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**October 2016**

## **AFRC Welcomes New Members**

AFRC is thrilled to welcome two new members to the association: Tricon Timber and T2 Inc.

Tricon Timber is the largest privately-owned mill in the state of Montana. After breaking ground in 1989 and coming online in 1991, Tricon is a full-service facility that utilizes 100 percent of all wood products with zero waste. Its nine-foot stud mill in St. Regis, Montana produces quality framing lumber as well as premium playground chips and landscape bark. Tricon also works closely with post and pole facilities which provides a new outlet for increased small diameter log inventory resulting from forest restoration and fuel reduction projects. Tricon Timber is the largest private employer in Mineral County, Montana.

T2 is a grinding, logging, chipping, land clearing, biomass consolidating, and forest thinning company launched in 2006 out of Sweet Home, Oregon. T2 uses 100 percent of all raw materials coming from the forest: sawlogs go to the lumber mills, tops are classified as chip logs and are processed on site into clean paper chips, and the left-over limbs and bark are then ground on site for biomass. T2 employs over 15 commercial chip and log truck drivers, ten equipment operators, three mechanics and three field operations managers.

AFRC is proud to welcome Tricon Timber and T2 Inc., businesses that will bring new voices and ideas, quality experience, passion, and additional expertise to AFRC's already outstanding membership. */Travis Joseph*

## **AFRC Weighs in on Cascade Siskiyou National Monument**

On October 14, a public meeting was organized at the request of Senators Jeff Merkley, Ron Wyden, and Barbara Boxer to hear comments on a proposed expansion of the Cascade Siskiyou National Monument in southern Oregon. Department of the Interior Deputy Secretary, Michael Connor, was in Ashland for the meeting.

The existing Cascade Siskiyou National Monument of approximately 66,000 acres was established by President Bill Clinton in 2000 using the authorities of the Antiquities Act. A map released by Senator Merkley's office on October 7, a week before the public meeting, reveals a proposed expansion of more than 90,000 acres. The proposed expansion includes 56,245 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, including productive O&C forestland, and 34,095 acres of private land.

AFRC sent a [letter](#) opposing the proposed expansion in its current form and urging Senators Merkley and Wyden to introduce, vet, and pass comprehensive forest management legislation in

Congress instead of supporting monument designation through the Antiquities Act. AFRC expressed its support for healthy and sustainable public forestlands, but explained its serious concerns about the designation's impact on forest restoration and resiliency in the long-term; neighboring private forestlands and access for the general public; and potential legal conflicts with the mandate of the O&C Act of 1937 – which requires the BLM to actively manage all O&C Lands.

Other interested parties raising concerns include the Association of O&C Counties – which, by law, directly benefits from the management of these lands; the Oregon Cattlemen's Association; and the Medford/Jackson County Chamber of Commerce. Additional letters from the public in opposition are expected.

A final public meeting is scheduled for November 1 at 6:00 p.m. at the Government hearing room 219 located at 305 Main Street, Klamath Falls. Senator Merkley has committed to receiving public comments until November 20. To join the grassroots “Not Without a Vote of Congress” campaign organized by Healthy Forest Healthy Communities, click [here](http://www.healthyforests.org/) or visit: <http://www.healthyforests.org/> /Travis Joseph

## **Forest Service Preliminary National Outputs**

The Forest Service has released its preliminary Fiscal Year 2016 (FY16) accomplishments. Overall, the numbers are disappointing. Total outputs for the Forest Service totaled 2.896 billion board feet (BBF), an increase of 29 million board feet (MMBF), or just more than one percent over Fiscal Year 2015. The 2.896 BBF total is approximately 90 percent of the assigned national target, the lowest percentage accomplishment in four years.

As reported in the Federal Forest Resource Coalition's (Bill Imbergamo) weekly report, the preliminary numbers highlight some disturbing trends:

- Despite a \$68.4 million funding increase, the Forest Service only sold 30 MMBF more in FY16 than in FY15.
- This means an 18 percent increase in timber funding produced only a one percent increase in timber outputs.
- Regions 2, 4, and 9 exceeded their targets; Regions 1, 3, 5, and 10 achieved less than 90 percent of their targets.
- Only 62 percent of the national output was sawlogs, 16 percent was pulpwood, and 10 percent fuelwood.
- 66 percent of the volume was sold in timber sale contracts and 25 percent was sold through stewardship contracts.
- While overall funding available for timber projects increased by \$68 million, only \$46 million of that was available after cost pools and other overhead.
- Direct timber funding (NFTM) was \$21 million higher than FY15, but, an additional \$15 million of NFTM went to cost pools, for an increase to the field of only \$6 million. That is a 72 percent overhead rate. /Travis Joseph and Bill Imbergamo

## Region 6 2016 Timber Accomplishments

Region 6 awarded 96 percent of the target assigned to it by the Washington Office selling 589 million board feet (MMBF) of the 610 MMBF target. Approximately 70 MMBF of the accomplishment came from salvage sales. As seen in the chart below, the accomplishments by Forest ranged from a low of 12 percent to a high of 122 percent. Forest level shortfalls were mostly from no-bid sales.

Some other statistics for the total program are:

- 83% Sawlogs
- 9% Biomass
- 8% Fuelwood
- 30% Stewardship contracts

FY2016 Timber Program			
Forest	Target* (MMBF)	Awarded as of 10/13/16 (MMBF)	Percent Accomplished
Deschutes	49.9	45.8	92%
Fremont-Winema	69.8	55.7	80%
Gifford Pinchot	31.7	32.3	102%
Malheur	74.9	60.2	80%
Mt Baker-Snoqualmie	13.8	1.7	12%
Mt Hood	34.8	38.1	109%
Ochoco	17.4	8.4	48%
Olympic	22.6	27.6	122%
Rogue River-Siskiyou	29.1	26.8	92%
Siuslaw	39.0	30.8	79%
Umatilla	31.9	31.3	98%
Umpqua	32.5	31.1	96%
Wallowa-Whitman	26.0	22.6	87%
Okanogan-Wenatchee	34.8	39.5	114%
Willamette	79.3	82.2	104%
Colville	44.7	54.7	122%
Regional Total	632.2	588.8	93%
Regional Target From WO = 610 MMBF			97%
*Target includes Supplemental Hazardous Fuels projects (FWI & WIL)			

AFRC expresses its thanks and appreciation to the Forests that accomplished more than their assigned target from the Regional Office. These Forests include the Gifford Pinchot, Mt. Hood, Olympic, Okanogan-Wenatchee, Willamette, and Colville. Added volume helps support local

infrastructure, jobs in rural communities, and essential services in forested counties. /Ross Mickey

## **A to Z Project Clears First Legal Hurdle**

The North Fork Mill Creek “A to Z” Project on the Colville National Forest cleared its first legal obstacle on October 14, when Judge Rosanna Malouf Peterson denied a motion for preliminary injunction. The project is an innovative, collaboratively-supported effort to treat areas of the forest that are at high risk for insects, disease, and fire.

Many of the forested stands in the project area are so overgrown that the trees have become stunted and are losing vitality. As part of the stewardship contract, Vaagen Bros. provided funding for the NEPA analysis, which was conducted by Cramer Fish Sciences.

The project and nearby Middle/South Fork Mill Creek are expected to produce up to 40 MMBF of volume that will be additive to the Colville’s program. Thus, the projects are key to continued health of northeast Washington’s milling infrastructure, including Vaagen’s mills at Colville and Usk as well as other AFRC members in the region. This project has an unusually wide base of support, including the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition (NEWFC), whose membership includes The Lands Council, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation Northwest, and Kettle Range Conservation Group, local counties, and Members of Congress.

After the project was approved in June, implementation began in early August. A few weeks later, Alliance for the Wild Rockies (AWR) filed suit. AWR claimed the project required an environmental impact statement because of cumulative effects with the nearby Middle/South Project, sediment impacts to fisheries, changes to big game winter range, and other issues. AWR moved for a preliminary injunction in early September.

AFRC intervened in the case on behalf of NEWFC, Pend Oreille County, and Stevens County. AFRC argued strongly that the project was in the public interest due to the risk to the Usk mill, that restoration forestry did not harm the environment, and that supporting collaborative projects was in the public interest. The *Spokesman-Review* [quoted](#) AFRC’s attorney, Lawson Fite, as arguing that the project brought together environmental groups, elected officials and a lumber company to work toward a common goal. “They all agree this land needs restoration,” he said. “This type of collaborative process is in the public interest.”

After a two-hour hearing, Judge Peterson ruled from the bench that the motion for preliminary injunction was denied. Almost immediately, AWR filed a motion for injunction pending appeal with the district court and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. The Ninth Circuit has deferred its ruling until the district court’s ruling, which is expected as early as October 31. In the meantime, weather permitting, project implementation continues. /Lawson Fite

## **AFRC Spearheads Support in Tower/Grizzly Litigation**

Working with collaborative partners and members, AFRC filed an *amicus* (friend of the court) brief supporting the Tower and Grizzly post-fire recovery projects on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest. The Forest Service brought these projects to decision only nine months after the

fires began in 2015, the result of impressive agency initiative and leadership as well as use of important tools including Emergency Situation Determinations (ESDs).

The two fires ignited in August 2015 and were contained in October, and both projects were approved in June 2016. The projects are designed to produce up to 55 MMBF in 10 timber sales. All sales were purchased by September 2016 by AFRC members Idaho Forest Group, Tricon Timber, and Vaagen Bros. Lumber.

Alliance for the Wild Rockies belatedly filed suit and sought a preliminary injunction on October 7. The lawsuit claims that the ESDs for the projects violate regulations, that the Forest Service took insufficient public comment, and that the Forest Service improperly failed to prepare an EIS due to controversy about post-fire logging.

Working with our members and partners, AFRC's attorney submitted an *amicus* brief on October 19 on behalf of the Panhandle Forest Collaborative, Bonner County (ID), Mineral County (MT), and AFRC members. The brief highlighted collaborative support for the project, unusual for salvage projects, which was achieved when the Forest Service agreed to drop some units in old-growth areas. AFRC also highlighted the strong public interest in the project, as the timber volume is essential to supply mills for our members and to support the economies of northwest Montana, northern Idaho, and northeast Washington. AFRC assisted Idaho Conservation League attorneys in the preparation of a separate *amicus* brief supporting the Tower project. The Kootenai Tribe of Idaho also lent its support, filing an *amicus* brief on October 24. Project implementation continues pending a decision by Judge Winmill on the motion for preliminary injunction. /*Lawson Fite*

## **GNA Working in Idaho**

The 2014 Farm Bill and 2014 Consolidated Appropriations Act provided authorities to the Forest Service to enter into contracts and agreements with state agencies to achieve restoration and resilient landscape objectives across ownership boundaries. The Idaho Department of Lands (IDL), Forest Service, and forest products industry in Idaho have partnered to establish a Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) "10-year Master Agreement." The goal of the agreement is to increase the pace and scale of forest and watershed restoration activities on federal forests.

In Idaho, 1.8 million acres of federal forests have been identified as in need of treatment. At the current pace, it will take decades to get these lands treated. The Forest Service, IDL, and the industry all saw advantages of increasing the pace and scale of treatments on federal forests, which led to the Master Agreement. The Forest Service can leverage state resources and efficiencies to increase capacity to accomplish additional work. The IDL can add external capacity to help with the enormous and complex job of restoring National Forests within Idaho. The projects coming from the GNA will be additive volume to help the forest products industry remain a strong partner in achieving forest and community health.

Milestones of the development of the GNA in Idaho included:

- March 2015 - State Senate passed Concurrent Resolution 126 endorsing the exploration of the GNA in Idaho.

- October 2015 - Contractor hired to facilitate the process.
- March 2016 - \$562,000 budget enhancement approved.
- May 2016 - GNA Master Agreement signed by State Forester and Forest Service Regions 1 and 4.
- Forest products industry (Idaho Forest Group, Stimson Lumber, and Clearwater Paper) put up \$1 million as seed money to assist the state in hiring additional people and purchasing needed equipment.
- June 2016 - three additional supplemental project agreements started between IDL and the Forest Service. Those include Wapiti Thin on the Nez Perce-Clearwater, Hanna Flats on the Idaho Panhandle, and additional field capacity added to the Payette for completion of NEPA work.

The 4.4 MMBF Wapiti Thin project was sold in September with a gross value of \$1.54 million. IDL foresters will now administer the project and help plan how the funds generated from the project will be used for further restoration and planning of new projects. The Hanna Flat project will be part of the Idaho Panhandle FY17 program, and the dollars spent on the Payette will directly lead to new forest health projects.

AFRC applauds the State of Idaho for developing a good template for implementing GNA authority. The Association notes that the GNA does not currently permit road reconstruction, which effectively excludes many Forest Service projects from consideration. The inclusion of road reconstruction as an authorized restoration activity with Farm Bill GNA would be beneficial to the success of future projects. / *Tom Partin*

### **Another Fisher Lawsuit**

On October 19, Earthjustice filed a lawsuit in federal district court in San Francisco on behalf of four environmental organizations challenging the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS's) April 18, 2016, decision not to list the [fisher](#) as threatened or endangered. (See [AFRC April 2016 Newsletter](#).) Rather than merely asking the Court to require FWS to reconsider its decision, the plaintiffs are asking the Court to substitute its judgement for that of the agency and order that the species be listed.

As previously noted, FWS's April decision came about in no small part through the voluntary efforts of state and private landowners in Washington, Oregon and northern California to protect millions of acres of fisher habitat. The refusal of the plaintiffs to recognize the gains to be made for not only the fisher but other species of conservation concern through use of cooperation, rather than draconian regulation, is disappointing. AFRC is considering how best to remain involved in this issue. / *Ann Forest Burns*

### **Forest Planning Rule Amendment Proposed**

On October 12, the Forest Service [published](#) a proposed amendment to the 2012 forest planning rule. The amendment is intended to clarify the extent to which amendments to existing forest plans, adopted under the 1982 Planning Rule, must comply with the requirements of the 2012 rule. Unfortunately, a careful reading of the proposed language shows that it is ambiguous and may, in fact, increase confusion and controversy.

The apparent rationale for the amendment has its basis in efforts to amend the Tongass Forest Plan. The question was raised whether this was actually a revision to the plan and therefore must comply with all the requirements of the new planning rule. This issue was brought to the Planning Rule FACA Committee, which worked on a solution, but was unable to reach consensus prior to its sunset in September, 2016. The deadline for comments is November 14. AFRC's comments will be available on our website before the November 14 deadline. */Ann Forest Burns*

## **2017 Wood Innovations Program Request for Proposals**

On October 19, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced the U. S. Department of Agriculture's continued effort to expand wood products and wood energy markets through a grant program. Since its beginnings in 2005, the Wood Innovations Program provides grants "to small businesses, non-profits, tribes, states, and local governments to improve forest health while creating jobs, renewable energy and healthy communities."

The 2017 program, administered through the U.S Forest Service, is expected to offer up to \$7 million in project funding. Projects intended to support sustainable forest management, especially in fire prone areas, while enhancing jobs may be eligible for funding. Projects such as wood energy development, building code revision work, and expansion through business development (for example, planning and marketing) of innovative wood products and mass timber products such as cross laminated timbers (CLT) are eligible for funding. According to the announcement, the program will look to invest in "projects designed to have a long-term impact on National Forests and other forest lands by leveraging the market for low-value wood."

The deadline for proposal submissions is January 23, 2017. More information is available on the [Wood Education and Resource Center](#) website. */Matt Comisky*

## **AFRC Launches Blog**

This month AFRC launched its blog, [Ponderosa](#). The blog will feature AFRC staff "opinion" posts on important and timely issues. Recent posts include reflections on the use of the Antiquities Act and public input, NEPA, cross-laminated timber, and fire borrowing. AFRC will update the blog with weekly posts and hopes to include guest blogs from its members, industry leaders, and other opinion leaders. It's another platform for AFRC to advocate for active management and share more about our association's culture and passion for responsible, active Federal forest management. Check it out at: <http://blog.amforest.org> */Travis Joseph*