



File Code: 1300
Route To:

Date:

Subject: Implementation of Secretarial Memo 1078-006

To: Regional Foresters and Deputy Chiefs

The Forest Service has a rich history of managing America's forests for the public good. Established in 1905, our agency has evolved significantly, adapting to changing societal needs and environmental challenges.

Today, we enter a new era marked by pressing issues like a growing demand for domestic lumber and wildfire resilience. The Executive Order titled “Immediate Expansion of American Timber Production” identifies these issues and set us on a path to overcome them. To address these challenges, we need to increase our active forest management to improve both the prosperity of rural America and the health of our forests. Our efforts will lead to an increase in America’s wood independence, a thriving wood products economy, and the protection of our water supply. The value of wood products derived from projects on national forests will play a crucial role in driving economic growth while supporting essential efforts to reduce wildfire risk and promote forest health. Our efforts will also result in a better return on investment for the public we serve by covering more of the costs of the timber program through revenue generated.

The goals we will seek to achieve in actively managing our forests are:

- Support rural economies and forest product industry partners
- Reduce the risk of destructive wildfire by creating and sustaining healthy and resilient forests and watersheds
- Build capacity through workforce alignment and partnerships

To achieve these goals, I am directing the following actions, within current capacity constraints, to be taken to make initial progress:

I am directing the Deputy Chief for the National Forest System, in consultation with other Deputy Chiefs, Regions and Forests, to develop a national strategy that outlines our agency’s goals, objectives and initial actions related to increasing active forest management. This will be completed in 30 days.

I am directing all Regional Foresters to develop 5-year strategies, tiered to the national strategy, to increase their timber volume offered, leading to an agencywide increase of 25% over the next 4-5 years. These regional timber strategies will include an assessment of their current 5-year



program of work (POW) that includes timber volume, opportunities to expand that POW, a wood utilization facility risk assessment, barriers to achieving a 25% increase in volume (including information beyond funding needed), and potential solutions to overcoming those barriers. As part of your regional strategy, you'll be required to explore the opportunity to designate *Sustained Yield Units* required for industry investments where active management is needed. Strategies must be completed in 60 days following the release of the national strategy.

I am delegating the authorization to use timber designations by prescription (DxP) and designations by description (DxD) to Forest Supervisors. These types of timber designations should be the default approach in implementing timber projects. Exceptions to these designations must be made in consultation with a Regional Forester. Additionally, virtual boundaries should be used in lieu of marked boundaries whenever possible.

Further, I am directing District Rangers and Forest Supervisors to, in addition to regular timber sale solicitations, utilize direct timber sale opportunities with interested purchasers operating on and around forests. Line officers with interested partners must initiate industry engagement within 60 days to integrate these opportunities into your short- and long-term programs of work.

Finally, all agency timber sales will use base rates or minimum rates, where appropriate, based on the Emergency Authorizations outlined by the Secretary. In addition, within 90 days, Regions will establish standard appraisal rates that can be applied and used over a geographic area where similar conditions exist. The Washington Office is available to assist in this process.

Within the next 24 months, I expect each Regional Forester to establish 2 years' worth of "shelf stock" of timber volume coming from project decisions for out-year implementation of their timber related program of work. These decisions should be in place within the next 24 months. As a part of this, within the next 3 months, and every 6 months thereafter, Districts with suitable timber base and active industry partners will develop projects that can be analyzed using appropriate Categorical Exclusions (CEs) to address active forest management needs. These projects will not only reduce fire risk and support local economies but also result in timber volume sold. National assistance will be made available where needed through the Planning Services Organization and Field Services and Innovation Center (FSIC).

I further direct all Line Officers to use innovative and efficient approaches to meeting the minimum requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act, and other environmental laws, including categorical exclusions, emergency authorities (including the Secretary's recent expanded Emergency Situation Determination), condition-based management, determinations of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) adequacy, and staged or tiered decision-making. In addition, I direct compliance with the NEPA statutory time limits for, completing environmental assessments and environmental impact statements.

To this end, I am directing the Deputy Chief of the National Forest System through the Director of Ecosystem Management Coordination, within 14 days, to release direction for using Emergency NEPA, Endangered Species Act (ESA), and other regulatory authorities to streamline and simplify our permitting processes. This guidance will include mandatory

minimum approaches to scoping, extraordinary circumstances analysis and decision documentation requirements.

We will align our workforce to be efficient in active forest management delivery. I am directing the National Forest System Natural Resources Director to streamline or reduce certification requirements and processes. In the next 4 months, all Forest Supervisors, Regional Forester Teams, and appropriate Washington Office staff will attend a national active forest management meeting to align the goals, objectives and actions associated with the program, followed by regular engagements to ensure continued progress and shared leadership. Within 12 months, all current line officers will complete or refresh Forest Management for Line Officers training. New line officers will complete this training within 12 months of their effective date as a line officer.

There have been significant improvements within the Washington Office with integration of the hazardous fuels, Wildfire Risk Reduction Infrastructure Team (WRRIT), and forest management teams over the last several years and their combined efforts have delivered record accomplishments. Based on the guidance in the Executive Order, I am asking for additional integration to continue building on those successes and chart a new, completely seamless program. Therefore, I am directing the Deputy Chiefs of National Forest System and State, Private and Tribal Forestry to develop a proposal for integration of the teams and funding structures at the Washington Office within 30 days. Additionally, I am directing the same group, in consultation with the Regional Foresters, to develop a strategy field level integration, inclusive of regions and forest, within 6 months.

I expect line officers to work with States, Tribes and Counties to establish priorities and identify opportunities to share resources for execution of regional and national active forest management strategies. I expect this to result in an increase in what region's accomplish through Good Neighbor Agreements. We will emphasize work with industry partners to identify needed, feasible projects on national forests and increase the use of G-Z and A-Z contracting, as well as stewardship agreements and other implementation tools.

We will also find additional opportunities to work with states, counties, tribes and non-governmental partners to increase our active forest management activities on the ground. Internal coordination to build capacity will include increasing commercial product delivery in projects that focus on hazardous fuels reduction, implementing direct financial support programs to industry (Wood Innovation Program and Hazardous Fuels Transportation grants), and identifying opportunities to re-direct existing funds toward active forest management.

The agency will fund up to \$50 Million in Good Neighbor Authority Agreements that will fund road and bridge maintenance and reconstruction for active forest management projects. This work will emphasize the *minimum* standards necessary for safety and removal of wood products.

Finally, it is imperative that we plan and execute salvage and reforestation projects as these disturbances happen to accelerate post-wildfire recovery and reestablish healthy and resilient

forests. We have many critical successes to anchor to, including expanded hazard tree removal efforts along roadways, post fire shaded fuel break construction, and Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) with key industry partners that have helped us model success at local levels. But we need to do more, and as such, I am directing line officers to prioritize and address salvage opportunities, including leveraging opportunities to work with states, tribes, counties, private industry, and partners to increase the pace and scale of recovery and share in achieving cross-boundary results. I'm also directing the use of existing frameworks and tools, such as Potential Operational Delineations (PODS) and the National Alliance of Forest Owners (NAFO) MOU to capitalize on the opportunity to move quickly, capitalize on value, and restore the areas to more fire resilient conditions. Regions, in consultation with the Washington Office and Forests, will integrate their regional 10-year reforestation implementation strategies with the national active forest management strategy. To the maximum extent practicable, use existing and new categorical exclusions for timber stand improvement, salvage, and other site preparation activities for reforestation, consistent with applicable law. I expect that active management, reforestation and stand improvement activities will reduce wildfire risk, ensure sustainable timber supply, promote forest health, and protect our communities and their water supply.

I want to express my sincere appreciation for your trust and support in these matters. Rest assured, we are committed to our mission, value your service and we will continue to exemplify excellence in stewarding public lands for the American people.

CHRISTOPHER B. FRENCH
Acting Associate Chief

Attachment 1: Regional Specific Actions