



Committee: House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment & Related Agencies

Event: [Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Hearing - United States Forest Service](#)

Date: April 16, 2026

Executive Summary:

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies hosted a hearing focused on the U.S. Forest Service's (USFS) budget for Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27). During the hearing, members across both parties questioned the USFS' proposed consolidation of wildfire fighting capacity and the planned relocation of its headquarters to Salt Lake City. Republican members emphasized the importance of proactive forest management, wildfire prevention, and opportunities for improved resource extraction. Democrats criticized proposed budget cuts and warned that reductions in research capacity, elimination of state and private forestry programs, and the USFS' reorganization would weaken wildfire response and strain state and tribal partners.

***Member Toplines:*¹**

Chair Mike Simpson (R-ID-02): Simpson emphasized that proactive forest management and prevention efforts can significantly reduce wildfire costs and impacts, while stressing the need to balance these priorities with fiscal discipline. He added that he hopes Congress will continue to demonstrate bipartisan support for federal wildland firefighters.

Ranking Member Chellie Pingree (D-ME-01): Pingree criticized the USFS FY27 budget request, arguing that its proposed elimination of state and private forestry programs reflects political priorities and arbitrary cuts rather than the needs of forest management. She raised concerns with the proposal's lack of detail on USFS' reorganization, warning Congress cannot properly evaluate the proposal without adequate transparency.

Witness Toplines:

[Tom Schultz, Chief, U.S. Forest Service:](#) Schultz emphasized recent challenges for the USFS including growing wildfire risk, declining forest health, and infrastructure strain. He underscored the FY27 budget proposal's focus on expanding forest management, wildfire preparedness, and domestic resource development, including critical minerals and energy. Schultz framed these priorities as key to reducing reliance on timber imports and ensuring long-term forest health.

¹ Opening statements were not available online at the time of this memo's distribution.

Major Takeaways:

Wildfire Management and Budget Cuts:

- Simpson questioned the proposed consolidation of federal wildfire suppression under DOI, noting Congress previously withheld approval due to missing feasibility details.
 - He emphasized that lawmakers cannot support consolidation without receiving the independent study on consolidation mandated in the previous year's appropriations bill report.
- Rep. **Betty McCollum** (D-MN-04) and Pingree warned that proposed budget cuts and program eliminations would weaken the USFS and shift responsibilities onto states and tribes that lack the resources to compensate.
- Rep. **Jake Elzey** (R-TX-06) argued that eliminating state fire assistance programs would weaken state wildfire response capacity, citing Texas' reliance on federal fire capacity funding.
- He pointed to opportunities for increased coordination between USFS and the Department of War to strengthen national wildfire response capabilities.
- Reps. **Josh Harder** (D-CA-09) and McCollum stressed the need for greater investment in forest management tools like prescribed burns to address worsening wildfire risks.

Forest Service Reorganization:

- Simpson asked for additional details on the proposed relocation of USFS headquarters from Washington, D.C. to Salt Lake City and its goal of shifting authority closer to field operations and states.
- Pingree raised concerns that relocation and restructuring could result in significant workforce losses due to employee relocation barriers, particularly among experienced technical staff.
- She warned that a lack of detailed reorganization plans prevents members from assessing potential impacts on mission delivery.
- McCollum cautioned that moving staff and consolidating offices risks losing institutional expertise, especially in research and climate monitoring functions.

Research Capacity:

- Harder criticized reported reductions in USFS research capacity, including proposed closure of research stations and reductions in scientific staff tied to reorganization.
- McCollum objected to proposed cuts to forest and rangeland research programs, emphasizing that the impacts of climate change on forests requires expanded scientific monitoring.
- Pingree argued that eliminating state and private forestry and research functions would undermine shared stewardship and forest health partnerships in states like Maine.

Interagency Coordination:

- Rep. **Celeste Maloy** (R-UT-02) raised concerns that new USFS agreement requirements, such as requiring completed NEPA reviews before fund transfers, could create inefficiencies in project development.