



32 reversing the deforestation crisis of 100 years ago was largely achieved. Today, our nation's  
33 forests cover about one-third of the country, provide 51 percent of the nation's demand for water  
34 (US Forest Resource, Facts and Historical Trends, 2005), provide wood and paper products,  
35 provide habitat for threatened and endangered species and other wildlife, and offer beautiful  
36 settings for billions of recreation visits (RPA, 2005).

37

38 Today I'd like to focus on the values our forests provide, rather than on any specific output. I  
39 believe we need to rethink our relationship with these lands in terms of their long-term values,  
40 not just their short-term uses. These values include everything from clean drinking water to  
41 hardwood for furniture to grizzly bear habitat to an experience of solitude as a respite from urban  
42 life to biomass that can help solve some of our nation's energy challenges. To protect and  
43 maintain the values the nation's forests provide requires much vision, planning, and work. Our  
44 forests are owned privately by individuals, families, and companies, and publicly by counties,  
45 states, and the federal government. One can find these forests in the backcountry far from cities,  
46 around communities, and sometimes in our own backyards. Our challenge is to reconnect urban  
47 and rural Americans to these forests and to focus on how we can work together to deliver all  
48 these important and essential values.

49

50 As part of delivering those values, we must have a clear assessment of the current condition of  
51 our nation's forests. Our forest scientists, located at universities and Research Stations  
52 throughout the nation, are continually gathering and analyzing data to help us better understand  
53 the conditions we are facing. In addition, our Forest Inventory and Analysis division has been  
54 gathering on-the-ground data on the condition of our nation's forests for the better part of a

55 century. These assessments point to the challenges our nation's forests are currently facing due  
56 to changes caused by insects, disease, noxious and exotic weeds and fire, and the conversion of  
57 forest land for development. Here are some specifics:

58

59 • While tree mortality caused by insects tends to be cyclical, it is at its highest level in fifty  
60 years. Eight percent of the forested area of the US is at risk of attack and potential  
61 mortality (RPA 2005). Beetle killed trees cover large areas of the Northern Rockies, the  
62 Southwest, and dry forests in the Northwest. Similarly, areas of the Lake States are being  
63 ravaged by the Emerald Ash Borer and the Asian long horned beetle is destroying trees in  
64 New England and right here in the backyard of the nation's capitol. The impact of  
65 insects and disease is not limited to the back woods. Cities and towns throughout the  
66 northeast are witnessing the death of their beloved trees along streets and within  
67 community parks.

68 • Public and private forests have accumulated a significant amount of excess hazardous  
69 fuels (brush and woody materials) due, in large part, to a century of fire exclusion. On  
70 the National Forests alone, between sixty and eighty million acres of forest land is  
71 classified as densely stocked with small diameter trees and at risk for a catastrophic  
72 wildfire (Budget Director re: Congressional testimony provided in 2009). As a result,  
73 wildfire is burning large amounts of forests across the nation. In recent years fires have  
74 burned about eight million acres each year of forest and grassland. This is an area nearly  
75 twice the size of the State of New Jersey. Management predictions for the next decade  
76 indicate that fires may well burn in excess of ten million acres of forest and grassland  
77 annually (Quadrennial Fire Review). In addition, more homes are being burned each

78 year. For many federal, state and local agencies, the cost of suppression continues to  
79 grow.

80

81 • Forested lands are being invaded by noxious and exotic weeds. On the National Forests  
82 alone, our management estimates indicate that to be six to eight million acres annually  
83 (Invasive Species Threat to America’s Forested Ecosystems, Ielmini).

84

85 • Over the past fifty years urban areas have increased in size by 60 percent. During that  
86 same period, forested acreage has shown little change. The actual picture is somewhat  
87 more complex than the simple statistics alone would suggest. The amount of forest area  
88 is generally shrinking in the eastern and western states due to urbanization and  
89 fragmentation, while the amount of forest area is increasing in the interior of the nation as  
90 some of our cropland reverts to forest. Over the next ten years we anticipate that almost  
91 22 million acres of forest within ten miles of existing cities and towns will be further  
92 subdivided or developed (Forest on the Edge, Stein, McRoberts, and Alig, 2006). In  
93 addition, many of the owners of large tracts of forest are senior citizens, indicating vast  
94 tracts of forested land will be transferred to new owners who may or may not maintain  
95 them as large forested tracts. Considering that the majority of forestland in this country is  
96 owned by private family landowners, change is coming and it may be significant.

97

98 • Today, over eighty percent of the population lives in urban settings (cities and towns with  
99 a population greater than 2500). The average canopy cover in these cities and towns is 27  
100 percent. These trees have many environmental benefits in the urban ecosystem including

101 cleaning the air and actually cooling neighborhoods which reduces our energy needs.  
102 Open space also provides areas for filtering surface water and helps mitigate potential  
103 flooding. Management estimates indicate that there are 3.8 billion trees in these settings  
104 (Forest Resource Facts and Historical Trends, 2009). As noted, the impact of insects and  
105 disease is also a major concern in these urban ecosystems.

106

- 107 • We continue to demonstrate our appreciation for forest settings in large numbers. Last  
108 year, we estimate that Americans made several billion visits to forest settings. On the  
109 National Forests, our survey data indicates that the Forest Service hosted approximately  
110 186 million visitors. These forested settings are critical to the quality of life for many of  
111 us and our communities. (Forest Resource Facts and Historical Trends, 2009)

112

113 In addition to resource challenges, the forest products industrial infrastructure is in decline in  
114 many places. Accompanying that decline is a loss of jobs and a decline in community vitality.  
115 Much of this is a result of the current recession and the associated decline in housing starts. This  
116 makes resource management, where needed, more difficult.

117

118 There are numerous challenges ahead, but every set of challenges also offers opportunity. There  
119 are significant opportunities to begin addressing these challenges by maintaining, reconnecting,  
120 and renewing the bond between communities and their forests. We can deliver the many values  
121 we've come to appreciate and want if we invest the time and energy to work together.

122

123 We look forward to working with the Congress to address many of the challenges facing  
124 America's forests. Some of those challenges include:

- 125 • private forests and development,
- 126 • insect, disease and noxious weed epidemics in both rural and urban settings,
- 127 • hazardous fuels reduction near communities, municipal watersheds and critical  
128 infrastructure,
- 129 • moving towards more fire resilient forested landscape,
- 130 • balancing sustainable wood products and the biomass industry which helps restore  
131 healthy ecosystems,
- 132 • managing roadless areas,
- 133 • supporting such values as clean water, clean air, and fiber and carbon sequestration and  
134 storage,
- 135 • protecting and enhancing wildlife and fish habitat, and
- 136 • providing opportunities for citizens to choose forest settings to recreate, refresh, and  
137 renew themselves.

138  
139 Another challenge our forests face is the deep divide that persists in the wake of decades of  
140 debate about how to best manage for the desired multiple uses. Some of our forests need  
141 restoration work and sustainable active management to remove hazardous fuels, to ensure clean  
142 water flows; all while maintaining forest health and resiliency in a changing climate. It is  
143 important to note that not every acre needs active management. We must move beyond the all or  
144 nothing ideas of competing interests by focusing on shared values and how they can overlap and

145 come together. This requires intelligent, collaborative planning, smart, scientific based  
146 management, and inclusive decision-making.

147

148 It's been my experience that people on opposite sides of the forestry table often have the same  
149 values. They just differ in how they would want to see those values expressed on the land.

150 While for one person, protection is eliminating human influence on an ecosystem, for another it  
151 is aggressive treatment. Both want the forest to exist and thrive. If we can focus on values, we  
152 can enlarge the dialogue and arrive at a better solution.

153

154 Currently, collaborative efforts are flourishing across the nation, creating increased  
155 understanding between citizens of diverse backgrounds. Here are several recent examples where  
156 people have been working together to accomplish this vision:

157

- 158 1. The town of Woodland Park, Colorado, working with the Front Range Fuels Treatment  
159 Partnership Roundtable, of which the Forest Service is a member, was the recipient of the  
160 Community Demonstration Project Award. The project already has attracted \$100,000 to  
161 help treat fuels in high-risk areas. One hundred percent of the project is in the Wildland  
162 Urban Interface (WUI). Funding from the Governor's Energy Office, the Colorado Forest  
163 Restoration Institute, and the Office of Smart Growth will be matched with funding from  
164 national foundations and local organizations to make the Woodland Park Healthy Forest  
165 Initiative a reality. This collaborative project of various federal, state, local government,  
166 nonprofit, and individual partners is dedicated to the improvement of the resiliency and  
167 health of forests in and around the Woodland Park area, and the implementation of the

168 Teller County Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Current funding for this project from  
169 the grant and from other partners exceeds \$350,000.

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171 2. The National Forests of Mississippi produced a nearly completed draft Land and  
172 Resource Management Plan that was a result of excellent collaboration with all interested  
173 parties. The collaborative process clarified the wide support for prioritizing native  
174 ecosystem restoration and habitat improvement for threatened and endangered species as  
175 core components of the plan. This collaborative process demonstrates how active forest  
176 management is a tool for meeting ecosystem restoration goals, sustaining healthy,  
177 resilient forests while also supplying desired goods and services to the local communities.

178

179 3. The Mississippi Forestry Commission is leading a collaborative effort to address the  
180 kudzu problem. Utility companies, federal, state and local officials spend thousands of  
181 dollars each year to control kudzu. Kudzu contributes to the intensity of woodland fires  
182 because it is highly flammable and provides a fuel ladder from the forest floor to the  
183 forest canopy. The purpose of this collaborative and comprehensive approach between  
184 state and federal agencies and non-governmental organizations is to address the threat  
185 and destruction that kudzu poses to farmers, ranchers, and foresters on both public and  
186 private lands.. The coalition intends to facilitate a voluntary and cooperative effort in  
187 educating the public, researching this pest species, and providing a means of control,  
188 suppression, or selective eradication of kudzu. As a partner in these efforts, Secretary  
189 Vilsack recently approved \$1.6 million for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act  
190 invasive species projects on the Holly Springs National Forest.



191  
192 Our intention is to provide the means to multiply these successes across America. We are  
193 committed to a vision where Americans will sit down to not only address impacts, but more  
194 importantly, to protect and promote the full range of forest values that are important to all of us.

195  
196 On a national and local scale, one particularly successful collaborative effort over the past  
197 several years has been the development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs). The  
198 National Association of State Foresters estimates that there are over 56,000 communities at risk.  
199 To date, more than 4,700 at-risk communities have completed (CWPPs). These plans prioritize  
200 fuels reduction areas across the landscape. Federal and state agencies have found CWPPs to be  
201 very useful in helping prioritize agency fuel treatments via these collaborative mechanisms.

202  
203 The Administration is increasing support for the Forest Legacy Program as well as the Land and  
204 Water Conservation Fund, both of which will help Americans protect important forested  
205 landscapes for future generations.

206  
207 We have much restoration work to accomplish on the nation's forested landscapes. Fortunately,  
208 the U.S. Forest Service is staffed by some of the best-trained, hardest working professionals in  
209 the world. They know we cannot achieve these objectives without the active participation and  
210 collaboration of federal and state resource management agencies, elected officials, residents  
211 living in and close to forested areas, the forest products industry, environmental interests, and the  
212 general public. We look forward to working together with the Congress and our partners to,  
213 among other things: 1) conserve working forest landscapes, 2) protect our nation's forests from  
214 harm - wildfire, invasive species and the ravages of insect and disease outbreaks, and 3) enhance

215 benefits associated with trees and forests; e.g., water quality as well as sustainable communities  
216 and landscapes.

217

218 I am convinced that with the help and continued engagement of the Congress and our state and  
219 local community partners, we can improve upon these successes by restoring our forests, public  
220 and private, consistent with the values we cherish. Simply put, healthy forests equal healthy  
221 communities. We welcome your involvement and assistance in that effort.

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223 This concludes my prepared statement, and I would be pleased to answer any questions you may  
224 have.

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