

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2014

WEDNESDAY, MAY 22, 2013

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met at 9:31 a.m., in room SD-124, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Jack Reed (chairman) presiding.

Present: Senators Reed, Feinstein, Tester, Udall, Merkley, Begich, and Murkowski.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE

STATEMENT OF TOM TIDWELL, CHIEF

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Senator REED. Let me call the hearing to order. And as the first order of business, let me wish Senator Murkowski a happy 21st birthday.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you.

Senator REED. Happy birthday.

I want to welcome all of our witnesses and my colleagues to the fiscal year 2014 hearing on the budget to the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). And on behalf of the subcommittee, let me particularly welcome Tom Tidwell, the Chief of the USFS. Thank you, Chief. You have been a great leader at the agency and someone we have enjoyed working with immensely.

I'd also like to welcome Barbara Cooper, the USFS acting Budget Director. Ms. Cooper, thank you very much for being here also.

The President's fiscal year 2014 budget request for USFS programs totals \$4.84 billion in discretionary spending. The request is \$62 million, or a 1-percent increase, more than the fiscal year 2013 enacted level.

Chief Tidwell, in reviewing your budget request, it's clear that there's a theme: making tough choices so that the agency can continue to fight wildland fires. The fire budget, as we spoke, seems to drive so much of the USFS.

Within the total amount provided, the budget request does include an increase of \$79 million for wildland fire management, for a total of \$2.046 billion, an increase of 3.5 percent.

In addition, the request provides level funding for the FLAME Fund, at \$315 million. However, that amount doesn't fully cover the increases that are needed within the fire program, including a \$65 million increase to fully fund the 10-year rolling average for fire suppression and a \$50 million increase to fund next-generation air tanker contracts to replace the 6-year-old P2 aircraft.

That means that your budget sustains some tough reduction to programs like Hazardous Fuels Reduction and State Fire Assistance.

I'm very concerned, as I know you are, Chief Tidwell, about the precedent that's been set with the fire budget. As the 10-year average goes up every year budgets are shrinking and the need to fight wildland fires is crowding out many worthy programs within your budget, as well as the budgets of other agencies in the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies bill. Indeed, I note that under the President's fiscal year 2014 budget proposal, funding for USFS wildland fire programs alone exceeds the investment in clean water and drinking water infrastructure by more than \$450 million.

As critical as your fire programs are, it is a challenge to explain in my parts of the country, and my State included, why fighting these fires requires so much resources that takes away from desperately needed improvements and jobs in infrastructure all across the country.

We also need a much better strategy for paying for the cost of fires that exceed the 10-year average, something that has happened 9 out of the last 10 years. In the past, the Congress has been able, on a bipartisan and bicameral basis, to provide emergency supplemental funds to pay for disasters like wildfires in a timely way.

This past year, however, our colleagues in the House chose to add funds to pay for firefighting shortfalls within the overall discretionary appropriations cap rather than fund those needs as emergency spending. All told, we appropriated \$423 million to pay for these additional firefighting needs. And that's \$423 million that you have to find in other parts of your budget or we have to find in other parts of other agency budgets. These funds are important, but ultimately, as I suggest, other discretionary programs must pay for them.

How to improve our capacity to budget for catastrophic fires and other disasters is a theme that we'll be grappling with during this year's appropriation process and something I've discussed with Chairwoman Mikulski and something, Chief, that I'm sure we will talk together, along with the ranking member, to try to come up with a better way to proceed.

We cannot allow our obligations, and we do have to fight these fires and we do have to support local communities, to erode other investments that are equally important to the nation.

STATE AND PRIVATE FORESTRY

I would also like to discuss a proposal of the State and Private Forestry Programs, programs that are important to all States, including my home State. Overall, the request also includes a 5 percent cut to State and Private Forestry Programs, for a total of \$240 million. Within that amount, the budget does propose to allow States to compete for a new \$20 million landscape scale restoration

program. However, it does include a number of cuts to specific grant programs, including a \$7 million cut to the Urban Forestry Program, without offering a concrete vision of what States like Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, and other urban areas have to do not only to participate, but also to get a more reasonable share of resources.

NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM

The budget also requests \$1.56 billion for operations of the National Forest, which is a 1.5-percent increase more than the fiscal year 2013 enacted level. Within that amount, the administration is again proposing a major budget restructuring, consolidating three major programs to create a new \$757 million Integrated Resource Restoration Program.

As you know, Chief, the subcommittee has allowed you to move forward with a pilot program in three USFS regions to test this new restoration program. And my colleagues and I will all want to hear more about the progress that you're making on the ground as we consider your request to implement this program on a national scale. I expect we'll also want to hear more about the budget trade-offs that you're making to implement this proposal, including steep reductions to other operating programs like law enforcement and recreation, as well as other reductions to capital improvement projects.

Finally, there are a few other bright spots in the request that are worth noting. The budget does include a \$15 million investment to boost forestry research, for a total of \$310 million. We talked about that, and that's absolutely important. And the request includes a total of \$118 million for land acquisition, the Forest Legacy project, as part of the President's \$400 million proposal for discretionary Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) programs. That amount is an 11-percent increase more than fiscal year 2013.

As my remarks suggest, Chief, we have a lot to discuss this morning. Thank you for being here, and let me now recognize my ranking member. I won't say "the birthday girl."

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you.

Senator REED. Senator Murkowski.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR LISA MURKOWSKI

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome, Chief. It's good to see you back here. We had a chance to talk during your testimony before the Energy Committee last month, so this is kind of a follow-on to that.

SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS

This morning, I'm going to focus my opening statement on an issue that stems from last year's Forest Service budget, and that's your decision in March to retroactively claw back these payments made to 41 States receiving Secure Rural Schools payments, including Alaska, because of the sequester.

I believe that this situation teaches a larger lesson about the failures of the agency's current forest management policy and how that is then reflected in your fiscal year 2014 budget.

On March 19, you sent the State of Alaska a letter demanding the repayment of \$826,000 in Secure Rural Schools funding. In response, our Governor Parnell sent a letter to you on April 28 refusing to pay back the funds, citing the lack of any legal authority offered by the USFS. And, Mr. Chairman, I have a copy of the Governor's letter that I would like to be included in the record.

Senator REED. Without objection.
[The information follows:]

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
FOREST SERVICE,
Washington, DC.

Hon. LISA MURKOWSKI, *Ranking Member,*
U.S. Senate, Energy and Natural Resources Committee,
Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR MURKOWSKI: Thank you for your letter of April 24, 2013, cosigned by Senator Ron Wyden, regarding the impact of sequestration on payments under the Secure Rural Schools Act.

To fulfill our commitment to rural communities, Secure Rural Schools payments were made on time in early January 2013, while the sequestration debate continued in Congress. Subsequently, the sequestration took effect, and agencies were required to implement it.

The Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (BBEDCA), as amended, requires that sequestration be taken at the budget account level, and applied equally to each program, project, and activity (PPA) in those accounts. In the case of Secure Rural Schools, the relevant account is the Forest Service Permanent Appropriations account, which includes two PPAs for Secure Rural Schools: one comprising the fiscal year 2013 budget authority from receipts in fiscal year 2012 (the "receipts PPA"), and the other comprising additional fiscal year 2013 budget authority provided from the U.S. Department of the Treasury to cover the shortfall in receipts necessary to make the full Secure Rural Schools payments (the "Treasury payments PPA"). While funding for Secure Rural Schools payments is based on the level of receipts collected in fiscal year 2012, section 102(e) of the statute directs that the funds be paid after the end of the fiscal year. Therefore, it is budget authority for fiscal year 2013 subject to sequestration under BBEDCA.

In calculating the sequestered amount, BBEDCA repeatedly refers to the amounts for a "fiscal year" or "that year" (2 U.S.C. 901a). Thus, consistent with the application of sequestration across programs of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and across the Government as a whole, the amount of the sequestration is based upon the full budgetary authority in the receipts PPA and the Treasury payments PPA for the entire fiscal year, not on the amount remaining available as of March 1, 2013, the date of the sequestration order.

Secure Rural Schools payments are made from both PPAs. The funding sources are not tied to a particular title, so for purposes of sequestration, it does not matter which title's funding stream is cut in order to meet the full sequestered amount, as long as the required reductions are taken from each PPA. USDA's goals in implementing sequestration have been to administer reductions in the most equitable and least disruptive manner possible. In this instance, USDA has determined that in order to ensure equity in the treatment of States, each State should take the same percentage reduction to Secure Rural Schools payments.

States can pay back the mandated sequestered amounts from their title I and title III money, or reduce title II allocations by the requisite amount where applicable. This approach best ensures equity and uniformity in the implementation of the reductions, as it applies the same percentage reduction to the payments for each State. We encourage the States that have the option to elect to have the Forest Service use title II funds to cover the sequestered amount, and thus avoid impacts to their schools and road funding and eliminate the need for repayment.

Regarding the assessment of interest, penalties, and administrative costs, the Forest Service will utilize existing Federal and Agency guidelines to waive these costs, where applicable. We are committed to working with you to mitigate the impacts of these actions on States and counties.

Again, thank you for your writing. A similar response is being sent to Senator Wyden.

Sincerely,

THOMAS L. TIDWELL,
Chief.

STATE OF ALASKA,
Juneau, AK, April 28, 2013.

Mr. THOMAS TIDWELL, *Chief,*
Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture,
Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. TIDWELL: In a letter dated March 19, 2013, you advised that the mandated Federal budget reductions (sequester) apply to revenue generated in 2012 and paid in 2013 under titles I and III of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act. Since the United States Forest Service has already made its payment to Alaska, you are seeking a repayment of the sequester percentage of 5.1 percent, which amounts to \$707,795.40 under titles I and III, as well as a withholding of \$118,536.50 (or 5.1 percent) of title II funds not yet allocated. You gave Alaska the option of having the total amount of \$826,331.90 reduced from the State's title II funds or having that sum collected from funds already disbursed under titles I and III.

On behalf of the proud forest communities that received fiscal year 2012 Secure Rural Schools aid in January of 2013, I maintain that neither the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, as amended by the Budget Control Act of 2011, nor the Anti-Deficiency Act, authorize you to request repayment of title I and title III outlays. As such, I will not request the Alaska State Legislature consider such an appropriation.

Additionally, your letter cites no authority for the reduction of title II funds. The titles I and III funds have been allocated and used in accordance with the Federal law that authorized their disbursement. You have cited no valid authority for your retroactive efforts to have those funds repaid or offset.

This sequester dilemma highlights the continued failure of the United States Forest Service to successfully manage the nation's forests, especially the Tongass. I stand ready to discuss solutions to allow our forests to once again support healthy communities—not impoverish them.

Sincerely,

SEAN PARNELL,
Governor.

Senator MURKOWSKI. The Governors of Alabama and Wyoming have since joined Governor Parnell for similar reasons.

I'd like to repeat, Chief, what I stated last month when we were in the Energy Committee. You have got to find a different path here that does not punish these struggling rural communities for the agency's failure to manage our Nation's forests. I'm going to be asking you today how you plan to respond to Governor Parnell and to the other States that have refused to pay.

Now, some might ask, "Why are you so upset? \$826,000, when you compare it to the millions, and really billions, that we're usually talking about here in Washington, the numbers seem relatively insignificant." But for me, this is pretty simple: I just can't go back to the superintendent of the schools in Wrangell, Alaska, because for him, these few thousands of dollars mean everything to him and his budget.

I think that this decision by the agency represents the latest in a long line of misguided Forest Service actions that have had a crippling impact on Southeast Alaska. Back in 1990, the region had more than 4,500 timber jobs, a vibrant wood products industry. Local communities at that time received 25 percent of the revenue generated from timber sales on the Tongass National Forest, and they used this appropriately for roads and schools. And there was no need for Secure Rural Schools funding.

TIMBER MANAGEMENT

Now, because of USFS policies, there are only about 300 logging jobs left, and the region must rely in part on mandatory payments

from the Federal Government to operate its schools. And sadly, just as Alaskans have learned that we can't rely on the USFS to provide a stable timber supply, now we can't even rely on the agency to send us the check that we're due and not demand part of that money back.

It's almost as though we're watching "Groundhog Day" all over again. Every year, you come before the Energy Committee. You come before this subcommittee. We pledge that we're going to work together on things. We're going to improve the timber sale program on the Tongass so we avoid losing what remains of the industry. I always describe it as folks just kind of hanging on by their fingernails. You agree. You know.

But then we come back, and it's a year later, and we're having the same conversation again. I think sometimes the script changes a little bit. Some years, it's litigation that's to blame. Other years, it's poor timber markets. This year, it's probably going to be tight budgets we're talking about or the impact of the sequester.

But one thing never changes. And that is the declining harvest in the Tongass. In 2008, at the beginning of this administration, the level was only 28 million board-feet. Last year, it was 21 million board-feet, near the all-time low of 19 million in 2007.

We talked, again, about the agency's plan for transitioning to second growth. And you know that I'm skeptical there. It's going to be years before these trees are mature and can support an annual sales program.

So I'm not encouraged by this year's budget request, which sets 2.4 billion board-feet as a target for the timber program nationally, when just last year you testified about ramping up to 3 billion board-feet as part of the agency's restoration strategy.

On May 2, I sent a bipartisan letter with 12 of my colleagues to the President, asking for him to reconsider these timber programs. And I know my colleague from Montana was involved with that.

So I want to be clear. I do support the agency's many programs that deal with recreation and with wildlife. But these objectives within that aspect of the Forest Service shouldn't come at the expense of managing our forests in a way that not only provides jobs, but lowers the fire risks that the chairman was talking about and really creates a more resilient environment. I think that's what your multiple-use mandate requires.

So I hope today that you can give me a reason to believe that we're not going to be sitting here again next year at these hearings with you talking about lack of timber supply on the Tongass and with an industry that is just barely able to get by. I want this year to be different. You've indicated that we're going to have an opportunity to visit with one another in Alaska. I look forward to that. But I think you and I would agree that we have some more business to be done.

I look forward to your answers here this morning and appreciate the courtesy of the Chair.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Senator. And if anyone else would like to make a brief statement? Senator Tester.

Senator TESTER. Real quick, if I might. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, ranking member.

First of all, thank you for being here, Chief Tidwell. I appreciate the job that you do. You oftentimes are dealt a very tough hand, and you play the cards reasonably well, from my perspective. So, thank you for that.

Look. I don't need to tell you how important the USFS is in a State like Montana. You've been there, you've done that. The fact is we lost 1.3 million acres to fire last year, another million acres to beetle kill. We've got some issues as far as mitigation of catastrophic wildfires, as the chairman talked about, and how we're going to deal with that in the short term and the long term. I look forward to fleshing that out more as the questions go.

And I also look forward to working with you to give the USFS more tools, more tools to be able to manage these forests, manage them in a reasonable way, getting folks to work together from the ground up, making sure that the industry and environmentalists and the USFS and the Congress are all on the same page.

Thank you for your work. I look forward to the questions.

Senator REED. Any of my other colleagues? Senator Merkley, please.

WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'll expand during the question period. But we had a fire the size of Rhode Island last year in Oregon. We had the worst fire season, you know, in 100 years. We lost a lot of rangeland, a tremendous amount of timber. And we're in a situation where the same time that's going on, and largely because of the buildup of hazardous fuels, we're looking at a proposed budget that cuts the hazardous fuels reduction in half.

Yet everyone after these fires said, "We've got to get in there and get more of these hazardous fuels out. We've got to operate on a 15-year cycle to be ahead of the 20-year fire cycle, not a 30-year cycle." And instead we're looking at a 60-year cycle.

The fires that start on public lands then move onto private land create an intolerable situation for our private landowners and huge damage to the public-trusted lands. So it's extremely troubling, the budget as it's laid out. I know that you're operating with limited resources and that it's a huge challenge. But somehow, we've got to figure out a way not to just be trying to mop up fires after they happen, but to manage the forests well on the front end.

Senator REED. I believe no more of my colleagues have opening statements. If that's the case, Chief Tidwell, please, your statement.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF TOM TIDWELL

Mr. TIDWELL. Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee, it's a privilege to be here again today to discuss the President's fiscal year 2014 budget request for the Forest Service. I cannot thank you enough for the support from the subcommittee over the years. I continue to look forward to working with you to do what we can to provide what the public wants and needs from their National Forests and Grasslands.

The President's budget reflects our commitment to strategic investments that are needed to grow the economy while exercising fiscal restraint. The budget does make some very difficult tradeoffs

between key programs. It does this by focusing on the economic growth for rural America, including the 450,000 jobs that are supported from activities on our National Forests and Grasslands.

Now, through three key objectives, I believe this budget request is a good investment for the economic growth in rural America. The first part of that is it will get us back on track with our accelerated restoration strategy to restore and sustain our national forests and to be focused on 65 million to 82 million acres that need some form of restoration.

It will do this by requesting full funding through our collaborative forest restoration fund. It will also request permanent authorization for stewardship contracting that is a tool that provides certainty so that private entities can invest in the wood products industry. It also will allow us to expand the use of landscape scale analysis so we can look at hundreds of thousands of acres at one time, determine the restoration activities that need to occur, and be able to cover that analysis with one EIS.

It also asks for an additional \$13 million in research that is dedicated to increasing the markets for wood through USDA Green Building Initiative, our Wood Energy Initiative, and also our research into nanotechnology.

The second key objective deals with fire. This budget request provides a level of preparedness that will continue our success to suppress 98 percent of wildland fires during initial attack. It does also request an increase from fiscal year 2012 to what we're requesting of \$138 million in suppression to fulfill our agreement to meet the 10-year average.

It also will continue to reduce the threat of wildfires to homes and communities by reducing hazardous fuels on approximately 685,000 acres of the highest priority acres in the wildland-urban interface. And, it also requests an additional \$50 million to modernize our large airtanker fleet.

The third objective is to continue with our focus on America's Great Outdoors Initiative, which will help support community-based conservation, provide opportunities for economic expansion to retain and create jobs by first providing the recreational opportunities that support the 166 million people that visit the National Forests and Grasslands. And it's through their activities, their economic activities that support more than 200,000 jobs.

Also, we want to focus on getting more volunteers out to be connected to help us to do the work, but also to increase their connection with the outdoors and also expand our Youth Conservation Corps to provide more opportunities for employment with our youth to be outdoors, understanding the benefits of working in conservation.

It also requests an increase in LWCF funding. This is based on what we hear from the public throughout this country about the strong support for the need for us to acquire those small parcels of land that are critical in-holdings to make sure that we're providing the habitat that is necessary to support species, but to provide recreational access. In every case where we're acquiring land, it always reduces our administrative costs of managing that part of the National Forest.

STATE AND PRIVATE FORESTRY

Now, we're going to continue to work with the States through our State and Private Forestry Programs to promote conservation and to keep private forests forested. We also will encourage biomass utilization and other renewable energy opportunities while working to process oil and gas permit applications and energy transmission proposals much more effectively and efficiently.

SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS

Our budget request also proposes a framework for reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools Act. In addition to these three key objectives, we're going to continue our focus on reducing our administrative costs by increasing our operational efficiencies. So over fiscal year 2013 and fiscal year 2014, we're going to reduce our overhead costs by another \$100 million. We're going to continue to focus on creating efficiencies in our processes.

For instance, when it comes to doing the environmental analysis and sale preparation for timber sales, since 1998, funding has been reduced by \$185 million when it's adjusted for inflation. Our staff has been reduced by 49 percent. But during the same time, we have reduced the unit cost by 23 percent.

The other thing we'll continue to focus on is doing the best job we can to deal with wildfire. Where we will continue to have 98 percent success on initial attack, for those large fires that escape initial attack we're going to continue to use our science, our experience, and our expertise to reduce those suppression actions that are unnecessary and not effective. By doing this last year, we reduced costs by avoiding unnecessary risks by \$377 million.

NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM

Our goal is to increase the collaborative efforts to encourage greater public involvement and management of the public National Forests and Grasslands. To maintain and restore healthy landscapes, we need to take care of the ecosystems. We also need to support healthy, thriving communities and provide jobs in rural areas.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for the opportunity to address this subcommittee, and I look forward to answering your questions. [The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF TOM TIDWELL

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me here today to testify on the President's budget request for the United States Forest Service (USFS) for fiscal year 2014. I appreciate the support this subcommittee has shown for USFS in the past, and I look forward to continuing to work together with members of the subcommittee to ensure that stewardship of our Nation's forests and grasslands continues to meet the desires and expectations of the American people. I am confident that this budget will allow the Forest Service to meet this goal while demonstrating both fiscal restraint and efficient, cost-effective spending.

Our Nation can and should take steps to make Government more effective and more efficient in the 21st century. The fiscal year 2014 budget that the President is proposing reflects the difficult choices we need to make to reduce spending while investing in long-term economic growth and job creation. To make the strategic investments needed to grow the economy while exercising fiscal restraint, this budget makes difficult tradeoffs between programs. It also reflects efficiency and improve-

ments to reduce our administrative costs. It is designed to appropriately fund many of the programs that matter to Americans.

VALUE OF THE UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE

Our mission at USFS is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The mission includes helping Americans use and enjoy the lands and waters that belong to them as citizens of the United States. USFS manages a system of national forests and grasslands on an area almost twice the size of California—193 million acres in 44 States and Puerto Rico. These lands entrusted to our care provide some of the richest resources and most breathtaking scenery in the Nation, as well as drinking water for millions of Americans.

As the Nation's leading forestry organization, we also serve Americans in other ways. USFS was founded in 1905 to stop the degradation of watersheds and manage the lands for the benefit of all Americans. To that end, in addition to the National Forest System, agency programs support the sustainable stewardship of more than 600 million acres of forest land across the Nation, including 423 million acres of private forest land, 68 million acres of State forest land, 18 million acres of Tribal forests, and 100 million acres of urban and community forests.

In addition, we maintain the largest forestry research organization in the world, with more than a century of discoveries in such areas as wood and forest products, fire behavior and management, and sustainable forest management. In an age of global interconnectedness, we also support the sustainable stewardship of forests around the world; we have served people in more than 80 countries, which have direct benefits to the American forestry economy through marketing American forest products and invasive species prevention.

America's forests, grasslands, and other open spaces are integral to the social, ecological, and economic well-being of the Nation. The benefits from Forest Service programs and activities include jobs and economic activity, especially in rural areas where other sources of employment and economic growth might be few. In fiscal year 2011, for example, the various activities on the National Forest System contributed more than \$36 billion to America's gross domestic product, supporting nearly 450,000 jobs.

The most popular uses of the national forests and grasslands are associated with outdoor recreation. Our increasingly diverse visitor population engages in activities such as camping, picnicking, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, equestrian use, firewood and forest product gathering, all-terrain vehicle riding, skiing, snowboarding, hunting, fishing, hiking, wildlife viewing, driving for pleasure, and visiting cultural sites and visitor centers. The national forests and grasslands attract about 166 million visits per year, supporting about 205,000 jobs and contributing \$13.6 billion to the Nation's gross domestic product each year. Fifty-five percent of our visitors engage in a strenuous physical activity, contributing to their health and well-being.

Noncommercial uses of forest and grasslands also provide vital benefits to the American people. For example, more than one-half of our Nation's freshwater flows from public and private forest land, and about 60 million Americans rely on drinking water that originates on the National Forest System. Forest Service land management, combined with USFS assistance to private landowners, helps protect the single greatest source of drinking water in the Nation.

USFS's creation of jobs and economic opportunities is not limited to rural areas. Through Job Corps and other programs, we provide training and employment for America's urban youth, and we help veterans transition to civilian life. Our Urban and Community Forestry Program has also provided jobs and career-training opportunities for underemployed adults and at-risk youth through activities such as tree care and riparian corridor restoration.

We also engage a wide range of partners who contribute to investments in land management projects and activities. In fiscal year 2012, we entered into more than 7,700 grants and agreements with partners who contributed a total of about \$535 million in cash and non-cash (in-kind) contributions. Combined with our own contribution of nearly \$779 million, the total value of these partnerships was over \$1.3 billion. The growing value of grants and agreements demonstrates the increasing importance of partnerships in fulfilling the USFS mission.

Forest landowners of all kinds benefit from our forest-related research, as does anyone who buys products made from wood. For example, USFS scientists have developed a free software application that helps people identify invasive plants and provides control recommendations. Our research and development bring all kinds of benefits to the American people, improving their quality of life.

More than 50 percent of the Nation's forests—more than 420 million acres—are privately owned. Working with the State Foresters, we help State forest managers and private forest landowners manage America's working forests sustainably. Through our Forest Health Management program, for example, we monitor and assess forest health conditions on all lands nationwide, both public and private, tracking outbreaks of insects and disease and providing funds for treating areas at risk.

In February 2011, President Barack Obama launched the America's Great Outdoors Initiative, setting forth a comprehensive agenda for conservation and outdoor recreation in the 21st century. The initiative challenges the American people to work together to find lasting conservation solutions, based on the premise that protecting America's natural heritage is a goal shared by all. In tandem with the President's initiative, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack outlined an all-lands vision for conservation. He called for partnerships and collaboration to reach shared goals for restoring healthy, resilient forested landscapes across all landownerships nationwide.

Our fiscal year 2014 budget request is accordingly designed to help us work with partners across borders and boundaries to invest in America's green infrastructure at a landscape scale. Our focus on landscape-scale conservation dovetails with broader administration priorities, including the President's America's Great Outdoors Initiative, the Secretary's "all-lands" vision, and the Department of Agriculture's priority goal of enhancing water resources. Our goal at USFS is to ensure the ability of our Nation's forests and grasslands to deliver a full range of jobs and benefits, both now and for generations to come.

CHALLENGES TO CONSERVATION

Our Nation's ability to protect its forest and grassland resources is now at risk due to drought, invasive species, and uncharacteristically severe wildfires and outbreaks of insects and diseases. Such stresses and disturbances are affecting America's forests, grasslands, and watersheds on an unprecedented scale. Twenty-seven percent of all forest-associated plants and animals in the United States, a total of 4,005 species, are at risk of extinction. Habitat degradation is the main reason—affecting 85 percent of all imperiled species. Many species are also threatened by nonnative invasive species, which affect 49 percent of all imperiled species.

Although biodiversity is exceptionally high on the national forests and grasslands, habitat degradation and invasive species remain serious threats. We estimate that watershed functionality is impaired or at risk on 48 percent of the watersheds on National Forest System lands. Severe outbreaks of western forest pests have affected 32 million acres on the national forests alone. Between 65 million and 82 million acres are in need of fuels and forest health treatments—up to 42 percent of the entire National Forest System.

Part of the problem is severe drought, resulting in extreme fire weather, very large fires and longer fire seasons. Since 2000, at least 10 States have had their largest fires on record, and some have had their records broken more than once. In 2000, for the first time since the 1950s, more than 7 million acres burned nationwide; and in 2012, more than 9 million acres burned.

The spread of homes and communities into areas prone to wildfire is an increasing management challenge. From 2000 to 2030, we expect to see substantial increases in housing density on 44 million acres of private forest land nationwide, an area larger than North and South Carolina combined. More than 70,000 communities are now at risk from wildfire, and less than 15,000 have a community wildfire protection plan or an equivalent plan.

A growing proportion of the USFS budget has been needed for fire-related activities of all kinds. In fiscal year 1991, for example, fire-related activities accounted for about 13 percent of our total budget; by fiscal year 2012, it was 40 percent. That has left a smaller amount of funding for nonfire purposes (watersheds, wildlife, recreation, and other benefits and services). With increasingly limited funding, we need to approach our work differently.

BUDGET REQUEST AND FOCUS AREAS

The fiscal year 2014 President's budget request is designed to meet the challenges we face. The President's proposed overall budget for discretionary funding for the Forest Service in fiscal year 2014 is \$4.9 billion. It shifts \$62 million from key programs to meet the requirement to fund the 10-year rolling average of fire suppression costs.

In response to the challenges we face, we are focusing our efforts on three key areas:

- restoring ecosystems;

- strengthening communities while providing jobs; and
- managing wildland fires.

In these tough economic times, our proposed budget balances spending on priorities in each of these three focus areas against measures to decrease costs. Through strategic partnerships, we will continue to leverage our funds to accomplish more work, yielding more benefits for the people we serve while also sustaining forest and grassland ecosystems for future generations.

RESTORING ECOSYSTEMS

Our approach to ecological degradation is to accelerate ecological restoration. USFS is restoring the ability of forest and grassland ecosystems to resist climate-related stresses, recover from climate-related disturbances, and continue to deliver the values and benefits that Americans want and need. Reforestation, habitat enhancements, invasive species control, hazardous fuels treatments, and other measures can help to make an ecosystem more resilient and more capable of delivering benefits, such as protecting water supplies and supporting native fish and wildlife. Our budget request for fiscal year 2014 is specifically designed to support integrated restoration efforts across USFS.

Through Integrated Resource Restoration, land managers are accelerating the pace of restoration and job creation, in part by using USFS's Watershed Condition Framework to identify high-priority watersheds for treatment. Managers use Integrated Resource Restoration to integrate activities such as hazardous fuels reduction, road decommissioning, and removal of barriers to fish passage. Outcomes include reducing risk from fire, insects, and diseases; maintaining clean drinking water for communities; and supporting more local jobs and economic opportunities. For example, in fiscal year 2012 through our overall efforts we treated almost 2.6 million acres to sustain or restore watershed function and resilience. Under the pilot program, through restoration activities we treated almost 800,000 acres. We propose fully implementing Integrated Resource Restoration across USFS in fiscal year 2014.

The growing need for restoration-related work and investments on the National Forest System is providing jobs and community benefits. The Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program was created in 2009 to restore high-priority forested landscapes, improve forest health, promote job stability, create a reliable wood supply, and reduce firefighting costs across the United States. After the program was created, the Secretary of Agriculture evaluated collaboratively developed project proposals, selecting 20 large-scale projects for 10-year funding, along with three additional high-priority projects for funding from other sources. They support an array of restoration activities, including reducing hazardous fuels, restoring watershed function and resilience, and improving forest vegetation and wildlife habitat. Continued implementation of these projects is a high priority in our fiscal year 2014 budget request. For example, the 23 projects under this program have created or maintained approximately 7,500 jobs over the last 2 years and generated almost \$272 million in labor income. They have also reduced the danger of fire on more than 600,000 acres near communities and enhanced clean water supplies by remediating or decommissioning 6,000 miles of roads.

USFS is creating partnerships across the country to help protect water by reducing the risk of fire in municipal watersheds that provide communities with water for drinking and other uses, such as irrigation, fisheries, and recreation. To help leverage our funding, we are proposing a new program for Restoration Partnerships in fiscal year 2014. The program will foster some of the most advanced public-private partnership initiatives in the Federal Government, leveraging new outside resources to support USFS's restoration efforts. Most funding under the new program will go to support cost-share projects that will be competed for at the national level to attract matching financial support from partners.

Another USFS program with a restoration emphasis is Forest Health Management. Under the program, we conduct risk mapping and surveys to identify the areas at greatest risk from insects and disease, including invasive species such as emerald ash borer and white pine blister rust. In identifying the areas at greatest risk and deciding on how to respond, we work with the States, in part by utilizing the State Forest Action Plans to help inform response decisions.

USFS is finalizing directives for implementing the new National Forest System Land Management Planning Rule governing how land management plans are written for the national forests and grasslands. Half of all units on the National Forest System have plans that are more than 15 years old. Successful forest plan revisions are key to meeting the Forest Service's contemporary land management challenges. The new 2012 Planning Rule will help land managers focus on collaborative water-

shed restoration while promoting jobs and economic opportunities in rural communities.

In concert with the President's America's Great Outdoors Initiative and Secretary Vilsack's all-lands vision for conservation, the Forest Service has launched an initiative to accelerate restoration across shared landscapes. The Accelerated Restoration Initiative builds on Integrated Resource Restoration, the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program, the Watershed Condition Framework, the 2012 Planning Rule, and other restoration-related programs and initiatives to increase the pace of ecological restoration while creating more jobs in rural communities.

USFS is supporting accelerated restoration through our programs in Research and Development. We have seven high-priority research areas, including Watershed Management and Restoration, which is designed to support our focus on protecting and enhancing water resources. In our Bioenergy and Biobased Products research area, we are developing technology to sustainably produce woody biomass and convert it into liquid fuels, chemicals, and other high-value products. In partnership with the wood products industry, we are also developing science to commercialize nanocellulosic technologies to generate new high-value products such as durable composites and paper that is stronger and lighter. This will revolutionize technology to create new jobs and revenues and help restore America's economy through industrial development and expansion.

We are also pursuing longer term strategic research. For example, sustainable forest management is predicated on decades of data on forest conditions collected through our Forest Inventory and Analysis program. We conduct long-term research in such areas as forest disturbances, the effects of climate change, fire and fuels, invasive species, wildlife and fish, and resource management and use to meet local needs. In all of our research, we are committed to delivering new knowledge and technologies to support sustainable forest and grassland management.

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES AND PROVIDING JOBS

Our fiscal year 2014 budget request emphasizes the role that communities play in sustaining the forests and grasslands around them and the benefits they provide. Working with State and local partners, we are focusing on landscape-scale outcomes through cross-boundary actions including forestry projects identified through the State Forest Action Plans. Accordingly, we propose building on our State and Private Forestry Deputy Area Redesign initiative through a new program called Landscape Scale Restoration. Our new program will capitalize on the State Forest Action Plans to target the forested areas most in need of restoration treatments while leveraging partner funds.

We also work with the States through our Forest Legacy Program to identify forests critical for wildlife habitat and rural jobs. Through the program, we provide working forests with permanent protection by purchasing conservation easements from willing private landowners.

In a similar vein, and supporting the President's America's Great Outdoors Initiative, our Land Acquisition program is designed to protect critical ecosystems and prevent habitat fragmentation by acquiring inholdings on the National Forest System and other lands where we can improve public access. We are working in collaboration with the Department of the Interior to leverage our joint investments by coordinating our efforts to protect intact, functioning ecosystems across entire landscapes. We propose transferring \$177 million in discretionary and mandatory funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund to support these goals.

The Forest Service also engages urban communities in protecting and restoring America's 100 million acres of urban and community forests. For example, we are working with 10 other Federal agencies in the Urban Waters Federal Partnership, designed to restore watersheds in urban areas. Through our Urban and Community Forestry program, we are benefiting communities by helping them to plant trees, especially through demonstration projects. Through our Conservation Education programs, we are engaging millions of children and their families in outdoor experiences.

In addition, we are helping communities acquire local landscapes for public recreation and watershed benefits through our Community Forestry and Open Space program. Our goal is to help create a Nation of citizen stewards committed to restoring the forests around them to health.

Our community focus supports the President's America's Great Outdoors Initiative to achieve landscape-scale restoration objectives, connect more people to the outdoors, and support opportunities for outdoor recreation while providing jobs and income for rural communities. Building on existing partnerships, establishing a 21st century Conservation Corps will help us to increase the number of work and train-

ing opportunities for young people and veterans through high-priority conservation and restoration work on public lands. To engage communities in conserving the lands around them, the Forest Service is building public-private partnerships that leverage new resources to support USFS's restoration goals. Our new Restoration Partnerships program features national competitive grants to support local restoration projects, with matching funds from partners.

We are also building public-private partnerships through our Sustainable Recreation Framework. Many economic opportunities and other community benefits generated on the national forests and grasslands are associated with outdoor recreation. Through the Sustainable Recreation Framework, we are engaging communities to protect and increase recreational access as well as jobs, benefits, and opportunities associated with outdoor recreation.

Our associated Trails program designates trails for multiple uses, consistent with our travel management rule, while building partnerships in trail stewardship. Our Roads program is designed to maintain forest roads and bridges to protect public safety and water quality while meeting access needs for both resource stewardship and the recreating public. Our Facilities program promotes the safe and energy-efficient use of agency infrastructure while emphasizing cost-effectiveness and a smaller environmental footprint through the use of green building techniques and materials.

MANAGING WILDLAND FIRES

Our restoration efforts are partly in response to growing fire season severity, one of the greatest challenges facing the Forest Service. We continue to suppress in initial attack at very small sizes up to 98 percent of the fires we fight. However, the few fires that escape initial attack tend to get much larger much faster. Extreme fire behavior has become far more common. Firefighters are largely limited to protecting certain points around homes and communities.

In 2009, the Congress passed the Federal Land Assistance, Management, and Enhancement (FLAME) Act, calling on Federal land managers to develop a joint wildland fire management strategy. Working with the Department of the Interior, USFS took the opportunity to involve the entire wildland fire community in developing a joint long-term National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy.

This strategy is the product of a collaborative effort between wildland fire organizations, land managers, and policy making officials representing Federal, State, and local governments; Tribal interests; and nongovernmental organizations that builds on the successes of the National Fire Plan and other foundational documents. Phase I was completed in 2011 and outlines the national strategy to address wildland fire issues across the Nation. Phase II was completed in 2012 and provides a risk based framework for evaluating local, regional, and national alternatives for wildfire response and preparedness at a mix of different temporal and geographic scales.

Our new strategy has three components:

—*Restoring Fire-Adapted Ecosystems.*—More than 1,000 postfire assessments show that fuels and forest health treatments are effective in reducing wildfire severity. Accordingly, our fuels treatments have grown; from 2001 to 2011, USFS treated about 27.6 million acres, an area larger than Virginia. We focus our treatments on high-priority areas in the wildland/urban interface, particularly near communities that are taking steps to become safer from wildfire, such as adopting the national Firewise program or developing community wildfire protection plans.

—*Building fire-adapted human communities.*—With more than 70,000 communities at risk from wildfire, USFS is working through cross-jurisdictional partnerships to help communities become safer from wildfires, for example by developing community wildfire protection plans. Through the Firewise program, the number of designated Firewise communities—communities able to survive a wildfire without outside intervention—rose from 400 in 2008 to more than 700 in 2012.

—*Responding appropriately to wildfire.*—Most of America's landscapes are adapted to fire; wildland fire plays a natural and beneficial role in many forest types. Where suppression is needed to protect homes and property, we focus on deploying the right resources in the right place at the right time. Using decision support tools, fire managers are making risk-based assessments to decide when and where to suppress a fire—and when and where to use fire to achieve management goals for long-term ecosystem health and resilience.

Hazardous fuels reduction is an important part of protecting communities and infrastructure in the wildland/urban interface, and the materials removed can often be utilized as biofuels. Our Hazardous Fuels program therefore supports grants and

other forms of assistance for wood-to-energy initiatives. We fund business plans and feasibility studies that help make a project more competitive for other sources of funding; we provide technical assistance to support project development or improve air quality, and we help develop financially viable approaches for building and sustaining facilities that convert wood to energy.

In fiscal year 2014, USFS will work with municipal water providers and electrical service utilities to leverage our funds for fuels and forest health treatments. For example, our new Restoration Partnerships program will support public-private partnerships for investing in projects to protect water supplies on the Colorado Front Range and elsewhere. Our Hazardous Fuels program complements activities conducted through Integrated Resource Restoration and the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program to reduce fuels, protect communities, and restore forested landscapes. Contracted services for fuels reduction provides jobs, as do the forest products and woody biomass utilization activities that result from fuels reduction and removal.

Our budget request for fiscal year 2014, taking the Suppression and FLAME line items together, fully covers the 10-year rolling average of annual amounts spent on suppression. Taken together with the Preparedness line item, our budget request reflects our emphasis on assessing strategic risks and improving operational decision-making for responding to wildland fires, including using fire, where appropriate, for resource benefits. Our efforts are expected to result in more effective and efficient use of Forest Service resources as well as the resources of our partners.

Airtankers are a critical part of an appropriate response to wildfire, but USFS's fleet of large airtankers is old, with an average age of more than 50 years. The cost of maintaining them is growing, as are the risks associated with using them. USFS is implementing a Large Airtanker Modernization Strategy to replace our aging fleet with next-generation airtankers. Our fiscal year 2014 budget request includes \$50 million to pay for the increased costs of modernizing the firefighting airtanker fleet. This is in addition to the \$24 million requested in the fiscal year 2013 budget for a total of \$74 million proposed over the last 2 years to further enhance the agency's ability to fight wildland fire.

COST SAVINGS

Since 2011, USFS has conducted more than a thousand postfire assessments in areas where wildfires burned into previously treated sites. In 94 percent of the cases, our fuels and forest health treatments were determined to have changed fire behavior and/or helped firefighters control the fire.

The Forest Service is also taking steps in other areas to cut our operating costs. For example:

- Taking advantage of new technologies, we have streamlined and centralized our financial, information technology, and human resources operations to gain efficiencies and reduce costs. We will continue to work together with other USDA agencies under the Blueprint for Stronger Services to develop strategies for key business areas to provide efficiencies.
- For the same reasons, we have integrated work across our deputy areas for National Forest System, State and Private Forestry, and Research and Development. For example, all three deputy areas have collaborated to develop the Southern Forest Futures project—the first comprehensive analysis of the future of Southern forests over the next 50 years.
- In fiscal year 2012, we began implementing a new Planning Rule that will reduce the length of time it takes to revise management plans, saving costs. We are also saving costs by streamlining our environmental review process under the National Environmental Policy Act.
- We are implementing measures to achieve \$100 million in cost pool savings in fiscal year 2013 and fiscal year 2014 combined.
- We have adopted new public-private partnership strategies for leveraging restoration funding. For example, over 10 years the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program is expected to leverage \$152.3 million in partner funding, about 62 cents for every Federal dollar spent.
- We also signed an agreement to use municipal funds to restore fire-damaged national forest land in the municipal watershed of Denver, Colorado. Over 5 years, Denver Water is matching the Forest Service's own \$16.5 million investment in watershed restoration. We have signed similar agreements with Santa Fe, New Mexico, and with other cities on the Front Range in Colorado, including Aurora and Colorado Springs.
- We are proposing a number of changes in our budget line items for fiscal year 2014 to better integrate accomplishments, to increase efficiencies in administra-

tion, and to make our program delivery more transparent. For example, combining the State and Volunteer Fire Assistance programs under Wildland Fire Management will improve program management, reduce administrative complexity, and will assist with improved performance management.

—In accordance with sustainability and efficiency mandates, we are working to reduce our environmental footprint. We are acquiring more energy-efficient vehicles and using the latest technologies to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and cut our electricity and natural gas costs at facilities.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

Our budget request focuses accordingly on America's highest priorities for restoring ecosystems, strengthening communities and providing jobs, and managing wildland fire. We are developing a kind of land and resource management that efficiently and effectively addresses the growing extent and magnitude of the challenges we face, as well as the mix of values and benefits that Americans expect from their forests and grasslands. We will continue to lead the way in improving our administrative operations for greater efficiency and effectiveness in mission delivery. Our research will continue to solve complex problems by creating innovative science and technology for the protection, sustainable management, and use of all forests, both public and private, for the benefit of the American people. Moreover, we are working ever more effectively to optimize our response to cross-cutting issues by integrating our programs and activities.

The key to future success is to work through partnerships and collaboration. Our budget priorities highlight the need to strengthen service through cooperation, collaboration, and public-private partnerships that leverage our investments to reach shared goals. Through this approach, we can accomplish more work while also providing more benefits for all Americans, for the sake of generations to come. This concludes my testimony, Mr. Chairman. I would be happy to answer any questions that you or the subcommittee members have for me.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Chief.

Senator Udall has joined us. Tom, we've offered everybody a chance to say a minute or so if you want to make a comment.

Senator UDALL. I first just want to wish our ranking member happy birthday. I know she was just out in the hall. Her two sons were calling her from Alaska. They were out on a boat. And so we're very happy that she's here with us today.

SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS

And just briefly just to mention, Chief, Secure Rural Schools. I know Senator Murkowski is probably going to focus on this, too. But I'm just very worried about the funding in our rural communities. And as you realize, in the Southwest we're concerned about the state of the environment, the ecosystems, and what's happening with those schools.

I think you've seen a number of letters from Governors and many participant State land commissioners, and others trying to urge you to find a way, and let's try to make sure that in our rural counties we're able to keep the schools there.

So with that, thank you very much, and really appreciate being here today.

Senator REED. Thank you, Senator.

WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT

All right. Chief, as we mentioned, the fire budget seems to drive everything that you do or don't do. At this point, can you give us sort of a sense of, will we have another record fire year? We've already had some activity in southern California. Should we be anticipating another year? And which leads to the question of, if

every year is a record year, then we've got to sort of recalibrate and think of different ways to fund these programs.

Mr. TIDWELL. Mr. Chairman, we've been fortunate to have a slow start to this fire season because of the moisture we're receiving in the Eastern part of the country. Our predictive services once again show that we are set up to have another very active fire season, especially throughout the West, California, Oregon, and Washington then moving into Idaho and Montana.

So based on those predictions, we're anticipating a fire season similar to last year's.

Senator REED. Which is a significant cost to the Government, and we could in fact run over the program's budgeted allocation. Then again, to get into that situation, we'll need extra money?

Mr. TIDWELL. That's correct. Unless we are fortunate to have just a very light fire season this year, even with a moderate fire season, the expenses will exceed what we currently have in the budget for this year.

Senator REED. Well, again, I think both the ranking members are concerned, and we have to come up with a mechanism. In the past, as I indicated, there was emergency funding available to cover true emergencies like this. We have to be thoughtful and creative. And we'll be working with you on that.

AIRTANKERS

One of the major capital programs you have, obviously, is your air fleet. You are now starting the next generation of tankers in terms of your making them available. Also, in the National Defense Authorization Act, the Air Force was given permission to transfer seven C-27Js to you.

Can you give us an overview of where things stand with respect to the aviation fleet? Will you have adequate aircraft this fire season? Also, longer-term plans in terms of the fleet, including your acceptance or rejection of the Air Force aircraft.

Mr. TIDWELL. We will have an adequate airtanker fleet this year, anticipating between 24 and 26 planes will be available. We currently have nine aircraft under what we call our legacy aircraft, which is seven P2s, plus two BAE-14As that are currently on contract.

We are in the process of awarding contracts for seven more aircraft, what we call our next-generation, which is the faster, the planes that we're trying to move forward to carry larger payloads. In addition to that, we continue to work with the Air Force and Air Force Reserve to make sure that the modular airborne firefighting system (MAFFS) units, the C-130Js and Hs are available again this year as a backup. We've also taken steps to be able to work with Alaska and Canada to bring down their Convair 580s if we need those aircraft.

So based on everything we're moving forward with this year, I feel confident we will have a set of aircraft that we can respond.

In addition, we are anxious to see what the Air Force, the decision that they make, if the C-27Js are surplus and they become available. We would definitely like to have seven more of those aircraft to be part of our overall fleet. They would be Government owned, but contractor operated. We're moving forward to actually

look at what it would take for our MAFFS units and modify those so that they can fit into the C-27Js so if those planes become available we'll be able to move as quickly as we can to build those MAFFS units for those C-27Js.

Senator REED. Just two quick follow-up questions in this regard. One is, the next-generation contracting process is still not completed. Are you confident that you'll have these aircraft under contract and useful this fire season?

Mr. TIDWELL. Mr. Chairman, we're working through the process of the contract for the next generation. We have received a protest, and we will work through that protest. I do have the authority to override the protest. As we go through the process, I'll make that determination to ensure we have the aircraft we need to be able to respond to fires this year.

Senator REED. Let me ask again a related question. And that is that the next-generation funding level, in last year's budget it was \$24 million. In this year's budget, it's \$50 million. But that begs the question, What's the overall amount of money that you feel you have to commit to get this next generation of aircraft in service?

And then with respect to the C-27J, have the costs of modifications been built into any budget yet? Because I would presume that's not going to be a trivial cost, at least initially.

Mr. TIDWELL. Mr. Chairman, that \$50 million that we have requested would help offset the additional cost for the next-generation aircraft, plus the additional cost for the legacy aircraft. The legacy aircraft with the new contract, the expenses have gone up, as expected. It also would help us deal with the cancellation charges that we have to have set up in our budget.

As far as the C-27Js, if those become available, we would probably then use part of this \$50 million to be able to do the work we'd have to do on those to be able to fly with our mission. We estimate for the C-27Js, it would cost about \$3 million per aircraft to build the MAFFS units and then to make some changes on that aircraft to make them usable for our mission and take some of the military equipment, some of the armor, off of those aircraft that's no longer needed for our mission.

Senator REED. Thank you, Chief.

Senator Murkowski.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS

Chief, let's talk a little bit about where we are with Secure Rural Schools. I indicated that as far as I know, the Governor has not yet received a response to his letter. I received your response on Monday the 20th. And in your response, you provide the agency's rationale for why you believe the sequester applies to the Secure Rural Schools payments.

But putting aside the legal arguments, the letter indicates that you made these payments in January, but the sequester was going to be the law of the land on March 1, or you certainly should have had every reason to anticipate that it would be.

Did you analyze the impact of whether or not the sequester would apply to these payments before you sent them out? I'm having a real difficult time trying to just justify how communities that

have for decades now received these payments from the Government now receive the payment, and then they get the letter in the mail saying, "We want it back." It just doesn't work.

So what kind of consideration was made before you sent out these payments? We know that the Department of the Interior withheld funds prior to sending out their Secure Rural Schools payments. They did it one way; you did it another. What was the rationale there?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, my rationale was based on two things. The first is at that time, and it was actually in December when we made the decision to issue those payments, I thought at that time there would be some options that would be found for the sequester and it wouldn't happen.

Second of all, I was still having ongoing discussions with our legal staff as to if the sequester would apply to the Secure Rural Schools payments. I personally had some questions on that. After a couple of meetings, the attorneys convinced me that they would apply.

The other thing that drove that decision is what you've mentioned. I know these communities, these counties, they rely on these funds for their schools and roads programs. So I had to make a call either to hold that money back or send it out. Based on my personal experience living in those communities, I made the call to go ahead and send it out, with an understanding also, with the title II funds that many of the States receive, which are funds that actually just go to project work on the National Forest, that we'd be able to use that money to be able to offset the sequestered amounts so that there wouldn't be an impact to community schools and roads programs.

That's the option that we've provided the States, to do what we can to minimize the impact on schools and roads, realizing that those title II funds, they're also important, because it creates jobs, it gets work done.

So, Senator, I regret the situation that we're in. When I think back through it, probably it would have been better to hold back maybe 5 percent at the very start instead of being in a situation where most of the States have the option to use title II or take it out of their schools and roads fund. But that's where we are. I regret that we've had to do this.

Senator MURKOWSKI. If the State of Alaska and Alabama and Wyoming refuse to pay, as the Governor's letter certainly suggests, I mean, what do you do? Are you going to, do you sue them for it? In your letter, it looks to me like you're kind of taking late fees and penalties off the table, which is a darn good thing, because you'd really have a fight on your hands there.

Mr. TIDWELL. I understand.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Your words are a little bit wiggly here in terms of being able to waive costs where applicable. I would certainly hope that at a bare minimum there is no effort to collect late fees and penalties.

And quite honestly, trying to sue the States, too, to collect the monies I don't think is a good option either. So again, we need to figure out how, you need to figure out, working with us, how we deal with this.

Let me ask a more, perhaps even more local issue than Secure Rural Schools. In the energy committee, when we visited last time, we had a lot of discussion about the USFS mandate of multiple use. We all recognize that it's all multiple use. And in that hearing, you suggested that some of what we need to look to in the Tongass is the recreational activities, the tourism activities.

TOURISM

And I agree. And it wasn't more than a week later from that hearing that I was in Ketchikan and sat down with a group of about a dozen air taxi operators that are fit to be tied. Because here they are trying to provide for a level of tourism within the Misty Fjords and Traitors Cove. They take their little floatplanes. Everyone wants to see the wilderness area. They get, the air taxi operators get permits to just land in these lakes, just land. Not go on the land, but just land.

And what the air taxi operators are telling me is that their permits coming from the USFS are being cut by some as little as 20 percent, some as much as 40 to 45 percent. One air taxi company has seen its permits cut from 300 to 165, another one from 500 to 298. When you're to provide for a level of tourism, when you can't take the tourists who are coming off the cruise ship out to do a quick floatplane trip, land in one of the lakes in Misty Fjords or Traitors Cove, it's kind of tough.

So I called Forrest Cole and talked with him. He was going to be meeting with everybody. And that's to be applauded. But I guess I'm trying to figure out, you're telling me on the one hand, "Tell the people who live in the Tongass to move toward tourism, utilize the forest in that way." And then your agency is limiting, dramatically limiting their ability to provide for those tourism opportunities.

So can you explain to me what it is that we're going to do in that particular situation in one community in Southeast?

Mr. TIDWELL. Well, Senator, I don't have all the details into the forest decision, but it's my understanding that they reduced some of the flights based on the concern from the public with the amount of noise that was created from the floatplanes, and at the same time increased the number of permits into Traitors Cove.

I will follow up with the forest and find out more specifics as to why the decision was being made, and then also what they're doing to actually mitigate. If it's something as just the noise, is there a way that they could land in a different place, maybe at a different time, but other ways to be able to deal with the concern from the public?

[The information follows:]

AIR TAXI SERVICE ON THE TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST

Due to concerns that limiting the amount and location of outfitter and guide use may not adequately provide for industry stability and growth, the Record of Decision for the Ketchikan-Misty Fjords Outfitter and Guide Management Plan allocated 53,997 service days annually to outfitters and guides. The highest actual use reported by outfitters and guides between 2005 and 2009 was 24,245 service days. Thus, the decision allows outfitter and guide use across the Ketchikan-Misty Fjords District to increase over 100 percent from the reported highest use levels.

The Forest Service also met with commercial air service providers on May 6, 2013 in Ketchikan, Alaska to discuss the issues you have raised, to explain what was in

the actual decision, and to discuss the new permit allocations. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Forest Service committed to meet again with the air service providers at the end of the season to review actual use versus permitted use. The Ketchikan-Misty Outfitter and Guide Management Plan includes an adaptive management strategy to allow changes to be made if experience shows they are needed.

Accordingly, by doubling the outfitter guide use across the District, and by incorporating a flexible adaptive management strategy to incorporate changes as needed in the future, the Ketchikan-Misty Fjords Outfitter and Guide Management Plan will facilitate growth of the industry while maintaining quality visitor experiences.

The Forest Service does not have reliable information about unguided visitor use numbers for Misty Fjords. Most unguided visitors access Misty Fjords National Monument Wilderness via motorized boat or sea kayak. Many of these visits are by local residents via privately owned boats. There is no practical way to know how many such visits are made.

The Forest Service has always been concerned about the economic health of rural communities throughout Southeast Alaska. The Alaska Region has made significant investment in a wide variety of resource areas to expand business opportunities across the Tongass. In this particular case, the Tongass National Forest limited the amount of outfitter guide use in one area to maintain its wilderness character and quality visitor experiences, while allowing for growth in other areas of the Ketchikan Misty Ranger District.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Well, this would be one opportunity for you to view for yourself. When you live in a place like Ketchikan that is on the water, you've got a lot of floatplanes. That's just the nature of the business. And how we provide for recreational tourism operations in a place like the Tongass, you've got to be flying.

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes.

Senator MURKOWSKI. So, let's work on this.

Senator REED. Thank you very much.

We will have a second round, just for the information of the members. My list has Senator Merkley as the first to arrive.

STEWARDSHIP CONTRACTING

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. And thank you for your testimony.

I first wanted to ask about, we have a mill in John Day that has been at high risk of closing. And the regional forester has been working very hard to lay out a 10-year stewardship contract to ensure accessible supplies so that essentially the infrastructure in the plant can be renovated, be competitive, and that the mill knows it's going to be able to access wood for long enough to make that work. Otherwise, the mill shuts down. And we were this close, and I'm afraid we're this close today.

Last week, the regional forester got a letter from Leslie Weldon. It said, "We can't figure it out. We can't do it." It notes that we'll work to design a new contracting structure. My concern is that it's been 6 months in which a new contracting structure could have been identified. We could be wrestling with that now if it didn't take legal changes, which it doesn't appear it will take, from this letter. It could be in place now.

We don't want to lose this mill. Last month we lost the mill in Cave Junction, the Rough & Ready mill. It is the heart of the economy in that small town. This is the heart of the economy in John Day.

How can—what can we do to create the sense of urgency about designing the necessary structures so we don't lose this mill?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, of course we share your concern about that mill for the community, the jobs, but also to have the facility to be able to do the restoration work on the National Forest.

Since our staff sent that letter out, I personally have taken another look at this to see if there isn't some other options that we can do prior to getting stewardship contracting reauthorized. I'm optimistic that there's a different approach that we can take, that we're working currently with the region and forest on, to be able to move forward with a 10-year stewardship contract.

I have to stress, though, that without reauthorization of stewardship contracting, it is really—well, it will be the end of the program, the program that has provided a lot of certainty, that gives us this kind of flexibility to do these long-term contracts. And it's one of the reasons why it becomes one of our highest priorities this year to be able to get that reauthorized.

So I will get back with you as soon as we have finalized our approach that we're going to take. But I'm confident that we'll be able to find a different way to be able to move forward.

[The information follows:]

STEWARDSHIP CONTRACT

The Malheur National Forest is preparing a 10-year Integrated Resource Service Contract (IRSC), Indefinite Delivery, and Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) to provide timber volume and service work. This contract should be available for companies to bid on this summer. The contract will provide a major share of the Malheur's program for the next 10 years.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you. And are you satisfied with the stewardship contracting reauthorization as structured in the Senate farm bill?

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes.

Senator MERKLEY. Okay. So we anticipate getting that done, and hopefully, we'll get it arranged through the House.

Mr. TIDWELL. Thank you.

Senator MERKLEY. And I appreciate that you've taken special attention, personal attention to this issue.

We have other situations where 10-year contracts will either make or break whether or not there is a biomass plant established, which means the difference between basically utilizing some of the forest woody mass versus having it burned on the floor of the forest.

It makes a lot of sense to try to make these things work, but there has to be a framework in what has been a very uncertain world that provides much more certainty. I know you understand. But thank you for your personal attention on it.

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

I wanted to turn to the LWCF and Forest Legacy. And I really appreciate the administration's support for the LWCF. And I was especially pleased to see the top-ranked project in the country was Gilchrist Forest in Oregon.

We were anticipating that there was a chance that the Gilchrist Forest and the Blue Mountains Forest Legacy could be funded in fiscal year 2013. And I think we're still waiting for announcements.

I think we thought those were coming out in April. Are those on the—are we likely to hear on some of these projects fairly soon?

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes. We should be able to get to you, I think, within the next week.

[The information follows:]

LWCF GILCHRIST FOREST UPDATE

Currently the project is held by The Conservation Fund. This was done at the request of the State and is in compliance with Forest Service Program Implementation Guidelines. The project will add nearly 26,000 acres to the 42,000 acre Gilchrist State Forest. The Gilchrist State Forest is the newest State forest in Oregon and was acquired with \$15 million of State funding. This project is important not only because of its contribution to the local forest products industry, but also for recreation and preventing conversion from open space, which will reduce fire risk and suppression costs. The State goal is to close on the Gilchrist land acquisition in this calendar year, though that may be closer to early in the following year to allow for the required due diligence actions for acquisitions funded by the Forest Legacy Program.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you. And I do appreciate the advocacy for funding. This has been a key, key set of programs.

HAZARDOUS FUELS

I wanted to turn to the issue of hazardous fuels reduction. The frustration of fighting these forests on the back end is just enormous. And after the fires last summer, everyone, whether it be inside the USFS, with the private landowners, with our local electeds, the scientists said, “We’ve got to do more on the front end. We’ve interrupted the natural fires of the past that were smaller fires that cleaned out this debris.”

And so it comes as a shock to us to see that that funding was cut by, I think, \$116 million. I fought hard for us to get funding to replace the surplus funds that were going to be diverted into fighting the fires, which I realize the huge challenge; you’ve got to fight fires when they occur. But how do we responsibly address forest health if we can’t have a robust fuels reduction program on the front end?

Mr. TIDWELL. Well, Senator, that reduction in the hazardous fuels funding in our request is just part of the difficult tradeoffs we have to make. When we have to continue to put so much more of our budget into suppression and also in preparedness, there has to be changes made in reductions.

With the funding that we are requesting, we’ll focus on the wildland-urban interface with the hazardous fuels reduction. And then in the backcountry, or outside of, away from the communities, when we do our restoration work, when we do our timber harvest, our timber thinning, we’re also reducing hazardous fuels. And so we’ll be accomplishing that hazardous fuels reduction through our integrated resource restoration work, through our timber sales.

But there’s just no question with that level of reduction, there’s going to be less fuels work done, there’s going to be less hazardous fuels accomplished.

Senator MERKLEY. Well, I’ll keep talking with you about it, because I realize there’s no easy answer. But with the changing or the more extensive droughts, we’re going to see that this problem of accumulated fuels becomes of more and more dreaded effect. And somehow we have to figure it out. Thank you.

Senator REED. Thank you very much.

Senator Tester.

Senator TESTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yeah, we've got to break the cycle. We're spending money on fighting fires when it would be much better to cut some wood and get us a permanent supply. We'll get into forest jobs maybe later.

AIRTANKERS

First I want to talk about airtankers, next-generation airtankers. As we well know, there's an intent to award contracts for seven of them. Fire season has already started in Montana and across the West, quite frankly. And while my staff was initially told that these planes would be ready to fly, I'm talking about the ones that were the seven that were contracted, awards were given. Well, my staff was initially told that these would be ready to fly this fire season.

We've received conflicting information from—even before the protests. And so I understand there might be some actions you can take to resolve this. But I have larger concerns regarding how these competitions are being run. You and I have known each other for a long time. You've been up front with me. I'm going to be up front with you.

After two protested competitions, I have serious questions as to whether the USFS is getting the best value for the dollar. So, Chief, can you tell me when these planes will be ready? I'm talking about the seven that the contracts have been awarded for.

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, once we work through the protests and we actually award the contracts, it's our expectation that those contractors that have the new contract awards will have their planes ready to go within 60 days for testing.

Senator TESTER. Okay, how about, that's for testing. Does that mean—okay, 60 days. We're middle of May, June, July. I hope we're not, but chances are, you know well, there's going to be a lot of smoke in here by the middle of July. Will the planes, they're ready for testing in 2 months. Are they going to be ready to fly in 2 months?

Mr. TIDWELL. Well, it's our expectation that after they complete the tests, they will be able to fly. The aircraft that are being considered, they are all FAA certified already. So there isn't a problem we have to deal with. So it's just to get their tanking systems and then to be able to meet our performance tests. And they'll be able to fly.

Senator TESTER. Yes, thank you, Chief. Can you tell me if that was taken into consideration as far as the contracting, whether—how quickly the planes could be up in the air? Because quite frankly, I really hate to say this, but you know very well we'll either be flooded out in June or there will be fires in June. There's going to be no happy medium here.

Mr. TIDWELL. It was factored into the decision on which contracts were awarded or would be awarded as to their capability based on what they provided, their capability to be able to have the aircraft that would perform to our standards and to be able to be operational within 60 days. There's no guarantee that they will be, but this is the process that we have to go through.

It's why we are also setting up contingency plans to bring the 580s down from Canada and Alaska if we need to, and then of course to have the MAFFS units on ready.

Senator TESTER. Look. You're probably frustrated with it, too. I'm a little frustrated with this whole thing because, quite frankly, I've seen what's happened in Montana's forests for a long time now. I live in eastern Montana, 200–300 miles from where the forest is. And we are covered in smoke most summers.

And it goes to a bigger issue that Senator Merkley was talking about. But if we're going to fight these fires and if you want to use next-generation as being the plane that's really going to get the job done much more efficiently and cost effectively, I honest to goodness can't figure out why the award was made how it was. That's just a dirt farmer talking. Because quite frankly, we haven't been able to get an answer from your staff as to when these planes are going to be up in the air, and I'm not sure I've gotten one from you as to whether these planes can be up in the air in 60 days.

Mr. TIDWELL. Well, Senator, that's the requirement in the contract, that once the contract is awarded, is that they need to be available to test within 60 days. That's the contract—

Senator TESTER. But if they don't pass the test, what happens?

Mr. TIDWELL. If they don't pass the test, then they don't fly. So those aircraft are not available. We have to then go back to the aircraft that are available, plus we can use the 580s.

Senator TESTER. The Canadians.

Mr. TIDWELL. Plus we can use the call-when-needed.

Senator TESTER. Okay.

Mr. TIDWELL. I want to point out this is the problem.

Senator TESTER. Yes.

Mr. TIDWELL. This is one of the reasons why we've been asking for the C-27Js. So we at least have part of our fleet that is Government owned so that there is some guarantee that we're going to have aircraft.

Senator TESTER. Yes.

Mr. TIDWELL. So this just could have been an ongoing problem with these contracted aircraft.

Senator TESTER. My problem is not with the contracted aircraft per se. And I'm not for privatizing Government. But my problem is that there were better options on the table to be taken up by the Forest Service, from my perspective. And they didn't do it. And you know exactly what I'm saying in all that.

Mr. TIDWELL. We have a set of procedures that we follow when we award contracts. I can guarantee you there is a high level of oversight that is provided. Through the process of being able to protest, on another additional level of review, and so that's the process that we have to follow.

Because of that, our folks go to great lengths to be able to make sure that we are making the right decision based on what the contractors provided us. We have to make our best decision.

Senator TESTER. I understand that. And I know there's going to be a second round. I would just say that, and I know you can't do anything about it because the contract has already been awarded—well, I guess you can. But the bottom line is that we need to get the biggest bang for the buck. And I'm not sure that, because of

the fact that we don't know if these planes are going to be operational or not, whether we got the bang for the buck.

I appreciate your service, and I don't mean to be critical. But I'll stick around for the second round.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Senator.

Senator Begich.

Senator BEGICH. Thank you very much, Chief, for being here. Let me just ask a quick question on Senator Tester's issue there. The protest has been filed, right? How long before that's resolved?

Mr. TIDWELL. I'm hoping that the attorneys are actually working today to begin the discussions to address that protest.

Senator BEGICH. So, I don't mean to interrupt you. But so they've started the review, but the protest has an amount of time that the individual has, correct?

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes.

Senator BEGICH. What is that time?

Mr. TIDWELL. Well, they've submitted the protest. The next step is for us to provide the information that both sides are requesting. Then eventually, it would go in front of, in this case, the judge.

In the meantime, I have to look at where we're going to be, how much it's going to take, and make the decision whether to override the protest or not.

Senator BEGICH. Got you.

Mr. TIDWELL. That's one of the decisions that I'm going to have to make here probably within the next week or so.

Senator BEGICH. That's the question I was trying to get to. So you have about a 2-week window that you'll determine if the protest, in your mind, is valid? Probably not the right word, but that there is full merit to it? But also, you'll weigh the fire issue that you have to deal with this summer; is that correct?

Mr. TIDWELL. That's correct. I have the authority based on the emergency situations of having airtankers to be able to override the protest.

Senator BEGICH. Very good. I just wanted to add that little context to the schedule there.

ROADLESS RULE

I want to talk to you about the Roadless Rule, which of course you know that the Alaska delegation is totally opposed to on many fronts. But, and I want to say your Alaska region has done a good job working with us in regards to mining issues in trying to make sure that some of those mines can continue to move forward.

We've been told and assured that the Federal Power Act will trump the Roadless Rule on development. So let me go to one area specifically. And that's the area of hydroelectric power. As you know, in Southeast, it is what operates.

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes.

Senator BEGICH. And also important for some projects that are moving forward. We have heard from individual operators, as well as the industry group, that it's not clear how this will work. For example, will they be forced to use helicopter maintenance as an issue versus accessing it, obviously, through roads? Which of course, just adds huge costs to the ability to move power.

I guess what I'm looking for, because there's so much uncertainty here, will you commit to meet with the industry groups to get this clarity on how hydropower can be utilized within the roadless areas? Two, how can we maintain a constructed, meaning the power itself and transmission lines and generation? Is that—because we keep hearing they're just not sure. And of course, if you start going to helicopter maintenance, very expensive.

Is that something you would commit to to make sure we can move forward in trying to get this figured out?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, I will make that commitment to be able to bring the right folks together to have a clearer understanding about what we need to do to move forward to make sure that the proponents for these hydroelectric facilities understand how they're going to need to operate. So make it very clear. So I will make that commitment to bring the right people together to clarify this.

Senator BEGICH. Very good. And on generation and on transmission?

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes.

Senator BEGICH. Okay. Because, obviously, generation may be a piece, you know, resolvable. But if you have lines that you can't get to and it costs a lot of money, the project may not happen. And if you could give us feedback as you move forward on that, it would be great.

AIRTANKERS

I want to just quickly follow up on the C-27s that were brought up by the chairman. And that is, let's assume for a moment DoD and the authorizing bill does it. They say they got seven surplus. They say, "Here you go." Are you willing to take those, and/or are you willing—tell me what your step will be if those are presented to you or available to you. Are you willing to take those? And if the answer is yes, do you have within your budget resources to do the things that the chairman asked for? One is retrofitted in, but also to maintain them and operate them.

I understand they're going to be contracted, operational, but owned by the feds. But can you tell me?

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes. If those seven aircraft are made available, we will receive those aircraft, and we'd expect that the earliest that would occur is toward the end of this fiscal year, probably in September at the earliest. Our budget request for fiscal year 2014 would provide us with the additional resources to move forward to modify those aircraft so they'd be available for our mission.

SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS

Senator BEGICH. Fantastic. Let me also just associate my comments with Senator Murkowski in regard to the secure school funding issue, obviously a big concern there. But I wanted to get to a higher level.

I mean, your position where you're at, and I kind of heard it through some of your testimony that, I mean, you're just getting squeezed from all ends. And you're just trying to figure out where to reduce the budget, and this is one of the areas that you looked at. And now you're kind of rethinking, maybe it wasn't the wisest

thing to do to do it all at that point, giving them all the money, then trying to claw it back.

Let's assume for a moment the sequester continues. Because it's a 10-year deal. It's not a 1-year deal. Are you going to look at this in how are you going to allow or transfer that money to schools and hold back any next cycle? Or what's your thinking now that you've gone through this experience that still is not over yet?

Mr. TIDWELL. The 25 percent funds will go out as collected for next year. If there is continuation on extension of Secure Rural Schools payments, we will know what we're up against right at the start so it will be the amount of money that will be made available for schools and roads so that we will not have this issue ever again.

Senator BEGICH. Okay. And are you starting to—I'm assuming, I know you don't want to do it too early because school is still in session this session. But as you move toward next session, will you be working with the affected schools' districts to make sure they understand, if we don't resolve the sequester, what the impacts are going to be?

Mr. TIDWELL. We will be working through the States to be able to inform them what we'd expect under the 25 percent fund if there isn't an extension of Secure Rural Schools. If there is an extension that is made available, then we will also work with the States to share that information.

TIMBER MANAGEMENT

Senator BEGICH. Great. Last question. Just for the record, maybe, if you could get to me, I'd be interested in maybe the last 10 or 15 years on a chart that shows on timber sales the amount of time it takes you from the initial stage to actual in production. I want to kind of see what it looks like over the last 10–15 years. Has it improved? Has it decreased? And if you wouldn't mind putting in there what your staffing levels and resources have been allocated to that effort corresponding to those years. Does that make sense?

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes.

Senator BEGICH. You see where I'm driving to. I just want to kind of see what the connection is if there is one.

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes, Senator, we can provide you that. It's the information that supports what I've already shared about the 49 percent reduction in staffing over the last 14 years, but at the same time a reduction in our unit costs by 23 percent. We'll also show basically the average amount of time it takes from when we initiate a project to when we actually sell the contract.

[The information follows:]

HISTORY OF TIMBER SALES AND TIMEFRAMES FROM BEGINNING TO PRODUCTION

The following are estimated timeframes for the various parts of the timber sale preparation process. The first step (Gate 1) is developing a project proposal. This typically will take 1 week to 1 year depending on the size and complexity of the project. The next step (Gate 2) is project analysis and design. This second step is when NEPA analysis is completed. This is the longest timeframe and varies based on the size of the area and the complexity of the proposal; it can range from 6 months to 2 plus years. This excludes the appeal and litigation processes if they occur. The third step (Gate 3) involves marking the areas on the ground, measurements, contract preparation, and appraisal. It varies from 3 months to 1½ years, depending on the size and complexity of the project. The sale package, bid opening

and sale award (Gates 4, 5, and 6) vary from 2 months to 6 months. Altogether the process can range from 1 year on a very simple, small sale to 5 years for a large complex project. There is also variation in the timeframes in different regions of the country. Our perspective is that these time periods have not changed much, if at all, over the past decade.

The history of timber sales for the past 15 years is provided in the table below.

[In million board feet]

Year	Volume Offered	Volume Sold
1998	3,415	2,955
1999	2,300	2,200
2000	1,714	1,745
2001	2,015	1,534
2002	1,785	1,621
2003	2,070	1,638
2004	2,467	2,164
2005	2,531	2,400
2006	2,639	2,863
2007	2,731	2,499
2008	2,830	2,484
2009	2,508	2,227
2010	2,671	2,592
2011	2,579	2,533
2012	2,616	2,644
2013 est ¹	2,800	2,800
2014 est ¹	2,380	2,380

¹ Sold value was estimate based on calculated 2012 unit value.

TIMBER STAFF LEVELS

The table below shows staff levels for the years 1998 to 2012. These numbers include FTEs from the Forest Products budget line item and the Timber Salvage Sales and Cooperative Work Knutson-Vandenburg funds.

TIMBER PROGRAM STAFF LEVELS

Fiscal Year	FTE
1998	6,453
1999	4,065
2000	3,445
2001	3,342
2002	4,659
2003	3,822
2004	4,128
2005	4,054
2006	3,268
2007	3,792
2008	3,210
2009	3,263
2010	3,101
2011	3,027
2012	3,282
Percent change 1998 to 2012	49

Senator BEGICH. That would be great. I'd love to see that. I think the window is 10-year—I think you used 1998 as your start point in your testimony.

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes.

Senator BEGICH. So maybe take it from that point, move forward.

Mr. TIDWELL. Okay.

Senator BEGICH. Very good. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator REED. Thank you, Senator.
Senator Feinstein.

Senator FEINSTEIN. Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. And welcome, Chief. It's good to see you again.

AIRTANKERS

At an earlier hearing of the Energy and Water Development Subcommittee on Appropriations, David Hayes indicated that California was going to have its worst drought in history this year. In terms of what that means, it's one water and two fire. We won't have the water, and we will have the fire. And that presents a very real problem.

I don't want to go into all the details which have been discussed of the holdup in contracts, of the contracting of the C-27s. But I want to express to you my view that this is life or death to California. If we have a number of lightning strikes, which we can have and have had 2,000 of an afternoon that started 1,000 wildfires, these tankers are critical.

I also want to take this opportunity to invite you to attend a summit on Lake Tahoe, where three National Forests sort of converge, on August 19. This is a bi-State summit with Nevada, Senator Reid handles it this year, and California. We alternate years when we do the summit. And we have the regional foresters there, which are just great.

I think it would be very helpful for you to come out and see the work that they have done. And it's one of the things that I try to get there every year to see the trails of burning that's gone on, the trails that are being cleared, and some of the foresting that's being done. So I want to extend that invitation to you personally, and also if you can, to say a few words at the summit.

I am really concerned by fire and would like to just urge you to do your utmost to get rid of those contract problems and move those planes, because they are going to be just vital to the California fire areas.

QUINCY LIBRARY GROUP

As you may know, many years ago, with Wally Herger in the House, I proposed legislation called the Quincy Library Group. And this was when environmentalists and lumber people and others up in the northern California area got together. And they went to the Quincy Library because it was the only place they couldn't yell at each other. And they forged a plan to be able to prudently forest some of the forests in that area, particularly to mitigate fire.

The project's authority expired in September 2012. I can't do a bill to renew it because it's now an earmark. But what I want you to know, and hope, is that you continue your significant fuels treatment within the 1.5 million acres of forestlands covered by Quincy Library Group in the next few years.

Now, you'll have reduced funding. And you'll have existing authorities. Can you tell me a little bit about what the Forest Service plans to do within that 1.5 million acres?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, we're going to continue to build on the good work that you started with Quincy Library Group. And out of that, we've also been able to release some of our scientific reports

that also support that type of work to continue in the forest, which is helping to build more and more support for it. So we're looking at expanding that type of work.

We do have the challenges with reduced funding. But by looking at larger areas than we have in the past, we're finding greater efficiencies by doing the analysis for hundreds of thousands of acres at a time versus those small projects, which is increasing the efficiency.

Also with the programs we have going on there in the State, where there's the incentives for biomass, that's also going to be very helpful. We want to make sure that we can demonstrate that the work we're doing on the forest also supports what the State is doing.

Senator FEINSTEIN. Well, I'm a strong supporter of both of those. And if you need help, please call. I very much fear this next fire system. As you know, the Santa Anas blew in May, of all things. And that started a huge fire. So it's really fire, and urging you to keep an eye particularly on California in this regard. And anything I can do to help, please let me know. I want to help.

If you can come to Tahoe, it will be on the Nevada side, on August 19. I think that would be very, very helpful. You've got a great team up there. And they work very hard. So it would, I think, be very welcome.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman. That's it for me.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Senator Feinstein.

WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT

You know, Chief, we've been going back and forth, I think, very productively. But certainly the critical issue of the fire season, the cost of fires, whether you're prepared or not, aviation, ground crews, et cetera, and then I think the ranking member and I are very concerned because, from what you've said, we're probably going to meet or exceed last year's very expensive fire operation, which takes away from discretionary spending.

And one of the things that we will pursue, and we'd like your support in this pursuit, is that at some point we're going to have to declare emergencies for these fires. Is that a position that you would support?

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes, I would. We need to have a better solution than what we've had in the past when we do have these very active fire seasons that go way beyond the budget that's been prepared for it. So I would appreciate your support there.

LANDSCAPE SCALE RESTORATION

Senator REED. Well, thank you very much, Chief. You've made many proposals, and let me discuss one of them. This is the Landscape Scale Restoration Program, which is you're trying to reorganize programs. Can you tell us what you would like to accomplish with this proposal? And how States with predominantly State or privately owned, not National Forests, but State or privately owned forests, and Rhode Island is one of those States, can participate and will benefit from this program? It seems just on the surface to be directing resources more exclusively to the National Forests.

Mr. TIDWELL. Mr. Chairman, this proposal is kind of built off of the concept of the integrated resource restoration, but would allow our State foresters to be able to look at their landscapes, their mix of private land and State lands, and be able to determine what type of work needs to occur on that landscape, instead of being focused on individual programs within that landscape.

So for States like yours, with their statewide plans that your State foresters put together, it actually supports that type of an approach, to be able to look at these larger landscapes, to be able to do all the work that needs to be done versus focus in on this program on this acre, another program on another acre.

So we feel that for a State like Rhode Island, it will actually support the work that they've been doing. It will also, we believe, create some more efficiencies and increase the overall amount of work that can be done to be able to support our private land forests.

INTEGRATED RESOURCE RESTORATION PROGRAM

Senator REED. Well, thank you, Chief. Another proposal is the Integrated Resource Restoration Program. We authorized and provided resources for a pilot program. I know you have the results for 2012. Now you want to go scale up nationally, even though it's a 3-year pilot. Can you share with us the results, the findings of the first year of the pilot? Presumably, that influenced you in your decision to seek a nationwide program.

Mr. TIDWELL. Mr. Chairman, first of all, thank you for the pilot authority. Our first-year results show that in almost every category, we met or exceeded the targets that were set up. The only area where we did not meet those targets was in our northern region when it came to biomass timber sale productions. That was driven by some litigation that occurred. That shortfall would have occurred with or without the integrated resource restoration.

With the pilot, we recognize it's going to take 2 to 3 years for us to be able to have the information to show you that this is a better way. We're committed to the pilot. I'll keep asking for the full authority just because based on my previous experiences, I think it's a better approach. We're going to focus on doing the pilot work and then be able to come in here 2 to 3 years from now and make a strong case as to why this is a better approach.

LAND ACQUISITION

Senator REED. Thank you, Chief. My final question is that the land acquisition component is about \$57.9 million. That's an increase of \$5.5 million. And I think we all support land acquisition. You indicated in your opening statement it's a very smart and efficient way to conduct your operations.

But the bulk of the money is targeted to six to eight, six projects where I presume that there are nationwide sort of demands for these funds. And can you sort of explain the rationale of so tightly focusing these resources rather than using them in a more dispersed basis?

Mr. TIDWELL. Mr. Chairman, over the years we had taken the approach of working the highest priority projects across the country without ever looking at what actually needs to get done in certain parts of the country. So working with the Department of the Inte-

rior a couple of years ago, we took a step back to really look at some key landscapes in the country where, by working together, we can complete the acquisition that needs to be done and actually be able to say, "Okay, we're completed there," and then be able to move on to other parts of the country.

So it helps us to be able to focus not only the funds that we request, but also from the Department of the Interior to be able to accomplish the overall goals for acquisition in that part of the country. So it does require a larger investment in any 1 year in a certain part of the country. But by doing that, it will allow us to complete that work and then move on to the next higher priority.

At the same time, we also have a list of what we call our core projects that we need to move forward with that are the highest priority, that are time sensitive. And we're going to continue to be able to do both.

Senator REED. Just, and you might provide this for the record. [The information follows:]

LAND ACQUISITION PROJECTS

The table below provides the status of Land Acquisition projects.

U.S. FOREST SERVICE LWCF PROJECTS FISCAL YEAR 2013 AND BEYOND

Forest Service Region	Project Name	State	National Forest	Fiscal Year 2013 Funding Amount/ Acres	Plan To Complete in Fiscal Year 2013/Phased ¹	Phases Complete Prior to Fiscal Year 2013	Proposed Fiscal Year 2014 President's Budget Phase ^{2,3}	Projected Fiscal Year 2015 and Beyond Phases in Dollars/Acres ⁴ ; Total Acres Upon Completion
1	CLP Crown of the Continent Northern Rockies: MT Legacy Completion ⁵	MT	Lolo/Flathead	\$12,400,000 4,500 acres	Phased	2	\$31,000,000 24,313 acres	Projected complete in fiscal year 2015 with additional \$5,000,000 for 1,200 acres Project total over 5 years = 35,700 acres
1	Tenderfoot	MT	Lewis & Clark	\$3,000,000 2,360 acres	Phased	3	\$3,200,000 2,280 acres Complete Total acres over 4 years = 8,220.	
2	Ophir Valley	CO	Uncompahgre	\$1,000,000 40 acres	4	5	\$1,470,000 59 acres Complete Total acres over 5 years = 1,113.	
3	Miranda Canyon	NM	Carson	\$2,656,000	Phased	1	\$2,170,000 965 acres	Projected complete in fiscal year 2015 with additional \$2,568,000 for 1,142 acres Project total over 4 years = 5,000 acres
4	Salmon-Selway Initiative Area: Morgan Ranch & Pardoe Rodeo Grounds.	ID	Salmon-Challis and Sawtooth National Recreation Area.	\$340,000 237 acres	Phased	1		Ongoing phases through 2020. Need \$8,243,000 for 908 acres
4	CLP Crown of the Continent: Greater Yellowstone.	WY/ID	Bridger-Teton/Caribou-Targhee.	\$3,200,000 350 acres	Phased	Multiple	\$2,000,000 320 acres	Ongoing phases through 2020. Need additional \$14,800,000 for 398 acres Project total by 2020 = 18,500 acres Projected complete in fiscal year 2016. Need additional \$3,320,000/2,388 acres
5	Hurodygurdy	CA	Six Rivers	\$1,300,000 1,678 acres	Phased	1		Project total over 4 years = 5,284 acres

	Leech Lake Mountain	CA	Mendocino	\$1,000,000 640 acres	Plan to complete in fiscal year 2013.	Multiple	Multiple	\$3,100,000	Multiple phases beyond 2020 Total need = \$141,685,300 Projected completion 2017 with additional \$10,464,000/10,464 acres Project total over 4 years = 12,504 acres
5									
5/6	Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.	CA/OR/WA	Several	\$650,000 160 acres	Phased	Multiple	Multiple	\$3,100,000	Multiple phases through 2020. Need \$21,000,000/25,000 acres Projected completion 2016. Need \$3,500,000/200 acres Project total over 6 years = 900 acres
6	John Day River Headwaters	OR	Malheur	\$2,040,000 2,040 acres	Phased	Multiple	Multiple	\$1,250,000 177 acres	Multiple phases through 2020. Need \$21,000,000/25,000 acres Projected completion 2016. Need \$3,500,000/200 acres Project total over 6 years = 900 acres
8	CLP Florida/Georgia Longleaf Pine.	FL	Apalachicola/Osceola	\$5,300,000 4,000 acres	Phased	Multiple	Multiple	\$1,400,000 241 acres	Multiple phases through 2020. Need \$21,000,000/25,000 acres Projected completion 2016. Need \$3,500,000/200 acres Project total over 6 years = 900 acres
8	NC Threatened Treasures	NC	Pisgah	\$1,150,000 176 acres	Phased	2	2	\$1,250,000 177 acres	Multiple phases through 2020. Need \$21,000,000/25,000 acres Projected completion 2016. Need \$3,500,000/200 acres Project total over 6 years = 900 acres
9	Great Lakes Northwoods	MN/WI	Superior, Ottawa, Chequamegon-Nicolet	\$1,745,000 617 acres	Phased	4	4	\$1,400,000 241 acres	Multiple phases through 2020. Need \$21,000,000/25,000 acres Projected completion 2016. Need \$3,500,000/200 acres Project total over 6 years = 900 acres
9	Grey Towers	PA	Grey Towers National Historic Site.	\$1,000,000 21.5 acres	Phased	Multiple	Multiple	\$1,400,000 241 acres	Multiple phases through 2020. Need \$21,000,000/25,000 acres Projected completion 2016. Need \$3,500,000/200 acres Project total over 6 years = 900 acres
10	Whitewater Bay, Admiralty NM.	AK	Tongass	\$980,000 160 acres	Plan to complete in fiscal year 2013.	Multiple	Multiple	\$1,400,000 241 acres	Multiple phases through 2020. Need \$21,000,000/25,000 acres Projected completion 2016. Need \$3,500,000/200 acres Project total over 6 years = 900 acres

¹ Phasing lets the Agency divide a project into smaller portions to allow for portioned acquisition subject to annual appropriation limits.
² The fiscal year 2014 planned acquisitions are based on the competitive LWCF prioritization process, but the amounts awarded to each project are subject to change based on appropriations. Projects might also be added or removed based on urgency of a particular project and market factors subject to congressional reprogramming guidelines.
³ The fiscal year 2014 President's budget includes projects not displayed on this fiscal year 2013 list.
⁴ Fiscal year 2015 and beyond assumes the appropriation named in the fiscal year 2014 President's budget and are subject to future appropriations. Future phases may change due to updated appraisal values and continued participation of willing sellers.
⁵ This is a Collaborative Landscape Planning (CLP) LWCF project.

Senator REED. Do you have sort of a list of those projects that are fully completed? You're indicating on your strategy, because there's always—and again, this is a good thing. There's always sort of a notion that, “Well, we've really consolidated a lot of territory around the national, and there's just one or two more pieces that we could do, where success leads to additional incentives.”

So it would be helpful, I think, to us to have a notion of, you know, if there is finality in this process and also to look closely at those high priority, because you're talking about areas of the country where it is time sensitive. You could lose the land to either public use—private use, rather, or many other reasons if they're not immediately acquired. So we would like that information if you could get it.

With that, let me recognize Senator Murkowski.
Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

INTEGRATED RESOURCE RESTORATION

Chief, I appreciate that you've clarified, I think, the agency's position with the budget request for the integrated resource restoration. I think it is important that we are able to really look at some concrete results that demonstrate improved performance, that really allow us to determine whether or not this IRR proposal lowers the costs and achieves better results on the ground.

So what I heard you say to the chairman was that you appreciate the pilot program, you're going to continue with the pilot. It's probably going to take several years before you can get exactly that kind of evidence so that we as a subcommittee can then weigh that and make a determination as to whether or not it should be made permanent.

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes.

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

Senator MURKOWSKI. So I appreciate that clarification.

Let me ask you a question on the LWCF. The plan calls for partial mandatory funding for LWCF in fiscal year 2014, then shifts to full mandatory funding of \$900 million a year beginning in fiscal year 2015. And then within your own budget—that was the President's budget. Within your own budget proposal, \$59 million is included on the mandatory side for LWCF in fiscal year 2014.

And I guess I'm looking at this and saying, we all have our priorities most clearly here. I have questioned that at a time where budgets are very, very tight, we would be purchasing more land when we're not able to adequately care for, maintain, provide the resources for what it is that we have. And then discussions like we're having here this morning about fire season that I think scares us all, and a recognition that we simply won't have the resources that we need to deal with that, have to move towards disaster funding.

So I guess it just begs the question here, when you move something to mandatory funding, we're basically on autopilot. And we are then in a situation where one program receives somewhat preferential treatment. If you're on autopilot, it's not subject to the same critical review, I think, that we go through with all of these very important programs, whether it is firefighting, whether it's

dealing with hazardous fuels, whether it's dealing with our timber harvest programs.

So I guess a very direct question is, Why does LWCF deserve to be put on a higher plane, a higher priority than some of these other very critical budget areas?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, the LWCF proposal for mandatory funding is based on the Department of the Interior's proposals to generate additional revenues to cover the cost of that. I want to assure you that the only way this could be successful is if there is adequate input and oversight from Congress and from this committee so that it reflects the type of projects you want to see go forward.

I want to reassure you it has to be part of this, to be able to put a system in place so that you have the level of input and oversight that's necessary to make sure that it is successful.

Once again, it is driven by what we hear across this country about the need to acquire these key parcels of land, whether it's for the critical habitat that can assure that we're able to recover species and be able to do more active management, or those key access points to make sure that folks can continue to access the National Forests and Grasslands, or in key areas to be able to provide the conservation easements so that a private landowner can keep working his land or her land so that she can still be able to manage that land as an active forest versus having to give it up to some form of development.

That's what really is driving this. Like I said earlier, when it comes to the acquisition, in every case that I've dealt with during my career, by acquiring those key parcels it actually reduces our overall administrative costs and gives us more flexibility to be able to manage these landscapes.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Well, you mentioned the role of the committee in terms of determining that priority. I think that oversight role is important. And I worry that we might lose some aspect of that oversight with this expansion that we're talking about.

TIMBER HARVEST

In my last minute, I'd like to bring up the question that you know that I'm going to ask. I don't want to disappoint you here. But this is relating to the timber harvest in the Tongass.

I asked my staff to get the official agency timber harvest for the last 10 years in the Tongass. The high-water mark was 2003. There were 51 million board-feet. We've gone downhill since then to 21 million board-feet last year. We talk about the situation every year.

What can you provide for me today in terms of assurances that we're going to see the numbers improve within the Tongass?

Mr. TIDWELL. Senator, last year we sold, I think, right around 50 million to 51 million, which is basically our 10-year average of timber sold. Harvest has been less than that, based mostly on market conditions. That's the way it is.

Senator MURKOWSKI. When you say "less," would you agree that it was 21 million board-feet last year?

Mr. TIDWELL. Well, as far as the harvest numbers, I'll have to get back to you.

[The information follows:]

TIMBER SALES, HARVEST, AND STAFFING IN REGION 10

The numbers shown between 1998 and 2008 are best estimates for timber sale activity and staffing in Region 10.

Fiscal Year	Number of Sales	Timber Sold (MMBF)	Timber Harvested (MMBF)	FTEs
1998	81	24	120	330
1999	46	61	146	310
2000	67	170	147	¹ 300
2001	40	50	48	280
2002	58	24	34	240
2003	35	36	51	230
2004	54	87	46	200
2005	70	65	50	180
2006	63	85	43	158
2007	41	30	19	130
2008	48	5	28	120
2009	181	23	28	110
2010	146	46	36	107
2011	38	37	33	107
2012	159	53	21	107
15-year average	75	53	57	186

¹ Fiscal year 2000 marked the last harvest from the Long term Contracts and the beginning of the Tongass "unification" effort which converted three separate "Areas," essentially separate National Forest sized entities, into a single large forest organization. (Three fully staffed organizations down to one.)

Source: Timber Cut and Sold Reports and Periodic Timber Sale Accomplishment Report.

Senator MURKOWSKI. That's what your agency says.

Mr. TIDWELL. Okay. So based on the market we've seen across the country our harvest levels have dropped, even though we've been able to maintain or actually increase what we're selling. That's how it works. The purchasers need to play the market as to when they can move forward to be able to do that. Our contract allows them the flexibility to decide what year to move forward with the harvest.

But as far as reassurances, we're ready to move forward with the Big Thorne project this year that will have a significant amount of volume. And at the same time, we have plans for the Wrangell project that will be coming up, I think next year. Then the other part of this is that we're going to move forward with our second growth, to be able to have that second-growth transition.

I think it is our best chance to ensure that we have an integrated wood products industry in Southeast Alaska, to be able to provide the wood that's needed in the sawmills, and at the same time be able to actually implement projects. It's one of those things that I think, through a stewardship contract, especially over a lengthy period like 10 years will provide that certainty so that private entities can make the investments in their mills. And that is the path forward.

So we're going to need your help in a couple of areas. There's another issue I want to talk to you about in the future. And that is if we could use the export values in our appraisal process, that would also help us to be able to put more of our timber, more sales, forward. And it's something that I'd like to be able to sit down with you in the future and discuss to see if we can get your support on that.

But I do believe that the sales that we have lined up, plus our focus on moving forward with the transition to second growth, is

going to give us the best path forward to be able to continue to build on a level of timber sales that we've been putting up over the last couple of years.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Well, Chief, you know that I am happy to talk with you. I'm happy to work with you, because I'm trying to keep some of these small Southeastern communities alive. And the one thing that I can't do is, I can't make these trees grow any faster.

And so when we talk about the transition, I've said it before, I will repeat again in this committee, I worry that we don't have our operators who are able to hold on until we can transition to that second growth, that you have situations just exactly as Senator Merkley has described in Oregon, where they had the Rough & Ready go down a few weeks ago, and now they've got another one going down. At some point in time, there is nobody left to deal with this transition.

And so I've pressed you to know whether or not the agency has a plan B, because I'm not sure that plan A, which is to transition to second growth, is one that is viable in an area where you have just 300 jobs remaining in the whole region. And it's getting skinnier every day.

So, Mr. Chairman, my time has expired right now. But I do think that this is something, again, we have this conversation every single year. And we're just not seeing things improve in the Tongass. So we've got to look at a different approach and one that will hopefully deliver some results for these communities.

Senator REED. Thank you, Senator Murkowski.

Senator Tester.

AIRTANKERS

Senator TESTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Real quickly, to follow up on the contracted next-gen, just real quick just for clarification purposes. My notes say that you said that these planes, these contracted next-gen planes, will have FAA clearance to fly as airtankers. They have that now?

Mr. TIDWELL. It's my understanding that all except one aircraft, I think, still needs FAA certification. But the other aircraft have been used for other purposes, for passenger planes or cargo planes in the past. So we expect to have the FAA certifications.

But I can follow up with that, Senator.

[The information follows:]

NEXT GENERATION LARGE AIR TANKER FAA CERTIFICATION

Six of the seven next generation large airtankers proposed in the intent to award are FAA approved with a FAA Type Certificate.

Senator TESTER. Yes. Well, the question is, Do they have it or do you expect that they will have it?

Mr. TIDWELL. It's my understanding that these aircraft do have it, except there is one that made a modification with the airframe and they've been working on getting that certification.

Senator TESTER. Sure.

Mr. TIDWELL. I can check on that.

Senator TESTER. If you could check on it and get back to us, that would be very much appreciated.

I want to talk a little bit about this C-27Js. The chairman talked about it a little bit. You talked about it in your statement. Could you give me an idea, is the transfer in process of the seven C-27Js?

Mr. TIDWELL. It's my understanding the Air Force is doing the study to determine if these aircraft are surplus or not.

Senator TESTER. Okay.

Mr. TIDWELL. We're hoping that will be completed later this year, hopefully by September. If they determine that they're surplus, it's my understanding that seven of those aircraft will be offered to the USFS.

Senator TESTER. And what's the timeline for acceptance?

Mr. TIDWELL. I think once they're offered, we will accept them as quickly as we can and then move forward to make the modifications on those aircraft so that they can be retardant planes.

Senator TESTER. Okay. Is there a system available, a retardant delivery system available for that plane?

Mr. TIDWELL. Not today. We are moving forward with our current MAFFS units and to be able to create one that would fit into the C-27J. We're working on the design of that. Then once we have that design completed, we'd be able to quickly move forward to have these units built.

Senator TESTER. Okay. And not being a pilot myself, I would assume that these planes would also have to be cleared by the FAA to be tanker planes to fight fires?

Mr. TIDWELL. These planes do meet all the airworthy criteria, so it would be up to us to determine that they meet our airworthiness standards and that they would be able to deliver the mission. But based on the success we've had with the C-130s, we expect the C-27Js will work just fine. They just carry a smaller payload than the C-130s.

Senator TESTER. Do you know what their payload is?

Mr. TIDWELL. We anticipate that the payload would probably be about 1,800 gallons. So these would be medium airtankers.

Senator TESTER. The reason I ask that is because at one point in time they were going to put C-27s at the Air National Guard in Great Falls, Montana. And I don't know this for a fact, but it seemed to me like their payload was 2,000 pounds. But we can visit about that. We're not to a point where that becomes an issue yet.

What about service and maintenance? Will that be contracted out?

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes.

Senator TESTER. Do you anticipate there being issues there?

Mr. TIDWELL. No. We expect that probably some of our current operators would be glad to have a contract and be able to maintain and operate those aircraft.

Senator TESTER. Okay. And then you'd mentioned in a previous question or maybe in your opening statement that you thought it would be about \$3 million per aircraft to adapt the aircraft and place the delivery system in that aircraft. Is that based off of—what's that based off of? Have you guys done some studies on that, or what?

Mr. TIDWELL. It's based on our past experience with building MAFFS units. That's part of it. And then also realizing that we'd have to spend some money in order to remove some of the military

equipment and, like I said earlier, some of the armoring that's on these aircraft. It's not necessary for our mission, and we would look at removing some of that excess weight that wouldn't be necessary.

Senator TESTER. Okay. Overall, by the time you get done, let's just assume the military makes the transfer. You get seven of these babies. Are you looking at a \$21 million expenditure to make the adaptation and have them up in the air? Or have you done any projections on what it would cost to get them up?

Mr. TIDWELL. It will be probably be \$21 million and maybe \$26 million is what it will take.

Senator TESTER. Okay. All right. Thank you. Thanks for that. Just curious to see where we're at.

COLLABORATION

Look, as a regional forester in Region 1, the most important region, right? No, you don't have to answer that. You did some great collaboration. You did some great collaboration. And it really shows what can happen when you do collaboration versus what happens when both sides dig in. Everybody loses, including the forest.

And so are you looking to expand upon collaborative projects? I mean, look. Senator Merkley talked about it. Both the chairman and the ranking member talked about it. If we lose the infrastructure that's out there because we don't have predictable supply, then it all falls on the taxpayers, it all falls on your budget. Is there some work being done collaboratively in different regions of the country that we can point to that say, "Yes, we're making progress here," as far as stopping the folks who don't want to cut one single tree?

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes, Senator. Throughout the country, we've had significant progress that's been made. The collaborative forest landscape project is just one example. There is an understanding and recognition across this country that there is a need for us to manage these forests and to reduce not only the hazardous fuels, but to make them more resistant, more resilient to the changing climate they have to deal with.

So there is recognition, and we're seeing it almost everywhere. We still have some issues in your State of Montana where we've lost a little ground recently. But we're going to keep working there to be able to show folks, this is the right work that needs to be done at the right time.

Senator TESTER. Well, not to put pressure on the ranking member of this subcommittee, because she's the ranking member of another very important committee. But if we can get her out, maybe we can show her collaboration in Montana that does work. Thank you, Chief.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Senator Tester.

Just for the record, we will keep the record open until May 29. So you may get additional questions from my colleagues, and additional statements could be provided. That's next Wednesday. But I know Senator Murkowski has a request. And before I adjourn, let me recognize Senator Murkowski.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just very briefly.

Chief, you have provided us with the timber offered over the past 10 years in the Tongass and the Chugach; I appreciate that. We'd also asked for the number of employees and the breakdown between the Chugach and the Tongass so we have them, those positions that are approved, those that are currently filled.

Can your folks get us the breakdown then on the number of jobs then within the Tongass that are focused on forest management, just kind of give us that breakdown, if you will, when you respond?

[The information follows:]

TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST, FOREST MANAGEMENT STAFF

There are 112 positions in Forest Management in the Tongass National Forest Supervisor's Office and Ranger Districts.

TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST, FOREST MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION

Location/ Series	Series Name	Number of Positions
	Supervisor's Office:	
0460	Forester	9
0462	Forestry Technician	3
0807	Landscape Architect	3
1315	Geologist	2
0193	Archeologist	1
0401	Recreation	1
1101	NEPA Coordinator	2
1082	Writer/Editor	1
0408	Ecologist	3
1035	Public Affairs	1
0802	Engineering Tech	2
0810	Engineer/Transportation Planner	2
1315	Hydrologist	1
0482	Fish Biologist	1
0470	Soils	2
2210	GIS	5
0301	NEPA Planner	2
0486	Wildlife Biologist	1
	Ranger District Offices:	
0460	Forester	24
0462	Forestry Technician	17
0404	Fish Technician	2
0193	Archeologist	5
0401	Natural Resource	6
1101	Specialist (NEPA, IDT Leader) NEPA Coordinator	2
1082	Writer/Editor	3
0408	Ecologist	1
1315	Hydrologist	2
0482	Fish Biologist	3
0470	Soils	1
0301	NEPA Planner	1
0486	Wildlife Biologist	3
	Total Number of Positions	112

Senator MURKOWSKI. And then in the Energy Committee, I had mentioned the Anan Creek facility. And I think we're working on a proposed solution for that. I understand that there's been some engineering work that has advanced. So hopefully, when we get you up to the State, we can see some good news there, as well.

But I look forward to visiting with you a little bit more and welcoming you north.

So, appreciate that, Mr. Chairman.

ADDITIONAL COMMITTEE QUESTIONS

Senator REED. Thank you. There are no further questions. Let me thank you, Chief, and thank you, Ms. Cooper, for your testimony today. And we look forward to working with you.

[The following questions were not asked at the hearing, but were submitted to the Department for response subsequent to the hearing:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JACK REED

FOREST AND RANGELAND RESEARCH

Question. What initiatives are you planning for next year that account for the \$15 million increase in Forest and Rangeland Research?

Answer. To be successful in our restoration efforts, Forest Service Research and Development (R&D) will play a critical role. Our R&D priorities are integral investments in science as a foundation for restoration activities. One avenue that we will take is to accelerate opportunities to develop new public/private partnerships to commercialize nanocellulose technologies. This will revolutionize technology, creating new jobs and revenues while simultaneously restoring our forests, thus strengthening America's economy through industrial development and expansion.

Forest Service R&D is investing in a Vibrant Cities program which will direct research efforts in selected urban areas to provide new information and tools to help in sustainability planning. Forest Service R&D will accelerate its urban research program on urban forest health and management, ecosystem services and values, watershed rehabilitation, human health and experiences, green infrastructure, and green building. This effort is aligned with the Vibrant Cities & Urban Forests National Call to Action initiative.

We will also invest more in our Localized Needs Research Priority Area, as directed by Congress in House Report 112-331, page 1080.

STATE AND PRIVATE FORESTRY

Question. What do you hope to accomplish with the new, \$20 million Landscape Scale Restoration proposal?

Answer. The goal of the proposed Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) Program is to focus and prioritize State and Private Forestry (SPF) resources to better shape and influence forest land use at a scale and in a way that optimizes public benefits from trees and forests across all landscapes, from rural lands to urban centers. This is an evolution of the successful SPF "Redesign" effort, formalizing a process already in place by establishing a specific Budget Line Item (BLI), rather than combining funds from specific BLIs. This will provide increased flexibility for States to focus on the priorities identified in their Forest Action Plans without the limitation of a predetermined mix of programmatic funding. The work under this BLI will continue to identify the greatest threats to forest sustainability and accomplish meaningful change in priority landscapes. As a competitive grant program, it will provide flexible opportunities to fund innovative projects across boundaries that focus on States' priorities.

Question. How are States with predominately State or privately owned forests but smaller "landscape," such as Rhode Island, likely to compete?

Answer. The increased focus on "All Lands" projects brings particular attention to implementation of the priorities identified in State Forest Action Plans, formerly called "Statewide Assessments." Landscapes will be defined broadly in this competitive grant program, focused on cross-boundary work between not only States and the Forest Service, but between States, between States and private landowners, between States and Tribes, etc. As such, States with large amounts of State and private land, such as Rhode Island, are expected to compete just as successfully as States with more Federal land. Over the past 5 years, Rhode Island has been successful in receiving project funding through the competitive "Redesign" process, and it is expected that success will continue under the LSR program, especially with Rhode Island's record of bringing partners, such as universities and nonprofits, into their competitive project process.

Question. Will this year's \$7 million reduction in Urban Forestry all go to Landscape Scale Restoration? Please detail the estimated State allocations vis-à-vis fiscal year 2013.

Answer. The Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) program estimates that State allocations in fiscal year 2014 will be largely the same as in fiscal year 2013

and the U&CF program will continue to support landscape scale restoration efforts. In recent years, the U&CF program has contributed roughly 15 percent of fiscal net available dollars to “Redesign” projects, and similar levels are anticipated for future landscape scale restoration projects that can include urban areas. Of the total proposed reduction to the U&CF program, approximately \$3.6 million is the estimated contribution to “Redesign” or what will essentially be the LSR BLI. The U&CF program plans to make reductions in areas such as national partnerships and initiatives (e.g. Urban Waters Federal Partnership) to maintain the U&CF community assistance activities carried out primarily through State forestry agencies with the State allocations.

NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM

INTEGRATED RESOURCE RESTORATION

Question. Please outline the findings for the first year of the Integrated Resource Restoration (IRR) pilot and what improvements you are making this year with that knowledge.

Answer. The pilot regions reported several advantages of the IRR program:

- Increased flexibility to fund multiple priorities, integrate planning efforts, leverage IRR funds to support Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration projects, and to achieve priority integrated restoration work.
 - Increased coordination across program areas and increased integrated planning.
 - Implementing high-priority projects is easier without multiple budget line items because it provides more flexibility.
 - Focused investments in landscape-level projects allowed restoration actions to be funded in a single year that would otherwise be piecemealed over many years.
 - The focused, integrated effort made setting goals and priorities easier.
- Regions also identified challenges with the IRR program, including:
- The Forest Service manages a number of programs that may not directly contribute to restoration activities in IRR under the previous separate programs, presenting challenges in how we manage these base programs and how they fit in the context of a restoration program.
 - Not all restoration priorities will align with traditional targets as allocated from previous years with IRR authority.
 - The consolidated nature of IRR does not lend itself easily to breaking out the cost of specific restoration activities to estimate trends in unit costs.

We are addressing the challenges going into fiscal year 2014 through improved program direction and continuing communication between the Washington office and the three regions under the pilot authority.

An agreement was entered into with Colorado State University and the University of Oregon to accomplish third-party monitoring and evaluate the effectiveness of the IRR program. Surveys will be conducted with key Forest Service individuals at all levels and case studies will be evaluated within the pilot regions. Findings from these activities will ultimately help the Agency better manage the program.

Question. Why does the budget propose full implementation in fiscal year 2014, when the pilot project has not concluded?

Answer. The IRR pilot regions met or exceeded allocated targets in all areas except for timber volume sold, which was 82 percent of the target volume. Factors unrelated to IRR caused this shortfall, such as litigation on projects with significant portions of acres to be treated, no bids received on timber sales, and impacts from a demanding fire season. The IRR pilot authority has provided a valuable learning opportunity for the Agency. The flexibility provided by IRR facilitates focused investments on expediting the completion of on landscape-level restoration projects that would otherwise be split over the course of many years. It allows the Agency to leverage funds across multiple programs to increase efficiency in planning and in achieving restoration outcomes. The flexibility given to Line Officers and program managers has proven beneficial in helping with prioritizing restoration treatments. To fully realize the flexibility created through IRR, it must be expanded to a full Agency-wide authority. In doing so, the Agency can focus resources on integrated ecosystem restoration across the country.

The Forest Service will continue to monitor and report the performance results from the three regions under the IRR pilot authority to demonstrate the advantages of the program.

RESTORATION PARTNERSHIPS

Question. What is the split between grants and “partnership development” in the \$10 million proposed for Restoration Partnerships?

Answer. This new authority is not a grant program. We propose a new \$10 million program to create and build partnerships for improving municipal and beneficial-use watersheds, reduce risks from wildfire to public utilities and infrastructure, and reduce biomass to sustain landscape fuel reduction and watershed investments. All of the funding would be used to support on the ground partnership work, a portion of which will fund staff work for those projects at a rate to be determined by the specific projects selected. Within Restoration Partnerships, funding will be allocated to a cost-share program and to partnership development with municipalities, public utilities, and other organizations. Partnership development will enable regions and forests to act on innovative partner supported ideas, with diverse partners including nongovernmental entities, municipal partners, and a variety of public service utilities.

Question. What match will be required from non-Federal partners?

Answer. There is no required match in Restoration Partnerships, but our target for fiscal year 2014 is to leverage \$11 million in partner funding for the \$10 million in requested Federal funding. In fiscal year 2012, the Forest Service entered into more than 7,700 grants and agreements with partners, who contributed \$535 million, which was leveraged by nearly \$779 million in Forest Service funding. However, Restoration Partnerships emphasizes the critical role of non-Forest Service resources across projects diverse in scope and duration. The Restoration Partnerships program will enable regions and forests to work with diverse partners to implement innovative projects that will expand the success of smaller scale projects to much larger landscapes. They will grow the circle of partners to include an increased number and broader array of municipal, utility, and nongovernmental organization partners. We will track the total value of resources, expressed as a ratio, leveraged through partnerships with States and other partners to assess performance in this newly proposed program.

Question. Do you anticipate National Forests in the East to participate?

Answer. Yes, all Forest Service regions will be able to respond affirmatively to partner sponsored projects to protect critical infrastructure such as electrical transmission lines, by reducing accumulated fuels, implementing municipal watershed restoration, and protecting and enhancing water quality and quantity.

ADMINISTRATIVE GRAZING FEE

Question. What percentage of the Forest Service’s Grazing program costs will the new \$1 administrative fee cover?

Answer. We estimate that the proposed \$1 fee would generate approximately \$5 million per year, approximately 6.2 percent of the grazing program costs in fiscal year 2012. The total grazing program costs in fiscal year 2012 were \$80.9 million, with \$55.4 million covered by the Grazing Management BLI, \$2.3 million from the Range Betterment Fund, and the remaining \$23.2 million coming from Vegetation & Watershed Management and Integrated Resource Restoration BLIs.

Question. How much will this \$1 fee add to the total cost per animal?

Answer. Changes in the total cost per animal with an added \$1 fee per head month are shown below (Western States National Forest).

On average (based on the Agency’s 2012 Grazing Statistical Report authorized use data):

—This additional \$1 fee would add \$1 per cow/horse per month. Combined with the current fees, (\$1.35 per head month for cattle), this would make the total cost \$2.35 per cow per month.

—This additional \$1 fee would add \$.20 per sheep per month (one-fifth of a head month). Combined with the current fees (\$.27 per sheep per month), this would make the total cost \$.47 per sheep per month.

Question. What are the comparisons for Forest Service fees to State and private lands?

Answer. The grazing fee for the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management are identical in the western States. The National Agricultural Statistical Service (NASS) provides both agencies three indices that are used in the fee calculation formula. This amount is restricted to plus or minus 25 percent of the previous year’s fee. The regulations also established a minimum fee of \$1.35.

The NASS calculates the average private grazing land lease rate per animal unit month (AUM) by State, which can be found on the following website: http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_Subject/Economics_and_Prices/index.asp.

These values are shown below. For comparison, the Forest Service cattle grazing in Western States fee is \$1.35 per head month (HM) for 2013. There are adjustment factors for type (species) of animal.

The Western States vary considerably in the fees charged for grazing on State lands and the methods used to set those fees. The GAO report titled "Livestock Grazing, Federal Expenditures and Receipts Vary, Depending on the Agency and the Purpose of the Fee Charged, 2005" provides the last data on State land grazing fees. Generally, States charge a fee per AUM. In fiscal year 2004, the Western States charged grazing fees ranging from a low of \$1.35 per AUM for some lands in California to \$80 per AUM in parts of Montana.

Below is a comparison of grazing fees on National Forest System lands, State managed lands, and privately owned lands.

State	\$/AUM West-ern States National For-est	Average \$/AUM Private Land	Difference NFS & Private lands grazing fees	Average \$/AUM State Land	Difference NFS & State lands grazing fees
AZ	1.35	9.00	7.65	2.23	0.88
CA	1.35	17.30	15.95	1.35-12.50	0.00-11.15
CO	1.35	15.30	13.95	6.65-8.91	5.30-7.56
ID	1.35	14.50	13.15	5.15	3.80
MT	1.35	19.40	18.05	5.48-80.00	4.13-78.65
ND	1.35	18.00	16.65	1.73-19.69	0.38-18.34
NE	1.35	27.30	25.95	16.00-28.00	14.65-26.65
NM	1.35	13.00	11.65	0.17-10.15	- 1.18-8.80
NV	1.35	13.00	11.65	N/A	N/A
OK	1.35	11.00	9.65	7.00-16.00	5.56-14.65
OR	1.35	14.80	13.45	4.32	2.97
SD	1.35	24.20	22.85	3.00-56.00	1.65-54.65
UT	1.35	13.20	11.85	1.43 or 2.35	0.08 or 1.00
WA	1.35	12.00	10.65	5.41 or 7.76	4.06 or 6.41
WY	1.35	17.60	16.25	4.13	2.78

AUM = Animal Unit Month = Head Month.

LAND ACQUISITION

Question. The first project on the Forest Service Land Acquisition list is \$31 million. Why does the budget place such a high funding priority on one project in fiscal year 2014? Is \$31 million all that is required to complete the project?

Answer. This request is part of the multi-Agency, public-private "Montana Legacy" collaborative. These investments directly fulfill the intent of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Collaborative Landscape Planning Initiative and address the requests of members of Congress and our private partners for a portion of Federal land acquisition to invest in the most ecologically important landscapes and in projects with clear strategies for reaching shared goals grounded in science-based planning. Through Collaborative LWCF, the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior bureaus jointly direct funds to projects that will achieve the highest return on Federal investments, and coordinate land acquisition planning with Government and local community partners.

In this Montana Legacy project, this collaborative land acquisition effort leverages millions in private investments such as a 110,000-acre donation to the Flathead and Lolo National Forests by the Nature Conservancy in 2010 and is resulting in the consolidation of tens of thousands of acres of the highest quality wildlife habitat and working lands in the northern Rockies. Eliminating the historic "checkerboard" lands will allow us to move toward completion and protection of this globally important ecosystem by 2015 instead of attempting it piecemeal over the next 10 or 20 years during which time parcels would be developed and lost, and it will result in improved management, reduced administrative costs and increased recreational opportunities.

Question. What should we expect from this Collaborative Landscape Planning program long-term? Will the same landscapes continue to be in the budget until they are completed, or will we see different focus areas next year?

Answer. In an era of constrained budgets, it is more important than ever that conservation investments deliver measurable returns, and rely on best available science and strong partnerships to target investments to critical needs. The administration's intention is for the Forest Service to continue to participate in the Collaborative Landscape Planning (CLP) program. The collaborative approach is successful be-

cause it allows LWCF funds to leverage other Federal resources, along with those of non-Federal partners, to achieve the most important shared conservation outcomes in the highest priority landscapes. An important objective of this program is to stabilize large landscapes in a short timeframe before they can be further fragmented and become more expensive if not impossible to protect. At the same time, the Forest Service recognizes the valuable role of protecting individual tracts of land with other LWCF components including Forest Legacy, and collaborative LWCF is not intended to replace the role of those programs in meeting individual conservation objectives.

Collaborative LWCF enables the Forest Service to continue its long held focus on conserving large-scale landscapes that provide multiple resource and economic benefits to the public including cleaner drinking water, increased recreational opportunities, improved and protected habitat for at-risk and game species, and a greater number of jobs generated on and off these lands. This approach also produces direct long-term benefits for the taxpayer by simplifying land management, creating public access, reducing operating and maintenance costs, reducing boundary conflicts, and protecting areas from urgent threats like wildfire and invasive species. Throughout this process, the Forest Service will continue to use its rigorous merit-based evaluation process to prioritize projects for funding for Forest Legacy, core and the multi-Agency CLP LWCF programs.

The investments needed in any particular collaborative landscape will be unique to that landscape's needs and resources. As part of the application process, landscape proponents are requested to identify future acquisition needs; to date, most projects are designed to take 2 to 3 years to complete, whether in the core competition or the CLP.

Question. For the Crown of the Continent, Longleaf Pine, and Desert Southwest Collaborative Landscapes, please provide a list of Forest Service projects within those Landscapes, designating completed and incomplete projects.

Answer. None of the Collaborative Landscapes are complete because only 1 year of funding has been disbursed. They are conceived as 2- to 3-year projects. Fiscal year 2013 is the first year of the Collaborative Landscape Planning Program. The first round of Collaborative Landscape Projects were selected in 2012, and announced in the administration's fiscal year 2013 budget request. The Crown of the Continent and Longleaf Pine projects areas were initiated in 2013. The Crown of the Continent initially included two sub-landscapes, which were the Montana Legacy Completion project and the Greater Yellowstone project. In 2014, these two projects were de-coupled and only the Montana Legacy Completion project received a funding recommendation. The Greater Yellowstone project will compete again in the fiscal year 2015 process.

The Desert Southwest Landscape was not proposed until fiscal year 2014. The Desert Southwest Collaborative is in the President's budget request to Congress for fiscal year 2014 for the first time therefore it is also not complete, as the fiscal year 2014 appropriations are not finalized.

	Fiscal Year 2013: FS Funded	Fiscal Year 2014 President's Budget Request
Crown of the Continent:		
Montana Legacy: Lolo/Flathead NF	\$12,400,000	\$31,000,000
Greater Yellowstone Area: Bridger-Teton/Carrizo-Targhee.	3,200,000	Proposed for \$2,000,000 by Forest Service, but not a CLP project.
Longleaf Pine Collaborative:		
Florida/Georgia Longleaf Initiative: Osceola NF.	5,300,000	Not included in CLP.
South Carolina Longleaf Partnership: Francis Marion NF.	¹ 1,000,000	\$6,700,000
Desert Southwest:		
California Desert Southwest: San Bernardino NF, Santa Rosa & San Jacinto NM.	10,390,000	\$10,390,000

¹ Core LWCF funding.

WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT

Question. Do you agree that the ability to provide emergency firefighting funds is critical? Will you support efforts to provide an emergency or disaster designation for funds appropriated to pay for emergency firefighting needs?

Answer. In the past few years, fire seasons have become longer and more intense with historical fires in several Western States. Funding the rolling 10-year average with both the FLAME and Suppression funds is insufficient in some years which results in detrimental transfers. In addition, continued growth of the 10-year average adds increasing pressure on already tight discretionary funding. We would like to work with the committee to explore long-term solutions to this problem.

Question. How does fire borrowing negatively impact your other programs, even if Congress does provide a partial or full repayment at a later date?

Answer. When funding is transferred from other programs to support fire suppression operations, these programs are impacted because they are unable to accomplish priority work and achieve the overall mission of the Agency. Often this priority work mitigates wildland fire hazard in future years. The ability of programs to achieve established targets is impacted and projects are often put on hold or canceled. This not only impacts the ability of the Agency to fulfill its mission responsibilities, but is an inefficient use of taxpayer resources. A significant amount of money can be wasted if all of the pre-work for a contract has been completed and then it is canceled due to transfers. In addition, transfers negatively impact local businesses and economies, costing people jobs and income because projects are delayed or canceled. Examples of deferred or canceled activities include contracts not awarded for various priority Forest restoration projects, such as our Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration projects, and ceased activity for land acquisition.

Question. The budget request recounts the accomplishments and benefits of programs that assist in reducing the incidence of catastrophic fire, yet these programs are proposed for decreases in fiscal year 2014 (hazardous fuels reduction, State and volunteer fire assistance, forest health management of pests and disease, and fire science). Aren't these reductions counter-productive to forest health and the Forest Service's stated goals of restoration, jobs and managing wildfires?

Answer. The budget reductions will result in lower targets and lower accomplishments. However, in times of reduced budgets, prioritization becomes even more important. Firefighter and public safety will remain our number one priority during the 2014 fire season. The Forest Service will continue to prioritize work to accomplish the most important projects in all of our programs. Specifically, the highest priority projects are focused where the threat is high, we can make a difference, and we have community partners.

Question. How much of the \$116 million decrease in Hazardous Fuels is transferred to the Integrated Resource proposal?

Answer. The fiscal year 2014 President's budget proposes \$201,228,000 for Hazardous Fuels, which reflects a funding decrease of \$115,848,000 from fiscal year 2013 including—a shift of \$76 million to IRR. Funds that may have been spent on hazardous fuels reduction outside the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) in previous years will now be part of IRR to support integrated restoration of National Forest System lands. We will continue to focus on the highest priority areas in the WUI to protect communities and create defensible space for firefighters to work in.

Question. With such a dramatic decrease for Hazardous Fuels within Wildland Fire, how are you planning to set priorities for where work is performed?

Answer. The Forest Service continues to improve its processes for allocating fuel reduction funds, which prioritizes fuel reduction projects based on national priorities. These improvements include the use of a computer model developed by the Forest Service (the Hazardous Fuels Priority Allocation System, or HFPAS) to assist in making allocation decisions, rather than relying primarily on historical funding patterns and professional judgment. HFPAS uses data from various sources and considers wildfire potential, negative consequences of wildfire, program performance with prior years' allocations, and potential opportunities that meet other integrated resources objectives. The Agency annually updates the model inputs to use the best available data and science. The Forest Service also directs its regional offices to use a similar process and finer scale information. Additionally, we have directed the regions and field units to focus on projects where the threat is high, we can make a difference, and we have community partners.

Question. In your testimony, you disclose that almost half of the Forest Service budget is dedicated to fire-related activities. What solutions are you pursuing to make firefighting cost less? How do we tackle this problem so that Fire doesn't overtake other Forest Service functions and priorities?

Answer. We have made significant strides in implementing risk management for fire suppression efforts, to ensure we have an appropriate, risk informed, and effective response to all fires. Cost is one outcome of our decisions. By utilizing risk management techniques we are successful in having positive financial outcomes on our suppression operations. Based on analysis performed by Forest Service researchers, in fiscal year 2012, we spent nearly \$377 million less than we would have in pre-

vious years, had they had similar fire seasons, due to applying risk management principles.

Question. Sequestration will reduce your firefighting assets by at least 100 fire engines and 500 fire crew members. Are those figures still correct and what are the consequences for fighting fire this year?

Answer. Yes, we anticipate reductions at approximately this level (although the engines may be subject to a reduction of 50–100). However, we will ensure that there are adequate resources available to meet the demands of fire activity through the use of contracted assets as well as by managing the levels and location of seasonal employees available nationally.

Question. We currently use a 10-year average of suppression costs to predict the funding necessary for the next fiscal year. The fact that we have spent more than the 10-year average in 9 of the last 10 years, it is evident that this model is not reliable. Are you working on a different model, and what are the options?

Answer. We have only overspent the 10-year average in 7 of the last 10 years. Fire costs are dependent on several factors, primarily weather, that are extremely difficult to predict 2 years out, as is necessary to meet budget formulation timelines. We have explored several methods, including multi-equation regression models that include weather and climate data, to more accurately predict future costs and fire activity and have had some success. We will continue to work to develop these methodologies and would like to work with the committee to explore other options.

FIRE AVIATION

Question. Last year's budget included \$24 million to pay for increases in tanker contract costs for the Next Gen aircraft. The President's budget request for fiscal year 2014 has an additional \$50 million, but there is not a total specified in the budget for aviation. What is the total amount you are proposing to spend, in both Preparedness and Suppression, on firefighting aviation?

Answer. Total aviation expenditures are hard to predict given that a large portion of our costs are associated with actual flight hours for flying suppression operations. We do expect to spend between \$160 million and \$200 million on fixed availability costs for all aviation assets (this includes not only large airtankers, but other assets like helicopters and water scoopers) from the preparedness account. In addition, on average, we spend \$150 million to \$200 million on flight costs, which are paid from suppression. The additional funding will support the contract acquisition costs of the continued phasing in of modernized aircraft.

Question. Are we going to see similar increases every year for this activity due to the increasing number of aircraft? What are the estimates of how much additional funding new aircraft will cost in future years?

Answer. As we continue to modernize our airtanker fleet, we will evaluate the needs for fiscal year 2015 and beyond to determine if we will continue to ask for specific increased funding for this purpose, weighing our other funding needs within the Agency.

Question. Congress has given you the opportunity to obtain 7 C-27Js. If you do receive them, they will not be immediately ready as tankers. What are you able to do now to prepare for the transfer?

Answer. A working group, made up of the following Aviation staff groups, Operations, Business Operations, Airworthiness, Pilot Standardization, and Strategic Planning—as well as Budget and Planning and Acquisition Management—has been formed within the Agency to facilitate the transfer, ownership, and eventual operation of these aircraft. Solicitations are being prepared for the design and manufacture of a retardant delivery system, maintenance services, and pilot services. The Forest Service is also working with the U.S. Army Prototype Integration Facility to assist us with the design of the retardant delivery system. The Forest Service is currently in discussions with the Department of Defense regarding the divestiture of the C-27Js. The Forest Service has also intensified interaction and coordination with potential inter-Agency partners to ensure contracts and other logistical requirements will be in place as soon as possible after receiving the aircraft.

Question. Do you have an estimate of how long it would take to convert the C-27Js to tankers after a transfer?

Answer. The Forest Service estimates it may take up to 18 months from the award of the retardant delivery system contract to complete the design, manufacture and testing. The retardant delivery system is the most complicated of the conversion tasks, because it involves engineering analysis, design and airworthiness, and engineering approval of the aircraft after modifications required to accept the delivery system and the actual installation of the delivery system have occurred.

Question. What assurances can you provide that these C-27J aircraft will actually perform as well as other firefighting aircraft?

Answer. The C-27J was designed for combat purposes, which are a similar flight environment to the wildland firefighting airtanker mission. It has a demonstrated ability to meet Agency and Federal Aviation Administration airworthiness and safety requirements. The C-27J is a multi-role aircraft capable of operating as an airtanker, as well as performing other missions such as firefighter transport, smokejumper deployment, and cargo delivery.

Question. If you acquire the C-27Js, the Forest Service must maintain ownership of these aircraft, which is not your current model. What type of contract do you plan to use, and how much will the C-27Js cost to operate?

Answer. The Forest Service would retain ownership when the aircraft are transferred. The only contracts would be for pilot and maintenance services from private industry. We are still analyzing the potential operating costs.

Question. How do you propose to pay for the C-27Js, taking into account the continuing costs of the Legacy and Next Generation contracts?

Answer. The Forest Service would pay for C-27Js within our requested budget by implementing programmatic efficiencies and identifying firefighter resource allocation changes and reduction that will decrease our costs and maintain our operational capability. Programmatic efficiencies include implementation of optimized dispatching analysis, streamlining of our IT investments through the Wildland Fire IT initiative, and a decrease in programmatic overhead costs.

Question. The Air Tanker Modernization Strategy called for 18 to 28 large airtankers with at least a 3,000-gallon capacity, which is not possible for the C-27Js. Does that mean that you also plan to pursue other contract aircraft that meet the requirements set in your modernization strategy?

Answer. The C-27Js would be considered medium airtankers, but would meet most of the other requirements to be considered a Next Generation Airtanker. In effect, two C-27Js would equal one large airtanker referenced in the Large Airtanker Modernization Strategy. We will continue to contract for airtankers from private industry. Seven contracts have been awarded for the Next Generation Large Airtanker services which will continue this model, providing aircraft that fit within the Large Airtanker Modernization Strategy.

COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLANS

Question. You also stated in your testimony that there are now 70,000 communities across the country at risk due to forest fires, but only 15,000 of those communities have wildfire protection plans. What incentives does this budget propose to improve that statistic?

Answer. The Forest Service prioritizes treatments identified in a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPPs) or equivalent plan and works in close coordination with communities at risk in the Wildland Urban Interface. This includes providing funding for development of CWPPs and providing technical assistance directly to communities when they are undergoing preparation of a CWPP. However, there is no requirement for communities, counties or States to develop CWPPs.

Question. Why aren't more communities working on Fire Plans?

Answer. Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) are most prevalent in the western United States, where significant portions of counties are covered by Forest Service or Department of the Interior lands. The eastern and southern portions of the country, however, often use tools other than a CWPP to prepare for wildland fire (and other hazards) and to identify priority acres for treatment. A CWPP may not be the right tool in communities that are not close in proximity to Federal lands or in communities focused more broadly on multiple types of hazards, such as hurricanes.

Question. Other than the clear risk of fire, are there consequences for communities that do not want to create Fire Plans?

Answer. Community Wildfire Protection Plans are an important tool in helping communities prepare for wildland fire. The Forest Service prioritizes treatments identified in a CWPP or equivalent plan and works in close coordination with communities at risk in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). This coordinates with funding for the development of CWPPs and providing technical assistance directly to communities while they prepare a CWPP. However, there is no requirement for communities, counties or States to develop CWPPs. Therefore, not all National Forest System lands in the WUI are identified in a CWPP.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JON TESTER

Question. Within the next 2 weeks, Chief Tidwell will decide whether or not to override the next-generation large airtanker contract intent to award protest. Can you provide a status update?

Answer. On June 7, 2013, Neptune withdrew their protest. The Forest Service moved forward to award the remaining four line items in the next-generation large airtanker contract that same day.

 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TOM UDALL

Question. Chief, as you know my State of New Mexico has experienced devastating wildfires the past 2 years, and we are now in our third year of extreme drought. I am concerned that the President's fiscal year 2014 budget request has a substantial reduction for the hazardous fuels program.

I realize that a direct budget comparison for your requested funding for hazardous fuels is complicated by the budget restructuring you request for the "Integrated Resources Restoration" (IRR) activity, but I understand that your request is about a 20 percent reduction from the current fiscal year 2013 level. (That assumes your hazardous fuels program budget of \$300 million for the current year, after the sequestration, and a request for fiscal year 2014 of \$201 million, plus perhaps \$40 million or so within the Integrated Resources Restoration account for hazardous fuels type projects.)

What do you expect the impacts to be if this reduction in hazardous fuels funding are maintained?

Answer. This reduction is just one of many difficult tradeoffs that had to be made, while fulfilling our commitment to request funding for the 10-year average for suppression funding.

The reduction in fuels funding will result in fewer acres of hazardous fuels treated, but still allows us to treat 685,000 of the highest priority acres each year. We will continue to focus on the highest priority areas in the WUI to protect communities and create defensible space for firefighters to work in. Funds that may have been spent outside the WUI in previous years will now be part of IRR to support integrated restoration of National Forest System lands.

Question. Will this reduction in funding for dealing with Hazardous Fuels make communities more at risk?

Answer. Firefighter and public safety will remain our number one priority. The Forest Service will continue to prioritize our work to accomplish the most important hazardous fuels projects. The highest priority projects are focused where the threat is high, where we can make a difference, and where we have community partners.

Scientific analysis and our monitoring have shown a strong correlation between hazardous fuel treatments and reduced wildfire behavior when a wildfire burns through a treated area. The treatments are also beneficial to fire suppression forces. We know these outcomes reduce risk to communities. However, because of the random nature of wildfires it is impossible to quantify the impacts of this reduction in terms of hypothetical increased risk or potentially less effective wildfire suppression.

Question. Chief Tidwell, it is my understanding that the President's fiscal year 2014 budget removes the Valles Caldera National Preserve line item, but that the Service intends to fund the Preserve through other Budget Line Items. The Valles Caldera National Preserve is very important to New Mexicans and we are very concerned that the Preserve continues to be well managed.

What kind of assurance can you give folks in my State that the elimination of this line item would NOT impact the continued funding of the preserve?

Answer. While the fiscal year 2014 President's budget does not propose a separate funding level for management of the Valles Caldera National Preserve, the Forest Service will continue to fund the Valles Caldera National Preserve through a variety of budget lines that are directly relevant to the work being completed. These fiscal year 2014 funds would support the integrated program management objectives of the Preserve.

The Preserve could expect to receive funding from the relevant budget line items (BLI) in the range of its historic appropriations under the former BLI, which would be approximately \$3 million at the fiscal year 2014 President's budget level.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR LISA MURKOWSKI

CUBE COVE ACQUISITION

Question. This is in regards to continuing discussions regarding the Forest Service's potential acquisition of Shee Atiká Incorporated's lands at Cube Cove on Admiralty Island. While it is my understanding there has been no final response, I have been told that the Forest Service staff has stated an intention to deny Shee Atiká request for a "mutually agreeable" appraiser. Shee Atiká believes that such a process is allowed by Forest Service Regulations.

What is the status of this request?

Answer. The Forest Service has looked further into completing an appraisal for the Cube Cove lands on Admiralty Island that could meet Government requirements that might be agreeable to Shee Atiká. In our May 3, 2013 response to them, we indicated that under the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR), activities related to the development of contract requirements and the source selection process for a Federal Government contract are inherently governmental and may only be performed by Federal employees.

Question. How does the Forest Service intend to move forward with Shee Atiká in a manner that protects the value and promise to Shee Atiká of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, while also protecting the interests of the Forest Service?

Answer. Since Shee Atiká has expressed desire to have an active participatory role in the selection of the appraisal firm, the Forest Service has offered to appoint someone acceptable to Shee Atiká to be a temporary, uncompensated "special Government employee" (SGE). The SGE would have access to contractor and source selection information and could participate in the evaluation and source selection process to the extent permitted by the Forest Service. The Forest Service will need a willing seller letter from Shee Atiká prior to moving ahead with the contract acquisition process for the appraisal.

Shee Atiká wrote Chief Tidwell on May 10, 2013 respectfully requesting a meeting with him as soon as possible to further discuss the appraisal process. This meeting has not yet been scheduled. The Forest Service is also evaluating the mineral potential of the area to assess the risks of acquiring a split estate (surface only).

AIR TOUR OPERATIONS

Question. I am hearing a great deal from my constituents in Ketchikan that the Forest Service's reduction of permit allocations in Misty Fjords National Monument and Traitors Cove in the Tongass will push air taxi businesses to the brink of financial collapse. As you know, tourism is becoming the predominant industry in Ketchikan, and your own budget puts a greater emphasis on the importance of outdoor recreation on our national forests to the national and local economies. The monument is accessible only by water and air, so any reductions to air permit allocations directly limits visitor access and the tourism dollars it generates. There is little evidence that the monument is threatened by visitor overuse. One air taxi company has seen its permits cut from 300 to 165; another from 1,600 to 1,191; and another from 500 to 298. These are real businesses providing jobs for real people. I don't know of many operators that can survive with a 45 percent cut to their business.

What are the other "uses" that the USFS is concerned that the air tour operators are negatively impacting?

Answer. We are concerned about the effects of motorized floatplane traffic on the wilderness character of Misty Fjords National Monument, the impacts of outfitters and guides on wildlife resources in the area, and conflicts between guided visitors and unguided public recreational use of the area.

In January 2012, the Ketchikan-Misty Fjords Outfitter and Guide Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) were completed which reduce commercial visitor use in the Misty Core Lakes. This decision established seasonal visitor capacities and outfitter and guide allocations for 28 Recreation Use Areas on the District. There is a perception that the decision reduced commercial visitor use at the Margaret Creek Wildlife Observation Site at Traitors Cove but this is not the case.

—The Ketchikan-Misty Fjords Outfitter and Guide (O/G) Management Plan EIS and ROD reduced commercial visitor use in the Misty Core Lakes area of the Misty Fjords National Monument Wilderness by about 27 percent.

—Contrary to public perception, the ROD allows for a 49 percent increase in O/G use at the Margaret Creek Wildlife Observation Site in Traitors Cove.

Question. What steps can be taken to help mitigate the current situation?

Answer. Due to concerns that limiting the amount and location of outfitter and guide use may not adequately provide for industry stability and growth, the Record

of Decision for the Ketchikan-Misty Fjords Outfitter and Guide Management Plan allocated 53,997 service days annually to outfitters and guides. The highest actual use reported by outfitters and guides between 2005 and 2009 was 24,245 service days. Thus, the decision allows outfitter and guide use across the Ketchikan-Misty Fjords District to increase over 100 percent from the reported highest use levels.

The Forest Service also met with commercial air service providers on May 6, 2013 in Ketchikan, Alaska, to discuss the issues you have raised, to explain what was in the actual decision, and to discuss the new permit allocations. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Forest Service committed to meet again with the air service providers at the end of the season to review actual use versus permitted use. The Ketchikan-Misty Outfitter and Guide Management Plan include an adaptive management strategy to allow changes to be made if experience shows they are needed.

Accordingly, by doubling the outfitter guide use across the District, and by incorporating a flexible adaptive management strategy to incorporate changes as needed in the future, the Ketchikan-Misty Fjords Outfitter and Guide Management Plan will facilitate growth of the industry while maintaining quality visitor experiences.

Question. How many non-air visits are made to Misty Fjords each year?

Answer. The Forest Service does not have reliable information about unguided visitor use numbers for Misty Fjords. Most unguided visitors access Misty Fjords National Monument Wilderness via motorized boat or sea kayak. Many of these visits are by local residents via privately owned boats. There is no practical way to know how many such visits are made.

Question. Is the USFS concerned that a number of these businesses will be put out of business if the current allocation numbers hold? What suggestions do you have, Chief, to help me resolve these disagreements?

Answer. The Forest Service has always been concerned about the economic health of rural communities throughout Southeast Alaska. The Alaska Region has made significant investment in a wide variety of resource areas to expand business opportunities across the Tongass. In this particular case, the Tongass National Forest limited the amount of outfitter guide use in one area to maintain its Wilderness character and quality visitor experiences, while allowing for growth in other areas of the Ketchikan Misty Ranger District.

TIMBER BUDGET NATIONALLY

Question. I, along with 12 of my colleagues, signed a bipartisan letter on May 2 to the President asking him to reconsider the reduction of national timber targets by 15 percent.

I understand that you are working with tight budgets, but can you explain to me why you reduced the timber targets so drastically when just last year you testified about the need to ramp up to 3 billion board feet as part of the agency's restoration strategy?

Answer. Continuing to increase the Agency's targets is challenging and will be slowed during the effort to reduce Federal deficits and the national debt. Based on the Integrated Resource Restoration (IRR) funding level proposed in the fiscal year 2014 President's budget, the expected output is approximately 2.38 billion board feet of timber volume sold. This budget request provides for continued strategic investments in the highest priority activities while also constraining spending in other activities to contribute to budget savings at the national level.

Approximately 51 percent of the funding for forest products is directed at preparing, offering, and selling new sales which is the basis for the output of timber volume sold. The remaining funding pays for administering the harvest of timber sales already under contract and handling "walk-in" business from citizens for firewood permits and special forest products. The Agency is contractually obligated to administer existing contracts and will continue to provide personal use permits for firewood and other special forest products. Thus, a 5 percent reduction in the total forest products program is actually a 10 percent reduction in funding available to prepare and sell new timber volume.

In addition, timber volume is not related to a single funding line item, but is a result of multiple National Forest System BLIs, Capital Improvement and Maintenance BLIs, permanent authorities, and trust funds. All of these funds were reduced by the sequestration and will continue to be constrained as we do our part to contribute to budget savings at a national level.

The fiscal year 2014 President's budget proposes a wide variety of management activities associated with IRR and is designed to balance the needs to maintain, enhance, or restore watersheds at the landscape level, and meet statutory requirements needed for sound resource management. We will also continue providing the public fuel wood program out of the decreased funds. The Forest Service continues

to explore ways to increase efficiencies to increase the pace of restoration through such things as NEPA efficiencies, stewardship contracting, and large scale projects.

Question. I note that you have increased your request for land acquisition by \$76 million—a 75 percent increase.

With 75 million to 80 million acres in need of restoration treatments, couldn't you reduce part of this request to keep on a path toward the 3 billion board foot goal? I would view taking care of what we already have as more important than adding more land that we can't take care of.

Answer. Land acquisitions are in response to public demand, as outlined in the America's Great Outdoors Initiative. The fiscal year 2014 program targets include new measures for acres acquired or donated using mandatory funds and high-priority acres acquired or donated using mandatory funds. For Land Acquisition, we propose a little more than \$58 million in discretionary funding; an increase of around \$8.2 million from fiscal year 2013 enacted levels after sequestration. We also propose almost \$34 million in mandatory funding, from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, for a combined total of \$92 million. All Land Acquisition projects are within National Forest boundaries and acquiring them will reduce confusion and costs associated with boundary management, landscape-scale conservation and fire suppression, as well as costs to communities providing services to remote and fragmented land ownership. Acquiring these proposed land acquisition projects will reduce overall management costs.

The Forest Legacy program is also important because funds are used to permanently protect working forests from development, helping to create and maintain rural jobs, conserve air and water quality, and provide habitat for threatened or endangered wildlife or fish. The increase is a key component of the President's America's Great Outdoors Initiative to conserve important landscapes and reconnect Americans to the outdoors. For the Forest Legacy Program, we propose \$60 million in discretionary funding; an increase of around \$9.5 million from fiscal year 2013 enacted levels after sequestration. We also are requesting \$24.8 million in mandatory funds, from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, for a total of \$84.8 million.

Question. Chief Tidwell stated that he would like to work with Congress on using "export" values in timber appraisals. What is this referring to exactly?

Answer. Current Region 10 policy uses export values for 50 percent of the spruce and hemlock volume in a timber sale appraisal, consistent with the volume we allow to be exported, and that has helped the program significantly since its inception. The Region could increase the percentage of exportable volume to 75 or 100 percent for spruce and hemlock and appraise accordingly with export values and might very well have more positive value sales available for offer. However, the result might be unacceptable in that mill jobs could be lost while logging and export processing jobs increased.

FIRE AND AVIATION

Question. I'm very concerned about the current state of our fixed wing airtanker fleet. You have included a request for \$50 million for airtanker modernization but there is virtually no indication of how these funds will be spent in your budget justification.

If these funds are provided, how exactly will they be expended?

Answer. The \$50 million that we have requested would help offset the additional cost for the next generation aircraft, plus the additional cost for the legacy aircraft. As anticipated, legacy aircraft expenses have gone up with the new contract. Additionally, the funds would help cover cancellation charges for which we are required to budget.

Question. The agency recently awarded a contract for "next generation" air tankers but it was reported last week that one company already plans to file a bid protest.

Can you tell us how long will it take to resolve the bid protest?

Answer. Neptune Aviation has withdrawn their protest as of Friday, June 7, 2013. Three of the line items from the next generation large airtanker contract were awarded on May 31, 2013. The remaining four were awarded on June 7, 2013 following Neptune Aviation's decision to withdraw their protest.

Question. Neptune Aviation, the company filing the bid protest, has met with my staff and claims that even if they had not filed a protest the "next generation" aircraft would not be ready to be in the air for several months. How do you respond to that claim?

Answer. One airtanker awarded on May 31 is currently approved and operating under the next generation contract. The other six aircraft are scheduled for retard-

ant tank testing and we expect them to meet the timeline of operating 60 to 90 days after the award.

Question. Without these new tankers, how many airtankers will you have at your disposal?

Answer. We do expect to have the new next generation large airtankers in operation this fire season, however without them we should have 16 to 18 airtankers on current or potential exclusive use or call when needed contract.

Last year's Defense Authorization bill included language concerning surplus C-27J aircraft operated by the military. The language gave the Forest Service the opportunity to possibly obtain some of these aircraft if the military declared them as surplus. I also understand the Coast Guard and National Guard have an interest in these aircraft.

Question. How many of these C-27Js may be declared surplus by the military and what can you tell us about the likelihood of the Forest Service obtaining these planes compared to the other agencies?

Answer. The C-27J aircraft being excessed by the Department of Defense would be available through the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which allowed for up to seven aircraft to be transferred to the Forest Service. The NDAA gives right of first refusal to the Secretary of Agriculture.

Question. Even if you obtain these aircraft, how long will it take to get them ready to drop retardant? It is my understanding that the interior tanks ("MAFFS" units) have not been designed yet for these planes.

Answer. The transfer timeline of the C-27Js is dependent on the Department of Defense. The Forest Service is ready to take ownership of these aircraft. Long-term plans will depend on interest from the U.S. Coast Guard and other Federal agencies in the C-27J. None of the MAFFS systems will fit into the C-27J. A new design will need to be created which incorporates the latest in technology and lighter weight components. In order for these aircraft to be used as medium airtankers, the Forest Service will have to solicit for contract services to design and manufacture retardant delivery systems, which is expected to take up to 18 months. If the Forest Service receives the aircraft sooner rather than later, one or more might be configured for general fire support missions such as firefighter or cargo transport later this fire season.

INTEGRATED RESOURCE RESTORATION

Question. For the past 3 years, the agency's budget request consolidates several programs including timber, wildlife, and planning into one line item called "Integrated Resource Restoration." Currently, you have authority to operate a pilot for this program in Regions 1, 3, and 4. I personally believe we need to see concrete results that demonstrate improved performance before we can approve such an approach for all Regions on a permanent basis.

My staff has told me that they have been briefed by the agency and there is still not sufficient information to determine whether the IRR lowers costs and achieves better results on the ground.

Why does the agency continue to propose this consolidation when the information the committee needs to make an informed decision is simply not available?

Answer. The flexibility provided by the Integrated Resource Restoration program (IRR) has allowed focused investment on landscape-level restoration projects that otherwise have been split into several projects over the course of many years. To fully realize the flexibility of budget line items created through IRR, it must be expanded to a full Agency-wide authority. In doing so, the Agency can focus resources on integrated ecosystem restoration across the country.

The Forest Service issued a progress report on April 15, 2013, describing the results of the IRR pilot program for fiscal year 2012. In 2012 the IRR pilot program exceeded or met its targets for moving watersheds to an improved condition class, acres treated to sustain or restore watershed function and resilience, miles of stream habitat restored or enhanced, and miles of road decommissioned. The pilot regions achieved over 80 percent of their target for timber volume; the shortfall was due to litigation in the pilot region independent of the IRR authority. The Forest Service will continue to monitor and report the performance results of the IRR pilot regions.

The fiscal year 2014 President's budget continues to emphasize Integrated Resource Restoration as the leading approach to accomplish on-the-ground restoration. This work will lead to improved forest and grassland health and resilience using landscape scale restoration to recover watershed health and improve water and create or maintain local economic opportunities and jobs.

Question. When do you anticipate having comprehensive quantitative measures by which the committee can decide whether moving to the IRR is a better approach than the current budget structure?

Answer. The Forest Service issued a progress report on April 15, 2013, describing the results of the IRR pilot program for 2012. The Agency has initiated a third-party monitoring of IRR with Colorado State University and the University of Oregon; it will begin June 2013 and be completed by March 2015. While we can already provide quantitative measures on outputs and outcomes as provided in response to the prior question, we will continue to work with the committee to provide needed information.

The IRR accomplishments for Regions 1, 3, and 4 are presented below for fiscal years 2008 to 2012 as are the accomplishments for non-IRR regions for comparison. The regions began implementation of the IRR pilot authority in fiscal year 2012 with passage of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2012.

IRR PILOT REGIONS 1, 3, AND 4

Region	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Region 1:					
Miles of stream habitat restored or enhanced	297	420	657	396	426
Miles of roads decommissioned	346	363	561	257	383
Acres treated annually to sustain or restore watershed function and resilience				246,695	307,420
Number of watersheds moved to an improved condition class					2
Volume of timber sold (million board feet)	240.2	293.1	256.9	210.6	206.1
Region 3:					
Miles of stream habitat restored or enhanced	121	177	127	151	162
Miles of roads decommissioned	46	103	25	57	69
Acres treated annually to sustain or restore watershed function and resilience				296,944	198,574
Number of watersheds moved to an improved condition class					
Volume of timber sold (million board feet)	123.5	111.9	138.6	131.9	124.4
Region 4:					
Miles of stream habitat restored or enhanced	232	296	355	238	346
Miles of roads decommissioned	162	320	792	325	286
Acres treated annually to sustain or restore watershed function and resilience				222,789	283,795
Number of watersheds moved to an improved condition class				3	1
Volume of timber sold (million board feet)	117.0	103.5	112.9	118.7	110.7

The number of watersheds moved to an improved condition class and acres treated annually to sustain or restore watershed function and resilience were both new performance measures in fiscal year 2011. There are no prior data for these two measures.

Volume of timber sold, miles of roads decommissioned, and miles of stream habitat restored or enhanced are traditional accomplishments, but because fiscal year 2012 was the first official year for IRR, it is difficult to establish valid IRR related trends at this time. We began implementation of the Watershed Condition Framework in fiscal year 2011 and it takes 3 to 7 years to restore a watershed. Therefore, we expect the number of watersheds moved to an improved condition class to show an increasing trend in future years.

Regions not included in the IRR pilot program below are the IRR corollary accomplishments for Regions 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10 for fiscal years 2008 to 2012.

REGIONS NOT IN THE IRR PILOT

[Regions 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10]

Region	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Region 2:					
Miles of stream habitat restored or enhanced	90	140	108	142	222
Miles of roads decommissioned	354	287	290	254	300

REGIONS NOT IN THE IRR PILOT—Continued

[Regions 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10]

Region	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Acres treated annually to sustain or restore watershed function and resilience				216,956	214,430
Number of watersheds moved to an improved condition class					
Volume of timber sold (million board feet)	259.9	243.4	222.3	204.7	241.3
Region 5:					
Miles of stream habitat restored or enhanced	281	1,163	426	449	465
Miles of roads decommissioned	51	94	83	249	274
Acres treated annually to sustain or restore watershed function and resilience				164,183	249,641
Number of watersheds moved to an improved condition class					3
Volume of timber sold (million board feet)	202.8	310.3	335.6	311.4	299.8
Region 6:					
Miles of stream habitat restored or enhanced	369	373	702	696	773
Miles of roads decommissioned	151	347	372	198	208
Acres treated annually to sustain or restore watershed function and resilience				302,055	464,793
Number of watersheds moved to an improved condition class					1
Volume of timber sold (million board feet)	628.0	584.4	576.7	547.6	605.6
Region 8:					
Miles of stream habitat restored or enhanced	509	486	551	756	670
Miles of roads decommissioned	93	104	204	81	337
Acres treated annually to sustain or restore watershed function and resilience				925,362	556,688
Number of watersheds moved to an improved condition class					2
Volume of timber sold (million board feet)	515.2	466.9	502.1	542.4	557.2
Region 9:					
Miles of stream habitat restored or enhanced	382	353	476	969	554
Miles of roads decommissioned	81	144	193	103	223
Acres treated annually to sustain or restore watershed function and resilience				211,227	246,116
Number of watersheds moved to an improved condition class					
Volume of timber sold (million board feet)	391.7	371.5	400.7	421.4	446.6
Region 10:					
Miles of stream habitat restored or enhanced	67	91	173	81	87
Miles of roads decommissioned	7	15	29	17	23
Acres treated annually to sustain or restore watershed function and resilience				37,805	40,907
Number of watersheds moved to an improved condition class				1	
Volume of timber sold (million board feet)	5.4	22.9	45.9	44.2	52.5

ANAN CREEK FLOAT DOCK STATUS

Question. Anan Creek, located 30 miles southeast of Wrangell, Alaska, in the Tongass National Forest, is home to one of the largest pink salmon runs in Southeast Alaska, making it an ideal spot to watch black and brown bears, bald eagles and sea lions. The Forest Service maintains an observation platform for visitors. However, the area is only accessible by floatplane or boat.

Several air charter service companies offer trips to Anan from local communities, especially Wrangell and Ketchikan. However, the current docking system in Anan Bay is only suitable for ideal weather conditions usually encountered during the summer months.

I understand that a new docking facility is needed, as the current situation has become a safety hazard, leading to sunken and damaged boats and planes. This issue was raised at public meetings with the Forest Service earlier this year and I understand the Forest Service has done some preliminary engineering work there.

Chief, I mentioned this issue to you in our ENR hearing last month and wanted to ask if you had a chance to look into it and give us a status update on the situation.

Answer. Access from the beach to the existing Anan Trailhead has been a management concern since we began allowing commercial use. Some type of dock, or other mooring, has been identified as a need. Although it has been identified as a need, available funding has been allocated to higher priority safety and health concerns, such as minimizing bear-human encounters and proper handling of human waste at the site.

Some work has been completed on a long-term solution for improving safety and accessibility of the bear viewing facilities. Conceptual designs have identified several options; the most practical option is a floating dock that could be beached in the off season. One potential site is at the head of the cove near the Forest Service cabin. This would complement the existing small float, but it may conflict with use of the cabin.

Another site being evaluated is in the cove where the Anan Administrative Facility is anchored. Integrating the dock into that floating facility has advantages. Connecting the floating dock to a staircase would make it more difficult to ensure an accessible facility, however. Finally, it may be difficult to construct accessible trails from the dock to the current trailhead.

In short, the Tongass National Forest is aware of the issues and is evaluating the best way to resolve them. Further NEPA analysis will be necessary before a dock or mooring facility can be built.

NUMBER OF FOREST SERVICE EMPLOYEES IN SE

Question. The State of Alaska has a large percentage of Federal employees living in our State. These Alaskans are paid good wages and are important contributors to our economy, especially in many rural places throughout the State. These folks are our little league coaches, neighbors and community leaders.

I'm concerned about the downturn of timber harvesting and the loss of related jobs on the Tongass. And I hear you saying that one of the reasons for this downturn is tight resources. I understand that you have over 350 employees working on the Tongass.

While I understand that the Tongass is expansive with several Ranger Districts working 17 million acres of land, I want to make sure you have enough people working on arguably the most important mission priority of the Service—one that promotes private sector jobs in these rural areas.

How many employees do you have working on timber?

Answer. There are 112 positions in Forest Management in the Tongass National Forest Supervisor's Office and Ranger Districts.

TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST, FOREST MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION

Series	Series Name	Number of Positions
	Supervisor's Office:	
0460	Forester	9
0462	Forestry Technician	3
0807	Landscape Architect	3
1315	Geologist	2
0193	Archeologist	1
0401	Recreation	1
1101	NEPA Coordinator	2
1082	Writer/Editor	1
0408	Ecologist	3
1035	Public Affairs	1
0802	Engineering Tech	2
0810	Engineer/Transportation Planner	2
1315	Hydrologist	1
0482	Fish Biologist	1
0470	Soils	2
2210	GIS	5
0301	NEPA Planner	2
0486	Wildlife Biologist	1
	Ranger District Offices:	
0460	Forester	24
0462	Forestry Technician	17

TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST, FOREST MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION—Continued

Series	Series Name	Number of Positions
0404	Fish Technician	2
0193	Archeologist	5
0401	Natural Resource	6
1101	Specialist (NEPA, IDT Leader) NEPA Coordinator	2
1082	Writer/Editor	3
0408	Ecologist	1
1315	Hydrologist	2
0482	Fish Biologist	3
0470	Soils	1
0301	NEPA Planner	1
0486	Wildlife Biologist	3
Total Employees Tongass National Forest		112

CONCLUSION OF HEARINGS

Senator REED. With that, the hearing is concluded.

[Whereupon, at 11:01 a.m., the hearings were concluded, and the subcommittee was recessed, to reconvene subject to the call of the Chair.]