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Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee: USFS FY 2016 budget hearing February 26, 2015

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing to examine the President's proposed fiscal year (FY) 2016 budget for the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) on February 26. USFS Chief Thomas Tidwell answered senators' questions regarding wildfire suppression funding, timber sales, and recreation permits in national forests, among other things.

Many senators and Mr. Tidwell expressed support for proposed updates to wildfire suppression funding. Under current law, suppression costs for all wildfires, even catastrophic ones, come out of the USFS budget. Senators Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Mike Crapo (R-ID) introduced the Wildfire Disaster Funding act of 2015 (S.235) to help remedy the drain that the small number of catastrophic fires places on the USFS budget. The legislation would alter the funding structure so that suppression costs for roughly 99 percent of fires would still come from the USFS budget, but suppression for the one percent of fires that prove catastrophic would come from the Disaster Relief Fund (DRF) via the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Chairwoman Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) voiced support for the primary goal of the legislation, but expressed concern about the mechanics.

Source: Congress.gov, E&E News
