

**Federal Forestry Management Reform**

**Background**

More than 193 million acres of the National Forest System is managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), located within the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Of this total, 46 million acres (24%) are designated as allowable for timber harvest. Less than half the allowable sale quantity of timber in existing forest plans is currently being harvested.

Declining timber sales negatively impact countless wood products businesses, local communities and schools that rely on the jobs and tax base provided by the industry. The decline in active management of federal lands also impacts the health and sustainability of the forests. The increasing cost of fire suppression further constrained the ability of USFS to effectively manage forest holdings, growing from 13% of appropriated USFS funds in 1991 to 50% in 2015.

**Issue**

After many years of Congressional debate, meaningful federal forest management legislation was enacted as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 including language on a wildfire funding fix for the USFS, as well as pro-forestry federal forest management reforms long supported by the Federation. But more needs to be done.

The House-passed Reauthorization of the 2018 Farm Bill includes several additional tools to help the Forest Service better manage our nation’s federal forests. Those provisions authorize a number of new categorical exclusions (CE) from NEPA reviews that will facilitate needed project work including:

* Expedite salvage operations in response to catastrophic events;
* Meet forest plan goals for early successional forests;
* Manage “hazard trees;”
* Improve or restore National Forest System lands or reduce the risk of wildfire;
* Forest restoration;
* Infrastructure-related forest management activities;
* Managing insect and disease infestation.

The Senate’s Farm Bill version includes no federal forest management reform measures.

**Hardwood Federation Position**

The upcoming Farm Bill conference committee negotiations is an opportunity to address additional forest management needs. The Hardwood Federation strongly supports the forest management reform measures in the House version of the Farm Bill and is advocating for their inclusion in the final conference report that is sent to the President.