees at the Department, and although the name of nominee for Deputy Secretary was announced this week, no other Under Secretaries have been named as of today.

**Fire Season Rips Along As Temperatures Rise:** This week, the National Interagency Fire Center raised the National Preparedness Level to 4, the second highest level, as fires in Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming all burned through lands devastated in recent bark beetle outbreaks. In most of those places, the Forest Service failed to take action to salvage dead and dying trees, leaving a well-cured tinderbox which is leading to large, damaging fires.

Fires on the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest and the Dixie National Forest have scorched thousands of acres, with the latter threatening the community of Breckenridge and the Brian Head Fire in Utah scorching over 71,000 acres. While the Peak 2 Fire in

Colorado was much smaller, it forced over 450 families from their homes, and could have grown much worse.

"The condition of our forests and drought over the last 20 years or so has really allowed it to gain ground and cause a lot of tree mortality in our pine forests," Boyd Lebeda, a district forester with the Colorado State Forest Service, told Fox 31 Denver. "It produces more smoke when it does burn, there's more heat released and it takes longer for it to burn down. It's harder for firefighters to put out."

National Forests account for about 400,000 acres of the 3.9 million burned so far this year. 2.5 million acres – mostly private range and pasturelands in Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, and Kansas – burned early this spring. The Forest Service has done prescribed burns on over 831,000 acres this year, almost 75 percent of which was in Region 8.

Forecasts show increased fire danger in California through the end of August.

**The Week Ahead:** On Tuesday, July 18<sup>th</sup>, the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations (Chaired by Rep. Bruce Westerman) will hold an oversight [hearing on misuse](#) of the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the National Historic Preservation Act.

On Wednesday, July 19<sup>th</sup>, the House Natural Resources Committee will hold a hearing on 5 [Endangered Species Act](#) reform bills.

Also on Wednesday, the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee will [hold a hearing](#) on a slew of natural resource and recreation bills, then on Thursday, the Committee will move on to a series of Interior and Energy Department [nominees](#).



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