

Fiscal Year 2007 Interior and Related Agencies Budget
Testimony by Marvin D. Brown, President
Society of American Foresters
House Committee on Appropriations,
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
March 16, 2006

The Society of American Foresters (SAF), representing over 15,000 forest managers, researchers, and educators, supports sound management and stewardship of the nation's 749 million acres of forestland. We offer the following suggestions to facilitate improved stewardship and management of the nation's forests through funding for forestry programs within the US Forest Service and the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management. Given the understandable restrictions on the length of our testimony, we do not offer the in-depth analysis we normally provide but would be pleased to provide further detail upon request.

Today, the nation's forest face serious threats-- threats that will affect the provision of clean water and air, wildlife habitat, recreation opportunities, forest products, and scenic beauty. Congress is faced with serious budget challenges and funding is extremely limited. In recognition of this, we've limited our funding recommendations to three priority areas even though there are many important forestry programs within USDA and USDO. The priority areas are:

- Forest Research and Inventory
- Forest Health on both public and private forestlands
- Family forestland Management

Forest Research and Inventory

The key to good stewardship and sustainable, long-term management of the nation's forests is sound scientific information. Forestry professionals must have the latest information on the state of forests, as provided by the Forest Inventory and Analysis program, and have access to new techniques and new research that will ensure they can continue to be good stewards in the constantly changing forest environment. We are deeply concerned with continuous declines in forest research capacity in the public and private sectors. Since the mid-80's, forestry research capacity in the US Forest Service has declined by 50 percent and unfortunately, the private sector and universities are facing similar downsizing. At the same time, federal investment in other research, including USDA's National Research Initiative which does not adequately provide for forestry research, has increased.

This decline in forestry research is contrary to the critical importance of the nation's forests in global trade and in ensuring national health and welfare. ***We strongly urge sustained long-term funding for forestry research and inventory, including full funding for the Forest Inventory and Analysis program, to ensure the US retains its capacity to manage and improve forests and the associated values and benefits.***

Forest Health

Across the country, over 190 million acres of federal forests and millions of acres of non federal forests, suffer from severe forest health issues and are threatened by catastrophic wildfires due to lack of management, insect and disease epidemics, climatic conditions, historical fire suppression practices, and other causes. Insect and disease problems include invasive species like the emerald ash borer, gypsy moth, and asian longhorned beetle; other insects like southern pine beetle and mountain pine beetle; and diseases like sudden oak death and white pine blister rust. ***To address these threats, we strongly urge increases above FY 2006 levels for forest health management and sustained funding for wildfire management accounts in both the USDA Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management.***

Biomass Utilization

The President's budget proposes \$5 million within the hazardous fuels line item to support biomass utilization grants. Biomass utilization offers a mechanism to address costly forest health issues and recover economic value from small diameter and unmerchantable wood. In addition to these forest benefits, biomass utilization can help reduce the nation's reliance on foreign oil imports and increase the use of renewable energy sources, a goal emphasized by the President and supported by the passage of the 2005 Energy Bill. ***We urge you to fund biomass utilization within the hazardous fuels program at \$10 million, to help foster utilization and development of markets for this material and assist in achieving forest health US energy security goals.***

Wildfire Suppression Funding

We greatly appreciate the Appropriations Committee's work to address the funding problems that have plagued wildfire suppression accounts in the Forest Service and Department of the Interior. Since steps were taken by your Committee and the Budget Committees to provide \$500 million in emergency suppression funding, the agencies have not had to borrow from other accounts and disrupt the work of other important federal forestry programs. ***We urge you to continue to monitor this issue and provide additional emergency funding when necessary. In addition, we urge you to continue to monitor the Forest Service and Department of the Interior's cost containment efforts, to ensure progress is being made in this area.***

Hazardous Fuels

We strongly support the President's proposal to increase the US Forest Service's funding for hazardous fuels reduction. We encourage the use of these funds in areas where Community Wildfire Protection Plans have recommended treatments. We are concerned with the \$10 million decrease in hazardous fuels reduction funding for the Department of the Interior. This decrease would result in an estimated 32,000 acre reduction in fuel treatments, 17,000 acres in the Bureau of Land Management alone. Ultimately, the undesirable consequences will be increased risk of catastrophic wildfire and insect and

disease outbreaks. *We urge you to fund DOI's hazardous fuels program at FY 2006 enacted levels.*

Family Forestland Management

With the future of 48 percent of the nation's forests in the hands of over 10 million family or non-industrial landowners, it is critical that this land remain forested. Family forestland owners are faced with severe challenges today, when owning forestland is often uneconomical and development pressures are fierce. A significant turnover in ownership of family forests is expected to occur over the next decade, creating a great deal of uncertainty as a new, younger generation decides what to do with their forests. Family forests supply approximately 60 percent of the nation's wood products. However only 3% percent of landowners have a written management plan and only 22% have sought professional advice prior to harvesting timber. These lands must be well managed with advice from professionals to avoid losses in productivity which make them susceptible to conversion to nonforest uses. To keep these lands forested, we must ensure that family forestland owners have access to professional advice and that these forests remain under sound management and stewardship. There are a variety of federal forest programs that assist in accomplishing this goal. *The Forest Stewardship Program and Forest Legacy Program are critical to maintaining and improving private family forests. We urge you to increase funding above fiscal year 2006 levels for these programs as shown below.*

Funding Recommendations for the US Forest Service

Discretionary Appropriations (dollars in millions)	FY 2006 Enacted	FY 2007 Proposed Budget	FY 2007 SAF Recommen- dations
Forest and Rangeland Research[a]	219.6	208.5	220.0
Forest Inventory and Analysis Total[b]	64.0	59.3	73.4
State and Private Forestry			
<i>Forest Health Management-Federal</i>	<i>53.4</i>	<i>49.8</i>	<i>56.0</i>
<i>Forest Health Management-Cooperative</i>	<i>46.9</i>	<i>34.5</i>	<i>49.0</i>
<i>State Fire Assistance</i>	<i>32.9</i>	<i>27.0</i>	<i>32.9</i>
<i>Volunteer Fire Assistance</i>	<i>5.9</i>	<i>5.9</i>	<i>5.9</i>
<i>Forest Stewardship Program</i>	<i>34.2</i>	<i>33.9</i>	<i>37.0</i>
<i>Forest Legacy Program</i>	<i>56.5</i>	<i>61.5</i>	<i>61.5</i>
<i>Urban and Community Forestry</i>	<i>28.5</i>	<i>26.8</i>	<i>28.5</i>
<i>International Forestry</i>	<i>6.9</i>	<i>4.9</i>	<i>7.0</i>
National Forest System			
<i>Land Management Planning</i>	<i>58.2</i>	<i>55.6</i>	<i>58.2</i>
<i>Inventory and Monitoring</i>	<i>167.7</i>	<i>154.1</i>	<i>154.1</i>
<i>Forest Products</i>	<i>280.2</i>	<i>310.1</i>	<i>310.1</i>
Wildland Fire Management			

<i>Preparedness</i>	666.1	655.9	655.9
<i>Fire Operations</i>	690.2	746.2	746.2
<i>Hazardous Fuels</i>	281.8	291.8	291.8[c]
<i>Rehabilitation and Restoration</i>	6.2	2.0	7.0
<i>Fire Research and Development</i>	22.9	20.1	22.9
<i>Joint Fire Sciences Program</i>	7.9	4.0	8.0
<i>Forest Health Management – Federal</i>	14.8	6.8	15.0
<i>Forest Health Management - Cooperative</i>	9.9	4.6	10.0
<i>State Fire Assistance</i>	45.8	29.1	45.8
<i>Volunteer Fire Assistance</i>	7.8	7.8	7.8

[a] totals do not include FIA funds which are broken out in the next line

[b] includes funding under State and Private Forestry and Research and Development

[c] funding would include \$10 million for biomass utilization, see above narrative.

Funding Recommendations for the Bureau of Land Management

Program (dollars in millions)	FY 2006 enacted	FY 2007 proposed	FY 2007 SAF recommendation
Wildland Fire Management			
<i>Preparedness</i>	268.8	274.8	274.8
<i>Suppression</i>	230.7	257.0	257.0
<i>Hazardous Fuels</i>	208.1	199.8	208.1
<i>State and Local Fire Assistance</i>	9.9	0	10.0
<i>Joint Fire Science</i>	5.9	5.9	6.0
Public Domain Forest Management	10.4	10.5	10.5
OR and CA Grant Lands Total	108.6	112.4	112.4