



Solutions for America's National Forests: Appropriations

America's forests and forest products are an economic engine, providing hundreds of billions in value each year from the clean drinking water, outdoor recreation opportunities, and health benefits that they provide. We have a responsibility to strengthen our commitments to forest stewardship. Robust federal funding for forest restoration will provide a legacy of healthy forests and clean water for our children and grandchildren.

Congress took a major step toward shoring up the U.S. Forest Service and Department of the Interior budgets by covering the cost of wildfires with the 2018 Wildfire and Disaster Funding Adjustment, but needs to do more. The U.S. Forest Service faces significant challenges and the "Fire Fix" will only work if reinvestments are made into management programs that increase forest resilience and protect communities.

Quick Facts

- More than 149 million visitors enjoy national forests annually, contributing over \$10 billion to the U.S. economy each year while supporting about 143,000 jobs.
- The Forest Service has a deferred maintenance backlog of more than \$5.2 billion.
- Some 180 million people in over 68,000 communities rely on America's forests to capture and filter their drinking water.
- More than 80 million acres of national forests are in need of restoration.
- Across the United States, one billion acres are at risk of catastrophic wildfire.



CASE STUDY: Managing Florida Longleaf Pine With Fire

Osceola National Forest in northern Florida has substantial longleaf pine resources but also a history of dangerous megafires, leading to significant fire management costs. Prescribed fire, timber management, and fuel treatments on the 567,800 acres of the forest and adjoining landscapes – funded through the collaborative Accelerating Longleaf Pine Restoration project – are reducing fire suppression costs while also sustaining local jobs and protecting wildlife habitat and water quality.



Longleaf pine restoration, Osceola National Forest, Florida. Photo: Cecilia Clavet/TNC

Recommendations

Congressional appropriators should:

- Increase funding levels for key National Forest System programs including Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration, Hazardous Fuels, Vegetation & Watershed Management, Wildlife & Fisheries Habitat Management, Legacy Roads & Trails Remediation, Land Management Planning, Inventory & Monitoring, Forest Health, and Forest & Rangeland Research.
- Increase mandatory funding levels for the national forests' Reforestation Trust Fund and establish and fund a new reforestation initiative under Vegetation and Watershed Management program to prioritize reforestation and restoration.
- Improve pre- and post-disaster funding managed by the Department of Homeland Security or in emergency supplementals to account for the changing climate's effects on national forests.
- Identify new sources of federal funding to support climate-informed restoration on national forests across the federal funding system.
- Create incentives that promote innovative conservation finance as an alternative source of funding, which could be tied to carbon sequestration, and would be a significant source of funding alongside the more limited federal funding, including:
 - Establishing a restoration fund with federal funding as leverage for non-federal funds,
 - Establishing governance changes to promote shared funding and collaborative project management for water fund models, and
 - Reducing barriers to federal participation in capital impact investment instruments.
- Direct the Forest Service to identify and fund highest priority projects based on best available climate vulnerability, watershed conditions, and fire risk assessments.



American red squirrel, Black Hills of South Dakota. Photo: Tracy Brunner



Bohemian waxwing, New Hampshire. Photo: Stephanie L. Smith



Red fox, Colorado. Photo: Dana Henry