



FUNDING THE NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM



Routt National Forest, Colorado, Cheri Walker

The first Chief of the Forest Service, Gifford Pinchot, summed up the mission of the Forest Service in one sentence “to provide the greatest amount of good for the greatest amount of people in the long run.”

Outdoor recreation including hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, hiking, camping, skiing, boating and bicycling is a component of that mission. These activities are a more than \$730 billion a year industry, generating 6,435,000 jobs and \$88 billion in federal and state tax revenues.ⁱ With more than 47 million in visitation every year, our National Forests factor greatly into those numbers.ⁱⁱ

Today, the National Forest System is struggling to live up to that mission and as Congress contemplates significant cuts to funding for natural resource

conservation, this work is getting even harder. Given the current challenging fiscal situation, the future of these programs will continue to be uncertain in the upcoming years. These difficult financial times *do* require tough decisions, but federal spending on all land, water, ocean, and wildlife programs already comprise *only* about 1 percent of the federal budget. Congress must consider the impacts decisions being made in Washington D.C. will have on the wildlife and other natural resources upon which we all depend.

About the Forest Service

The U.S. Forest Service mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation’s forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The 30,000 staff members of the Forest Service accomplish this by:

- Managing 193 million acres of National Forest and Grassland spread over 175 units
- Advocating a conservation ethic in promoting the health, productivity, diversity, and beauty of forests
- Helping States and communities to wisely use the forests to promote rural economic development and a quality rural environment
- Developing and providing scientific and technical knowledge aimed at improving our capability to protect, manage, and use forests and rangelands
- Restoring and Conserving the last best wildlife habitat throughout the nation



Bull moose, Wasatch-Cache National Forest, Utah, Howie Garber

The Forest Service is threatened with funding cuts that would place all of these resources in jeopardy.

National Forests and Wildlife

Budget cuts would severely limit the agency's ability to recover and conserve the more than 100 wildlife species and more than 150 plant species listed under the Endangered Species Act that are currently considered priorities for recovery efforts. Cuts of just ten percent could also prevent the Forest Service from improving wildlife habitat on 25,000 acres of national forests, including habitat for imperiled wildlife such as the red-cockaded woodpecker, salmon, and Pacific fisher.



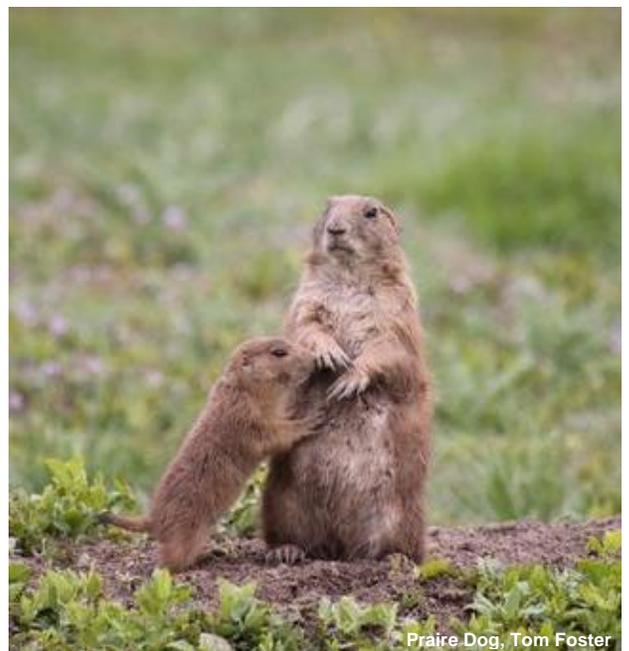
Bighorn Sheep, Colorado, Vaughn Cottman

Funding cuts would impact many of the larger animals in the U.S. such as grizzly bear, wolverine, elk, Canada lynx, and bighorn sheep that persist because of National Forest lands. Since national forests often represent intact connected habitat, they are often the only suitable remaining habitat for recovery and reintroduction of rare creatures and form the backbone of many large-scale conservation plans. For example, the Forest Service has conducted cutting edge research that is informing management of lynx, wolverine, fisher, grizzly bear, cougar, and Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep on forest lands.

Cuts would also severely diminish the Forest Service's ability to foster conservation partnerships. Partnerships enable the agency to leverage habitat improvements on an additional 200,000 acres of National Forest lands. The agency also partners in innovative efforts that help both communities and wildlife. In just one example the agency is using the local Job Corps in Montana to install bear-safe garbage containers, keeping bears in forests and out of communities.

Examples of important wildlife work include:

- Working to cure a disease that is currently decimating prairie dog populations – these rangeland species are important because of their role as prey for the severely endangered black-footed ferret.
- Installing escape ramps in livestock water troughs to help lizards, snakes, birds, and bats avoid drowning and to maintain quality water for livestock operations.
- Managing prescribed burns and mechanical treatments to maintain and enhance wildlife habitat, including for big game. One recent project enhanced 3,200 acres of habitat on the Gallatin National Forest in Montana, another restored 1,000 acres in Utah, and yet another restored more than 1,000 acres on the Lincoln National Forest in New Mexico.
- Thinning and gap creation are being used on the Tongass National Forest in Alaska to move areas that have been harvested toward a mature/old growth condition at a faster pace. Old growth areas are key for rare and unique species like the Alexander Archipelago wolf and the Queen Charlotte Goshawk.
- Restoring sage brush habitat to avoid listing of the imperiled Greater sage-grouse – the Forest Service is aiming to improve 1,000 acres of sage-grouse habitat.



Prairie Dog, Tom Foster

National Forests and Freshwater Animals

Significant decreases in funding would be devastating for fish and other freshwater species. Cuts of just ten percent would prevent the Forest Service from restoring 100 miles of streams and 1,200 acres of lakes, threatening the recovery of 92 threatened and endangered fish species, 64 listed mussel, crustacean, and aquatic species, and 440 sensitive aquatic species on national forests and grasslands. Programs that protect and enhance fishing opportunities and local economies would be decimated. For example:



Steelhead, North Umpqua River, Oregon

- On the Inyo National Forest in California, the Kern River Headwaters Restoration project (successful to date) was designed to prevent the accelerated degradation of a local watershed to protect listed species. Preserving watershed function is a critical component of providing high quality fish habitat, a continued supply of cool, clean water and overall ecosystem health within the California golden trout habitat.
- The South Fork Skokomish River on the Olympic National Forest in Washington is in a watershed that has been extensively logged. Restoration efforts have begun and in 2010 alone the Forest Service was able to decommission almost 30 miles of road and restore 132 acres of the watershed. These efforts created approximately 60 jobs and resulted in better habitat for species like salmon and steelhead, bull trout, Hood Canal chum and the ESA listed Puget Sound Chinook. Additional restoration work is needed and in jeopardy if the Forest Service receives significant funding cuts.
- In Colorado, restoration of the Upper Swan River watershed is a priority with the goal to restore genetically pure native Colorado River cutthroat trout. To accomplish this, old roads will need to be decommissioned and abandoned mines impacting water quality will need to be documented and restored.
- On the Tongass National Forest in Alaska, restoration is ongoing on Prince of Whales Island, an area heavily impacted by logging. More than 360 acres of habitat have been restored in one watershed alone, greatly benefiting local fish populations including coho, pink and chum salmon



Willamette National Forest, Oregon, FWS Pacific Region

Forest Service Land Management Planning

Given the significant land and resource management challenges of the coming decades – including the complex task of sustaining our forests, wildlife, and water resources in a changing world – it is imperative to support intelligent planning for our national forests and grasslands. Effective land and resource management plans that are reflective of changing conditions and can effectively respond to emerging challenges, form the basis for the smart management of our forests, wildlife, and water. In this coming year, the Forest Service will finalize and begin to implement a new forest planning rule. The success of this rule would mean stabilization of the planning process and an increase in plan revisions, leading to a more modern set of forest plans nationally. Failing to invest in meaningful land management planning is a recipe for implementation problems at the project level – effective ground level projects are dependent upon the baseline direction found within the overarching forest plans. Strong, effective forest plans streamline the analysis and decision-making process at the project scale because that work has already been accomplished up front, for example by designating key locations and prescribing methods to restore damaged forests and recover wildlife.



Forest and Rangeland Research

U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service Forest and Rangeland Research (FS R&D), is comprised of five regional stations, as well as dozens of other local sites. They provide land managers and policy makers with information and tools to support sustainable management of National Forest System lands as well as non-federal forestlands. The Wildlife and Fish Research and Development program supports science-based fish and wildlife management on National Forest lands and beyond. For example:

- Wildlife and Fish R&D is working to develop methods to not only stop the spread of the deadly white nose syndrome (WNS) in bats, but to find a cure. The WNS outbreak currently spreads from the northeast all the way to Oklahoma killing an estimated 5.7 - 6.7 million bats, and it is only getting worse. Bats are important for agriculture because they eat pests, providing at least \$3.7 billion in pest management services to the agriculture industry each year.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Key research is answering the question of how changes in snow pack will impact wolverines. Climate vulnerability assessments, along with targeted research like the wolverine project, are necessary for the Forest Service to adequately respond to changing conditions on the ground.
- FS R&D's development of watershed management best management practices will play a vital role in protecting the quantity and quality of water coming out of our national forest watersheds, water used by 66 million Americans.

Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program

The Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) encourages the collaborative and science-based ecosystem restoration of priority forest landscapes while benefiting local communities. CFLRP is a unique program that was established specifically to create job stability, achieve reliable wood supply, restore forest health, and reduce the costs of fire suppression in overgrown forests. The ultimate goal of CFLRP is to collaboratively achieve improved forest benefits for people, water, and wildlife in a way that can be shared across the Forest Service's 193 million acres, and beyond. The ten projects funded in the program's first year have:

- Created and maintained 1,550 jobs
- Produced 107 million board feet of timber
- Generated nearly \$59 million of labor income
- Removed fuel for destructive wildland fires on 90,000 acres near communities
- Reduced destructive wildland fires on an additional 64,000 acres
- Improved 66,000 acres of wildlife habitat
- Restored 28 miles of fish habitat
- Enhanced clean water supplies by remediating 163 miles of eroding roads



The Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program is the first national restoration program for the Forest Service. As this program matures, communities will continue to benefit from improved watershed function, restored fish and wildlife habitat, and ecosystem health in the forests they enjoy and depend on. Communities will also be better protected from uncharacteristic wildfires. In turn, the activities under the CFLR Program are expected to further reduce future wildfire suppression and restoration treatment costs, while improving the health, safety, and productivity of our nation's forests, including helping forests adapt to climate change.

Inventory and Monitoring

Sustaining our nation’s forests, wildlife, and water resources requires dedicated funding for critical inventory and monitoring activities, including the assessments that will be fundamental to the implementation of the new planning rule. The Forest Service’s vision is based on a feedback between assessments of current conditions, management actions to achieve desired conditions, and monitoring to evaluate activities. Failure to invest in inventory and monitoring deprives managers of information they need to make and modify management decisions. Lack of information also stalls the implementation of key actions on the ground. Such delays have social, economic, and ecological consequences. Lack of this information can prevent the land use planning process from moving forward and can result in ineffective and inefficient projects that fail to accomplish management objectives and waste taxpayer dollars.

National Forest Benefits

According to the American Sportfishing Association the combined spending effect of hunting, fishing, wildlife and watching activities on National Forest lands totals \$9.5 billion in annual retail sales, supports 189,400 jobs and provides \$1.1 billion in annual federal tax revenues. Cuts would impact important interpretation and education programs such as the “NatureWatch” and “Kids in the Woods” programs as well as the Forest Service’s ability to manage wildlife for hunting and for providing hunter access.



Rio Grande National Forest, NFS

*The Annual Economic Effects of Hunting Fishing and Wildlife-Viewing within U.S. Forest Service-Managed Units
(American Sportfishing Association, 2007)^{iv}*

	Retail Sales (millions)	Total Ripple Effect (millions)	Salaries Wages & Business Profits (millions)	Jobs (Full & Part-time) (thousands)	Sales/ Fuel Tax Revenues (millions)	State Income Tax Revenues (millions)	Federal Income Tax Revenues (millions)
Hunting	\$5,138.9	\$14,052.7	\$3,488.1	97.1	\$198.7	\$55.7	\$621.2
Fishing	\$2,755.2	\$7,770.0	\$2,016.6	57.7	\$133.8	\$35.2	\$324.9
Wildlife Watching	\$1,590.7	\$3,966.5	\$1,149.3	34.6	\$85.8	\$29.4	\$134.6
Totals	\$9,484.8	\$25,789.2	\$6,654.0	189.4	\$418.4	\$120.3	\$1,080.6

Funding cuts would also force the Forest Service to stop valuable programs like a 2010 watershed restoration project on the Clearwater National Forest in Idaho. The project brought in dollars from partners, created jobs to manage and complete the restoration work, increased the quality of fish and wildlife habitat, and reduced the sedimentation within the drinking water supply for the town of Elk River. The benefits of projects like this one go way beyond the habitat and water supplies that are restored – between 13 and 29 jobs are created or retained and more than \$2.1 million in economic activity generated for every \$1 million invested in watershed restoration work.

Even in these difficult financial times, agencies like the National Forest Service that are responsible for our public lands, wildlife, air and water cannot afford to take the brunt of the cuts. We cannot solve our financial problems by decimating funding for the wildlife and natural resources upon which we all rely. Congress must work to ensure any comprehensive spending bill protects vital conservation funding and remains free of anti-wildlife provisions.

ⁱ The Economics Associated with Outdoor Recreation, Natural Resources Conservation and Historic Preservation in the United States www.nfwf.org/Content/ContentFolders/NationalFishandWildlifeFoundation/HomePage/ConservationSpotlights/TheEconomicValueofOutdoorRecreation.pdf

ⁱⁱ <http://apps.fs.usda.gov/nrm/nvum/results/Report.aspx/Export/VE01/R01-R02-R03-R04-R05-R06-R08-R09-R10/Round3?filename=Visitation&format=PortableDocFormat>

ⁱⁱⁱ Justin G. Boyles, Paul M. Cryan, Gary F. McCracken and Thomas H. Kunz, “Economic Importance of Bats in Agriculture,” *Science* 332 (April 2011):41-42

^{iv} The Economics Associated with Outdoor Recreation, Natural Resources Conservation and Historic Preservation in the United States www.nfwf.org