



Washington, DC Update

Congress approves spending measures. On September 1, the House voted 370-48 to approve the Senate-passed Continuing Resolution (CR), H.R. 6500, and President Donald Trump signed it into law the next day. The CR funds the government through December 11, allowing Congress to avoid a government shutdown while punting on finalizing Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 appropriations until well after the November mid-term elections.

The CR funds agencies at their FY 2026 baseline budget levels, blocks a new Trump Administration rule related to federal grants, and places limits on defense spending or defense equipment contracts that exceed current funding levels. These latter provisions were secured by Senate Democrats.

The House and Senate are both set to return to D.C. the week of September 14, although many members will likely be more focused on holding campaign fundraisers. With Congress struggling to advance major legislation due to the narrow Republican majority in the House, major legislative efforts like the Farm Bill or Surface Transportation Bill are unlikely to advance before the election and may see short term extensions of expiring programs.

House Republicans recently announced that the House will no longer be in session the weeks of September 21 and 28, which will give members additional time to be in their districts campaigning.

Forest Service pares down facility closure list. On September 3, the US Department of Agriculture [announced](#) the results of an internal review of potential closures of Forest Service facilities as part of the agency's restructuring effort. Earlier this year, the agency announced that it would retain 20 research and development facilities while evaluating 57 for potential closure. Similar to proposals to close military bases, the announcement was met with opposition from Congress, negative media coverage, and concerns from within the agency.

According to the announcement, "Sixty-four locations were ultimately reviewed, and, after careful evaluation, the agency determined that 41 additional facilities will be retained. Twenty-three sites with little to no staffing were identified for closure. Employees at these affected locations will transition to other facilities within local commuting areas, allowing the agency to consolidate its physical footprint while retaining the people, the research, and the expertise needed to carry out its mission." A list of the facilities is available at the Forest Service's [reorganization webpage](#).

The 23 sites identified for closure will save the agency more than \$16 million: \$8.8 million in annual lease savings and more than \$8 million in deferred maintenance savings. The Forest Service is still reviewing other National Forest System facilities and operations of the agency as part of its broader facilities review in an effort to improve fiscal solvency.

Here in the Pacific Northwest, Forest Service research facilities in Seattle, Wenatchee, Moscow, Boise, Bozeman, and Hungry Horse, Montana avoided closures. Several smaller facilities in California will close. The Forest Service still plans to close its regional office in Portland as part of its reorganization and shift to a state-based leadership model. /Heath Heikkila

The AFRC Podcast



Episode 60: BRC's Ben Burr- Restoring public lands access for all Americans



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

Episode 60 features Ben Burr, executive director of the BlueRibbon Coalition, a national organization that advocates for recreation and public access to our public lands. Ben grew up around logging and firefighting and brings that experience to many of the public lands debates happening today. We'll talk about the proposed rescission of the Roadless Rule, why access matters for recreation, forest management and firefighting, and the role litigation plays in delaying projects on our national forests. We'll also discuss efforts to reform federal policies and what Ben sees ahead for the future of our public lands.

Click here to listen to Episode 60. Our podcast is also available on Spotify and Apple Podcasts

Registration Open: Federal Timber Purchasers Coalition (FTPC) Fall Meeting

Registration is open for the 2026 Fall Federal Timber Purchasers Coalition (FTPC) Meeting on October 20-22 in Rapid City, South Dakota.

The Fall Meeting builds on the success and momentum of the Spring FTPC Meeting hosted in Denver, Colorado in May when more than 70 participants from around the country met with Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management leadership to improve communication, partnership, and ultimately – on the ground stewardship – of federal forests and public lands.

The Fall FTPC Meeting will feature a field day to the Black Hills National Forest to see and discuss opportunities and solutions in the forest; an industry-only meeting to discuss regional and national priorities for contractors; and a day of joint meetings and conversations with agency leadership and decision-makers to improve the essential partnership between federal land managers and the people and businesses that do the work on the ground.

FTPC Members can register for the Fall Meeting by visiting FTPC's updated website [here](#). To become a member of the Federal Timber Purchasers Coalition, please contact Travis Joseph (tjoseph@amforest.org). /Travis Joseph

Sawtooth National Forest Proposes First Use of Nationwide Post-Fire Recovery EA

In June, the Forest Service released a [national post-fire recovery environmental assessment \(EA\)](#) to serve as a guide for local units to refer to as a starting point for developing site-specific salvage and recovery projects.

The EA does not authorize any action itself but instead is designed to serve as a template to streamline the analysis process for salvage activities where expediency is integral to success. Last month, the Sawtooth National Forest in Idaho issued a Decision using this EA to authorize hazardous fuels reduction, timber harvest, and essential road work to support post-fire recovery in the 2024 Wapiti Fire area, making it the first National Forest to utilize the nationwide EA.

While several post-fire actions have already occurred following the Wapiti Fire, substantial portions of the burned area within the Sawtooth National Recreation Area still require additional recovery work as fire-damaged trees continue to pose a hazard to the public and bark beetle proliferation threatens partially burned stands. Proposed activities across the 1,100-acre project area include timber salvage, hazardous fuels reduction, and hazard tree removal.

The work associated with the project has been approved as an authorized emergency action under Section 40807 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. More information on the project can be found [here](#). /Andy Geissler

Boise National Forest Moves Into Action

The Boise National Forest is putting the Forest Service's new Active Forest Management Strategy (AFMS) into practice by finding ways to overcome implementation challenges to accomplish more needed forest management on the ground.

Following Executive Order 14225 and the development of the national AFMS in 2025, the Forest developed a forest wide implementation strategy covering timber sale design and preparation, contracting, environmental compliance, biomass utilization and communications. The strategy also prioritizes reducing wildfire risk, supporting rural economies and the forest products industry, leveraging partnerships, and modernizing Forest Service systems.

The Ola Summit project on the Emmett Ranger District provides an example of that strategy at work. The project was analyzed in 2018 under a Healthy Forests Restoration Act categorical exclusion to address forest health and hazardous fuels in a popular recreation area. Implementation was originally planned for 2021, but the timber sale received no bids several times because of its location and the size and species of material required for removal. A local logging contractor eventually purchased the sale in 2024.

In 2025, the contractor notified the Boise National Forest that low removal volumes per acre made it impossible to complete the work as originally designed. Rather than allowing the project to stall, the District used tools identified through the AFMS to reevaluate the treatment.



The District determined that the original prescription retaining 75 square feet of basal area would not adequately achieve the forest health and hazardous fuels objectives analyzed in the Ola Summit decision. The prescription was revised and the timber sale contract modified, increasing the volume available for removal while meeting the project's silvicultural and fuel break objectives.

The result, shown in the photo (*left*), demonstrates how greater flexibility can help Forest Service personnel respond to conditions on the ground, keep projects moving, and accomplish needed forest management. *Irene Jerome*

Western States Bolster GNA Programs

The Good Neighbor Authority (GNA), authorized under the 2014 Farm Bill, has enabled states to partner with federal agencies to manage federal lands using state personnel, procedures, and contracting authorities. Washington, Idaho and Montana have emerged as national leaders in using GNA to help the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) plan and implement forest management projects more efficiently.

All three states have put together impressive GNA timber sale programs for Fiscal Year 2026.

Idaho. The Idaho Department of Lands has sold 37.5 million board feet (MMBF) of GNA timber this fiscal year, with several additional sales scheduled for auction in September. If those sales are successful, Idaho's FY 2026 total would reach 64.3 MMBF. Adam Ivey was recently appointed GNA Bureau Chief. AFRC also works closely with Ed Wingert, GNA Program Manager for Northern Operations, who works with Region 1 National Forests in Idaho.

Montana. The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) expects to have 72 MMBF of GNA sawlog volume under contract by the end of FY 2026. Chloe Munden serves as GNA Bureau Chief and Sarah Lyngholm as Program Manager. Governor Greg Gianforte has set a goal for Montana DNRC to sell 100 MMBF of GNA timber annually.

Washington. The Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has sold 21.963 MMBF of GNA timber this fiscal year. Additional sales are scheduled for September that could bring the state's FY 2026 total to 24.792 MMBF. Tom Frantz serves as DNR's Federal Lands Program Manager.

Together, these three states have sold or are on track to sell more than 150 MMBF through GNA in FY 2026. Timber sales are only part of the work being accomplished. GNA projects also support noncommercial treatments and other resource improvements that help federal agencies address forest health and hazardous fuels.

But the scale of the challenge is much larger. The Forest Service and BLM need to treat millions of acres, and the GNA program will need to grow significantly if it is going to help federal agencies increase the pace and scale of forest management.

Two improvements would help states, counties, and tribes accomplish more work through GNA. Congress should allow limited road construction and reconstruction under GNA agreements and allow counties and tribes to retain and reinvest timber receipts generated by GNA projects, as states currently can.

AFRC strongly encourages Congress to advance these improvements, whether through the Fix Our Forests Act currently being considered in the Senate or through reauthorization of the Farm Bill.

AFRC applauds the states that have embraced GNA and partnered with federal agencies to get more work done on the ground. These partnerships are demonstrating how GNA can increase forest management while providing timber to support the forest products infrastructure and rural communities that depend on it. */Tom Partin*

Forest Service Issues Proposed Rule and Draft EIS to Rescind the Roadless Rule

The Forest Service has issued a proposed rule and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) that would rescind the 2001 Roadless Rule which has largely prohibited active forest management across millions of acres for the past 25 years. The stated purpose of the rescission is to reduce regulatory burden and return land management decision-making for Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRA) to local Forest Service officials. The proposed action would remove IRA designation from 44.7 million acres, or about 23% of all National Forest System (NFS) lands.

Approximately a quarter of those acres outside of Alaska overlap “high priority firesheds” where wildfire poses the most significant risk to communities, infrastructure, and natural resources. The 2022 Wildfire Crisis Strategy called for fuels and forest management activities, including mechanical thinning and prescribed fire on these firesheds. The Proposed Action would allow the greatest flexibility to manage wildfire within IRAs while also providing increased opportunities for wildfire risk mitigation activities. While such risk reduction is difficult to quantify, the DEIS indicates that any form of wildfire risk mitigation would provide meaningful benefits to the public through protection of homes, infrastructure, and drinking water supplies.

The origin of the Roadless Rule is rooted in the Wilderness Act of 1964. Following passage of the Act, the Forest Service conducted a review of areas suitable for wilderness designation, known as the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE). Through this process, roughly 111 million acres of wilderness have been designated. However, only Congress is authorized to designate wilderness areas, and many of the areas identified in the RARE process did not receive congressional designation. The Roadless Rule created a mechanism to circumvent the congressional designation process. In essence, IRAs are de facto Wilderness areas that don’t require an act of Congress to be established but are still afforded similar protections as congressionally designated wilderness.

The DEIS analyzes two action alternatives. One would rescind the Roadless Rule in its entirety. The other would modify the prohibitions of the Rule on a subset of IRAs (31.7 million acres) that are limited to the Tongass National Forest, areas adjacent to existing roads, and within areas identified as wildland urban interface (WUI). If the Forest Service adopts one of the action alternatives, management of the affected acres would default back to the underlying Land Management Plan (LMP) standards and guidelines.

The specific impacts of a complete or partial rescission can only be estimated since new road construction and active forest management are constrained by funding, operability, and the underlying LMP direction. However, the DEIS estimates that it is likely that the action alternatives would result in an increase in treatment areas and timber volume harvested. The Intermountain Region (Region 4) presents the greatest potential area for timber harvest with 1.5 million acres impacted, followed by the Northern Region (Region 1) at approximately 841,000 acres impacted.

The Forest Service is currently accepting public comment on the Proposed Rule and DEIS. Comments are due September 21. Information on the Rule, including how to comment, can be found [here](#). /Andy Geissler

Draft EIS Published for the Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision

The Forest Service has released a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) that analyzes the impacts of revising the Land Management Plans (LMP) for the Umatilla, Malheur, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests.

A previous planning effort failed to revise these plans following the withdrawal of the analysis and all planning documents in 2019. The renewed revision process began in 2023 with an assessment of the current conditions on each National Forest. Following finalization of the DEIS the Forest Service will issue a Decision authorizing the new LMPs that would govern approximately 5.5 million acres across eastern Oregon and southeastern Washington. The LMPs being revised are over 35 years old. The National Forest Management Act requires that Plans be revised at least every 15 years.

The DEIS considers two action alternatives with alternative 2 identified as the Proposed Action. The Desired Conditions outlined in the DEIS are largely driven by the “natural range of variability (NRV).” NRV describes a spectrum of forest seral stages that are estimated to reflect the state of the forested landscape over time. That spectrum includes stand initiation, stem exclusion, understory reinitiation, old forest single story, and old forest multi-story. The goal is for the full spectrum of structure, from young stand to old stand, to be represented in the forested environment. Active forest management, including timber harvest, would be designed to either maintain NRV if the forested environment is aligned with the spectrum or attain NRV if the forested environment is misaligned with the spectrum.

Oddly, the DEIS only proposes standards and guidelines directed at one portion of this spectrum: old forest. It is unclear why the Forest Service has identified a need to only establish requirements directed at old forest while ignoring the need for directives designed to attain additional portions of NRV such as young forest. Despite this omission, it is encouraging that the Proposed Action replaces the Eastside Screens standard, particularly the “21-inch rule” that has hampered attainment of desired results for the past 30 years due to the prohibition of harvesting any live tree over 21 inches in diameter. Instead, revised directives provide discretion for local land managers to manage for old forest conditions free of arbitrary constraints such as diameter limits.

Both action alternatives would increase probable timber sale quantities (PTSQ) on each of the three National Forests. These PTSQ levels are a function of modified standards and guidelines as well as an increased suitable timber base. Additionally, the higher PTSQs in the Proposed Action reflect an assumption that the 2001 Roadless Rule would be rescinded and existing Inventoried Roadless Areas would be available for management. It should be noted that PTSQs are not binding Plan directives, merely estimations of the amount of timber that “may” be harvested.

Annual Probable Timber Sale Quantity (MMBF)			
	Current Plan	Proposed Action	Alternative 3
Malheur	46	163	66
Umatilla	24	76	34
Wallowa-Whitman	38	125	61

The Forest Service is currently accepting public comments on the DEIS. Comments are due September 30. Interested stakeholders should be aware that the current comment period on the DEIS represents the final opportunity to establish standing during the subsequent Objection process. There will be no additional comment opportunities following the publication of the Final EIS. Information on the Plan revision, including the DEIS, can be found [here](#). /Andy Geissler

Akawa Butte Post Fire Rehabilitation Field Trip

The Akawa Butte Fire was first reported on July 16 following a significant dry lightning event. High winds and low relative humidity drove rapid fire growth, with the fire exceeding 10,000 acres in two days and reaching 27,000 acres within a week. By mid-August, firefighters had fully contained the fire at 27,491 acres, including approximately 12,000 acres on the Sisters Ranger District.

Recognizing the limited window to salvage fire killed ponderosa pine before staining and degradation reduce its commercial value, District staff quickly brought local purchasers and contractors into the burned area to assess salvage opportunities. The District estimates approximately 3,200 commercial acres were affected, along with another 1,300 acres of mixed commercial viability along roadways.

Unfortunately, the fire heavily impacted two District planning areas: the Sisters Canyon Active Restoration Project (SCARP) and Cougar Rock Restoration Project. These



projects were expected to provide several years of commercial timber sales while reducing fuels and improving wildfire resilience in forests that have experienced little or no disturbance over the past 80 years. While it is disappointing that these treatments could not be implemented before the fire, much of the resource survey work needed for the projects has already been completed. This should help the Forest move more quickly with post fire salvage planning.

The Sisters Ranger District plans to use the recently approved National Post Fire Recovery Environmental Assessment to analyze salvage and other recovery activities within the Akawa Butte Fire footprint. The conditions based EA does not authorize specific salvage activities. Instead, the Forest's interdisciplinary team must evaluate conditions on the ground and complete a site specific effects analysis for proposed actions consistent with the activities and effects analyzed in the nationwide EA. Proposed actions must also comply

with existing Forest Plan standards and guidelines. With much of the necessary resource work already completed in this area, the District should be well positioned to move through this process efficiently.

The Sisters Ranger District will host a public meeting to discuss recovery plans for areas affected by the Akawa Butte Fire on Monday, September 14, beginning at 5:30 p.m. The meeting will be held at the new District office at 201 North Pine Street in Sisters. Participants may also watch the presentation online by preregistering [here](#). /Corey Bingaman

Washington Superior Court Upholds Type Np Stream Buffer Rule but Stays Rule on Appeal

In November 2025, the Washington State Forest Practices Board (Board) adopted a rule significantly expanding buffers that prevent harvest along non-fish-bearing, perennial (Type Np) streams (2025 Type Np Rule). The previous buffer rule, adopted in 2001, arose out of the 1999 Forests and Fish Report and required 50-foot buffers for specific portions of Type Np streams.

The Forests and Fish Report was negotiated over a period of two years to govern Washington forestry practices while serving multiple purposes: contribute to salmon recovery; comply with federal law obligations like the Endangered Species Act and the Clean Water Act; and protect the economic viability of the timber industry. The process purported to result in “permanent rules.”

However, the 2025 Type Np Rule expands the previous rule generally to require a 75-foot buffer along each side of a Type Np stream for a 150-foot buffer total. The 2025 Type Np Rule was developed through an adaptive management process to improve habitat for salmon and other species. Due to the number of Type Np streams in Washington, the 2025 Rule is expected to remove over 200,000 acres from harvest on private lands.

The Washington Forest Protection Association and Washington Farm Forestry Association (collectively, Petitioners) challenged the 2025 Type Np Rule in the Thurston County Superior Court the same month it was adopted. See *Washington Farm Forestry Association et al. v. State Forest Practices Board et al.*, No. 25-2-05763-34 (Filed Nov. 26, 2025). The Washington Conservation Action Fund and Conservation Northwest intervened together in defense of the 2025 Type Np Rule. AFRC participated by submitting an [amicus curiae brief](#) in support of Petitioners and the 2025 Type Np Rule. AFRC highlighted the disastrous economic, environmental, and public safety impacts that will result from the 2025 Type Np Rule without the intended benefit.

AFRC emphasized the outsized importance that private timberlands have on the timber industry in Washington and that the University of Washington estimated that the 2025 Type Np Rule will immediately eliminate \$2.8 billion in harvestable timber value on private lands. AFRC provided further context on the university study and described the additional impacts that will burden the industry and rural communities in Washington. AFRC also highlighted the dangers in undercutting the 1999 Forests and Fish collaborative process and the wildfire risk that the 2025 Type Np Rule poses. Seventeen counties, ports, school districts, fire and emergency service districts, and local business organizations (including Lewis County, Pacific County, Skamania County, and Port of Port Angeles) also submitted a joint [amicus curiae brief](#) in support of Petitioners and provided further information on the detrimental impacts that the 2025 Type Np Rule will have on communities.

Petitioners brought nine challenges against the 2025 Type Np Rule. At oral argument on August 21, they focused on three primary arguments: the Board exceeded its statutory authority, violated the

Administrative Procedure Act’s rulemaking requirements, and failed to comply with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). First, Petitioners argued that the Board misinterpreted and misapplied the Department of Ecology’s water antidegradation regulations as a justification for the 2025 Type Np Rule. Second, they argued that the Board failed to consider a least burdensome alternative. Lastly, Petitioners argued that the Board failed to disclose and evaluate environmental impacts and failed to respond to public comment under SEPA.

Judge Christine Schaller ruled from the bench and upheld the 2025 Type Np Rule against each of Petitioners’ challenges. Notably, Judge Schaller commended the *amici* parties for presenting “powerful” briefs that shed light that the impacts of the 2025 Type Np Rule will have throughout Washington. Although Judge Schaller commented that these types of challenges might be most appropriate for an appellate court, she determined that it was appropriate to defer to the agency’s analysis in this instance.

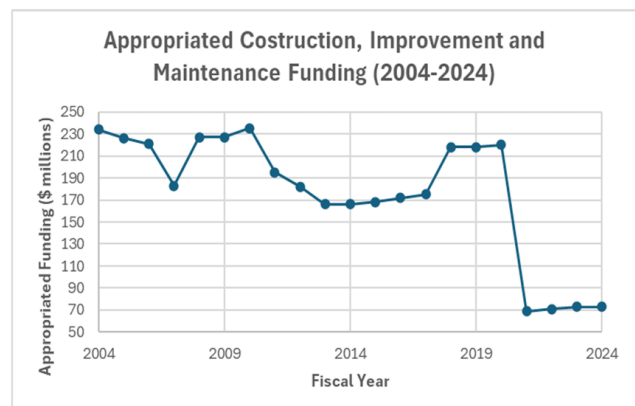
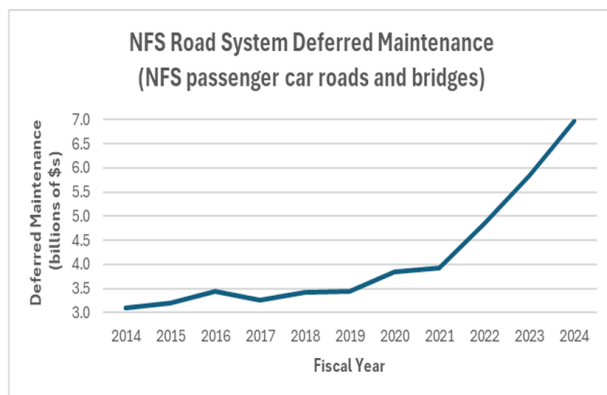
Following that ruling, Petitioners indicated their intention to appeal Judge Schaller’s ruling and moved to stay the 2025 Type Np Rule—which went into effect on August 31, 2026—during the pendency of the appeal. On September 3, Judge Schaller granted that Motion and ruled that the previous rule “shall remain in effect and have the full force of law” until the conclusion of the appeals process.

AFRC is encouraged that Petitioners have chosen to appeal Judge Schaller’s ruling and that the 2025 Type Np Rule is stayed for the time being. AFRC looks forward to supporting Petitioners in the appeal process. /Greg Hibbard

USDA Proposes to Revise Travel Management Regulations

The Forest Service is initiating rulemaking and an environmental impact statement (EIS) to revise its regulations that govern its transportation systems and public access on National Forest System lands. The current rule was finalized in 2005 and its regulations are located under 36 CFR 212.

The Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS indicates that the proposed action would favor increased access while preserving local decision-making. Existing roads would be open to public use unless closure is required by law or supported by justifiable reasons such as safety, user conflicts, or resource concerns. The proposed rule would then require an annual review of all closed roads. This preliminary language indicates a significant departure from the existing regulations that favor a reduced road system by requiring the Forest Service to identify its minimum road system and “unnneeded” roads that “should be decommissioned.”



The Forest Service maintains approximately 368,000 miles of roads necessary for administering, managing, protecting, and using national forests. This road mileage has been trending downward for the past 20 years. Since 2003, approximately 18,000 miles of roads have been removed from the Forest Service's system. Congress has also significantly reduced the annual funding appropriations directed at transportation system maintenance during this time period. The Capital Improvement and Maintenance budget line item has decreased by 69% since 2004. In 2024, the Forest Service estimated a deferred maintenance backlog of \$6.9 billion for roads and bridges (this estimate is based only on roads open for passenger cars).

The Forest Service is currently accepting comments on the proposed rule. Comments are due September 23. Information on the Proposed Rule can be found [here](#). /*Andy Geissler*

AFRC in the News

- Nick Smith published an opinion in the [Seattle Times](#) in support of the Forest Service's proposed rescission of the Roadless Rule.
- Tom Partin published an opinion in the [Seely Swan Pathfinder](#) regarding the need for active management and the North Seeley Project.
- Travis Joseph published an opinion in the [Springfield Chronicle](#) about Oregon's Grasshopper Fire and the impacts of anti-forestry litigation.