



## Washington, DC Update

*Key Interior Appropriations Updates.* It is budget season on Capitol Hill as various administration officials appear before Congressional committees to defend President Trump's Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 budget request. These hearings provide an opportunity for lawmakers to press administration officials on a variety of topics, which can often result in political gotcha moments and fireworks.

On April 29, Interior Secretary Doug Burgum appeared before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and received pushback from Democrats on delays in the approval of renewable energy project permits, including wind and solar. Democrats suggested that Administration efforts to derail these projects threaten bipartisan talks to reach a deal on permitting reform. Secretary Burgum is set to join the House Natural Resources Committee for budget hearings on May 13.

The President's FY 2027 Budget Request for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) would reduce funding for managing the Oregon and California (O&C) Grant Lands from \$115.5 million to \$65.8 million. This level of reduction would make it very difficult for the BLM to increase its timber sale program consistent with President Trump's Executive Orders and the Administration's priorities. The Administration proposed a similar reduction to the O&C program last year, which Congress did not follow.

Forest Service Chief Tom Schultz appeared before the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee on April 16 and its Senate counterpart on April 30. Schultz faced many questions about the Administration's major reorganization of the Forest Service and concerns about impacts to agency staffing, including those holding "red cards" ahead of a what is expected to be a challenging wildfire season. The Forest Service has worked to avoid any change until after this summer. The Chief also heard concerns about the plans to close and consolidate research offices.

The Administration's budget request again proposes to consolidate the Forest Service's wildland fire programs, including wildfire suppression, within the U.S. Wildland Fire Service at the Department of the Interior. Appropriators have been skeptical about this proposal and recently mandated a third-party review and report on potential impacts to the Forest Service, including the timber sale program. The Forest Service has not yet selected a third-party contractor to conduct this review.

The President's FY 2027 budget request for the Forest Service proposes a massive increase for the agency's Forest Products line item, which directly supports the timber sale program, from \$39 million to \$175 million. However, the overall budget request for the National Forest System is down by \$400 million, primarily targeting agency staff and operation costs. Schultz is expected to appear before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on May 13.

During the week of April 27, EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin appeared before three different Congressional committees to defend a budget request that proposes a 50% reduction. While Congress is unlikely to agree to these cuts, the Trump Administration has already reorganized the agency and over 4,000 employees – about 25% of its workforce -- have left the agency. Zeldin also had several heated exchanges with Democrats, including this [tussle](#) with Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), the Ranking Member of the House Appropriations Committee.

*Farm Bill Passes; Woody Biomass in RFS Amendment Fails.* On April 30, the House of Representatives voted 224-200 to pass a five-year farm bill reauthorization, a major win for House Agriculture Chair G.T. Thompson (R-PA) after years of delay. The vote was in doubt until the bill was amended to remove controversial liability protections for pesticide manufacturers. As reported in the [March AFRC Newsletter](#), the House Farm Bill includes a robust forestry title that builds on many proven authorities.

Rep. Cliff Bentz (R-OR) offered an amendment to remove nonsensical restrictions on woody biomass within the federal renewable fuel standard (RFS), including an outright prohibition on materials from federal lands.

Fixing the RFS has been a priority for groups like the National Alliance of Forest Owners, which hopes to create additional markets for biomass and residuals from private forests. The amendment failed by a 210-216 vote due to opposition from environmental groups and the pulp and paper industry, due to concerns about impacts to residual markets. The RFS debate will likely resurface if and when the Senate Agriculture Committee looks to take up its own Farm Bill proposal. /Heath Heikkila

## The AFRC Podcast



***Episode 56: Chief Schultz Takes Us Inside the Forest Service Reorganization***



The [AFRC Podcast](#) is a monthly discussion examining key issues and news relating to forestry, forest products and public lands management.

On Episode 56, we're joined by Forest Service Chief Tom Schultz to discuss the agency's reorganization. The Forest Service is moving leadership out of Washington, D.C., and shifting toward a more state- and field-focused model as National Forest System lands face growing challenges from wildfire and forest health.

Related link: [US Forest Service Reorganization - Myths and Facts](#)

Click here to listen to [Episode 56](#). Our podcast is also available on Spotify and Apple Podcasts

## AFRC Goes to Washington, DC on Earth Day

As part of AFRC's strategic plan to increase our regular and consistent presence in Washington, D.C., Team AFRC and executives of member companies completed a productive and timely trip to the Nation's Capital on Earth Day, representing the real conservationists and stewards of our working forests and public lands.

The trip primarily focused on timber supply constraints in the West, impacts to the existing milling infrastructure and rural communities, and opportunities and solutions to increase active forest management and timber supply consistent with the priorities of the Administration and the Congress.



AFRC met with leaders and decision-makers at the White House, Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Commerce, Department of Agriculture, and U.S. Forest Service.

AFRC and our members were also on Capitol Hill sharing industry updates and priorities with bipartisan Members of the House of Representatives, the Speaker's Office, U.S. Senate, the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, and the House Committee on Natural Resources.

AFRC's ideas and solutions were favorably received by the Administration and Democratic and Republican offices on the Hill. The trip strengthened our access, trust, and credibility with key decision-makers and lawmakers across the political spectrum. We look forward to more trips to Washington, D.C. with our members in the future. /Travis Joseph

## AFRC Completes Record-Breaking 2026 Annual Meeting, “Transformational and Durable”

More than 200 people attended AFRC's 2026 Annual Meeting from April 7-9 at Skamania Lodge in Stevenson, Washington. It was the highest attended event in AFRC's history.

U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Schultz provided the keynote address, focusing his remarks on the [Forest Service Reorganization Plan](#) “to strengthen local leadership, streamline operations, and improve mission delivery.”

The Chief shared his vision and optimism for an agency that is taking a common sense, back-to-basics approach of active forest management, increasing timber harvests, improving wildfire prevention, and providing world-class access and recreation to the American public.

Attendees also heard from exceptional speakers about: the new Shared Stewardship agreement in Montana; the future of public engagement and NEPA implementation on public lands; science trends to



inform active forest management and conservation goals; an update on markets, milling infrastructure, and log supply in the West; and federal and state elected lawmakers engaged in forest policy.

During the Annual Meeting banquet, Chuck Roady was recognized with AFRC's Tillicum Award for his extraordinary, consistent, and impactful leadership and service to the forest products industry and rural communities. And, for the first time ever, two teams tied for top honors at the AFRC Golf Open, shooting 11-under par.



Team AFRC extends a huge thank you to this year's speakers and participants, as well as our thirteen [Event Sponsors](#), another record set that allows AFRC to continue strengthening and expanding Annual Meeting

*Photos, clockwise: record-breaking attendance at Skamania Lodge; Chief Tom Schultz; Shared Stewardship panelists; U.S. Rep. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez*

participation. If you missed it, mark your calendar. We'll be back at Skamania Lodge for AFRC's 2027 Annual Meeting, April 13-15.

**AFRC Board of Directors Elects New Officers.** On April 9, the AFRC Board of Directors elected Paul McKenzie (F.H. Stoltze) as the new Chair of the Board; Jay Sandmann (Boise Cascade) as the new Vice Chair of the Board; and Payton Smith (Southport) as the new Secretary/Treasurer of the Board. Each officer was elected to a two-year term in AFRC leadership.

Sean Smith (Starfire) completed three years as AFRC's Chair and will remain on the Executive Committee. Sean's service, leadership, and advice helped guide AFRC through dynamic times, growth, and capitalizing on opportunity. He was also recognized at the Annual Meeting. /Travis Joseph

### **Forest Service 1<sup>st</sup> Half Accomplishments**

First half timber accomplishments for Regions 1, 5, and 6 are summarized below. It's a positive sign that both Regions 5 and 6 were close to 50% attainment of their assigned targets halfway through the fiscal year. Another positive sign is the sawtimber percentage comprising the accomplishments for Region 5; that component was only 50% and 62% for fiscal years 2025 and 2024 respectively. Increased levels of sawtimber volume to support the forest products industry in California was a priority for AFRC and its

members over the past two years; it's encouraging to see the first half trends respond to those local industry needs.

<b>USFS - Region 1 - FY26</b>			
<b>Target - 394 MMBF</b>			
<b>Forest</b>	<b>Target (MMBF)</b>	<b>Sold</b>	<b>% Accomplishment</b>
Idaho Panhandle	101.0	32.7	32%
Nez-Clear	79.0	16.6	21%
Kootenai	58.0	3.4	6%
Lolo	60.0	45.2	75%
Flathead	36.0	11.1	31%
Bitterroot	25.0	1.3	5%
B-D	15.0	7.9	53%
Helena-Lewis & Clark	20.0	2.8	14%
Custer-Gallatin	11.0	1.7	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>405</b>	<b>122.7</b>	<b>37%</b>
	GNA Volume	40.1	
	No Bid Volume	15.3	
	Percent Sawtimber	81%	

<b>USFS - Region 5 - FY26</b>			
<b>Target - 393 MMBF</b>			
<b>Forest</b>	<b>Target (MMBF)</b>	<b>Sold</b>	<b>% Accomplishment</b>
Eldorado	18.0	12.7	71%
Plumas	45.0	21.0	47%
Lake Tahoe Basin	9.0	7.4	82%
Tahoe	69.0	26.5	38%
Klamath	40.0	16.9	42%
Lassen	52.0	15.1	29%
Shasta-Trinity	48.0	18.7	39%
Mendocino	2.0	0.2	10%
Modoc	25.0	13.2	53%
Six Rivers	15.0	10.1	67%
Sequoia	9.0	4.3	48%
Sierra	20.0	13.4	67%
Stanislaus	38.0	16.8	44%
Inyo	3.0	0.1	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>176.4</b>	<b>45%</b>
	GNA Volume	0.4	
	No Bid Volume	45.8	
	Percent Sawtimber	81%	

<b>USFS - Region 6 - FY26</b>			
<b>Target - 622 MMBF</b>			
<b>Forest</b>	<b>Target (MMBF)</b>	<b>Sold</b>	<b>% Accomplishment</b>
Colville	131.0	60.6	46%
Deschutes	24.0	17.5	73%
Fremont-Winema	100.0	63.8	64%
Gifford Pinchot	36.0	18.5	51%
Malheur	35.0	6.9	20%
Mt Baker-Snoqualmie	10.0	0.2	2%
Mt Hood	26.0	23.9	92%
Ochoco	10.0	5.7	57%
Okanogan-Wenatchee	30.0	9.0	30%
Olympic	10.0	2.1	21%
Rogue River-Siskiyou	25.0	20.1	80%
Siuslaw	40.0	22.3	56%
Umatilla	35.0	15.0	43%
Umpqua	30.0	9.7	32%
Wallowa Whitman	20.0	9.4	47%
Willamette	60.0	14.1	24%
<b>Total</b>	<b>622.0</b>	<b>298.8</b>	<b>48%</b>
	GNA Volume	10.6	
	No Bid Volume	12.6	
	Percent Sawtimber	88%	

Nationally, the Forest Service has attained 43% of its 3.2 billion board foot target through the first half of the fiscal year. Regions 1, 5, and 6 have contributed almost 50% of that total. /*Andy Geissler*

### **Western Oregon BLM 1<sup>st</sup> Half Accomplishments**

First half timber accomplishments, and second half expectations, for the Western Oregon BLM timber sale program are summarized below. So far, the BLM has offered and awarded 19 timber sales for a total of 126 million board feet (MMBF), representing roughly 44% of the year's planned volume. While the Agency is tracking behind in their attainment, we remain confident that the Agency will achieve their stated target of 290 MMBF. This target would represent a high-water mark since FY2021 when the Agency underwent a significant salvage effort following the 2020 Labor Day Fires.

<b>BLM FY2026 Timber Target Achievement as of 04/01/2026</b>				
<i>Values Listed in MMBF</i>				
<b>District SYU</b>	<b>Timber Target</b>	<b>ASQ Contribution</b>	<b>2026 Attainment To-Date</b>	<b>% Attained</b>
<b>Eugene</b>	76	66	47	62%
<b>Salem</b>	84	84	21	25%
<b>Medford</b>	56	32	26	46%
<b>Roseburg</b>	35	21	12	35%
<b>Coos Bay</b>	32	10	20	63%
<b>Klamath Falls*</b>	4	4	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>44%</b>
<i>* Indicates no sale plan posted as of 05/06/2026</i>				

In terms of green timber sale volume, this is the largest offering since the 2016 RMPs were finalized. The Agency plans to offer another 29 timber sales in 2026 for a total volume of 171 MMBF. /Corey Bingaman

### **Direct Attack and Active Management Lead 2026 USFS Fire Strategy**

On April 30, U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Schultz released the agency’s [2026 Fire Letter of Intent](#) with a focus on readiness, direct attack, and performance in the field. The letter typically serves as the agency’s annual direction heading into wildfire season and sets expectations for how the workforce will prepare and respond. Last year, despite recording the highest number of wildfire starts on national forests since 2016, the agency held total acres burned to nearly half the 10-year average.

Once again, the 2026 letter places a strong emphasis on direct attack. Early suppression remains one of the most effective ways to protect communities and limit fire spread. It also helps reduce long-term impacts to forests, watersheds, and natural resources. Quick action at initial attack can shape the outcome of an incident.

The letter also reinforces the importance of proactive forest management. In his letter, Chief Schultz calls for sustained work to address hazardous fuels and reduce risk across the landscape. Active management supports healthier forests and gives firefighters better conditions when fires occur. It also helps sustain the workforce and infrastructure needed to carry out this work at scale.

The letter points to the importance of strong partnerships. One example he cites is the ongoing work with AFRC member Sierra Pacific Industries to [create fuel breaks](#) on national forests and nearby private lands. This collaboration shows how federal managers and private operators can work together to move projects forward and deliver results. It supports forest health, community protection, and the capacity needed to get work done.

The letter also speaks directly to concerns about readiness. Despite questions raised in the news media and by some members of Congress, Chief Schultz contends that staffing levels are strong as the wildfire season begins. He said the Forest Service surpassed its hiring target for operational firefighters, expanded premium pay incentives, and issued more than 22,000 red cards.

Active management and immediate response are essential to protecting forests and the communities that depend on them. AFRC appreciates Chief Schultz’s leadership and his continued focus on proactive management, direct attack, and strong partnerships that deliver results on the ground. /*Nick Smith*

## **Oregon District Court Denies Preliminary Injunction on the BLM’s Last Chance Project**

On April 9, Judge Kasubhai of the Oregon District Court issued an [order](#) denying Plaintiffs Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center et al.’s Motion for Preliminary Injunction in the litigation challenging the Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM) Last Chance Forest Management Project (the Project). *See Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center et al. v. Burgum et al.*, No. 1:25-cv-2296 (D. Or.) (Filed Dec. 9, 2025). Murphy Company, individually, and AFRC, jointly with the Association of O&C Counties, intervened in defense of the Project. *See [March 2026 Newsletter](#)*. The Court granted AFRC’s motion to intervene on March 13, 2026. Murphy Company purchased the Paul’s Payoff Timber Sale, and Boise Cascade purchased the Take a Chance Timber Sale under the Project.

Plaintiffs challenged the Project under the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). However, Plaintiffs only moved for a preliminary injunction based on its ESA and FLPMA claims, which concern the northern spotted owl and the northwestern pond turtle, respectively.

Plaintiffs sought injunctive relief for three alleged violations of the ESA. First, Plaintiffs alleged that the BLM and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) failed to rely on the best available science when conducting northern spotted owl surveys. The primary issue in dispute was when to consider a specific area occupied by the northern spotted owl or when to attribute an observation of an owl to a “floater owl” that did not reside in the area.

Plaintiffs pointed to the Appel study, which used the passive acoustic monitoring scientific technique to conclude that when an owl is detected there is a 72 percent likelihood that the owl belongs to a resident pair. Plaintiffs attempted to rely on the Appel study to interpret the results from a different survey technique, callback surveys, used by the federal agencies.

Federal Defendants and Intervenors explained that those techniques were not directly comparable. During the preliminary injunction hearing, the Government called a wildlife biologist to the stand to testify as to the differences between passive acoustic monitoring and callback surveys. In the order denying the preliminary injunction, the Court concluded that the agencies were entitled to deference on the scientific methods used and recognized that one technique could not necessarily inform the other.

Second, the Court also held that FWS and the BLM adequately explained why there will be “no take” from the Project even if there is a risk that some of the “floater owls” are residents because continued surveys will allow BLM to avoid incidental take of northern spotted owls.

Lastly, the Court agreed with Plaintiff that there were serious questions about whether the BLM’s Project is arbitrary and capricious for exceeding the scope of FWS’s Biological Opinion but held that injunctive relief was not warranted. The Court acknowledged that the BLM analyzed impacts to more acres in its Environmental Assessment than FWS did in its Biological Opinion. Although the Federal Government explained that the discrepancy was due to overcounting, the Court questioned whether that explanation was an improper post-hoc rationalization.

Nevertheless, the Court held that injunctive relief was not appropriate because Plaintiffs had not shown irreparable harm from the acreage discrepancy. The Court reasoned that the Decision Records authorizing specific timber sales under the Project offer evidence that the Project will not exceed the scope of the Biological Opinion.

With respect to Plaintiffs' FLPMA claim, Plaintiffs alleged that the BLM violated its 2016 Resource Management Plan (RMP) because the agency had not undertaken sufficient mitigation efforts to protect the northwestern pond turtle, which is a "bureau sensitive species." The Court determined that the BLM's RMP does not require any specific mitigation planning beyond responding to specific threats that would cause the species to be listed under the ESA. The Court acknowledged the BLM's mitigation efforts were sufficient. Specifically, the BLM designed the Project to avoid the turtle's overwintering habitat by imposing buffers on perennial streams and imposing seasonal restrictions.

AFRC is grateful that, as a result of the Court's order, important operations under the Project can move forward while the underlying merits of the lawsuit are litigated. AFRC looks forward to continuing to defend the Project for the duration of the litigation. /Greg Hibbard

### **AFRC Moves to Intervene in Defense of Multiple Forest Service Projects in Idaho**

On April 23, AFRC [moved to intervene](#) in the litigation challenging eight Forest Service projects on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest. *Friends of the Clearwater v. Word, et. al.*, No. 3:25-cv-00567 (D. Idaho) (Filed on October 3, 2025). Plaintiff, Friends of the Clearwater, is challenging a group of six projects for the first time: Clear Creek Integrated Restoration Project; Dixie-Comstock Community Protection Project; Green Horse Project; Limber Elk Project; Red Siegel Project; and the Twentymile Project (collectively, Six Projects).

Plaintiff is also challenging the second iteration of two projects that it previously challenged: the Hungry Ridge Project and the End of the World Project. Plaintiff challenges the eight projects under the Administrative Procedure Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Forest Management Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the Healthy Forests Restoration Act.

The Six Projects were individually authorized between 2023 and 2024 through a variety of mechanisms, including an EIS/Record of Decision (Clear Creek), environmental assessments/findings of no significant impacts (Dixie-Comstock, Green Horse, and Twentymile), and categorical exclusions (Limber Elk and Red Siegel). Twentymile, Green Horse, Dixie-Comstock, and Limber Elk were also authorized under emergency actions or exemptions due primarily to wildfire threats. The purposes of the Six Projects include: restoring forest structure to support various habitats; reducing fuels; promoting forest resiliency to fire, insects, and disease; improving public and firefighter safety; and contributing to the economy of rural communities.

The End of the World Project was originally approved under an environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact and the Hungry Ridge Project was previously approved under an EIS/Record of Decision. Both projects are similarly important forest health and fuel reduction projects. AFRC intervened in defense of those projects in the first round of litigation in September 2021. Plaintiff prevailed in that matter, and the District Court of Idaho remanded both projects for further analysis to address old growth and cumulative effects. After completing an EIS for the End of the World Project, the Forest Service issued a new Record of Decision in January 2025. For the Hungry Ridge Project, the Forest Service supplemented its EIS and issued a new Record of Decision in December 2024. Following

additional analysis for each project, the Court dissolved the injunction in March 2025. See [April 2025 Newsletter](#).

This litigation has a very large scope and implicates approximately 329 million board feet (MMBF) of timber volume under the eight projects. To date, AFRC member Idaho Forest Group has purchased six sales under the challenged projects that will generate approximately 51.5 MMBF: the Clear Corral Integrated Resource Timber Contract (Clear Creek Integrated Restoration Project); the Sad Sob Timber Sale (Green Horse Project); the Horse Fall Timber Sale (Green Horse Project); the Jungle Badger Good Neighbor Authority Timber Sale (Red Seigel Project); the Limber Elk Timber Sale (Limer Elk Project); and the American Iron Timber Sale (Limer Elk Project). AFRC member Associated Logging Contractors, Inc. of Idaho, will also be impacted by this litigation given that its members are likely to be contracted to assist in implementing the various timber sales under the challenged projects.

Because Plaintiff indicated that it opposes AFRC's motion, there will likely be briefing on the motion before the Court issues a decision. Regardless of the timing, AFRC is hopeful that it will be able to participate in the litigation and defend the important work planned under the challenged projects. /Greg Hibbard

### **AFRC Meets with North Idaho and Montana Forests**

During April, AFRC staff and members held forest monitoring meetings with all nine National Forests formerly within Region 1. With the transition away from regional offices, the Forests will now report to State Directors. There will be eleven State Directors nationally, including positions in Helena and Boise, each supported by a small staff.

The meetings were productive, with a clear focus on treating larger landscapes and increasing timber outputs. Several forests are ramping up planned volumes. Key updates include:

*Bitterroot and Lolo National Forests:* The Bitterroot recently entered into a Shared Stewardship agreement with the State of Montana to treat more than 200,000 acres through the West Fork project, with expected volume of about 37 MMBF. The Montana DNRC has sold the first project. The Bitterroot is also advancing the Bitterroot Front G-Z project. The Lolo is on pace to meet its 59 MMBF target, with seven projects already sold totaling 45 MMBF. The Forest is also evaluating a shared stewardship project along the Idaho Montana border. A December wind event caused damage across multiple sales, with significant blowdown in leave trees.

*Beaverhead-Deerlodge, Custer-Gallatin, and Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forests:* These forests are proposing a Tri-Forest Sustained Yield Unit covering nearly 900,000 acres to support a predictable timber supply for regional manufacturers. The combined allowable sale quantity is 51 MMBF. The first 35 MMBF sold annually would be directed to facilities within the unit. About 25 manufacturing facilities operate in this area and depend on this supply.

*Flathead and Kootenai National Forests:* Both are participating in a 200,000-acre Shared Stewardship agreement with the State of Montana, with initial projects already moving forward. The Flathead is adjusting following a recent court decision that halted work on four timber sales and is shifting to other projects to meet its 38 MMBF target. The Kootenai expects to sell 51 MMBF, with most volume scheduled later in the fiscal year. Both forests are addressing significant infrastructure damage and blowdown from winter storms, with several million board feet already salvaged.

*Idaho Panhandle and Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests:* Both forests have increased planned timber volumes, in part due to salvage from recent blowdown. The Idaho Panhandle expects to sell about 127 MMBF, which would be among its highest levels in recent years. The Nez Perce-Clearwater is developing the large End of the World G-Z project near Grangeville, with potential volume of up to 200 MMBF, and is planning additional salvage work. The Forest expects to sell around 90 MMBF this year.

AFRC and its members appreciate the work underway to expand active management and deliver a more reliable timber supply. We look forward to continuing this progress at our next round of meetings to be held later this fall. */Tom Partin*