

Rural Voices for Conservation

Working together to find solutions to the ecological and economic challenges of the rural West.

American Forests

Center for Watershed & Community Health

Communities Committee of the 7th American Forest Congress

Ecosystem Workforce Program

Flathead Economic Policy Center

Forest Trust

Framing Our Community

Gifford Pinchot Task Force

Hells Canyon Preservation Council

Jefferson State Forest Products

Jefferson Sustainable Development Initiative

Lake County Resources Initiative

Mattole Restoration Council

Northwest Ecosystem Alliance

Northwest Natural Resources Group

Old-Growth Campaign

Partnership for a Sustainable Methow

Redwood Community Action Agency

Sierra Forest Communities Institute

Sustainable Northwest

Wallowa Resources

Watershed Research & Training Center

Wildlands CPR

FY 2005 Community-based Restoration Funding Package

Bringing fiscal responsibility to the care of our forests and health of rural communities

The Community-based Restoration Funding Package takes an integrated, fiscally responsible approach to restoring public and private lands, while stimulating jobs and entrepreneurship in rural communities. It prioritizes investments made through the US Departments of Agriculture and Interior, and shows how scarce public dollars can be leveraged to maximize effective forest restoration. Also proposed is a new line item to support Collaboration and Multi-party Monitoring—activities essential to the success of the President’s Healthy Forests Initiative and the Healthy Forests Restoration Act, the Stewardship Contracting authorities, and the goals of the 10-year Comprehensive Plan (National Fire Plan).

The CBF Restoration Funding Package totals \$3.2 billion with \$228 million in new money to achieve the joint goals of healthy forests *and* healthy communities.

Why do we need a Community-based Restoration Funding Package?

The health and productivity of forests and watersheds across the West suffer from decades of insufficient investment in restoration and maintenance. Fire cannot play its natural role in these landscapes due to the degraded state of our forest ecosystems, and our resource base - on which we all depend - is severely damaged. Coupled with these ecological conditions is a concomitant decline in social and economic circumstances in our rural communities. As a result, the business and workforce infrastructure necessary to carry out forest health activities no longer exists and must be rebuilt.

Despite the seasonal headlines drawing national attention to the disastrous state of our nation’s forests, policy and funding approaches to date have been piecemeal, addressing the symptoms of the forest health crisis rather than the causal economic and social relationships that generate them. The result is increased long-term taxpayer costs in the form of abnormally severe wildfires, the escalating need for forest and watershed restoration work, and an undermining of rural economies and community resiliency.

The FY 2005 budget proposed by the Bush Administration is inconsistent with its own legislative proposals and lacks a clear strategy to distribute funds effectively.

Where should we invest public dollars?

The Community-based Restoration Funding Package highlights budget line items particularly effective at delivering:

- **Long-term Commitment for A Consistent Program of Work**
The unreliability of federal programs makes small business investment in training, hiring and equipment difficult.
- **Rural Infrastructure and Business Development**
A skilled, rural-based restoration/maintenance workforce, and wood products sector, is the most cost-effective way to get the work done.

Funding Package Line Item Highlights

- The Economic Action Programs
- Collaboration and Multiparty Monitoring (a new line item)
- Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat
- Vegetation and Watershed Management
- Capital Improvement and Maintenance (road maintenance and restoration)
- Landowner assistance programs such as the Community and Private Land Fire Assistance and the Forest Land Enhancement Program

- **Meaningful Public Participation**
Collaboration will improve the technical aspects of projects and increase social support for those actions.
- **Monitoring**
Monitoring ensures accountability on the effectiveness of our management choices and is critical to restoring trust in our land management agencies.

Funding Package Line Item Highlights

1. **Restore the Economic Action Programs (EAP)—base program and NFP program.** Elimination of the EAP base program will hurt rural communities and businesses by removing an effective grant and technical assistance program that positions these communities to leverage private dollars and re-create their community vitality. Elimination of the National Fire Plan EAP undercuts the goals of the 10-year comprehensive plan by taking away the focus on marketing and utilization of small diameter wood and other material not currently commercially viable. The NFP Economic Action Program is a critical investment to develop economically viable markets for small diameter material for value-added processing.
2. **Create a Collaboration and Multi-party Monitoring Line item.** It is time for serious commitment to collaboration and multi-party monitoring. This line item will support the land management agencies and communities in working together to restore and maintain our landscapes.
3. **Invest in Wildlife and Fisheries Management and Vegetation and Watershed Management.** Reductions in line items for Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Management and Vegetation and Watershed Management will handcuff the agencies, preventing them from effectively developing a program of work around restoration. Even with the new administrative provisions aimed at streamlining planning, such as the new categorical exclusions, to comprehensively address the restoration needs across the landscape will require that we do the planning. If there is no money for planning there will be no public support for the projects resulting in a continued quagmire of public controversy, and ultimately, no implementation.
4. **Support the Forest Service and the States in working with homeowners.** Failure to fund the Community and Private Land Fire Assistance (CPLFA) program is hampering important coordination between State Foresters and the Forest Service in their efforts to educate homeowners and communities. In the face of increased wildfire threats to communities in the Wildland Urban Interface, lack of investment in this program is ultimately costing the taxpayer more.
5. **Restore, maintain, and decommission roads.** Chronic under investment in the maintenance, improvement, and decommissioning of roads is exacerbating an already expensive problem. Increasing our investment for these activities is necessary to close the gap on this backlog of work.

Expanded explanation of funding package priorities

USDA – FOREST SERVICE

State and Private Forestry

The Forest Service **State and Private Forestry** programs are central to the Community Based Forestry Restoration strategy. These programs provide a coordinated effort for management, protection, conservation education and resource use that helps facilitate stewardship across lands of all ownerships. State and Private Forestry programs build community capacity to care for our public resources, while building the economic strength of rural areas.

Cooperative Fire Protection contributes important funds to build local wildland firefighting capacity through the State Fire Assistance and Volunteer Fire Assistance activities. Building local capacity to fight wildfire increases safeguards for life, as well as private and federal property, and reduces federal wildfire fighting costs.

Cooperative Forestry administers a critical set of programs and works in partnership with States, tribal governments, communities and private landowners to improve the management, protection, and use of forest-based goods and services. The Forest Stewardship Program provides technical assistance to private forest landowners to develop forest plans and reforestation and hazardous fuels reduction resources. Forest Legacy provides an investment in maintaining the value and functions of lands threatened with conversion to non-forest uses through the acquisition of land or interests in the land. Urban and Community Forestry programs engage communities and volunteer organizations in assessing, retaining and protecting their natural environment. **Economic Action Programs** build capacity within natural resource-dependent rural communities to strengthen their economies and to work in collaboration with federal agencies on federal lands restoration/maintenance. The Forest Resources Information and Analysis program provides cost share financial assistance to states to perform important nationwide forest inventory and analysis for public and private forested resources.

We also recommend the creation of a **Collaboration and Multi-party Monitoring** line item to provide the funding necessary to build agency capacity to work in partnership with communities. Included in these funds is financial support for collaborative monitoring efforts on hazardous fuels reduction projects, called for under the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA). We recommend moving the \$20 million increase in the National Forest System – Inventory and Monitoring line item allotted in the President’s budget to this new line item to insure that the funds are utilized in a collaborative nature consistent with the mandates in HFRA.

National Forest System

Inventory and Monitoring funds inventory, monitoring, assessment and resource mapping activities in the Forest Service. These functions are an important component to measuring success toward agency goals and objectives. Ideally, with the collaborative monitoring emphasis contained in the Healthy Forests Restoration Act, more of these funds will be used to help achieve collaborative monitoring goals.

Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Management provides funding for essential work performed on national forest and grasslands to manage habitats necessary to maintain the diversity, viability, and productivity of plant and animal communities.

The Vegetation and Watershed Management program focuses on restoration, enhancement, and watershed conditions including soil, air, water, and forest and rangeland vegetation. This program includes reforestation and timber stand improvements, which are important activities for restoring lands affected by wildfires.

The Hazardous Fuels Reduction budget line item funds hazardous fuel reduction treatments in the wildland urban interface (WUI) and on other NFS lands in order to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire. Funds are provided to plan, implement and support fuel management activities including inventorying and mapping hazardous fuels, prioritizing areas for treatment, analyzing treatment alternatives, determining and applying fuel treatment, and monitoring and evaluating fuel treatment accomplishments.

Wildland Fire Management

The Wildland Fire Management budget funds activities to protect life, property, and natural resources on National Forest Lands, as well as adjacent State and private lands. Along with the necessary fire operation budget line items, there are a number of line items in this budget area that fund a holistic approach to restoring our national forest lands.

Rehabilitation includes both long and short-term efforts to improve lands unlikely to recover naturally from wildland fire damage.

Several important programs are funded through the State and Private Forestry account specifically for activities under the National Fire Plan. The **Forest Health Management – Federal Lands** line item provides funding for technical assistance to help manage and control invasive insects and diseases, and to evaluate forest and tree health in areas of high risk of wildland fires and in previous burn areas. The program targets federal lands close to

cooperative lands to control damaging pest populations that have the potential to affect neighboring lands, including those of rural communities. The ***Forest Health Management – Cooperative Lands*** program provides technical and financial assistance to States to control damaging pest populations on forestland owned by states, local governments, private organizations and individuals that is in high-risk fire areas or previously burned areas. ***Economic Action Programs*** provides funding to local communities to identify, develop and expand economic activities related to materials and wood removed through hazardous fuel reduction treatments. This program also funds projects that allow communities to conduct wildfire risk assessment, defensible space planning and community plans. ***State Fire Assistance and Volunteer Fire Assistance*** provides funds in preparedness and hazardous mitigation to States and local fire fighters. These funds include resources for local communities to implement fire protection activities such as hazardous fuels treatment, fire prevention and education campaigns, personnel training, and equipment and personnel availability. This program is the primary contributor to the national FIREWISE program that supports work to ensure that states and local communities can reduce hazardous fuels in and around communities. It also supports strengthening voluntary fire departments in small, rural communities.

Community and Private Land Fire Assistance

Congress authorized the Community and Private Land Fire Assistance (CPLFA) in 2001 with \$35 million annually under the National Fire Plan. The program is intended to improve landscape level protection on Federal and non-federal lands by expanding outreach and education programs directed at homeowners and communities. The Forest Service and the State Foresters administer CPLFA. This is an important compliment to the limited number of existing programs that serve community and private landowner needs because it focuses on education and outreach.

Capital Improvement and Maintenance

The **Roads** budget line item funds maintenance, improvements and decommissioning on the 386,000 miles of NFS system roads. Current funding provides only 20 percent of funds necessary to fully maintain Forest Service roads to intended safety, service, and environmental standards. Funding for road maintenance and decommissioning on NFS lands is essential to ensure that the road system is a public asset and not an ecological and economic liability to the American public. While roads in disrepair cause damage to streams, fisheries and water supplies, road maintenance and decommissioning provide high wage jobs to rural communities while protecting our natural heritage.

Mandatory Appropriations

Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) is a unique landowner assistance program, which replaced two previous successful programs, the Forestry Incentives Program (FIP) and the Stewardship Incentives Program (SIP). FLEP provides assistance to family forests in sustainable management activities. It helps family forests reduce fire risk, and restore and recover damage by fire, insects, invasive species, disease, and weather. Congress enacted FLEP with \$100 million of funding in the 2002 Farm Bill - \$20 million was used in FY 2003, the first year of implementation. The President's FY 2005 budget recommendation cancels the remaining \$40 million in the FLEP account.

Payments to States – County Projects are authorized under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, under Title II and Title III, which allow counties to utilize 15-20 percent of their payment amounts for forest restoration, maintenance, stewardship, or county projects under the auspices of a Resource Advisory Committee. The program is collaborative in nature, and the funds, if a county elects to utilize them, are for project-oriented work.

USDA – NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE

The Natural Resource Conservation Service administers two key programs that assist private landowners with management activities that improve their overall land stewardship.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides cost-share payments and other incentive payments to address soil, water and other natural resource management issues on non-industrial private lands. **The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)** provides cost-share payments and technical assistance to private landowners to develop wildlife habitat.

US DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR - BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has led the way in cooperative stewardship and collaboration with rural communities. However, funding for basic land management activities has been reduced in recent years, forcing local BLM offices to become more creative in meeting land management goals. Because the BLM interfaces with communities to accomplish forest restoration, fisheries enhancement, hazardous fuels reduction, timber stand improvement, and road decommissioning, we recommend maintaining base funding for BLM land management programs while increasing funding for collaboration-focused programs.

Funding for BLM land management activities are divided by focus area, and local BLM offices submit project proposals to the state and national offices on a project-by-project basis. Projects that demonstrate local collaboration are an integral component to the following programs. Riparian Management funds are used to enhance creek side areas through livestock fencing improvements, tree planting, and erosion control. The Wildlife and Fisheries programs work to restore habitat in forest and rangelands habitats. The Fisheries Program has played a significant role in watershed restoration efforts to improve salmon and trout habitat. The Resource Management and Planning inventories and monitors BLM-managed resources, including timber, rangeland, fisheries, recreational impacts and water quality.

To further encourage collaboration between the BLM and local communities, we recommend funding for two related programs, the Challenge Cost Share Program and the Cooperative Conservation Initiative, which are specifically designed for projects undertaken by local communities on public lands. The Program has been used to complete projects as diverse as road maintenance, land management planning, fisheries restoration and timber stand improvement.

BLM – Wildland Fire Management

The ***Hazardous Fuels Reduction*** line item funds fuels reduction projects on both the BLM Wildland/Urban Interface (WUI) and non-WUI lands. The ***Rural Fire Assistance*** program funds capacity building for local fire fighting efforts.

The ***Jobs in the Woods*** program provides funds to undertake necessary restoration work on BLM lands in Oregon and California while retraining displaced rural workers.

Resource Management and Planning supports the Bureau's efforts to expand and improve its monitoring systems to support management decisions and to assess the impacts of restoration activities.

US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

The US Fish and Wildlife Service oversees the National Wildlife Refuge System. As a participant in the National Fire Plan, the USFWS engages communities in hazardous fuels reduction on and around Refuges through the Hazardous Fuels Reduction line item. In addition, the USFWS works extensively with private landowners to promote voluntary conservation work. Programs such as the Landowner Incentive Program and the Private

Stewardship Program have been used by community groups to achieve forest restoration goals on private lands and within mixed ownerships. These programs place an emphasis on habitat restoration for threatened and endangered species. The voluntary approach can reduce conflict by promoting consensus-driven projects that emphasize recovery.

Hazardous Fuels Endangered Species Consultations provides funding for the agency to undertake necessary consultations on proposed hazardous fuels reduction projects.

The **Landowner Incentive Program** funds grants to states and tribes to provide technical and financial assistance to private landowners to help them protect and manage imperiled species and their habitat. The **Private Stewardship Program** provides grants to individuals and groups engaged in local, private and voluntary conservation efforts that benefit listed, proposed, candidate, or other at-risk species.

Who We Are

The Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition is comprised of western rural and local, regional, and national organizations that have joined together to promote balanced conservation-based approaches to the ecological and economic problems facing the West. We are committed to finding and promoting solutions through collaborative, place-based work that recognizes that the inextricable link between the long-term health of the land and well-being of rural communities. We come from California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, New Mexico, and Montana.

For More Information

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