

**George M. Leonard**  
**Chairman, Board of Directors**  
**National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR)**  
**Recommendations to the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies**  
**Regarding the FY2009 Budget for the U.S. Forest Service**

The following recommendations relate to all programs of the U.S. Forest Service. In developing these recommendations, we used the FY2008 Omnibus appropriation, as enacted, as the starting point. We find the Administration's FY2009 budget proposals for the Forest Service to be irresponsible. We believe the base funding for all programs should be the FY2008 appropriation level adjusted for pay act and other uncontrollable costs (an increase of \$77 million across all program areas). We recommend the following increases to the base funding level:

Wildland Fire Management Fully fund implementation of the National Fire Plan	\$Million
National Forest System	
Land Management Planning	10
Inventory and Monitoring	10
Recreation, Wilderness, and Heritage Management	20
Wildlife and Fisheries Management	10
Forest Products	10
Vegetation and Watershed Management	15
Land Ownership Management	10
Research	
Resource Management and Use	10
Water, Air, Soil	10
State and Private Forestry	
Forest Stewardship	10
Forest Health – Federal Lands	10
Forest Health – Coop Lands	5
Capital Improvements and Maintenance	25

**Wildland Fire Management**

*Fire Operations - Suppression*

The most critical issue that needs to be addressed in the Forest Service budget is the funding of fire suppression. The current procedure of including the ten-year average cost of fire suppression within the agency's discretionary budget is destroying the capability of the Forest Service to carry out the remainder of its statutory missions. From 25 percent in FY2000, fire funding is now approaching 50 percent of the budget. The suppression cost trend means the ten-year average is going to continue to grow, further cannibalizing funding for other programs. While the overall Forest Service budget has increased nine percent over the last six years, the diversion of funds to fire suppression has had a major impact on the workforce available to carry out the multiple-use mission of the agency. The number of foresters, biologists, and other resource specialists, along with supporting technicians, is a good measure of the capability of a resource management agency to carry out its mission. As illustrated in the following table, the capability of the Forest Service has been seriously compromised.

## Forest Service Staff Level (FTE)

	FY2002	FY 2008	REDUCTION
Research	2,494	2,283	-9 %
State and Private Forestry	909	739	-19 %
National Forest System	17,094	11,156	-35 %

**THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FOREST SERVICE RETIREES (NAFSR) RECOMMENDS THAT FIRE SUPPRESSION COSTS BE SEGREGATED FROM THE OTHER DISCRETIONARY PROGRAMS OF THE FOREST SERVICE. NAFSR RECOMMENDS FULL FUNDING OF THE NATIONAL FIRE PLAN.**

### **National Forest System**

#### Land Management Planning

The National Forest Management Act requires that all activities on the National Forests be conducted in accordance with approved Land Management Plans. It requires revision of these plans at 10 to 15 year intervals in order to reflect changing conditions, new knowledge, and changing public needs and desires. Revisions of 60 percent of the Plans are overdue. Revisions must be completed to comply with the law, avoid legal challenges, and to keep National Forest management relevant to the needs of the people.

**NAFSR RECOMMENDS AN INCREASE OF \$ 10 MILLION FOR LAND MANAGEMENT PLANNING**

#### Inventory and Monitoring

Regular monitoring of forest resource conditions and the results of management activities is fundamental to sound forest management. It is particularly important during this period of climate change. Further implementation of ecosystem management and use of adaptive management, key to obtaining public acceptance of vegetation management projects, cannot be accomplished without assurance of appropriate inventory and monitoring of resources and project outcomes. The number of resource specialists and technicians available for inventory and monitoring declined by 44 percent between FY2002 and FY2008.

**NAFSR RECOMMENDS AN INCREASE OF \$ 10 MILLION FOR INVENTORY AND MONITORING**

#### Recreation, Wilderness, and Heritage Management

The National Forests include some of the most scenic, historic, and culturally important recreation areas of our country. Some 192 million visitors enjoy camping, hiking, fishing, hunting, skiing, visits to cultural sites and visitor centers, and other activities each year. But the quality of facilities is declining and access to recreation opportunities is being lost. Personnel available to administer and care for recreation facilities and resources dropped by 28 percent between 2002 and 2008. The capacity of recreation sites managed to standard declined from 93,600,000 PAOT in FY2002 to 70,230,000 in FY2008. Priority Heritage Sites managed to standard declined from 8112 to 2294, and the miles of trail maintained to standard has declined 30 percent in this period.

**NAFSR RECOMMENDS AN INCREASE OF \$ 20 MILLION FOR RECREATION, WILDERNESS, AND HERITAGE MANAGEMENT**

#### Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Management

The National Forest System includes some of the most important wildlife and fish habitat in the nation. There are thousands of miles of streams, millions of acres of big game habitat, and thousands of species of plants and animals. Proper stewardship of these resources requires on the ground management by biologists and technicians. But while the pressure on these important resources

continues to grow, the personnel available to care for the habitat has declined. From 2002 to 2008 the wildlife and fisheries staff was reduced by 39 percent.

**NAFSR RECOMMENDS AN INCREASE OF \$ 10 MILLION FOR WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES MANAGEMENT.**

**Forest Products**

There is wide spread recognition of the need to thin our overstocked forests to reduce their vulnerability to fire, insects, and disease. Funding for hazardous fuel reduction is important and must be continued, but it is only scratching the surface. Annual growth on the currently roaded portion of the timberlands on the National Forests is about 4 billion cubic feet. Not all of the material that needs to be removed has economic value, but portions are suitable for conventional wood products. Much more is suitable for energy production, including ethanol. Capturing these economic values is essential for making real progress in improving the conditions of our forests. It can also contribute to meeting our energy needs.

**NAFSR RECOMMENDS THE FOREST SERVICE ASSESS THE OPPORTUNITY TO MARKET MATERIAL THAT NEEDS TO BE REMOVED FROM THE FOREST FOR CONVENTIONAL WOOD PRODUCTS, ENERGY, AND OTHER USES. NAFSR RECOMMENDS AN INCREASE OF \$10 MILLION FOR CONVENTIONAL SALES OR STEWARDSHIP CONTRACTING FOR MATERIAL THAT NEEDS TO BE REMOVED FROM THE FOREST TO PROMOTE FOREST HEALTH.**

**Vegetation and Watershed Management**

One of the primary purposes for which the National Forests were established is to provide favorable conditions of water flow. Our forested watersheds provide much of the water that meets the needs of our growing population, particularly in the West. Resource management specialists and supporting technicians available to protect and enhance our watersheds have declined by 44 percent in the last six years. This decline must be reversed.

With the serious fire seasons of recent years, the backlog of reforestation needs is growing, but the reforestation program is shrinking. The Forest Service estimates the backlog of needed reforestation at more than one million acres, but reporting is not up to date. The capacity to monitor reforestation needs, maintain adequate nursery capacity, and operate a program to eliminate the backlog in a reasonable time must be redeveloped and maintained.

**NAFSR RECOMMENDS THAT THE CONGRESS REQUIRE THE FOREST SERVICE TO REPORT REGULARLY ON ITS CAPACITY TO MONITOR REFORESTATION NEEDS AND TO PROMPTLY REFOREST AREAS FOLLOWING DEFORESTATION. NAFSR RECOMMENDS AN INCREASE OF \$15 MILLION FOR VEGETATION AND WATERSHED MANAGEMENT.**

**Land Ownership Management**

The National Forest System is a vast estate. Millions of acres of land share thousands of miles of property boundaries with other agencies, small, and large property owners. Proper stewardship of this Federal estate requires maintenance of property lines, monitoring for trespass, and administering thousands of special use permits. The National Forests should be good neighbors to adjacent landowners and communities. With a 19 percent reduction in staffing for this activity in the last six years, it is instead becoming an unresponsive, absentee landlord.

**NAFSR RECOMMENDS AN INCREASE OF \$10 MILLION FOR LAND OWNERSHIP MANAGEMENT.**

**Research**

Quality management of our forest resources requires up to date scientific knowledge. Forest research in this country has declined substantially as major forest product companies have divested ownership of their timberlands and terminated their research efforts. Funding for research at universities has

declined. With retrenchment elsewhere, the 9 percent reduction in research scientists and support personnel in the Forest Service research organization has been particularly untimely. We urgently need more information on the response of forest resources to changing climate and the refinement of management practices to respond to these changes. We urgently need to develop forest products that use the immense volume of small material that needs to be removed from our forests to reduce their vulnerability to fire, insects, and disease. Economically viable uses for this material for energy, such a cellulosic ethanol, would permit treatment of the thousands of acres that need thinning and at the same time help meet the energy needs of our country.

**NAFSR RECOMMENDS AN INCREASE OF \$20 MILLION FOR RESEARCH WITH EMPHASIS ON RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND DEVELOPING ECONOMIC USES FOR SMALL DIAMETER MATERIAL.**

### **State and Private Forestry**

Two-thirds of our nation's forests are in small non-industrial ownerships. This land is vital to meeting our nation's needs for wood products and for providing other forest values. The importance of proper management of these forest lands is growing as the forest industry continues to divest its timberlands. The continued fragmentation of ownership of these lands presents serious challenges to assuring proper stewardship and sustainable management. The State and Private Forestry program, in cooperation with State Foresters, has a proven record in helping to promote sustainable forest practices on these lands. Continuing drought conditions have increased fire, insect, and disease problems on private lands, just as they have for federal lands. Continued attention is needed so that private owners can be encouraged to make long-term investments in the management of these lands.

**NAFSR RECOMMENDS AN INCREASE OF \$10 MILLION FOR THE STATE AND PRIVATE FORESTRY PROGRAM FOR FOREST STEWARDSHIP. NAFSR RECOMMENDS FULL FUNDING FOR THE NATIONAL FIRE PLAN. NAFSR RECOMMENDS AN INCREASE OF \$10 MILLION FOR FOREST HEALTH ON FEDERAL LANDS AND \$5 MILLION FOR FOREST HEALTH MANAGEMENT ON COOP LANDS.**

### **Capital Improvements and Maintenance**

Over the years the Congress has made substantial investments in developing the infrastructure necessary for the protection and use of the National Forests and Grasslands. Unfortunately, funds have not been provided to maintain these facilities adequately. The public is losing access and use through deterioration of roads, trails, campgrounds, and visitor centers. One-third of the recreation facilities are in poor condition. Inadequately maintained roads and other facilities result in damage to watersheds and fisheries habitat. Inadequate access increases the cost of management activities.

**NAFSR RECOMMENDS AN INCREASE OF \$25 MILLION FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS AND MAINTENANCE.**

### **Miscellaneous**

**NAFSR RECOMMENDS THAT RESTRICTIONS ON CONTRACTING OUT BE RETAINED.**

*The National Association of Forest Service Retirees believes that the National Forests and Grasslands should be managed so they are an asset to the communities within and adjacent to these lands. In too many instances, rather than being an asset, the overstocked, insect-infested, poorly maintained, understaffed Forests are becoming a liability. We believe the funding increases recommended above will begin the process of restoring the capability of the Forest Service to provide proper stewardship for these national treasures.*