

MANAGING NATIONAL FORESTS IN IDAHO

CRITICAL CHOICES FOR OUR FORESTS

WHAT ARE NATIONAL FORESTS?

National forests are federal lands owned by the American people and managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), a management agency within the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture.

The 20.4 million acres of USFS managed lands in Idaho are divided between seven national forests. Five lie south of the Salmon River in the Intermountain Region headquartered in Ogden, Utah and two are part of the Northern Region based in Missoula, Montana. Nearly 80% or 16.3 million acres of these lands are forested.

MANAGEMENT FROM CONFLICT

At the turn of the 20th century, few laws were in place to guide management on national forests. Conflicts between competing forest users led to laws focused on specific interests, resulting in increased management requirements and costs and longer implementation timelines. Conflicting laws and requirements have contributed to gridlock through lawsuits and appeals that delay or stop management activities.

IDAHO PANHANDLE NF

NEZ PERCE-CLEARWATER NF

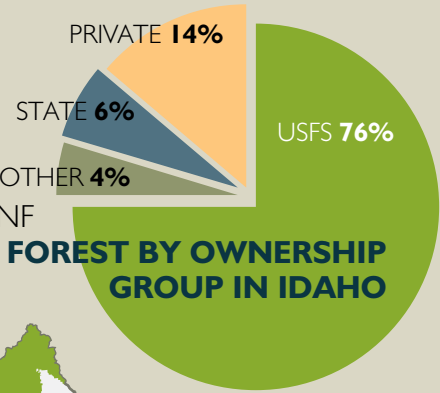
PAYETTE NF

BOISE NF

SAWTOOTH NF

SALMON-CHALLIS NF

CARIBOU-TARGHEE NF



Who Runs the U.S. Forest Service?

PRESIDENT
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Secretary
Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment



HEADQUARTERS IN WASHINGTON, D.C.
Chief

REGION
Regional Forester
NATIONAL FOREST
Supervisor

RANGER DISTRICT
District Ranger

40% NATIONAL FORESTS OCCUPY NEARLY 40% OF IDAHO'S LAND MASS, **MORE THAN ANY OTHER STATE.**

CHANGES IN MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

Unlike national parks created primarily to preserve natural beauty and outdoor recreation, our national forests were working forests established to provide timber and water for the nation's benefit. Federal laws and policies outline how national forests are used and managed.

In the mid-1800's, many believed the wood supply was unlimited. Large areas were logged for agriculture or not replanted. As populations moved west, concerns grew and Congress took action. After World War II, national forests provided wood for our growing nation and a place for expanding outdoor recreation.

"Caring for the Land and Serving People"

Today, we want and expect a lot from our national forests. Management priorities have shifted from mainly protecting timber from fire to providing a wide range of uses from Wilderness, recreation, wildlife habitat and timber production. These management changes mostly came through conflict. Numerous environmental laws passed in the 1960-70s vastly changed how federal lands were managed and increased public involvement in the decision making process.

Conflict and Litigation

Bitter conflicts and litigation over forest use in the 1980-90s involved a range of issues from spotted owls, old growth, fire, and Wilderness. This gridlock set the stage for President Clinton's 1994 Northwest Forest Plan that re-designated forest use and established a new ecosystem approach to resource management on federal lands. Policies from this time drastically reduced timber harvest, resulting today in dense forests that are less resilient to drought, disease, changes in climate and fire.

KEY FOREST LAWS & POLICIES OVER TIME

- 1876 Special Agent created in the U.S. Department of Agriculture to assess quality and condition of U.S. forests.
- 1881 "Division of Forestry" created.
- 1891 Forest Reserve Act placed western public lands into "Forest Reserves" under the U.S. Department of Interior.
- 1897 Organic Act established the purpose of Forest Reserves was to improve and protect forests and water flows, and to provide a continuous supply of timber for citizens.
- 1905 Lands renamed "National Forests" and transferred to the Department of Agriculture's newly created U.S. Forest Service.
- 1911 Weeks Law authorized purchasing and reforestation private lands to regulate water flow and produce timber.

- 1960-70s Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act, Wilderness Act, Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Endangered Species Act (ESA), National Forest Management Act, Resources Planning Act (RPA), Archaeological Resource Protection Act
- 1994 Northwest Forest Plan
- 2001 Roadless Rule effectively prohibited road construction, road reconstruction, and timber harvesting on 58.5 million acres of inventoried "roadless" areas on National Forests.
- 2008 Idaho Roadless Rule finalized—Established management direction for 9.3 million acres of designated "roadless" areas in Idaho including around 6.9 million forested acres.

A LOT AT STAKE

PUBLIC ACCESS



RECREATION

Each year, 6.6 million people visit national forests in Idaho.

- 9 downhill ski areas
- 389 campgrounds
- 56 picnic areas
- 256 trailheads
- 12,838 miles of motorized trails
- 10,349 miles of non-motorized trails

WILDERNESS VALUES

Over 4 million acres of designated Wilderness in Idaho.

WATER



WATER

68% of Idaho's water supply originates from national forests.

FISHERIES

Numerous native and anadromous fish rely on Idaho's streams and rivers.

WATER QUALITY

National forests provide 20% of the nation's drinking water.

WILDLIFE



HABITAT

Healthy forests of varied ages provide habitat for "keystone" plants and animals.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

National forests are home to many of the 20 species that are "Threatened" or "Endangered" in Idaho.

WILDFIRE



WILDFIRE

Around 65 million acres of National Forest System lands are in high or very high risk of catastrophic wildfires.

AIR QUALITY AND SMOKE

FIREFIGHTER AND PUBLIC SAFETY

HOMES AND PROPERTY

THREATS TO WATERSHEDS

COST TO TAXPAYERS

HEALTHY FORESTS



REFORESTATION

SUSTAINABILITY

What will be passed on to future generations?

SOIL HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY

Soils are the basis for ecosystems and can be significantly altered by severe wildfires.

CARBON

Well managed, healthy, growing forests "sequester" or hold carbon, preventing its release into the atmosphere. Older forests release carbon at the same rate they absorb it.

ECONOMICS



JOBS

Idaho has over 22,000 forest-related jobs.

National forest visitors spend \$372 million annually. Hunting, fishing and wildlife watching bring \$1.2 billion to Idaho's economy.

PRODUCTS

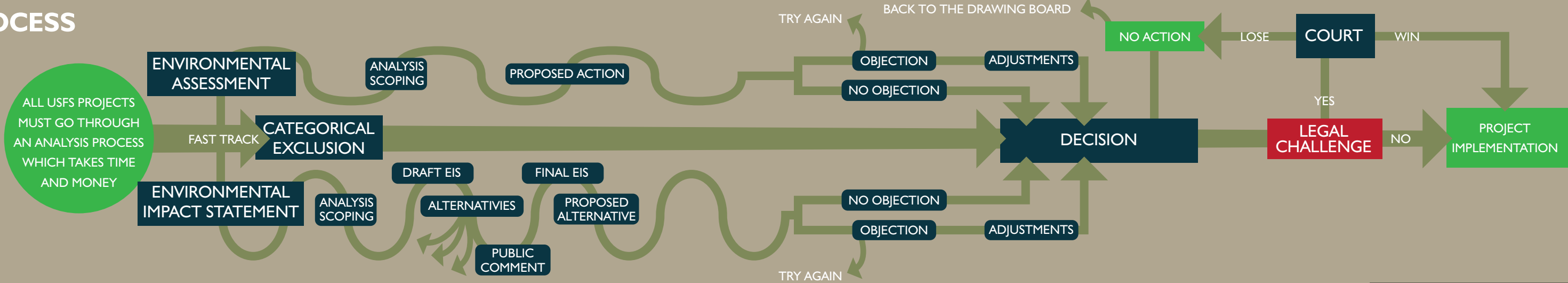
The total 2015 impact in Idaho of turning timber into products was over \$4 billion.

WASTEFULNESS

Millions of acres of trees burn in national forests in Idaho each year.

THE MANAGEMENT PROCESS

Proposed management projects on USFS lands come from a variety of sources such as Forest Plans, Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP), Landscape Treatment Areas (LTA) and forest “collaborative” groups. Proposals reflect the ideas and input of local and state government, resource managers and the public.



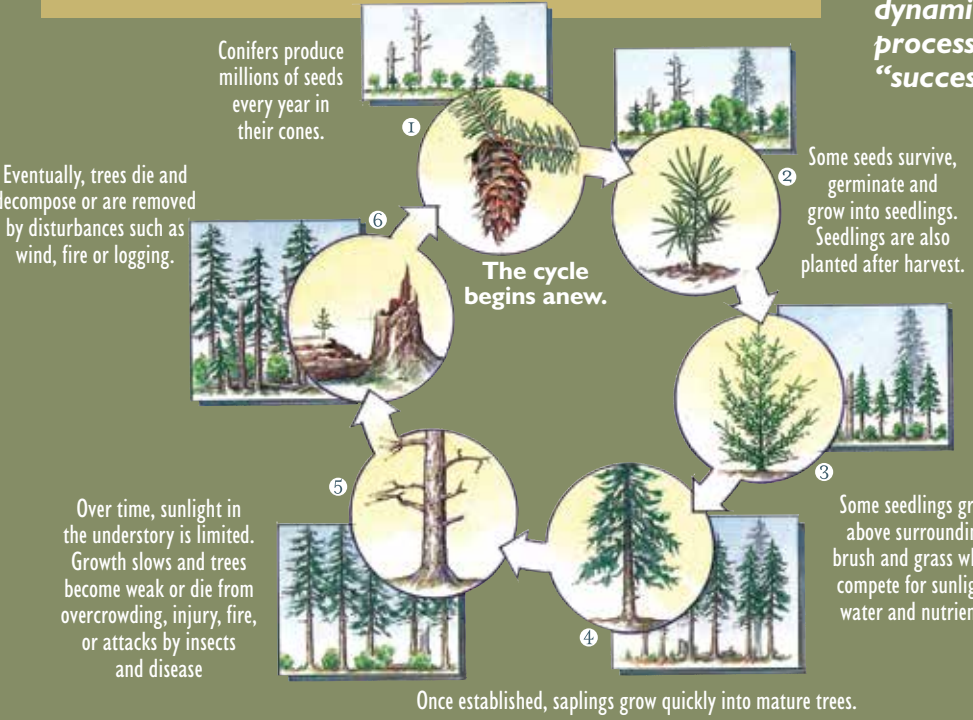
DOES NEPA PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was enacted in 1970 to protect resources on federal lands by setting up a process to analyze the impact of proposed management activities and procedures for public input. Despite the good intentions of this law, USFS forest lands in Idaho today have more mortality, more insects and disease, more overstocked acres outside the range of historic variability, more dead standing trees, more wildfire and more at-risk watersheds than all other forest owners.

HOW FORESTS WORK

Forests go through distinct stages at different speeds depending on natural and human caused events such as rain, drought, wildfire, wind and disease as well as logging and prescribed burns. Each stage creates conditions for the next step in the cycle.

Forests constantly change over time though a dynamic natural process called “succession.”



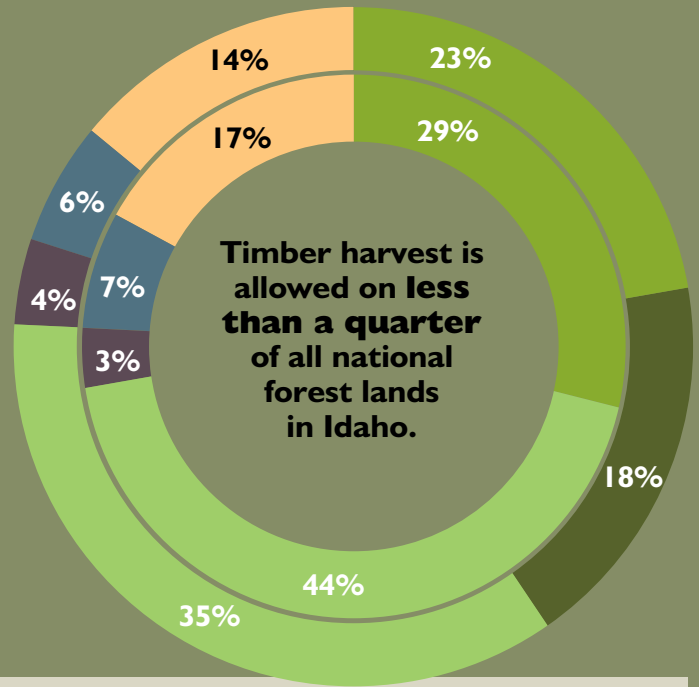
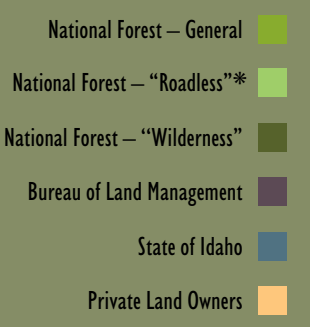
FOREST MANAGEMENT: It’s Science and Common Sense

Forest management involves planned actions that speed up or slow down the stages of succession. Forest management actions such as harvesting and prescribed burning interrupt the succession cycle for a reason or objective such as ecosystem restoration, creating habitat, providing wood and paper products, or speeding up regeneration. Even no action is a management choice that has consequences.

WHAT IS FOREST MANAGEMENT?

Forests are managed for specific goals and objectives set by the landowner. Management ranges from “custodial” where little or no action is taken such as in designated Wilderness to intensive active management where timber is continually grown, harvested and replanted.

IDAHO FORESTS BY OWNERSHIP

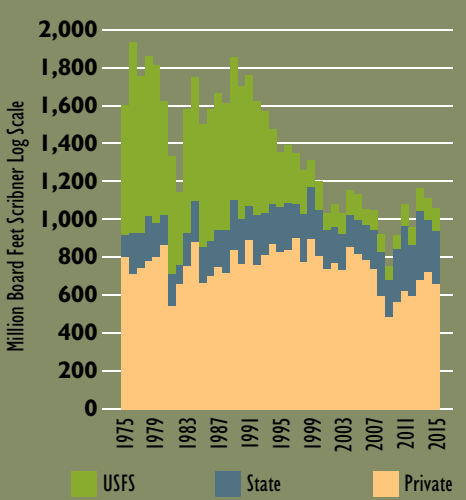


Outer Ring All “Forest Land” — 21.5 million acres [100%]
Inner Ring “Timberland” — Reported productive forests 16.5 million acres [76%]
*Based on best available data on 9.3 million “Roadless” acres reserved from timber harvest by Idaho Roadless Rule (2008)

NATIONAL FORESTS IN DECLINE What will we pass on to future generations – an ASSET or a LIABILITY?

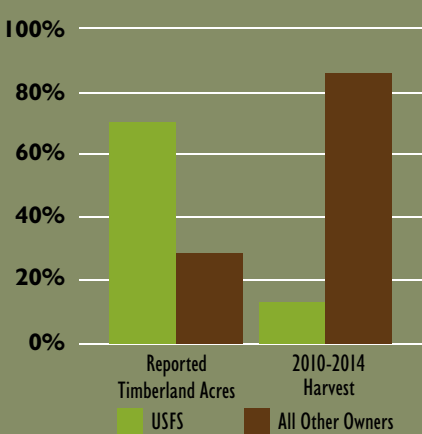
- Forests are dying faster than they are growing on national forests in Idaho.
- 73% of national forests in Idaho and 42% of all national forests need **restoration**.
- There is a \$3 billion **backlog** of Forest Service road maintenance.
- 13% of bridges on national forests are **structurally deficient**.
- There’s been a 95% **reduction in maintenance** budgets for national forest campgrounds, water and wastewater systems, dams, recreation structures, and buildings since 2000.
- Three-quarters of the **158,000 miles of trails** on national forests currently need maintenance.
- Over 10.5 million acres of Idaho forests have **forest health problems**, most of which are on national forests.
- 93% of **forest mortality** in Idaho is on national forest lands.
- 80% of national forest lands needing **reforestation** have not been replanted.

IDAHO TIMBER HARVEST BY OWNERSHIP 1975-2015



TIMBER HARVEST LIMITED

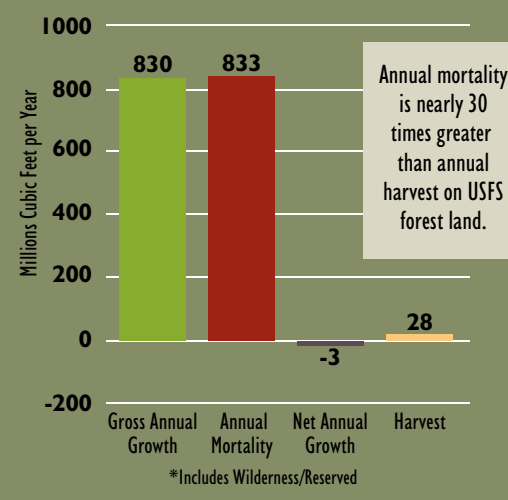
While 76% of Idaho’s productive timberlands lie within national forests, only 13% of the state’s 2010-2014 harvest came from national forests.



TREES KEEP GROWING Forest DENSITY increased 70% on national forest timberlands since 1954.

USFS has 29% more volume of trees per acre and 336% more annual MORTALITY per acre than all other owners.

ANNUAL GROWTH AND HARVEST ON USFS FOREST LAND IN IDAHO*



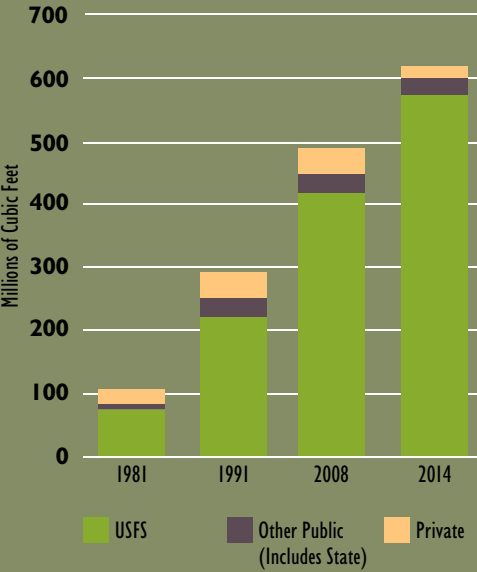
IDAHO FOREST LAND INVENTORY AND ANNUAL MORTALITY USFS vs. All Other Owners



OVERGROWN FORESTS HAVE GREATER MORTALITY There is as much standing dead volume of trees on national forests in Idaho as there are live growing trees on other ownerships.

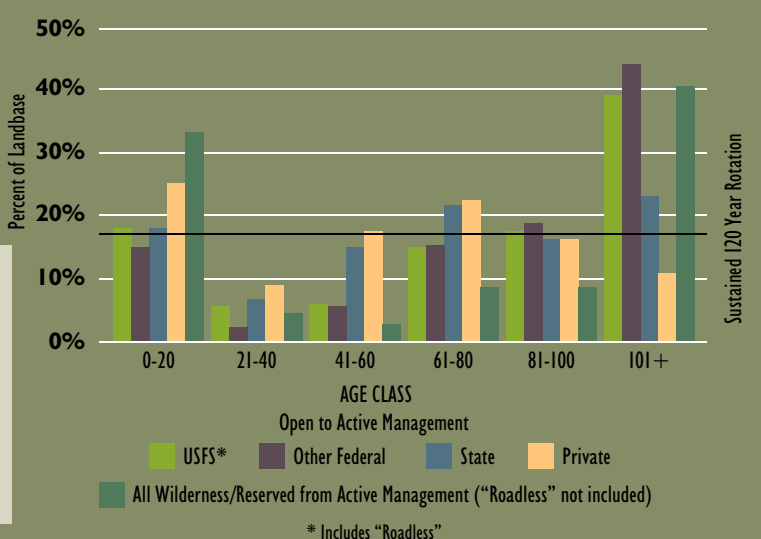
CARBON & DYING TREES Dead trees don’t absorb carbon, and take the space of growing trees that do.

IDAHO TIMBERLANDS ANNUAL MORTALITY



YOUNG TREES Why are there so many young trees in Wilderness areas? Fire has been the change agent starting the succession cycle anew.

IDAHO FOREST ACRES DISTRIBUTION BY AGE, OWNER & MANAGEMENT



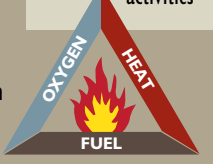
FIRE RISK

Idaho’s forests evolved with fire, and in some cases, fire can be used as a management tool. However, current forest conditions are not the same as in the past. Wildfires today are larger, more severe and more dangerous to watersheds and ecosystems due in large part to overcrowded, unhealthy forests.

Bigger wildfire seasons are associated with several factors: rising levels of biomass fuels, changing climatic conditions, and an increase of homes near forest lands. Idaho’s fire season is 32 days longer than in 1984.

“High forest mortality and low timber removal rates in the Western States promise hazardous fuel accumulations and big fires.” U of I

FIRE TRIANGLE Three elements are necessary for a fire to burn. Fuel is the only one humans can impact through management activities



RUNAWAY COSTS

Wildfire suppression costs alone exceeded \$1 billion in 11 of the past 15 years. Wildfire protection and suppression costs have exceeded \$3 billion annually for over a decade.

Much of current costs are spent protecting homes in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) which comprises 10% of the West. This number is expected to triple as more homes are built near and in the forest.

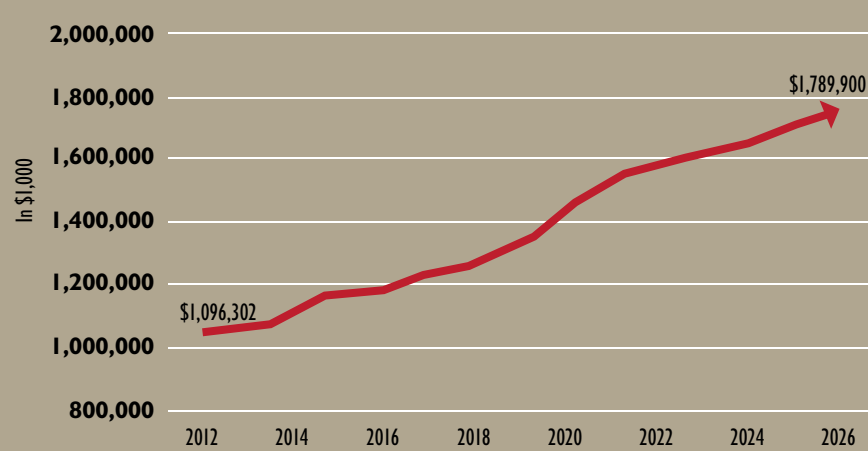
FIREFIGHTING COSTS GROW MANAGEMENT BUDGETS SHRINK

Congress currently allocates a fixed amount of money to put out wildfires. When these funds are spent, the Forest Service is forced to take money from other programs. This impacts critical management activities, restoration projects and forest users.

CARBON & FIRE

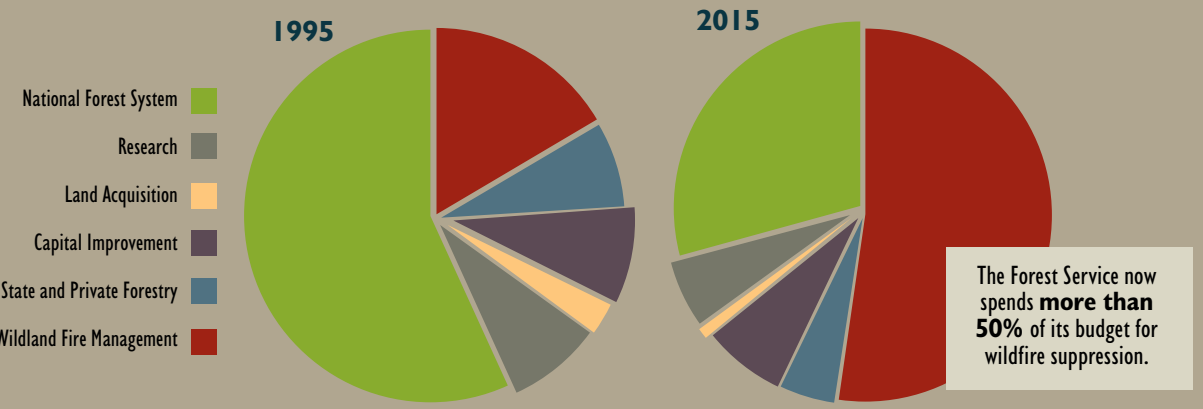
In an active fire year, wildfires in Idaho emit the same amount of carbon dioxide into the air as 4.7 million cars.

PROJECTED COST OF FIRE SUPPRESSION



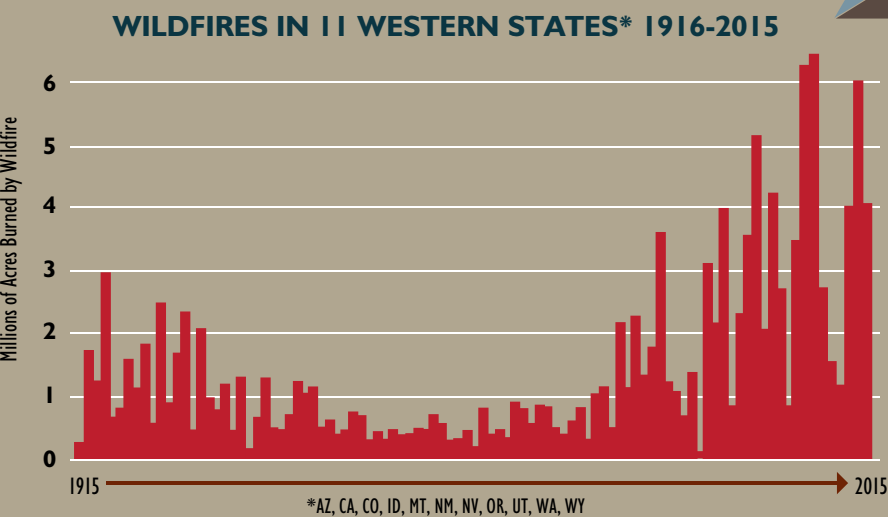
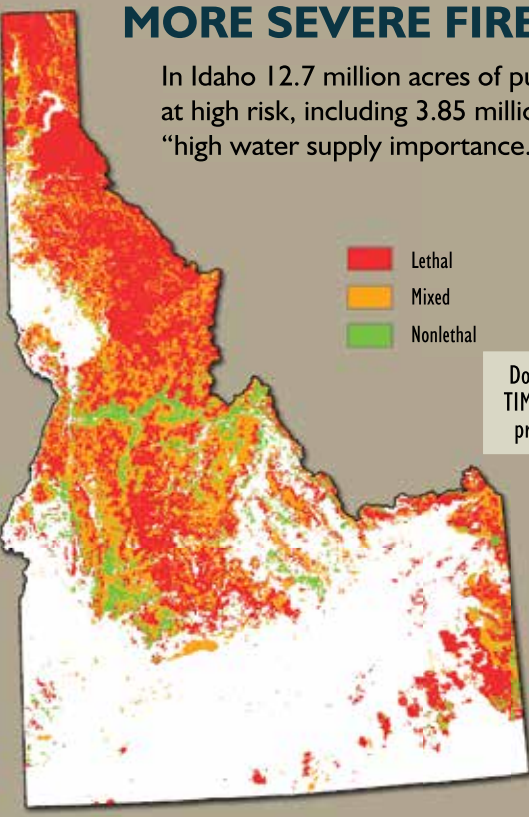
STAFF SHIFTS IMPACT FOREST STEWARDSHIP

Since 1998, fire staffing within the USFS has increased 114%, from around 5,700 employees in 1998 to over 12,000 in 2015. Over the same period, staffing levels for those dedicated to managing National Forest System lands has decreased by 39% from approximately 18,000 in 1998 to fewer than 11,000 in 2015.



INCREASED TREE DENSITY AND CHANGES IN SPECIES = MORE SEVERE FIRES

In Idaho 12.7 million acres of public lands are at high risk, including 3.85 million acres of “high water supply importance.”





CRITICAL CHOICES FOR OUR FORESTS

National forests are part of America’s heritage and our future. How we choose to care for OUR forests is important. There are critical choices to be made to secure the health, vitality and sustainability of OUR forests.



WHAT DOES RESTORATION MEAN?

Restoration aims to restore resiliency to disturbance. Restoration activities help re-establish the composition, structure, pattern, and ecological processes of damaged, degraded or destroyed ecosystems. Fuels reduction, reforestation, stream restoration, road decommissioning, replacing and improving culverts, thinning and harvesting, prescribed fire are all management actions used to restore forests to a more resilient condition. These activities can be expensive. Where it’s possible, logging can help offset these costs when trees that need to be removed for forest restoration are converted into wood and paper products.



Restoration creates healthy forests and provides jobs beyond the forest industry. Every million dollars spent on restoration projects generates from 12 – 28 jobs and creates healthy forests for outdoor recreation.



FOREST INDUSTRY ROLE Jobs, Markets and Expertise

A vibrant forest industry helps national forests by providing the infrastructure, workforce and know-how to restore unhealthy forests and maintain healthy, resilient forests for the future. Wood markets provide a way to help pay for restoration projects, create living-wage jobs and help develop new uses for green products.



Each forest job supports two additional jobs in other sectors.

THE ROAD TO HEALTHY, RESILIENT FORESTS

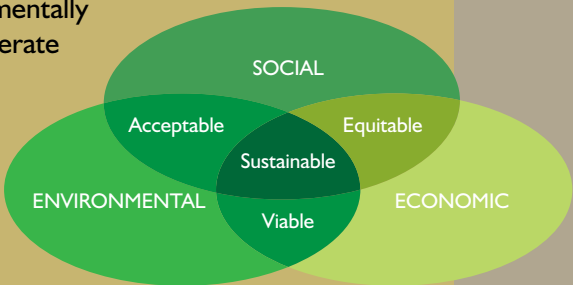
What can we do to secure the future of OUR forests?

Be Open to Active Management

Managing national forests is about a lot more than harvesting and thinning timber. But where it’s allowed, logging could be the best option to reduce fuels, improve forest health, provide environmentally sound products, employ local people and generate revenues to offset the cost to taxpayers.

Manage for Sustainability

In their current state, national forests in Idaho do not meet sustainable criteria of being ecologically sound, economically viable and socially desirable.



Support National Forest Restoration

Strategic forest restoration is essential to address uncharacteristic wildfire, insects, disease and changes in climate.

“We estimate that up to 42 percent of the National Forest System is in need of restoration- up to 82 million acres- and that 12.5 million acres need mechanical treatments. Here in Idaho, about 15 million acres are in need of restoration work, including 2 million acres of mechanical treatments.” USFS Chief Tom Tidwell, 2012

Commit Financial Resources and Expertise to Management

Addressing backlogs and focusing on projects that address unhealthy forest conditions are at a critical point. Increasing the on-the-ground expertise at the local district level would help implement projects. Committing to transparency in management activities will increase public trust and support.

Increase Use of Management Tools

“Good Neighbor Authority” allows the Forest Service to enter into cooperative agreements or contracts allowing States to help increase the pace and scale of forest management and watershed restoration projects on National Forest System lands. Projects may include treating insect and disease infected trees, reducing hazardous fuels and other activities to restore or improve forest, rangeland, and watershed health, as well as fish and wildlife habitat. Timber sales are allowed and the Forest Service approves how the harvesting is done.

“Categorical Exclusion” allows the Forest Service to streamline restoration projects by not requiring the agency to prepare an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS). Categorical Exclusions expedite forest restoration projects and greatly reduce costs to taxpayers.

Nine locally-driven Collaborative Groups across Idaho are bringing together timber industry, community, and conservation interests to resolve long-standing conflicts over land use on public forests. They seek to balance the interests of forest ecology, local jobs, and long-term stewardship of the national forests. All are committed to respect each other’s interests in the search for practical on the ground solutions. Many collaborative groups are finding a promising level of agreement on employing active forest management as a tool to achieve ecological goals at a landscape level and provide local jobs.

“Stewardship Contracts” provide a way to work with communities on longterm landscape projects that improve, maintain or restore national forests and offset costs with profits from timber harvested as part of the project.

Other Considerations....

Public Land Law Review. More than 80 laws govern the national forests. Many of these laws conflict with each other, clouding management goals and contributing to legal challenges and appeals. It’s been nearly 50 years since public land laws and regulations were collectively reviewed to clarify management direction and provide for more efficient project implementation.

Equal Access to Justice...for All. The Equal Access to Justice Act (EAJA) reimburses attorney fees and other expenses in actions against the federal government, but only to non-profit groups, individuals with a net worth less than \$2 million or businesses with less than 500 employees and \$7 million in net worth. The Act, which passed in 1980 to help veterans, now creates incentive for legal challenges to Forest Service proposed management activities, but does not provide the same financial opportunity for all forest stakeholders. EAJA payments are made from the Social Security Administration. In the past 5 years, payments for legal challenges to the Forest Service nearly doubled, costing taxpayers \$38.1 million in 2015. The Forest Service currently faces a staggering amount of litigation that often halts projects and increases management costs, and redirects staff priorities.

Buy and Invest Locally

Encourage government and private investment in market development and use locally made products. Buying wood and paper products made with timber harvested on national forests can help spur national forest restoration and management by providing income and services FROM the land FOR the land. Restoration alone can cost up to \$1,000 per acre. Using local products stimulates the entire process. Developing new markets and uses for wood will be vital to the future.