

Hearing On the President's FY 2022 Budget Request for the

U.S. Forest Service

Thursday, June 17, 2021

Chairman Manchin's Opening Statement

- The committee will come to order.
- This morning we will be discussing the Fiscal Year 2022 Budget for the U.S. Forest Service.
- But before we get underway, I would like to take a moment to recognize Chief Christiansen.
- Chief Christiansen, I appreciate your being here this morning, especially given your announcement last week that you will be retiring.
- I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for dedicating your career to public service.
- I know that serving as the Agency's Chief has been no easy task, so I want to thank you for your leadership.
- Over the last few years, you have helped me address a range of issues from ensuring Wounded Warriors had the access they needed for hunting on the George Washington-Jefferson National Forest to facilitating the re-opening of the Timberline Mountain Resort on the Mon.
- Thank you, and I wish you all best in retirement.
- I will now turn to the purpose of today's hearing, the President's proposal for the fiscal year 2022 Forest Service budget.
- Rural communities across the country depend on our National Forests. They provide timber resources and opportunities for recreation, and thereby support jobs in local communities.

- I understand the President’s Budget requests a billion-dollar increase for Forest Service programs above what Congress appropriated last year.
- I look forward to learning why these increases are needed and for what specifically this money would be used.
- I am glad to see the President’s commitment to investing in solutions to address climate change reflected in this year’s budget request.
- Our Committee recently held a hearing with top scientists and practitioners on the significant roles that forests and active forest management can play in sequestering carbon emissions, and the science is clear.
- Proactive management—including activities such as reforestation, thinning, and prescribed fire—can both prevent carbon emissions and significantly increase carbon absorption.
- Earlier this week, Ranking Member Barrasso and I sent a letter to President Biden requesting that he provide additional direction to the Federal land management agencies, including the Forest Service, for two things:
 - 1) to ensure management decisions concerning our forests are being made consistent with the current science and
 - 2) to tell us what more can be done to enable our forests to better sequester and store carbon.
- You can expect to see more coming out of our Committee in the weeks ahead on this.
- Another example of investing in climate solutions that was included in your budget request is the \$100 million proposal for plugging orphaned oil and gas wells and remediating abandoned mine lands.

- There are thousands of leaking orphaned wells on the National Forests, particularly in the East; and in West Virginia, there are currently over 170,000 acres of un-reclaimed abandoned mine lands.
- I understand there are over 40,000 abandoned mine land sites on the National Forests across the Country, and I appreciate your agency wanting to make investments to restore these sites.
- Finally, I would like to remind everyone that the Senate passed the Great American Outdoors Act one year ago today.
- In this one law, we provided full funding—\$900 million per year—for the programs funded by the Land and Water Conservation Fund and provided \$9.5 billion for the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior to address the backlog of its deferred maintenance.
- I want to thank my colleagues here—especially Senator Daines and Senator Heinrich—who worked together to get this important bill enacted into law.
- With that, I'll turn it over to Ranking Member Barrasso for his opening statement.