

## **Appropriations / Funding for Healthier Forests**

**POSITION:** Federated Women in Timber (FWIT) urges you to support increased appropriations for forest products and fire suppression on our national forests. This funding is essential to continue to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire, protect our forests from invasive species, carry out landscape restoration, and support needed management of our aging forests.

As part of the President's fiscal year 2007 budget, the Healthy Forests Initiative (HFI) will receive \$610 million to reduce hazardous fuels and restore forest health. This represents a \$12 million increase over 2006, and an investment that will work to reduce fire-fighting costs over time.

FWIT also urges Congress to support the President's proposed \$31.3 million increase for the timber sale line item for the United States Forest Service (USFS). It is FWIT's position that our nation's forests need to be managed proactively through timber sale programs. These programs include the harvest of over mature stands before they become susceptible to damaging agents. Not only is this good forest management, but it provides our country with required forest products, making room for the regeneration of vital new forests.

**BACKGROUND:** Under the goals of Healthy Forest Restoration Act, federal land managers are provided with the ability to expedite and improve the process involved in hazardous fuels reduction projects, reduce the amount of NEPA analysis involved in projects that fit specified criteria, and reduce frivolous lawsuits.

Federal land managers have identified 190 million acres that are at high-risk for fire. The Forest Service and Department of Interior, through implementation of the HFI, have treated hazardous fuels and conducted landscape restoration on more than 4.3 million acres of land in 2005. Federal agencies plan to treat an additional 4.5 million more acres in 2006. These efforts must continue to restore the health of our forests before further degradation occurs.

The Forest Service, at its inception, was focused on providing abundant, renewable forest resources to the nation. The availability of these resources helped this country to grow and prosper. While our focus has changed over time, and we look to our national forests to fulfill additional needs, our necessity of abundant, renewable forest products has not diminished. Because of the legal wrangling over selling timber from our forests over the past two plus decades, not only have our forests been mismanaged, but also this country has been forced to turn to foreign imports in order to supply its needs. Viable timber sale programs are needed on every forest in this country not only because they provide professional forests with an essential management tool, but they help

supply products to our nation. Furthermore, viable timber sale programs throughout the northwest, west, and southwest, where catastrophic fires are most prevalent, will help generate much needed revenue to continue funding forest restoration projects in future years.

**RATIONALE:** Adequate funding is needed to continue implementation of the HFI on our national forests to turn “high-risk” acres into healthy, productive acres. The President’s proposed 2007 budget would allow an additional 4.6 million acres of land to be treated through hazardous fuel treatments and site restoration projects. More importantly, the proposed budget shifts the focus away from simply measuring acres that have been treated, but looks at overall improvements to forest health that would decrease forest mortality on a larger scale over the landscape.

The 2007 budget also reflects the President’s commitment to collaboration and sustainable forestry especially in the Northwest through increased funding to fully implement the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan. This plan promised to produce a sustainable level of timber sales while protecting the long-term health of forests, wildlife and waterways of the region. The budget proposal increases appropriations for the plan by \$66 million for a total of \$182 million. It also allows the Forest Service’s Pacific Northwest and Pacific Southwest Regions to offer over 800 million board feet of timber to meet the goals of the Northwest Forest Plan. The budget also emphasizes improving the overall effectiveness of the Forest Service through efficient management. Therefore, FWIT supports the President’s budget with its efforts to increase overall timber funding while reducing overhead, business management, and other indirect costs by one-third.

**CONCLUSION:** Federated Women in Timber strongly supported the Healthy Forest Initiative of 2002 and Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003. We have always supported fully funding our Forest Plans to include timber sale programs, for they provide the framework for good forest management. We urge you to support the President’s 2007 Budget increases that work to make our forests healthier. Responsible forest stewardship and active timber sale programs will create safe, healthy forests that in turn provide needed forest products to our nation.

We agree with the President’s directive in the 2007 budget to streamline forest planning and restoration, while providing funding to monitor and protect the long-term health of forests, wildlife, and waterways in the Pacific Northwest. More importantly, we desire this for all of our national forests. We ask that Congress appropriate the funds necessary to support this initiative and work toward fully funding all of our Forest Plans.