



# FEDERAL FOREST

## RESOURCE COALITION

### FFRC Weekly Report for Friday, November 17, 2017

#### **Member Assignments:**

**First: Send us your photos!** FFRC is always trying to keep our facebook page up to date and interesting. Pictures get a lot of interest, but since our tiny staff sits mostly in Washington, DC, we don't have a lot of forest or mill shots to use. Have a photo of your mill? Your logging crew working on a Forest Service or BLM timber sale or Stewardship contract? Please, [click here to send them our way](#). We'll let you know if we use it on our facebook feed. By the way, if you're not following our facebook feed, you can like and follow us [at this link](#).

**Second: Send us your money!** If you have an outstanding FFRC dues invoice, please make sure you get your payments in the mail before the middle of December. Also, if you've not written a check to support the FFRC PAC, please hurry up and do it now. If you need more information on either of these, contact Bill Imbergamo, Executive Director. Thanks.

**White House Asks for Supplemental Funding, Is Silent on Fire Borrowing:** Earlier today, Office of Management & Budget Director Mick Mulvaney sent a letter requesting a 4<sup>th</sup> Supplemental funding bill, totaling over \$44 Billion, for relief from Hurricanes Irma and Maria, even while noting that damage assessments from the latter storm are still ongoing. Unlike an October 4 letter from Mulvaney, which said "the problem of wildfire "borrowing" must be addressed in a more structured, long-term manner," and asked Congress for forest management reforms, the most recent request only acknowledges wildfire by asking for tax breaks for California property owners who incurred losses due to recent fires there.

The last supplemental bill signed by the President in October, paid back over \$576 million in FY 2017 "fire borrowing." As usual, more than half the Forest Service funds "borrowed" came from trust funds paid into by timber purchasers when they buy Forest Service sales, including \$140 million from Knutson-Vandenberg Funds, and more than \$94 million from purchaser elect, brush disposal, and roads trust funds. In case you needed a reminder on why we need a fire funding solution.

**Cochran Says Appropriations Bills to Be Released Next Week, Argues Against Further Continuing Resolutions:** Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Thad Cochran (R-MS) Friday issued a statement where he laid out his preferred scenario for finishing work on the FY 2018 appropriations process. Citing the need for a budget deal between Congress and the Administration, Cochran said "The Senate Appropriations Committee has little time to finalize the

regular appropriations bills, and to consider additional supplemental appropriations requests for defense and for natural disaster recovery.

“Congress and the administration must reach agreement on acceptable top-line funding levels for defense and non-defense programs,” he went on. He noted that the current CR expires on December 8<sup>th</sup>, and that “we cannot afford to extend that continuing resolution into next year. A budget agreement is necessary for the Senate to approve responsible appropriations legislation. I urge all parties to those negotiations to redouble their efforts to reach agreement.”

Chairman Cochran indicated that he will release “chairmen’s marks” next week for the remaining four FY2018 appropriations bills not yet taken up by the committee, including the FY 2018 Interior Appropriations bill, which funds the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. The House, naturally, has already adopted its spending bills, but these have not moved through the Senate. It has been nearly a quarter century since Congress passed all thirteen spending bills in time for the start of the fiscal year.

Cochran’s position is directly at odds with other rumors circulating through the appropriations rumor mill. There has been speculation about a short-term CR, and then possibly a long-term omnibus, after that. With leadership in both houses much more focused on passing tax cuts, it seems like the budget process will get short shrift again this year.

**Daines Introduces Pilot Arbitration Measure in Senate:** Sen. Steve Daines (R-MT) today introduced the *Protect Collaboration for Healthier Forests Act* to accelerate badly needed and locally supported forest management projects that will improve the health of National Forests and get loggers back to work.

“Fringe litigators – radical environmental extremists – sue to stop commonsense collaborative forest management projects that would reduce the risk of wildfire,” Daines stated. “We need to provide common sense relief to the Forest Service to get projects off the ground and out of the courtroom. We need to manage our forests, before our forests manage us.”

Daines’ bill establishes a pilot arbitration program in Region 1 of the Forest Service (Montana, North Idaho, and North Dakota) allowing the use binding arbitration as an alternative dispute resolution process for certain forest restoration projects. Litigation against forest management projects frequently take many years to resolve. Pilot arbitration authority may bring swifter resolution to disputed projects, allowing them to be implemented more quickly.

Daines offices noted that according to the Forest Service, there are 19 projects in Region 1 that are currently impacted by litigation, far more than any other region: Of the 19 Region 1 projects currently impacted by litigation, 12 were developed through a collaborative process. Fifteen of the 19 projects are in Montana. Ten of those were developed through a collaborative process. 17 projects include acres that are inside the wildland urban interface, which is defined as the areas where communities are in close proximity to forests that are at risk of wildfire. All 15 of the MT projects impacted by litigation include WUI acres. The pilot arbitration bill was cosponsored by Sens. Mike Crapo (R-ID) and Jim Risch (R-ID).

The bill drew praise from a broad spectrum of interested stakeholders. Rebecca Humpries, CEO of the National Wild Turkey Federation said “The NWTFF welcomes Senator Daines’ proposal of a pilot program offering binding arbitration as an alternative to litigation. We believe this will remove another barrier to implementing important forest management, that has been recommended through a collaborative effort, in a timely manner.”

“Montana Wood Products Industry has long advocated for alternative dispute resolution as an option to deal with obstructionist litigation in Region 1 that impacts jobs in the woods and at the mills,” added Julia Altemus of the Montana Wood Products Association, an FFRC member. “We believe this reasonable approach will be a step forward in judicial relief that is desperately needed in Region 1.”

Keith Olsen of the Montana Logging Association said “We thank Senator Daines for offering this opportunity to the Forest Service and hope to see this authority move collaboratively developed projects out of the courts and back into the woods.”

**Smith Currie to Host IRSC Seminar in Las Vegas in January:** FFRC Affiliate Member Smith, Currie, & Hancock are organizing a seminar on Integrated Resources Service Contracts (IRSC’s), a unique type of Stewardship Contract with many features that may be unfamiliar to purchasers of normal timber sales. Alan Saltman and his team are leading authorities on all aspects of Federal contracting, and this seminar should be of interest to anyone considering on bidding on Integrated Resource Stewardship Contracts. The seminar runs January 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada.

The seminar will cover facts about IRSC’s, compare them to IRTCs, and help purchasers understand the language of Federal procurement contracts. The registration fee is \$395, but FFRC/FTPC members get \$50 off.

**Upcoming Events:** Congress is on recess next week, and unless something really dramatic happens (the naming of an Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment, perhaps?), we will resume publications on December 1<sup>st</sup>.

We wish you and yours a Happy Thanksgiving!



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