



Elklick Run in Monongahela National Forest, West Virginia. © Kent Mason

Fiscal Year 2017 Forest Restoration Appropriations

Investing in America's Forests

America's public forests have tremendous national importance but their health puts them at severe risk unless we invest in proper stewardship and forestry. America's forests:

- store and filter more than half of our nation's water supply;
- provide jobs to nearly one million forest product workers;
- generate \$13.6 billion in recreation based economic activity from USDA Forest Service lands alone;
- are habitat to thousands of forest-dependent wildlife and plant species;
- offer a million square miles to sportsmen and families for outdoor recreation;
- are a major carbon sink that sequester 15% of all fossil fuel emissions in the US.

However megafires, pests, drought, and sprawl are now dragging down our forests. An area larger than the state of Oregon is in immediate need of restoration to return forest health—and that is on Forest Service lands alone.

Forest restoration is significantly obstructed by ballooning fire suppression costs. Last year we witnessed the most expensive firefighting season on record, ending with the Forest Service taking \$700 million from management accounts to cover emergency firefighting expenses.

Congress can advance American lives and livelihoods by providing appropriate support to federal forest agencies in the FY 2017 Budget, and reinvesting in forest restoration for people, water, and wildlife.

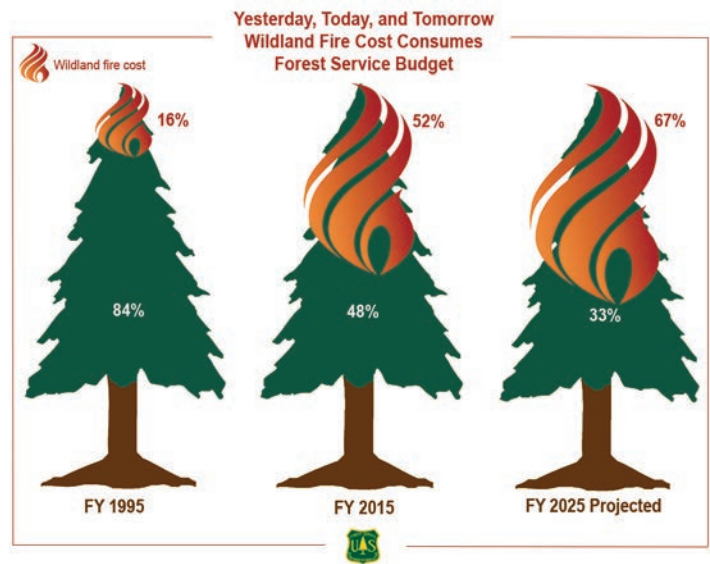


Red fox pup in Wisconsin forest. © Steve Meyer

Top Funding Priorities for Fiscal Year 2017 Forest Restoration Appropriations

Enact the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act Fix the Fire Suppression Funding

The Forest Service and Interior Bureaus need a stable and efficient budgeting process that provides firefighters with the necessary upfront resources to address wildfire disasters, while also providing the stability to perform activities that restore forests and reduce fire risk and costs to communities. A solution to the current fire funding problem must include all three of the following: 1) accesses disaster funding, 2) minimizes impacts from transfers/borrowing, and 3) addresses the increasing costs of suppression over time.



PRIORITY 1

Increase funding for Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration (CFLR) to \$60 million—The CFLR program is demonstrating that collaboratively-developed forest restoration plans can be implemented at a large scale with benefits for people and the forest. This is a model approach that brings citizens, local government and federal staff together to determine effective management that is locally appropriate and provides jobs, sustains rural economies, reduces the risk of damaging fires, addresses invasive species, improves wildlife habitat, and decommissions unused, eroding roads. The funding increase will guarantee the existing 23 successful projects can continue, and additional critical projects across America can begin.



Eli holds a baby snapping turtle at a Conservancy preserve in North Carolina. © Ben Herndon for The Nature Conservancy

PRIORITY 2

Fully fund the Hazardous Fuels reduction programs at the Forest Service & Interior—Strategic, proactive hazardous fuels treatments have proven safer and more cost-effective in reducing risks to communities and forests by removing overgrown brush and trees, leaving forests in a more natural condition resilient to wildfires. Drought conditions increase the need for investment in this program. Congress should provide no less than **\$479 million for all Hazardous Fuels Reduction for the USDA Forest Service** and **\$178 million for Hazardous Fuels Reduction for the Department of the Interior**. Also provide **\$30 million for the new Interior Department Resilient Landscapes program**, to restore and maintain fire adapted landscapes and habitats.

PRIORITY 3

Support critical National Forest Action programs for effective, durable restoration—Caring for America's vast public forests requires integrated approaches can address threats and improve forest health and habitat values while supporting forest-dependent communities.

- **Wildlife & Fisheries Habitat Management:** maintain a **\$140 million funding level** to restore, recover, and maintain wildlife and fish and their habitats on all national forests and grasslands.
- **Vegetation & Watershed Management:** provide **\$185 million** to promote restoration through watershed treatment activities, invasive plant species control, and reforestation of areas impacted by wildfire and other natural events.
- **Legacy Road and Trail Remediation (LRT):** maintain **\$50 million** to restore river and stream water quality by fixing or removing eroding roads, while providing construction jobs, supporting vital sportsmen opportunities, and reducing flooding risks from future extreme water flow events.
- **Land Management Planning, Inventory and Monitoring:** provide **\$201 million and consolidate two previously separate budget items**. This will be more efficient for land managers, while supporting the collaborative, community and science based planning featured by the Forest Service 2012 Forest Planning regulation.



Members of the Haida tribe perform fish surveys in Tongass National Forest on Prince of Wales Island. Streams with proven good salmon habitat can be protected at the highest level by the state of Alaska. © Erika Nortemann/TNC

PRIORITY 4

Support Forest Health Protections, State Fire Assistance and Landscape Scale Restoration-Forest Health Management:

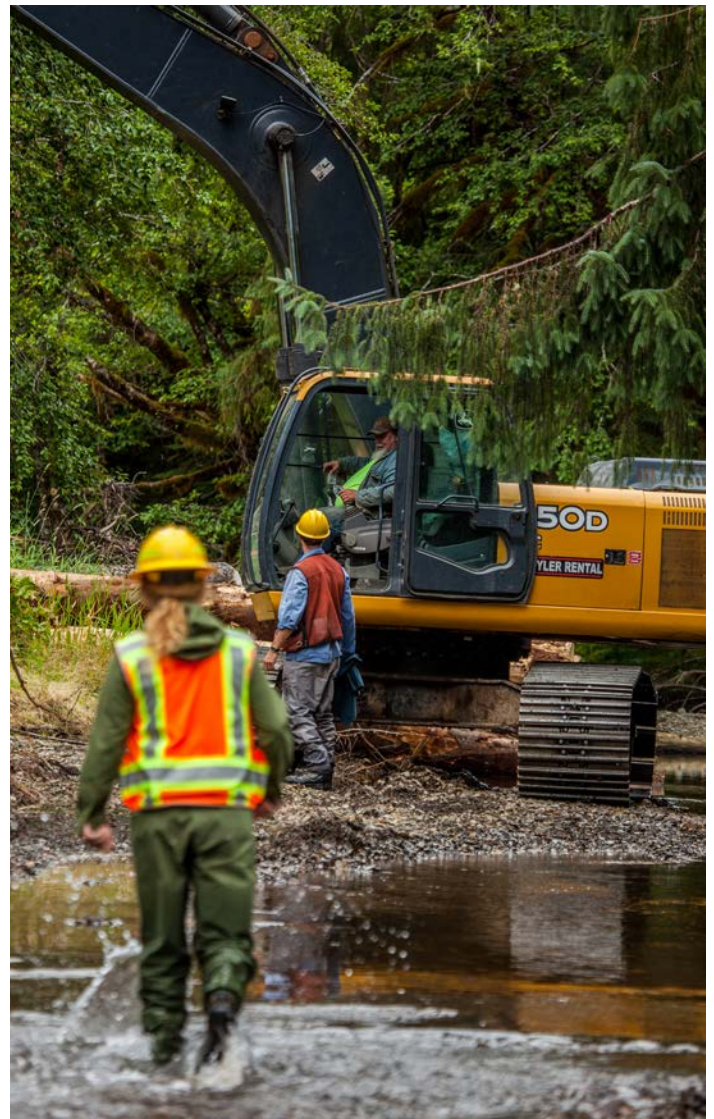
provide **\$111 million** for **Federal and Cooperative Lands Forest Health Programs** to protect forests and minimize impacts caused by invasive species. Across the nation large-scale, non-native insect, disease, and invasive plant outbreaks are damaging forest health. These programs help reduce invasions of non-native pests that destroy iconic American trees such as ash, hemlock, and California oaks.

State Fire Assistance (SFA): provide **\$86 million** to aid communities with fuels treatments, firefighter capacity building, fire prevention education, and pre-fire planning. The SFA program is an important complement to the Hazardous Fuels program for federal lands.

Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) for Non-Federal Lands: provide **\$24 million** for competitively selected projects that leverage state funding, restore forests of national importance, and, whenever possible, complement CFLR and other landscape scale restoration efforts.

PRIORITY 5

Fully fund vital science capacity at Forest & Rangeland Research and the Joint Fire Science Program: provide **\$293 million** for Forest and Rangeland Research that offers the scientific basis for policies that improve the health and quality of urban and rural communities. This program is vital for the longterm health and utility of our American forests and rivers, particularly as we face an uncertain climatic future. **Maintain the Joint Fire Science Program at \$7 million for the Forest Service and \$6 million for the Interior Department under Wildland Fire Management.** This key, small program has proven a great success in supporting practical science that reduces fire risk and enhances economic, ecological, and social outcomes nationwide.



Forest Service workers and contractor restore Twelve Mile Creek in Alaska. © Erika Nortemann

The Nature Conservancy's Funding Recommendations for FY 2017

| The Nature Conservancy's Funding Recommendations for FY 2017 | FY 2016 Enacted | FY 2017 President's Proposal | TNC FY 2017 Request |
|--|-----------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
|--|-----------------|------------------------------|---------------------|

| USDA FOREST SERVICE | <i>in millions</i> | | |
|--|--------------------|-------|-------|
| National Forest System & Roads | | | |
| Wildlife & Fisheries Habitat Management | \$140 | \$140 | \$140 |
| Vegetation & Watershed Management | \$185 | \$185 | \$185 |
| Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration** | \$40 | \$40 | \$60 |
| Legacy Roads & Trails | \$40 | \$40 | \$50 |
| Land Management Planning, Inventory & Monitoring | \$185* | \$184 | \$201 |
| Wildland Fire Management | | | |
| Total Hazardous Fuels | \$375 | \$384 | \$479 |
| State Fire Assistance | \$78 | \$78 | \$86 |
| Joint Fire Science | \$7 | 0*** | \$7 |
| State & Private Forestry and Research | | | |
| Forest Health - Federal | \$59 | \$51 | \$63 |
| Forest Health - Coop | \$41 | \$41 | \$48 |
| Landscape Scale Conservation | \$14 | \$24 | \$24 |
| Forest & Rangeland Research | \$291 | \$292 | \$293 |
| Forest Inventory & Analysis | \$75 | \$77 | \$83 |

| DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR | <i>in millions</i> | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|-------|-------|
| Fire Risk Management | | | |
| Hazardous Fuels | \$164 | \$149 | \$178 |
| Resilient Landscapes | - | \$30 | \$30 |
| Joint Fire Science | \$6 | \$6 | \$6 |

* Land Management Planning and Inventory & Monitoring are funded as two separate programs in the FY2017 Appropriations bill, but are added together in this table. Separately, the Land Management Planning program was allocated \$37 million and Inventory & Monitoring was allocated \$148 million. TNC supports the administration's proposal to group these two programs together.

** TNC is also supporting the increased authorization level of CFLRP to \$80 million.

*** Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP) has been zeroed out of the WFM budget; however \$3 million is to be transferred from the already strained Research program to fund JFSP.



Jeremy Bailey, TNC's Associate Director for Fire Training, is the Chairperson for the National Coalition of Prescribed Fire Councils. © Ryan Donnell for The Nature Conservancy

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