



Committee: House Agriculture Subcommittee on Forestry & Horticulture
Event: [For the Purpose of Receiving Testimony from Chief Tom Schultz, U.S. Forest Service](#)
Date: July 22, 2026

Executive Summary:

On Wednesday, July 22, the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Forestry & Horticulture held a hearing to hear testimony from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Chief **Tom Schultz** and discuss current goals, successes, and shortfalls of the agency. There was bipartisan agreement on the increasing impact of wildfires and the need for a strong, capable USFS to manage wildfire prevention. However, members disagreed on USFS reorganization and agency budget cuts.

Member Toplines:

[Subcommittee Chairman Dan Newhouse \(R-WA-04\):](#) Newhouse expressed concerns over forest health, the increasing severity and number of wildfires, and a fall in timber harvesting. He praised the current administration and USFS's efforts on hazardous fuel reduction and support for the timber industry. Newhouse was supportive of the agency's reorganization, arguing it would result in more locally-made decisions.

[Subcommittee Ranking Member Andrea Salinas \(D-OR-06\):](#) Salinas shared her concerns over the Trump administration and USFS's lack of focus on wildfire preparedness and hazardous fuel reduction, instead spending energy on re-organization and commercial timber efforts. She further was unsupportive of the USFS's staffing cuts and relocations that have hampered the agency's ability to fight wildfires.

[Committee Chairman Glenn Thompson \(R-PA-15\):](#) Thompson praised the USFS's recent work in improving agency efficiency and combating wildfires after a devastating fire season. He advocated for expanding forest management activities and supporting a strong forest products industry. Thompson highlighted his interest in the agency's plans for reorganization, restoration and fuel reduction, timber production, and research.

[Committee Ranking Member Angie Craig \(D-MN-02\):](#) Craig raised worries regarding USFS staff reductions, decreased hazardous fuel treatments, and an elimination of research funding. She further stated she does not support the reorganization plan. Craig highlighted the bipartisan support for a strong and effective USFS and called for the agency to do better.

Witness Toplines:

Tom Schultz, Chief, USFS: Schultz emphasized the USFS's prioritization of wildfire management, specifically through increased interagency coordination and staffing of firefighters. Schultz briefly highlighted several other agency priorities and successes, including forest management, mineral development, recreation access, disaster recovery, and the agency's reorganization effort.

Major Takeaways:

Wildfires

- Ranking Member Craig asked if the recent USFS announcement that the Boundary Waters Canoe Area was closing due to wildfires was due to USFS staff decreases.
 - Schultz replied that the staff cuts were preplanned due to a constricted budget.
- Rep. **David Valadao** (R-CA-22) asked if USFS was prioritizing aggressive initial wildfire response and how the agency makes decisions on containing vs. putting out wildfires. He further inquired about USFS wildfire restoration efforts and local coordination strategies.
 - Schultz replied that USFS has a full suppression strategy based on several factors for each fire. He added that USFS receives immediate funding for wildfire restoration and then looks to obtain additional funding for infrastructure fixes. Schultz also discussed coordination between state, federal, and local levels. He highlighted the Potential Operational Delineations system as a key tool to publicize data on what communities and areas need to be protected most.
- Rep. **Gabe Vasquez** (D-NM-02) highlighted damage from recent fires and expressed frustration over recent firefighter staff decreases.
 - Schultz emphasized that USFS currently has more firefighters now than in recent years and staffing has not impeded the agency's ability to manage fires.
- Rep. **Jim Costa** (D-CA-21) asked how funding cuts to research will impact long-term spending on fire suppression.
 - Schultz replied that research is expected to continue through private entities, not federal agencies.
- Ranking Member Salinas continued her criticism of the agency's reorganization