

Debra Thompson

From: Sarah Fine <sarahfine90@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 10, 2025 6:02 PM
To: Mark Jensen; Carey.case@usda.gov
Cc: Assembly; Stephen Giesbrecht; Becky Regula
Subject: Executive Order to Log Mitkof & Kupreanof Islands
Attachments: implementation-secretarial-memo-1078-006.pdf; sm-1078-006.pdf; forest-health-fuels-emergency-lands.pdf

External Email! Use Caution

Dear Mayor Jensen & Ranger Case:

I'm concerned about plans I've just read about to log Mitkof & Kupreanof Islands. This came from Secretary Rollins's Memorandum of April 3, 2025.

<https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/press-releases/2025/04/04/secretary-rollins-announces-sweeping-reforms-protect-national-forests-and-boost-domestic-timber>

The map referenced in the memorandum specifically indicates Mitkof & Kupreanof Islands as "Forest Health and Fuels Emergency Situation Determination (FHFESD) lands" for logging.

I suspected that the Tongass would be earmarked for deforestation but I didn't think it would be right in our backyard. Is there anything we can do?

Sincerely,
Sarah Fine-Walsh



File Code: 1300**Date:** April 3, 2025**Route To:****Subject:** Implementation of Secretarial Memo 1078-006**To:** Regional Foresters and Deputy Chiefs

The Forest Service has a rich history of managing America's forests for the public good. Established in 1905, our agency has evolved significantly, adapting to changing societal needs and environmental challenges.

Today, we enter a new era marked by pressing issues like a growing demand for domestic lumber and wildfire resilience. The Executive Order titled "Immediate Expansion of American Timber Production" identifies these issues and set us on a path to overcome them. To address these challenges, we need to increase our active forest management to improve both the prosperity of rural America and the health of our forests. Our efforts will lead to an increase in America's wood independence, a thriving wood products economy, and the protection of our water supply. The value of wood products derived from projects on national forests will play a crucial role in driving economic growth while supporting essential efforts to reduce wildfire risk and promote forest health. Our efforts will also result in a better return on investment for the public we serve by covering more of the costs of the timber program through revenue generated.

The goals we will seek to achieve in actively managing our forests are:

- Support rural economies and forest product industry partners
- Reduce the risk of destructive wildfire by creating and sustaining healthy and resilient forests and watersheds
- Build capacity through workforce alignment and partnerships

To achieve these goals, I am directing the following actions, within current capacity constraints, to be taken to make initial progress:

I am directing the Deputy Chief for the National Forest System, in consultation with other Deputy Chiefs, Regions and Forests, to develop a national strategy that outlines our agency's goals, objectives and initial actions related to increasing active forest management. This will be completed in 30 days.

I am directing all Regional Foresters to develop 5-year strategies, tiered to the national strategy, to increase their timber volume offered, leading to an agencywide increase of 25% over the next 4-5 years. These regional timber strategies will include an assessment of their current 5-year



program of work (POW) that includes timber volume, opportunities to expand that POW, a wood utilization facility risk assessment, barriers to achieving a 25% increase in volume (including information beyond funding needed), and potential solutions to overcoming those barriers. As part of your regional strategy, you'll be required to explore the opportunity to designate *Sustained Yield Units* required for industry investments where active management is needed. Strategies must be completed in 60 days following the release of the national strategy.

I am delegating the authorization to use timber designations by prescription (DxP) and designations by description (DxD) to Forest Supervisors. These types of timber designations should be the default approach in implementing timber projects. Exceptions to these designations must be made in consultation with a Regional Forester. Additionally, virtual boundaries should be used in lieu of marked boundaries whenever possible.

Further, I am directing District Rangers and Forest Supervisors to, in addition to regular timber sale solicitations, utilize direct timber sale opportunities with interested purchasers operating on and around forests. Line officers with interested partners must initiate industry engagement within 60 days to integrate these opportunities into your short- and long-term programs of work.

Finally, all agency timber sales will use base rates or minimum rates, where appropriate, based on the Emergency Authorizations outlined by the Secretary. In addition, within 90 days, Regions will establish standard appraisal rates that can be applied and used over a geographic area where similar conditions exist. The Washington Office is available to assist in this process.

Within the next 24 months, I expect each Regional Forester to establish 2 years' worth of "shelf stock" of timber volume coming from project decisions for out-year implementation of their timber related program of work. These decisions should be in place within the next 24 months. As a part of this, within the next 3 months, and every 6 months thereafter, Districts with suitable timber base and active industry partners will develop projects that can be analyzed using appropriate Categorical Exclusions (CEs) to address active forest management needs. These projects will not only reduce fire risk and support local economies but also result in timber volume sold. National assistance will be made available where needed through the Planning Services Organization and Field Services and Innovation Center (FSIC).

I further direct all Line Officers to use innovative and efficient approaches to meeting the minimum requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act, and other environmental laws, including categorical exclusions, emergency authorities (including the Secretary's recent expanded Emergency Situation Determination), condition-based management, determinations of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) adequacy, and staged or tiered decision-making. In addition, I direct compliance with the NEPA statutory time limits for, completing environmental assessments and environmental impact statements.

To this end, I am directing the Deputy Chief of the National Forest System through the Director of Ecosystem Management Coordination, within 14 days, to release direction for using Emergency NEPA, Endangered Species Act (ESA), and other regulatory authorities to streamline and simplify our permitting processes. This guidance will include mandatory

minimum approaches to scoping, extraordinary circumstances analysis and decision documentation requirements.

We will align our workforce to be efficient in active forest management delivery. I am directing the National Forest System Natural Resources Director to streamline or reduce certification requirements and processes. In the next 4 months, all Forest Supervisors, Regional Forester Teams, and appropriate Washington Office staff will attend a national active forest management meeting to align the goals, objectives and actions associated with the program, followed by regular engagements to ensure continued progress and shared leadership. Within 12 months, all current line officers will complete or refresh Forest Management for Line Officers training. New line officers will complete this training within 12 months of their effective date as a line officer.

There have been significant improvements within the Washington Office with integration of the hazardous fuels, Wildfire Risk Reduction Infrastructure Team (WRRIT), and forest management teams over the last several years and their combined efforts have delivered record accomplishments. Based on the guidance in the Executive Order, I am asking for additional integration to continue building on those successes and chart a new, completely seamless program. Therefore, I am directing the Deputy Chiefs of National Forest System and State, Private and Tribal Forestry to develop a proposal for integration of the teams and funding structures at the Washington Office within 30 days. Additionally, I am directing the same group, in consultation with the Regional Foresters, to develop a strategy field level integration, inclusive of regions and forest, within 6 months.

I expect line officers to work with States, Tribes and Counties to establish priorities and identify opportunities to share resources for execution of regional and national active forest management strategies. I expect this to result in an increase in what region's accomplish through Good Neighbor Agreements. We will emphasize work with industry partners to identify needed, feasible projects on national forests and increase the use of G-Z and A-Z contracting, as well as stewardship agreements and other implementation tools.

We will also find additional opportunities to work with states, counties, tribes and non-governmental partners to increase our active forest management activities on the ground. Internal coordination to build capacity will include increasing commercial product delivery in projects that focus on hazardous fuels reduction, implementing direct financial support programs to industry (Wood Innovation Program and Hazardous Fuels Transportation grants), and identifying opportunities to re-direct existing funds toward active forest management.

The agency will fund up to \$50 Million in Good Neighbor Authority Agreements that will fund road and bridge maintenance and reconstruction for active forest management projects. This work will emphasize the *minimum* standards necessary for safety and removal of wood products.

Finally, it is imperative that we plan and execute salvage and reforestation projects as these disturbances happen to accelerate post-wildfire recovery and reestablish healthy and resilient

forests. We have many critical successes to anchor to, including expanded hazard tree removal efforts along roadways, post fire shaded fuel break construction, and Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) with key industry partners that have helped us model success at local levels. But we need to do more, and as such, I am directing line officers to prioritize and address salvage opportunities, including leveraging opportunities to work with states, tribes, counties, private industry, and partners to increase the pace and scale of recovery and share in achieving cross-boundary results. I'm also directing the use of existing frameworks and tools, such as Potential Operational Delineations (PODS) and the National Alliance of Forest Owners (NAFO) MOU to capitalize on the opportunity to move quickly, capitalize on value, and restore the areas to more fire resilient conditions. Regions, in consultation with the Washington Office and Forests, will integrate their regional 10-year reforestation implementation strategies with the national active forest management strategy. To the maximum extent practicable, use existing and new categorical exclusions for timber stand improvement, salvage, and other site preparation activities for reforestation, consistent with applicable law. I expect that active management, reforestation and stand improvement activities will reduce wildfire risk, ensure sustainable timber supply, promote forest health, and protect our communities and their water supply.

I want to express my sincere appreciation for your trust and support in these matters. Rest assured, we are committed to our mission, value your service and we will continue to exemplify excellence in stewarding public lands for the American people.

 CHRISTOPHER FRENCH
2025.04.03 16:47:18 -04'00'

CHRISTOPHER B. FRENCH
Acting Associate Chief

Attachment 1: Regional Specific Actions



Secretary Breck J. Reffner

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250**

SECRETARY'S MEMORANDUM 1078-006

April 3, 2025

**INCREASING TIMBER PRODUCTION AND DESIGNATING AN EMERGENCY
SITUATION ON NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM LANDS**

1. PURPOSE

Executive Order (EO) 14225, *Immediate Expansion of American Timber Production* (March 1, 2025), highlights the importance of timber production and how forest management and wildfire risk reduction projects can save American lives and communities. The United States has an abundance of timber resources that are more than adequate to meet our domestic timber production needs, but heavy-handed federal policies have prevented full utilization of these resources and made us reliant on foreign producers. It is vital that we reverse these policies and increase domestic timber production to protect our national and economic security. We can manage our forests to better provide domestic timber supply, create jobs and prosperity, reduce wildfire disasters, improve fish and wildlife habitats, and decrease costs of construction and energy. This Secretarial Memorandum details the actions I am directing the Forest Service to take in response to EO 14225.

2. AUTHORITIES

This Memorandum is issued under the authority of the Organic Administration Act of 1897 (16 U.S.C. §§ 472-475, 477-482, 551); Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 (16 U.S.C. §§ 528-531), Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended (16 U.S.C. §§ 1601-1613), and the Infrastructure, Investment, and Jobs Act (16 U.S.C. 6592c); as well as other statutory authorities governing the management, administration and protection of the National Forest System (NFS). Other authorities include, but are not limited to, EO 14225.

3. BACKGROUND

National Forests are in crisis due to uncharacteristically severe wildfires, insect and disease outbreaks, invasive species, and other stressors whose impacts have been compounded by too little active management. For example:

- The *2023 Wildfire Hazard Potential for the United States* report identifies 66,940,000 acres of NFS lands under a very high or high fire risk.
- Roughly 78,800,000 acres of NFS lands are already experiencing, or are at risk of experiencing, insect and disease infestations.

These threats—combined with overgrown forests, a growing number of homes in the wildland-urban interface, and more than a century of rigorous fire suppression—have all contributed to what is now a full-blown wildfire and forest health crisis.

The Forest Service manages 144 million forested acres in 43 States. Forest plans identify approximately 43 million acres suitable for timber production. Over the last five years, the Forest Service has sold an average 3 billion board feet annually.

Immediate action is needed to mitigate risk, protect public health and safety and critical infrastructure, support local and rural economies, and mitigate threats to natural resources on NFS lands. We can do more to contribute to American prosperity and protect our national and economic security.

4. DIRECTIVE

a. EMERGENCY SITUATION DETERMINATION

To address this crisis, I am making an Emergency Situation Determination (ESD) under section 40807 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). This ESD encompasses 66,940,000 acres of NFS lands rated as very high or high wildfire risk that are hereby determined to be an emergency situation as defined by IIJA. In addition, I have determined that the 78,800,000 acres of NFS lands designated under Section 602 of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA), that are experiencing declining forest health; at risk of experiencing substantially increased tree mortality over the next 15 years [from time of designation] from insect and disease infestation; or containing hazard trees posing an imminent risk to public health, infrastructure, and safety, are an emergency situation as defined in the IIJA. There are approximately 33,846,000 acres of NFS lands which overlap between wildfire and insect and disease risk. In total, this ESD designates 112,646,000 acres of NFS lands as an IIJA emergency situation, which is 59 percent of all NFS lands. *See Map #1 Forest Health and Fuels Emergency Situation Determination.* I am also providing federally recognized Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, and States the ability to request additional areas to be included in this ESD under IIJA section 40807 through the Regional Forester to the Chief of the Forest Service for approval.

Actions taken pursuant to this ESD will support improving the durability, resilience, and resistance to fire, insects, and disease within forests and grasslands across the National Forest System.

Consistent with IIJA section 40807 and this determination, the Forest Service may carry out authorized emergency actions after an ESD is declared to achieve relief from threats to public health and safety, critical infrastructure, and/or mitigation of threats to natural resources on NFS lands. These actions will improve the durability, resilience, and resistance to fire, insects, and disease within national forests and grasslands across the National Forest System. To be eligible to use this authority, at least 50 percent of the treatment areas supporting this authorized emergency action must be within the designated areas.

Proposals using the special emergency action procedures at IIJA section 40807 shall:

- Reduce wildland fire risk to communities, critical infrastructure, or key ecological values; or
- Reduce/mitigate post fire risks needed to protect communities, critical infrastructure, or key ecological values; or
- Reduce hazardous fuels by removing or modifying vegetation to lower the risk of wildfires; or
- Reduce the density of fire-dependent forests; or
- Support the durability and resiliency of forests and grasslands; or
- Reduce hazardous fuels to help make wildfire response, as well as ingress or egress, safer and more effective; and
- Be authorized by the Forest or Grassland Supervisor.

Authorized emergency actions to respond to emergency situations include the:

- Salvage of dead or dying trees;
- Harvest of trees damaged by wind or ice [Note: or other natural disasters];
- Commercial and noncommercial sanitation harvest of trees to control insects or disease, including trees already infested with insects or disease;
- Reforestation or replanting of fire impacted areas through planting, control of competing vegetation, or other activities that enhance natural regeneration and restore forest species [Note: the restoration of forest species includes prevention, suppression, and eradication of insect, disease and invasive species outbreaks];
- Removal of hazardous trees in close proximity to roads and trails;
- Removal of hazardous fuels;
- Restoration of water sources or infrastructure [Note: the restoration of water sources includes watersheds];
- Reconstruction of existing utility lines; and
- Replacement of underground cables.

Any required environmental assessment or environmental impact statement for an authorized emergency action requires analysis of only the proposed action and the no action alternative and is not subject to the project-level pre-decisional administrative review (“objections”) or any processes set forth in 36 CFR Part 218.

b. OTHER EMERGENCY AUTHORITIES

The IIJA section 40807 authority is one of several tools that can be used to achieve expedited compliance around emergencies. Within designated areas, the Forest Service shall deploy, or continue to deploy, other emergency authorities including:

- Emergency and direct hire authorities (including hiring Tribal crews to implement and monitor);
- Expedited contracting authorities or mechanisms, including virtual incident procurement (VIPR), sole source contracting, and USDA contracting authorities and include Tribes within that effort;
- Expedited grant and agreement authorities or mechanisms, including with Tribes;
- Exemptions, waivers, expanded inclusions, and expedited mechanisms for emergency programs on joint efforts with USDA agencies and Tribes;
- Emergency consultation to comply with the Endangered Species Act;
- Emergency and programmatic consultation to comply with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA);
- Emergency procedures to comply with the Clean Water Act (CWA); and
- Expedited permitting, certification, and qualification processes as defined in Forest Service directives or as directed by the Chief.

Additional administrative authorities within the Forest Service Chief’s discretion may also be deployed to deliver emergency and expedited response. Nothing herein changes the requirement for Tribal consultation but may require expedited consultation time frames under certain conditions. In scenarios where Tribal consultation time frames need to be expedited, the Forest Service shall notify Natural Resources and Environment.

The agency shall use IIJA Section 40807 where authorized emergency actions can facilitate current and future post-disaster recovery actions within the scope of this Emergency Situation Determination.

c. TIMBER PRODUCTION AND SOUND FOREST MANAGEMENT

In order to increase domestic jobs and prosperity, increase economic independence, and protect our national security, the Forest Service will:

- Issue new or updated guidance to increase timber production, decrease the time to offer timber supply, and increase certainty in future timber supply. This guidance should include use of Good Neighbor Authority, stewardship contracting, and agreements or contracts under the Tribal Forest Protection Act;

- Streamline, to the extent allowable by law, all processes related to timber production, including project planning, decision-making, implementation (including preparation, appraisals and measurements), and required certifications;
- Develop a strategy to improve the efficiency of delivering the timber program and increase quantity and consistency in volume offered; and
- Identify legislative proposals that would improve timber production and sound forest management.

d. SHARED STEWARDSHIP AGREEMENTS

The Forest Service will work with State and local partners and federally recognized Tribes to collaboratively align with their respective priorities. Many States and Tribes have Forest Action Plans that prioritize critical treatment needs, and this memo directs the Forest Service to work with States and Tribes to also prioritize these areas and projects. Given the urgency and cross-jurisdictional nature of the current crisis, the Forest Service shall work quickly to proactively update and expand Shared Stewardship Agreements to bring the full power of our partners to help address this emergency. Immediate implementation of actions under this ESD should proceed concurrently with the updating and creation of these agreements.

e. REPORTING

Each calendar year, the Forest Service shall report to Natural Resources and Environment on the use of emergency authorities that will include those actions taken pursuant to this Forest Health and Fuels Reduction Emergency Situation Determination detailing:

- Status of any ongoing environmental analysis or compliance actions;
- Listing of completed (signed decision) or future compliance actions;
- Status of any ongoing consultation, including the National Historic Preservation Act and Endangered Species Act;
- Status of any ongoing coordination with local or state emergency management offices or other federal agencies;
- Status of coordination and consultation with federally recognized Tribal governments and/or Alaska Native Corporations; and
- Listing of any completed (implemented on the ground) or future mitigating emergency actions, to include number of acres treated or anticipated to be treated.

5. IMPLEMENTATION

The Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment is responsible for implementing all aspects of this memo, in coordination with the Office of General Counsel. In the absence of an Under Secretary, the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service will carry out the responsibilities assigned in this Memo.

6. EFFECTS OF THIS MEMO

This memo is intended to improve the internal management of the Department and to assure implementation of the above-referenced Executive Order. This memo and any resulting report or recommendations are not intended to, and do not create, any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity by a party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities or entities, its officers or employees, or any other person. To the extent there is any inconsistency between the provisions of this memo and any federal laws or regulations, the laws or regulations will control.

7. EFFECTIVE DATE

This memo is effective immediately.

/s/ Brooke L. Rollins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture

