

FY 2026 Forest Service Appropriations Summary – Interior, Environment, and Other Related Agencies bill released on January 5, 2025

Provides \$8.61 billion for the Forest Service, which includes a fire suppression cap adjustment of \$2.48 billion as authorized. Section 443 of the Title IV General Provisions incorporates many of the programs, projects, and activities specified in the tables in the explanatory statement by reference into the bill. This removes agency discretion from allocating these funds differently.

- \$1.091 billion for **Forest Service Operations**, a \$59 million decrease from FY 2025
 - \$28 million decrease in Information Technology
 - \$17 million decrease in Facility Maintenance and Leases
 - \$10 million decrease in Organizational Services (funds Greenbook, WCF, utilities, janitorial, etc.)
 - \$5 million decrease in Forest Service Operations Salaries and Expenses
- \$308.7 million for **Forest and Rangeland Research**, an \$8.6 million increase from FY 2025
 - Includes over \$27 million in congressional funding directives, of which \$22 million was incorporated into the bill by reference
 - Also incorporates into the bill by reference, \$61.5 million for Research and Development program funding and \$212 million for Research and Development Salaries and Expenses
- \$310.6 million for **State, Private, and Tribal Forestry**, a \$27 million increase from FY 2025
 - Includes over \$15 million in congressional funding directives incorporated into the bill by reference.
 - Of significance, \$10 million to support spruce budworm mitigation activities in the Eastern United States (a Senator Collins priority).
 - Another \$18 million was directed to specific Congressionally Directed Spending (Senate earmarks) projects
 - Also incorporates into the bill by reference, \$58 million for Forest Health Management, \$97 million for State and Volunteer Fire Assistance, \$5.5 million for Community Forest and Open Space Conservation, \$37 million for Urban and Community Forestry, \$19 million for International Programs and Trade, and \$50 million for SPTF Salaries and Expenses.
- \$1.858 billion for **National Forest System**, a \$6 million decrease from FY 2025
 - \$6.2 million decrease in National Forest System Salaries and Expenses
 - Includes approximately \$90 million in congressional funding directives, of which \$89 million was incorporated into the bill by reference
 - Includes \$1.4 million to create a new Southwest Ecological Restoration Institute in the State of Nevada.
- \$153 million for **Capital Improvement and Maintenance**, a \$2.3 million increase from FY 2025
 - \$20.6 million decrease in Facilities Maintenance and Construction
 - Approximately \$10.5 million in congressional funding directives
 - Another \$20.9 million was directed to specific Congressionally Directed Spending projects (Senate earmarks)
- \$2.426 billion for **Wildland Fire Management**, flat to FY 2025
- \$2.48 billion for the **Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund**, \$90 million increase from FY 2025

Report Language Directives of Note:

- **Wildland Fire Consolidation** – The Committees emphasize the narrative included under the heading “Reorganization Proposals – Wildland Fire Management” in House Report 119-215. In lieu of the directive, the Committees include the following direction. The Committees direct the Secretary of Agriculture, in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior, to contract with an independent, non-partisan research organization with expertise in federal land management to conduct a comprehensive study on the feasibility of consolidating wildland fire management operations as proposed in the President’s budget. The Committees expect the study to assess the impacts a consolidation would have on reaching proposed timber targets, continued cohesion between wildland fire management and the hazardous fuels reduction program, continued use of the available red card-certified workforce, and how a new consolidated service would differ from the role the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) already plays in coordinating fire response. The study should analyze the impact a consolidation would have on states, localities, and Tribes.

The Committees further direct the Secretaries to consult with the Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Senate prior to the study’s beginning to consider additional aspects of a consolidation the study should address, and the Secretary is directed to submit the study and a comprehensive response to the finding of the study, including funding estimates, staffing plans, and the legislative proposal required to complete the transfer to such Committees upon its completion.

- This language is in response to the President’s Budget proposal to move multiple aspects related to Forest Service Wildland Fire Management to the Department of the Interior as part of the new U.S. Wildland Fire Service.
- This language is a compromise to the language that was included in the FY 2026 House bill (extensive reporting requirements) and FY 2026 Senate bill (a funding prohibition).
- **Leases** – The Committees direct the agencies to provide notice within 180 days of any official action to terminate a lease or dispose of a federal building. The notice should include proposed closure plans, ongoing consultations with affected stakeholders, and actions to address potential service gaps.
 - This language is in response to the proposed USDA reorganization.
- **International Programs and Trade** – The Committees expect the Forest Service to continue an intact program office reporting to the Chief of the Forest Service for serving as the lead entity and coordinating all activities related to the Lacey Act and the protection of the American wood trade.
 - This language is in response to the President’s Budget proposal to terminate the International Programs and Trade office.
- **Reprogramming** – Significant direction on the reallocation of resources, including reorganization activities, is provided in the explanatory statement under Reprogramming Guidelines. Additionally, Sec. 421 of Title IV General Provisions within the bill notes that advance notification and approval of the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations in accordance with the reprogramming procedures contained in the explanatory statement is required.

- Note: USDA general counsel advises that congressional approval requirements are unconstitutional. They advise agencies to comply with the notice portion and proceed to act after any notice period has lapsed.
- This language has been standard in recent years, but the perceived lack of compliance by the Forest Service and other agencies has been a point of contention with the Appropriations Committees.
- **Aerially Applied Fire Retardant** – The Committees understand the importance of utilizing a variety of wildfire suppression techniques and direct that prior to any action related to hindering the use of such techniques, particularly aerially applied fire retardant, the relevant Agencies confirm that there is an alternative that is effective and available.
 - This language is in response to a variety of pressure points in relation to the use of fire retardant: Clean Water Act issues, there only being one viable retardant in the federal marketplace, media related to health impacts on firefighters, etc.