

**Joint Agriculture Committee
June 6th, 2022
BLM Wyoming Forestry Talking Points**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Joint Agriculture Committee, I appreciate the invitation to appear before you today to provide information about BLM Wyoming's forestry and fuels programs and forest conditions on BLM-managed lands across the state.

Forestry Program & Staffing:

- BLM Wyoming has significant forest resources in the state.
- The Forestry program is actively managing them for long-term health, resiliency, and local economic opportunities.
- Earlier this spring, we advertised, and are now working to fill, forester positions in two of our offices in the state that have not had forestry staff for several years. This represents a return to full staffing of our forestry program in Wyoming.

Economic Contribution:

- Based on a 2021 Department of the Interior and BLM economic analysis, the BLM forestry program provided 2.2 million dollars in direct and indirect contribution to Wyoming's economy.

Budget:

- In FY-2022 the forest management budget in the state received a slight increase over FY-21 funding levels, additionally we were able to compete for additional funding, specifically for forest salvage and forest health restoration projects. BLM Wyoming has also received some Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding in support of Good Neighbor Authority projects.

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL):

- For FY23 BIL funding, we are working towards addressing our reforestation backlog in the Black Hills, treatment of whitebark pine, and accelerating planned forest health and fuels reduction projects across the state.

Accomplishments:

- Our target is to offer 5 million board feet of timber per year as a byproduct of our forest health and fuels reduction treatments. This year we are set to offer approximately 8.5 million board feet of timber statewide.
- BLM Wyoming sells thousands of cords of firewood for personal and commercial use each year and treats thousands of acres of forested land to reduce hazardous fuels and restore and improve forest health each year.

Special Forest Products (SFP) Online:

- For the last several years, we have been offering the sale of firewood and Christmas trees permits online. The public has generally responded well to the convenience this system offers, and we have approximately doubled the number of permits we have been selling annually since the program was launched.

Forest Health:

- On Bureau managed forests, we continue to see large amounts of defoliation from Western Spruce Budworm going into the third year of that outbreak. We have also observed increased mortality from Spruce Beetle and Douglas-fir Beetle, possibly linked to trees stressed from drought and defoliation.

Fuels Program:

- In Fiscal Year 2021, the BLM Wyoming Fuels Management Program treated 107,000 acres of public lands.
 - 12,000 acres treated were in the forest and woodland ecosystem.
- The primary objectives include reducing conifer encroachment within aspen stands and in sagebrush, forest thinning to increase forest health and vigor, reducing the fuel load in order to decrease wildfire risk and severity, restoring riparian areas, and improving habitat for species like mule deer, elk, Big Horn sheep, and Greater sage-grouse.
 - To accomplish this, we use a variety of techniques including hand thinning, mastication, prescribed fire, and timber sales

Conclusion:

- The BLM looks forward to continued work with our state and federal partners, and private industry to manage towards a healthy, productive, fire resistant and sustainable forest.
 - Partnerships and inclusion are vital to managing sustainable, working public lands.
- Thank you for the having me here to speak with you today. The BLM appreciates maintaining direct communications with all of you.
- I am pleased to answer any further questions the committee may have.