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May 2018

Washington, D.C. Update

During the month of May, AFRC has been closely monitoring the annual Appropriations process and efforts to reauthorize the Farm Bill, which saw a significant setback on the House floor when the legislation failed to receive sufficient votes for passage. On the Appropriations front, the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee released its draft Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 Interior Appropriations bill, but the bill has not been considered by the full House Appropriations Committee.

Farm Bill. H.R. 2, the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018, included a robust forestry title that would provide the Forest Service additional forest management authorities, including many new Categorical Exclusions (CEs) for federal forest management activities for early seral, critical

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response, and salvage activities, as well as provisions to streamline interagency consultations under the Endangered Species Act. Most of the new forest management CEs would be limited to 6,000 acres, including the 2014 Farm Bill's insect and disease CE which would be increased to 6,000 acres under the legislation. H.R. 2 also included a proposal to expand the Good Neighbor Authority to federally recognized tribes. You can find a section by section of H.R. 2's forestry title [here](#).

H.R. 2 was brought to the floor of the House of Representatives for debate the week of May 14. The House proceeded with work on 48 amendments, including a dozen related to forestry and public lands. Representative Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-WA) offered a successful amendment to subject timber sold through stewardship contracts to the county revenue sharing requirements that apply to traditional timber sales.

Meanwhile, an amendment by Representative Don Young (R-AK) to exempt national forests in Alaska from the Roadless Rule was narrowly adopted by a 208-207 vote.

Democrats were united in opposition to H.R. 2 – primarily due to the legislation’s proposed cuts and strengthened work requirements for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP is a program used by 40 million people at a cost of about \$70 billion in annual spending. Ultimately disarray within the Republican Caucus doomed the legislation. A group of House conservatives, many of whom are members of the House Freedom Caucus demanded votes on unrelated measures to cut government spending and address illegal immigration. Ultimately, 30 House Republicans voted against the Farm Bill, robbing it of the majority required for passage. It failed by a 198-213 vote.

Fortunately, the forest management provisions were not the cause for the failure and bipartisan support remains in the House for providing the Forest Service with additional management authorities to streamline forest management projects. In the Senate, there appears to be some support for a much more modest forestry title. The Senate Agriculture Committee may release its Farm Bill reauthorization proposal soon. House leaders have committed to bringing H.R. 2 back to the floor of the House in June, although the path forward for the legislation is not positive. If a Farm Bill moves forward in the Senate it is likely to be bipartisan and would be very difficult to reconcile with H.R. 2. With the fall mid-term elections quickly approaching, most observers expect an extension of the 2014 Farm Bill as the most likely scenario.

Appropriations. On May 14, the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee released its FY 2019 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies spending bill, which funds the Forest Service and Department of the Interior. The draft legislation provides over \$6 billion for the Forest Service, including \$3 billion for wildfire suppression and prevention activities. On the management front, the legislation would boost the Forest Products budget line item by \$15 million to \$380 million. Hazardous Fuels reduction funding would see a \$63 million increase, bringing it to a \$450 million annual program. Meanwhile, the Capital Improvement & Maintenance budget line item, which includes funding for the Roads program, would see a significant funding increase. The legislation would fund the management of BLM’s O&C lands in Western Oregon at \$106 million, which is level with the FY 2018 and FY 2017 funding levels.

The full House Appropriations Committee was scheduled to take up the legislation on May 22, but abruptly cancelled the markup. It is not clear whether it will be rescheduled or if there were policy amendments that prevented the legislation from moving forward. AFRC is pleased with the funding levels provided by the Subcommittee and hopes to maintain strong support for the timber management programs as the Appropriations process unfolds. The Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee is expected to release its draft appropriations bill in early June.

/Heath Heikkila

FTPC Meeting Recap - Arizona

Last month the Federal Timber Purchasers Committee (FTPC) met in Flagstaff, Arizona with Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management leadership. The committee meets with agency personnel twice a year to discuss issues pertinent to the timber sale program. The meeting

covered topics such as NEPA streamlining, forest products modernization, and implementation of the 2014 Farm Bill.

The FY 2018 national timber target for the Forest Service is set at 3.4 billion board feet (BBF). To date, the agency has sold 27% of their target, with 53% of that total as sawtimber volume. Despite accomplishing only a quarter of the target halfway through the year, the agency is confident it will meet the 3.4 BBF target by the end of the fiscal year. Additionally, the Forest Service noted that 70% of the accomplished target to date was implemented with timber sale contracts, 20% with stewardship contracts, and 10% with timber permits. The Forest Service also emphasized that the only two targets that they are expected to meet this year are timber volume and hazardous fuels reduction acres.

The Forest Service provided an update of its efforts to modernize delivery of timber products. The goal of this effort is to align the agency's culture, policy, and procedures with current and future forest management needs to increase the pace and scale of active management. The Washington office assembled several "solution teams" tasked with soliciting ideas internally across the nation. At the request of FTPC, the agency also offered to create a forum where the forest products industry can provide ideas to assist in this effort, which will likely formulate early this summer. The Forest Service also provided an update on the Environmental Analysis and Decision-Making effort focused on improving how the agency conducts project level planning. Through this effort, the agency anticipates the development of new Categorical Exclusions (CEs), the expansion of coordination with regulatory agencies, and new performance measures for agency employees.

Efficiency tools already in place were also discussed. This discussion focused on the implementation of the 2014 Farm Bill Insect and Disease provision that provides the authority to use the expedited NEPA procedures under the Healthy Forests Restoration Act. To date, 77 such CEs have been decided across eight regions. Leading the way is Region 8 with 30 completed CEs. Region 6, meanwhile, has not been as proactive in utilizing this tool with only five completed CEs, all in Oregon.

The meeting wrapped up with a panel discussion focused on the challenges associated with implementing the 4FRI project in Arizona and to engage in a problem-solving conversation between FTPC, the Forest Service, and stakeholders. The panel consisted of Cal Joyner, Regional Forester, Region 3; Rob Marshall, The Nature Conservancy; Bruce Hallin, Salt River Project; Jeff Whitney, AZ State Forester; and Bill Imbergamo, FFRC.

Earlier in the meeting, Cal Joyner commented that the priority resource that R3 Forest Service land provides is water. The driving objective on the 4FRI project is the maintenance of water quality for dependent communities, including Flagstaff and Phoenix, through commercial fuels reduction treatments designed to mitigate the risk of uncharacteristically severe wildfire. Rob Marshall commented that the two primary challenges that 4FRI presented were public trust and economics. Throughout the planning process, the trust challenge was addressed through active public engagement; conversely, the economics challenge was not fully vetted and analyzed during planning. This shortcoming is evident today as the forest thinning treatments considered under 4FRI have proven to be largely unimplementable due to a combination of low-value wood

products and the absence of a robust local forest products manufacturing presence capable of processing this material.

FTPC pointed out backloading economic viability considerations is a recipe for failure. Perhaps the only path forward is to take a step backwards and conduct a vigorous economic viability analysis to assess the steps needed to produce a viable fuels reduction project. It does not appear the Forest Service and its partners are willing or able to take this step. Unfortunately, none of the forest products industry professionals present at the meeting were able to offer up any solutions given the current project design features. */Andy Geissler*

Old Enough to Vote, Frog Project Finally Gets Its License From 9th Circuit

On May 18, only three days after oral argument ([listen](#) | [watch](#)), the Ninth Circuit issued a one-paragraph [order](#) affirming the district court and approving the Frog Project on the Sequoia National Forest. The Court's entire ruling stated: "Plaintiff-Appellant Sierra ForestKeeper appeals the district court's decision granting summary judgment in favor of Defendants-Appellees Eric La Price, et al., and Intervenor-Defendant-Appellee Sierra Forest Products. Having carefully considered the record, briefs, and oral arguments, we affirm for the reasons given by the district court in its order dated September 15, 2017."

This lightning-quick resolution marks the end of one of the lengthiest administrative and court processes anywhere. The Frog Project was first proposed in 1999 and the first Environmental Assessment (EA) issued in 2000. The Forest Service proposed to improve forest stand health on 1,630 acres in the Sequoia by thinning small understory trees to reduce stand density. AFRC member Sierra Forest Products acquired the contract to operate the first sale in 2001. Operations commenced in 2004 but were halted by the McNally Fire. Litigation followed, and a preliminary injunction was issued in 2005. The court found that a supplemental NEPA review was warranted due to new information about the status of the Pacific fisher in the southern Sierras. The initial injunction remained in place for seven years. In 2013, the Forest Service completed a revised EA and the court dissolved the injunction. Sierra Forest Products resumed operations in 2015. Shortly before the 2016 operating season, a lawsuit was filed, claiming that the 2013 revised EA needed to be supplemented because of effects on fisher habitat arising from the recent mortality epidemic in the southern Sierras. AFRC intervened in the new litigation on behalf of Sierra Forest Products.

The Forest Service voluntarily suspended operations to engage in extensive data collection. Upon completion, it was decided a supplemental EA was not necessary. In September 2017, District Court Judge Anthony Ishii of the Eastern District of California agreed and issued a ruling in favor of the Forest Service. Project implementation then resumed.

This type of forest management is essential to support a robust forest products industry and rural economies, but even more so for the long-term health of the forest and wildlife during this era of megafires, which result in part from a lack of active federal forest land management. The projects long litigation and planning history encapsulates the litigation problem on public forests; if projects like Frog were not delayed by litigation, the healthy forest would more strongly resist many of the impacts of the severe drought.

In a [press release](#), AFRC expressed appreciation for this decision but also highlighted the continuing problem of forest management litigation. “We are very pleased that the Ninth Circuit issued its ruling approving the Frog project after over 18 years of planning and litigation,” stated AFRC General Counsel Lawson Fite, who argued the case in the Ninth Circuit on May 15. “We will continue to press for reasonable litigation reforms to ensure valuable projects don’t get stalled for decades while forest health continues to decline.” AFRC President Travis Joseph added, “It’s really good news that this project has finally cleared all its legal hurdles, but we need to do more to keep up with the pace and scale of the forest health crisis.” */Lawson Fite*

Victory! Lava Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project Upheld

On May 30, U.S. District Court Judge England denied Conservation Congress’s motion for summary judgment and its motion for preliminary injunction was denied as moot.

In April 2016, Conservation Congress brought a lawsuit against the Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) challenging the Lava Project on the Modoc National Forest within the Doublehead and Big Valley Ranger Districts. The project is in an area known as “gasoline alley” because of high lightning occurrence and susceptibility to stand-replacing wildfire. The project involves treatment of 8,390 acres of eastside pine and mixed conifer types highly susceptible to stand-replacing fire. In addition, the Lava Project seeks to safeguard the powerline corridors that run through the project area. These structures are part of the Western Interconnection power grid, a key link in the Northern American energy system stretching from western Canada to Baja California. Early collaboration between the Transmission Agency of Northern California and the Forest Service identified the need to safeguard these power lines from a wildfire event. The total estimated volume from the project is 12.1 million board feet, with one timber sale sold to AFRC member Franklin Logging in the fall of 2017. The other sale is anticipated to be offered this fall. AFRC, and members Associated California Loggers (ACL) and Loggers Association of Northern California (LANC), intervened in support of the Lava Project as defendant-intervenors.

Conservation Congress’s motion for summary judgment asserted both NEPA and ESA claims. The NEPA claims focused on impacts to the northern spotted owl and the gray wolf, alleging the need for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) instead of an EA, and the need to consider its proposed alternatives to prohibit the removal of trees greater than 12 or 20 inches diameter breast height (DBH). The ESA claims included the need for a new biological assessment and biological opinion for the northern spotted owl, and the need to reinitiate consultation regarding the impacts of the project on the gray wolf since gray wolves were detected in northern California (but no wolves were detected in the project area or the Modoc National Forest). This case is one of the first to challenge a project based on the effects on the gray wolf.

In his 29-page order, Judge England concluded that after reviewing the record “it appears that Plaintiff simply disagrees with the Government’s decisions on how to manage forest habitat and how to protect and conserve the NSO and the gray wolf.” With respect to plaintiff’s ESA claim related to the gray wolf, Judge England determined that plaintiff’s lacked standing to pursue its claim because even if its members have an interest in the gray wolf, any injury to that interest is conjectural since “[t]here is no indication that the gray wolf has ever entered the Project area or will be at all affected by the project, and the likelihood that a wolf may wander into the Project

area in the future is entirely speculative.” The Court went on to conclude that even if plaintiff had standing to pursue its claim, all its substantive arguments fail on the merits since it was “wholly rational” for the Forest Service to conclude that no wolf would be affected by the project when no wolf had been detected in the project area and there was nothing unique about the project area that would attract gray wolves in the future.

With respect to the northern spotted owl, Judge England held that FWS rationally concluded that direct and indirect effects to northern spotted owl habitat “are not expected to result in changes to the ability of [the subunit] to provide for the intended conservation functions of demographic support and connectivity.”

Finally, Judge England denied plaintiff’s two NEPA claims. First, Judge England concluded an EIS was not required because the agency rationally and reasonably exercised its discretion when it issued its FONSI. As required by regulation, the Forest Service evaluated whether the project was highly controversial; the degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks; and the degree to which this action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or critical habitat. The Court held that each of the agency’s conclusions was supported by the record and no factor warranted the preparation of an EIS. Judge England rejected plaintiff’s assertion that the project was controversial because “minor disagreements” between the Forest Service and FWS -- about whether 41 acres of northern spotted owl habitat should be removed -- did not rise to the level of “controversial.” In addition, Judge England held that the Forest Service did consider reasonable alternatives and was not required to consider an alternative that would have prioritized the northern spotted owl or an alternative that prohibited the removal of trees greater than 12 or 20 inches DBH.

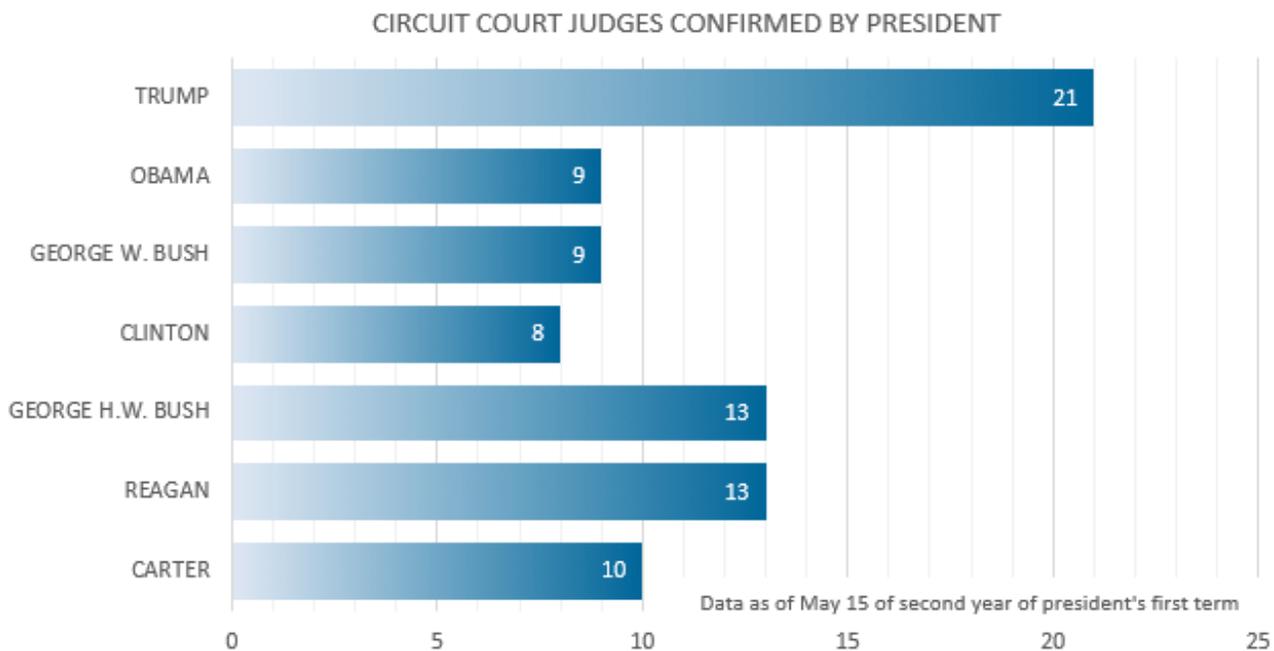
We are very pleased with the ultimate result, allowing this much-needed project to move forward, and greatly appreciate the support our allies ACL and LANC in this case. /Sara Ghafouri

Trump Reshapes Appeals Courts

While the Trump Administration’s pace of nominating and securing Senate confirmation for political appointees has been slow, President Trump is reshaping the appeals-court level of the judiciary system through his nominations and a Republican Senate that has made their confirmation a priority.

While the addition of Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court will likely go down as Trump’s signature judicial appointment, Trump’s influence on the 13 regional U.S. appeals courts may have a more sweeping effect since the Supreme Court takes up fewer than 1% of all appeals. Many of President Trump’s judicial nominations have been conservatives, including those active in the Federalist Society.

As of May 15, the Senate has confirmed 21 circuit court judges nominated by President Trump, which is more than double the number of judges appointed by President Obama at the same point in his administration. Ten additional circuit court nominees are currently pending in the Senate, including three nominees to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, which currently has seven vacancies – far more than any other circuit court.



Claudine Hellmuth/E&E News; Data: Federal Judicial Center

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) has made judicial confirmations a priority and Republicans have largely stuck together, despite their narrow 51-49 majority and strong opposition from Senate Democrats to many of Trump’s circuit court nominations. Republicans have benefited from judicial confirmation no longer being subject to a 60-vote threshold for cloture, a rule change that was adopted by Democrats for district and circuit court judges in 2013. Republicans did away with the 60-vote threshold for Supreme Court confirmations in 2017. While the Trump Administration has made circuit court nominations a priority, it is lagging on its appointments for district courts. Thus far, 17 district court judges nominated by President Trump have been confirmed by the Senate, while 72 additional district court nominations are currently pending before the Judiciary Committee or the full Senate. Senator McConnell recently announced that the Senate would make judicial confirmation votes a priority between now and the end of the year – even threatening to cancel some or all of the August recess if Democrats continue stalling the process through extended debate. / *Heath Heikkila*

Washington Forest Health Advisory Committee Meets

The Forest Health Advisory Committee (FHAC) held its third meeting on May 23 in the Methow Valley. The Committee was established as part of [SB 5546](#) passed by the Washington legislature in 2017. The FHAC is using the work of the [20 Year Forest Health Strategic Plan](#) (see [October 2017](#) newsletter) to help advise DNR on efforts to increase the pace and scale of forest health treatments in eastern Washington.

The committee received an update from DNR staff about the progress the Department has made on identifying high priority watersheds needing treatment. DNR has identified the next two biennia of high priority watersheds proposed for treatment planning work. For the 2018 planning cycle, there are nine planning areas located along the east slopes of the Cascades and three located in NE Washington. The identification process does not consider “ownership” and simply looks to prioritize watersheds based on a variety of risk factors. This ranking is then

reviewed by a variety of stakeholders including the FHAC and large landowners such as the Forest Service. Over the next few months DNR will be conducting the landscape evaluations, developing proposed treatments, engaging with landowners, and identifying resource needs and potential appropriations requests for the legislature.

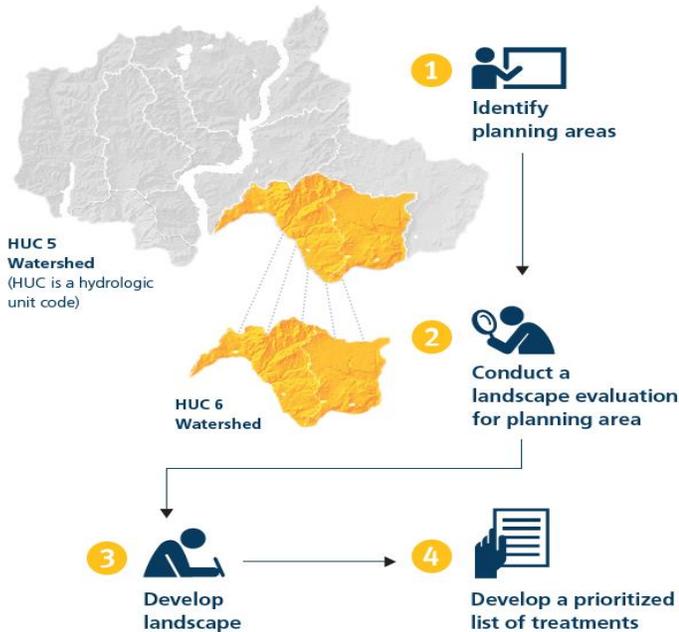


Figure 1 - Steps for 20 Year Plan Treatment goals.
Graphic courtesy of DNR

The FHAC also received a briefing on two grant programs under development by DNR related to funding received in the FY17-19 Capital Budget. The legislature provided \$250,000 for the development of a Forest Collaborative Infrastructure Pilot program. DNR has been working with partners to develop a grant program to implement the pilot program this summer. For eastern Washington Collaboratives, their grant applications must include activities that

support the 20-year Forest Health planning areas. DNR is also developing the Cross Boundary Competitive Grant program, which the Legislature funded to the tune of \$1.4 million. The intent of the program is to provide funding for the planning, implementation and monitoring of landscape-scale forest restoration and management activities that support statewide forest health priorities. Considerations for the grant projects include: projects should either be cross-boundary or adjacent to recently completed work, projects should be part of a landscape-scale effort, and in eastern Washington projects need to be in a 20-Year FH Planning Area. Documentation of “additionality” and linkage to the Good Neighbor Authority Program will also be evaluated in proposals.

The FHAC finished up their meeting with a field trip to a small forest landowner’s homesite near Mazama. The intent of the visit was to see the work small landowners are undertaking to make properties more resistant to wildfire and improve the health of trees. The conversation included the efforts these landowners have taken to become strong advocates for forest health and firewise work to protect their homes and communities. The group also had a good discussion about how the FHAC can work to help provide guidance to DNR and other organizations in reaching out to small private landowners on these critical issues. The FHAC will hold its next meeting in the early fall to review the progress DNR has made on the landscape evaluations and to discuss potential legislative requests related to the 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan implementation work. /Matt Comisky

Region 1 Salvage Preparation Moving Forward

Even with near record snowfall in parts of the Kootenai and Lolo National Forests, crews have been able to get into areas burned last summer. The crews continue preparing salvage projects the agency hopes to get out in late spring or early summer. The warmer weather and rapid snow melt has made access much easier and progress has improved.

The draft EA for the Sunrise project on the Lolo was released in April and the comment period closed on May 17. The draft EAs for the West Fork and Cub projects on the Kootenai have been released and the comment periods close on June 3 and June 15 respectively. The Forests have asked for an Emergency Situation Determination (ESD) for all three projects.

An ESD has to be approved by the Chief of the Forest Service and is defined as “a situation on National Forest System (NFS) lands for which immediate implementation of a decision is necessary to achieve one or more of the following: 1) relief from hazards threatening human health and safety; 2) mitigation of threats to natural resources on NFS or adjacent lands; and 3) avoiding a loss of commodity value sufficient to jeopardize the agency’s ability to accomplish project objectives directly related to resource protection or restoration.” If an ESD is granted, the project will be exempt from the pre-decisional objection process.

The Gibraltar project on the Lolo and the Moose Peak project on the Lolo/Kootenai have completed analysis using a Categorical Exclusion (CE). These projects should be the first ones sold once the ground preparation has been completed. The Liberty project CE should also be completed soon.

The chart below shows the latest figures regarding acres burned, acres of salvage, volume estimates, and skyline logging acreage as a percent of the total project. The acres burned on the Kootenai and Lolo totals 338,000 with 22,900 acres (or about 7%) being salvaged. Estimated salvage volumes are 107 million board feet (MMBF) on the Kootenai and 79 MMBF on the Lolo. However, Forest Service personnel stress these are just estimates until more on the ground work is completed. The amount of skyline logging might present a problem not only for the number of loggers available, but also for sales requiring multiple machines using the same road systems. A great deal of planning will have to go into when and what units can be logged without blocking roads needed for other jobs.

2018 Salvage NEPA Projects	Total Burned Acres	Potential Salvage Acres	Scoping Period	Initiate 30-DAY Public Comment Period on EA (if applicable)	ESD Request submitted to Forest Service Chief (if applicable)	Signed Decision Date	Sale Names & Projected Sale Dates
Bluejacket CE Nez Perce-Clearwater NF	1,010	80	10/20/17-11/20/17	N/A	N/A	12/01/17	Bluejacket: 03/30/18 SOLD
Tamarack CE Kootenai NF	413	199	09/23/17-10/13/17	N/A	N/A	11/08/17	Tamarack: 03/06/18 SOLD
Gibraltar Ridge CE Kootenai NF	12,938	250	01/19/18-02/09/18	N/A	N/A	04/17/18	Gibraltar: 7/5/2018
Liberty CE Lolo NF	33,263	250	03/05/18-04/04/18	N/A	N/A		Liberty: 8/13/2018
Moose Peak CE Kootenai NF	13,903	50	01/19/18-02/09/18	N/A	N/A	04/05/18	Moose Peak: 6/26/2018
Moose Peak CE Lolo NF	13,903	250	01/23/18-02/24/18	N/A	N/A	05/18/18	Fish Fry: 6/18/2018
** Meyers EA Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF	73,316	330	N/A	05/15/18			Molten Copper: 1/7/2019
** Little Hogback EA Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF	39,374	1,200	N/A	05/30/18			Dead Wood: 1/7/2019
Cub Creek EA Kootenai NF	7,080	1,624	12/19/17-01/16/18	05/16/18			Up in Smoke: 8/14/2018 Dirty Haines: 8/14/2018
Sheep Gap EA Lolo NF	25,182	2,152	10/31/17-12/01/17				Burnt Beam: 8/13/2018 Black Sheep: 8/30/2018
Sunrise EA Lolo NF	26,310	2,718	10/31/17-12/01/17	04/17/18	05/04/18		Smoked Trout: 7/9/2018 Smokey Quartz: 8/1/2018
Rice Ridge EA Lolo NF	160,190	4,838	12/29/17-01/22/18				Rice Crispy: 9/19/2018 Fried Morrell: 9/19/2018 East 1: 9/19/2018 East 2: 9/19/2018
Caribou EA Kootenai NF	24,753	5,268	12/15/17-01/14/18				South Canada: 8/13/2018 Burnt Caribou: 8/13/2018 Young Fork: 8/13/2018
West Fork EA Kootenai NF	20,072	5,300	12/19/17-01/17/18	05/04/18			West Pipe: 8/20/2018 Pipe Bull: 8/20/2018

AFRC wants to thank the Kootenai and Lolo personnel for all their hard work in getting these projects prepared. We are hopeful the ESDs will be granted so the projects can move forward in a timely manner. /Tom Partin

Economic Viability in Forest Restoration

AFRC and Associated Oregon Loggers (AOL) are working together to promote recognition of the need for economical forest restoration projects on Forest Service lands throughout eastern Oregon. The current landscape restoration paradigm is generally focused on understory thinning projects. This paradigm is complicated by the Eastside screens with its prohibition on cutting trees greater than 21 inches DBH and by the focus on leaving all “old trees.” “Old” trees are currently defined as those greater than 150 years regardless of diameter. These criteria have created significant issues in the present and create an even bleaker picture in the future for the forest products industry.

The photos below were taken during a field trip in May on the Fremont-Winema National Forest. The first photo is typical of what many unmanaged stands now look like in the dry forests on the eastside of Region 6. The second photo is what the “restored” landscape often looks like.



The next entry in these “restored” stands appears to be well into the future since the mid-aged cohort was harvested in the current entry to pay for the removal of the nonmerchantable and small material. Economic viability of these projects is often marginal on ground-based logging projects and the time is rapidly approaching when cable logging will be required to address restoration objectives of steeper slopes.

AFRC fully supports managing these stands by shifting species compositions as appropriate and by harvesting across all age classes. However, it is imperative that these projects be economically viable to ensure the future of the industry as well as the future of our nation’s forests. /Irene Jerome

To Keith Olson: Congratulations and Thank You

On May 19, Montana Logging Association (MLA) hosted a retirement party and “roast” to honor Executive Director Keith Olson. MLA is a non-profit organization that serves and represents Montanans who work in the state’s logging industry. Keith has served MLA’s members since 1980, after receiving his degree in Forest Management from Oregon State University and serving as a corporate forester in Oregon and a consultant in Idaho.

For 38 years, Keith helped shape the association’s programs and passionately advocated on behalf of MLA’s members. He was instrumental in building MLA’s membership, which currently has 600 members who are engaged in the business of harvesting and transporting timber in Montana. Keith helped spearhead several membership programs, including the Accredited Logging Professional program, Professional Log Hauler program, and Safety Services program. In addition, Keith advocated on behalf of MLA members before Montana’s legislature and the state’s congressional delegation in Washington D.C. Working tirelessly behind the scenes, Keith believes that a lot of good can get accomplished for this industry if you’re not worried about who gets the credit.

The event included a comedic performance by MLA staff and others recounting Keith’s professional journey from Oregon to Montana. The highlight was the re-creation of the infamous event where “three nefarious loggers sat Keith down in a bar in Thompson Falls, and through the skillful manipulation of fast talk and cold beer, they convinced him to become the Executive Director of the MLA.”

On behalf of AFRC, its members, staff, supporters and friends, we offer our sincerest appreciation and gratitude to Keith for an extraordinary and meaningful career committed to “this profession we call logging.” Congratulations, Keith! /AFRC Staff

AFRC Communications Director Update

In the first month of my new role, I’ve been conducting a communications strategy “audit” of AFRC and its tools. One of the tools AFRC can and will take advantage of, which corresponds nicely with our members’ ongoing efforts, is social media. Many AFRC members employ communications directors and execute a strategic social media plan that tells each member’s unique story with a public audience to share the incredible work they do for our forests and communities.

My initial plan on social media is to focus on the relationship between catastrophic wildfires and their impacts to public health in AFRC member states. Smoke affects vulnerable populations and communities; has dramatic economic and financial implications as highlighted by OFRI’s recent [report](#); and overloads our public health system. It’s important that we not only continue to shed light on the smoke epidemic but help prepare people for the upcoming wildfire season and use our exposure to demand action! #wecandobetter.

When planning a social media campaign, it’s essential to provide facts and fun information so that it stays engaging. To give an example, one of our most popular posts so far is the May 4th (Star Wars Day) “May the Forest Be with You,” a creation from Roseburg Forest Products. Not surprisingly, long articles and in-depth information are not popular on Social Media. What does



work – and draws the most public interest and attention to our industry – is content that is lighthearted, funny, and/or educational and thought provoking (by making us all feel smart).

In the coming months, we'll be gearing up for Congressional town halls hosted this August. It is our goal to equip our supporters with information, talking points and facts so they can meaningfully engage and participate in these public forums. We'll continue to share new and relevant content on social media this summer about the importance of federal forest management as it relates to smoke and public health.

What does this mean for you? We could use your help spreading the word! We are currently on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Please like and follow us on all three accounts not only to stay plugged in between AFRC newsletters but also to learn and share what other AFRC members are up to!*Asha Aiello*

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AmericanForestResourceCouncil/>
Instagram: @afrc_forestry **Twitter:** @amforest_org