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**Committee:** Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

**Event:** [Oversight of the United States Forest Service](#)

**Date:** June 2, 2026

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***Executive Summary:***

On June 2, 2026, the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee held a hearing to review the operations and oversight of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). The hearing focused on preparation for the upcoming wildfire season, with members of both parties expressing support for the bipartisan Fix Our Forests Act (FOFA) ([S. 1462](#)), reported out of Committee last October. Additionally, Democrats raised concerns regarding the proposed USFS reorganization, while Republican members expressed support for the more state-based structure the reorganization would provide. Lastly, members raised concerns regarding specific mining projects in New Mexico and in Minnesota.

***Member Toplines:***

[Chairman John Boozman \(R-AR\)](#): Boozman highlighted the USFS's role in preventing and mitigating wildfires across the country. He highlighted the recent announcement that the USFS will relocate its headquarters to Salt Lake City and transition to a state-based structure, expressing support for moving the agency closer to the communities it serves. He also thanked the Committee for supporting FOFA last October and emphasized his commitment to working with congressional leadership to advance the legislation, citing its potential to improve USFS's wildfire response.

[Ranking Member Amy Klobuchar \(D-MN\)](#): Klobuchar expressed her commitment to supporting the USFS ahead of the upcoming wildfire season, citing increasingly hot and dry conditions as factors contributing to heightened wildfire risk. She emphasized the importance of the USFS and raised concerns about staffing reductions at the agency, noting the loss of more than 1,400 employees who had the ability to support wildfire response. She also expressed concern with the administration's proposed budget for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), highlighting proposed cuts to state forestry programs, volunteer fire department funding, and forestry research. Additionally, she questioned the proposal to move wildfire operations outside of the USFS without clear direction or delineation of responsibilities. Finally, she reiterated her support for FOFA and expressed hope that the legislation will receive floor consideration.

***Witness Topline:***

[Tom Schultz, Chief, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service](#): Schultz emphasized the priorities guiding the USFS, including wildfire response, active forest management, disaster recovery, recreation access, domestic energy and mineral production, and reducing regulatory burdens. He highlighted improvements in firefighter safety, wildfire response metrics, hazardous fuels treatments, noting the agency's role in supporting critical mineral development and post-disaster recovery. He expressed support for the USFS reorganization, arguing the

changes will move decision-making closer to the communities the agency serves. Schultz noted that the agency is prepared for elevated wildfire risk, citing increased firefighter staffing and ongoing coordination with the Department of the Interior (DOI) on efforts to consolidate the federal wildland fire system as directed by the administration.

### ***Major Takeaways:***

#### Wildfire Readiness and Prevention

- Schultz noted that the USFS has hired over 11,000 firefighters in preparation for the approaching fire season
- Chair Boozman asked what policies would be most effective at reducing wildfire risk.
  - Schultz expressed support for FOFA and highlighted reforms to utility rights of way, particularly in the West, as helping to prevent wildfires by allowing utilities to remove hazardous fuels from utility lines.

#### USFS Reorganization

- Boozeman asked about expected improvements as a result of the USFS moving its headquarters to Salt Lake City and transitioning to a state-based structure.
  - Schultz stated that the move would support work at the state and local level. He noted the intent of the move was to bring more decision-making to the state and local level.
- Ranking Member Klobuchar expressed concern regarding moving USFS wildfire operations to DOI before the congressionally directed study regarding the move is complete.
  - Schultz noted that, while he was unaware of the Senate's position on the issue, he believes the House is waiting to approve funding for the move until the study is complete later this year, likely in November.
- Sen. **Adam Schiff** (D-CA) raised concerns regarding the USFS reorganization plan, noting that six of the agency's eight research and development facilities slated for closure are located in California, more than in any other state. He also questioned whether the reorganization could contribute to staff attrition.
  - Schultz acknowledged California's significant wildfire risk, noting it faces the greatest wildfire challenges in the country. He emphasized that the reorganization would not reduce the USFS's research presence in California, arguing that the planned facility closures are intended to consolidate and co-locate personnel rather than eliminate research activities.

#### Mining and Public Lands

- Sen. **Tina Smith** (D-MN) expressed concerns regarding the environmental impacts of a copper sulfide mine near the Boundary Waters in Minnesota, following the revocation of a 20-year moratorium on mineral leases in the area. Smith asked about the USFS's plans to complete an environmental review of the project.
  - Schultz noted that while they do not have a clear timeline for the evaluation, the USFS had previously completed an environmental impact statement for the project, and they will need to review it for any necessary updates or revisions.
- Sen. **Ben Ray Lujan** (D-NM) raised concerns regarding the legitimacy of a claim by the Canadian mining company Gamma Resources, which has announced plans to begin exploratory drilling for Uranium in New Mexico's Carson National Forest in mid-2027. Lujan expressed strong opposition to those plans, claiming the company is "not welcome in New Mexico."

- When asked, Schultz said they had not approved the project and that, given the lengthy permitting process for a mine, he would find it difficult to expect it to be operational by 2027.