United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
Washington, DC 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:
DIVISION OF FORESTRY AND WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT

Bureau of Indian Affairs-Division of Forestry and Wildland Fire Management

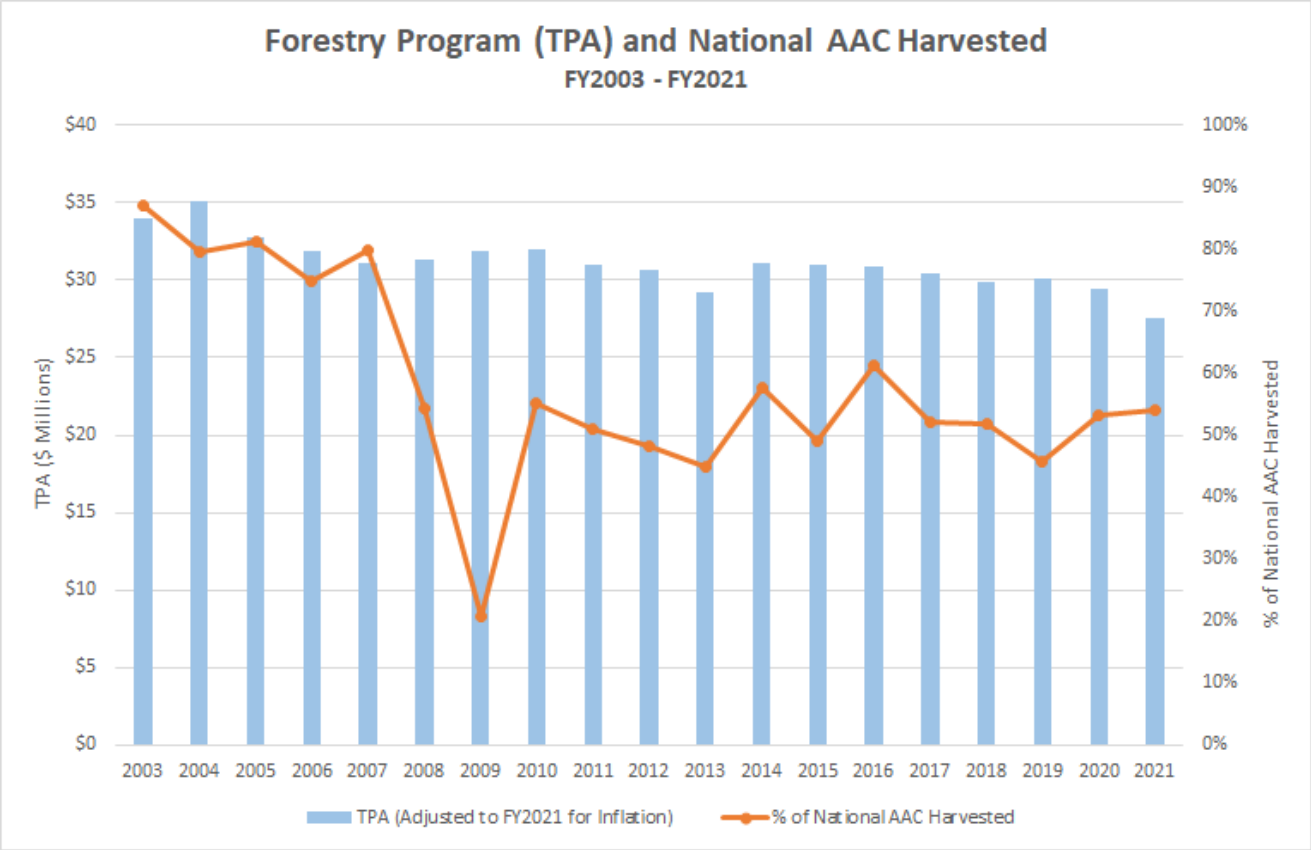
Report for Tribal-Interior Budget Council

Forestry TPA

The current Forestry Program (TPA) budget is not sufficient to adequately staff BIA and Tribal Forestry Programs. A general increase in the Forestry Program (TPA) budget to achieve funding levels sufficient to fill on the ground positions to plan, execute, and administer timber sales is critical. Many BIA Regional Offices receive very little TPA funding, and many Tribes receive little or no TPA funding. In previous years, we requested an additional $22,150,000 to fund 292 additional FTE dedicated to Indian Forestry. This investment has the potential of yielding an additional $68.2 million in stumpage revenue. The sale of forest products is a principle fiduciary trust responsibility and a vital source of tribal revenue and employment.

The BIA has faced challenges related to staffing and funding. However, the BIA continues to deliver quality services to the Tribes where forest land management activities are concerned. In fact, the BIA is successful in harvesting over 50% of the total annual harvest for the Department of the Interior and meets or exceeds the modified annual target harvest levels for Tribes, even though the full harvest of the national allowable annual cut (AAC) of timber is not achieved. In FY2021, we were able to harvest 395,426,000 board feet of forest products, resulting in stumpage income that generated $79,857,236 in revenue to the Tribes.

BIA Forestry's recurring goal for each fiscal year is to harvest the full AAC. We project the FY2023 national AAC in Indian Country will be approximately 733 million board feet. If harvested in full, the projected FY2023 national AAC would generate approximately $149 million in revenue for the Tribes. Achieving this goal in not possible unless Tribal and BIA Forestry Programs are fully staffed. The TPA funding increase is needed to fulfill our trust responsibility, provide recurring funding for BIA and Tribal forestry staff, comply with the National Indian Forest Resources Management Act (NIFRMA), and harvest the full AAC.



Timber Team / Tribal Training Opportunities

The second year of the BIA Timber Team, based in Billings, Montana, has been busy with field work in the Eastern, Eastern Oklahoma, Rocky Mountain, and Northwest Regions. During these work assignments the Timber Team helped 13 agencies complete a variety of projects including timber sales preparation and layout, stand exams, measuring continuous forest inventory plots, GIS mapping, and fire salvage layout. Travel for these work assignments has exceeded 18 weeks this fiscal year.

Full capacity of Team members is seven and by the end of August 2022, the Timber Team will be down to two employees. Recruitment efforts started in February with three positions being advertised in April and again in May with no success. BIA Forestry staff continue to work with Human Resources to readvertise as soon as possible so that the Team can continue assisting Tribes. Two BIA Pathways program interns worked with the Timber Team this summer gaining experience across Indian Country.

Requests for FY2023 BIA Timber Team assistance are now being accepted. If Federal or Tribal staff would like to work with the Timber Team on any future assignment, please contact your local Regional Director or Regional Forester. It is a great way for staff to gain additional experience and it will also help the Timber Team that is currently short staffed.

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Timber Team is provided a field briefing before beginning work.

ER/BIL Funding

Executive Order 14008 (Sec. 223) Justice 40 initiative aims to ensure that the overall benefits of certain Federal investments flow to underserved communities (goal of 40%).

Total ER funding allocations within DOI for FY22:

BIA $4.77 million
BLM $25.55 million
BOR $1.35 million
NPS $12.70 million
OIA 2.09 million
FWS $15.19 million
USGS $6.59 million

BIA Forestry developed four (4) project proposals for the FY22 Ecosystem Restoration funding cycle:

- $37.5 Million over 5 years to conduct 8500 acres of thinning and 6500 acres of planting annually. This project would restore ecological health by improving forest health and reducing the risk of resource loss to environmental factors such as insects, disease, and wildfire.
    - Amount Funded: $1.2 million for FY23.

- $3.7 million over 5 years to provide funding for Tribal Youth Crews to conduct activities to restore, prepare or adapt recreation sites on Federal lands, including Indian forest lands or rangelands.
    - Amount Funded: $0.00.

- $35 million over 5 years to update and expand Tribal Greenhouses. The goal is to double production and increase staffing capacity to provide conifer seedlings and native plants for use in reforestation and restoration projects on Tribal and Federal lands.
    - Amount Funded: $800K for FY22.

- $11.3 million over 5 years to conduct Tribal Lidar projects focused on developing complete landscape-scale resource assessments (data relevant to forests, range, invasive species, water, fire, roads, and wildlife habitat) and tree-level forest inventories. Lidar

has proven to be an efficient and cost-effective method in gathering large amounts of data, and it will continue to be a valuable tool given staffing shortages.

- Amount Funded: $0.00.

Ecosystem Restoration funding is still available, so opportunities remain. BIA Forestry will revise and resubmit non-funded proposals, continue to develop project proposals for out years 2023-2026, and will remain available to assist tribes in the development of their proposals.

Tree Planting

Regions have identified over 548,000 acres of commercial timberlands that need reforestation. There are a variety of situations where artificial regeneration should be the selected method of reforestation. Some examples of these situations are: 1) lack of preferred species or poor genetic quality in the seed sources of the adjoining stands or residual overstory; 2) low probability of seed production in the quantities necessary to regenerate the site within required time frames; 3) logistical problems in cutting or site preparation practices that will not allow for proper natural regeneration seedbed preparation; 4) disease pockets that make regeneration with an alternative species desirable; and 5) management objectives that call for a conversion from a natural stand to a plantation. Nationally, over 14,000 acres per year are being reforested through artificial tree planting on trust lands.

Tree spacing or trees per acre vary at each location depending on the tree species being replanted and local stocking goals. These can be found in the local Forest Management Plan. Typically, the number of trees per acre range between 300-400. In areas with natural regeneration, this number can be well over 10,000 trees per acre.

Tree spacing at the time of replanting is a critical step in regenerating a stand of timber. Planting trees at wide spacings (less trees per acre) can create economic issues because widely spaced trees tend to grow overly large knots that devalue logs at the time of timber harvest. Wide spacing can also place the Tribe at risk of having under-stocked stands if insects and/or disease, or competing vegetation, kill too many replanted trees. In such cases, replanting must be done to ensure enough trees are growing on the site, which adds to the cost of managing the forest.

The key to increasing resiliency and reducing the risk of resource loss to wildland fires is to manage the forest over time. This means conducting thinning operations and reducing hazardous fuels.

Forestry Facilities

Across the 12 BIA Regions, Forestry has many facilities in need of repair or replacement at an estimated cost of $40,000,000. Most BIA Forestry offices are currently located in old, dilapidated facilities that need repair or lack modern infrastructure. Buildings repairs needed at many field locations include fixing holes in walls and doors, replacing old windows and flooring, painting, updating electrical wiring, adding insulation, fixing leaky roofs, and installing new heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems. In addition, many facilities are not readily

accessible by individuals with disabilities as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act and do not meet current National Fire Protection Association requirements. Many locations lack adequate parking, storage space, and occupational safety features. Many facilities need information technology upgrades to participate in the new hybrid work environment and security systems to secure equipment and vehicles to prevent theft and improve personal safety. The estimated need of $40 million for repairs or replacement is well above the 2022 enacted BIA budget of $5,488,000 for Activity "Other Program Construction" Sub Activities "Telecommunication Improvement & Repair" ($1,419,000) and "Facilities/Quarters Improvement & Repair" ($4,069,000).

The need for maintenance, improvements, and new construction at Forestry facilities is mission critical to the management of Tribal forestland and workforce development. Housing for seasonal employees, forestry interns, and emergency response staff is lacking and prevents critical forest management activities such as timber sales, thinning and fuels reduction, tree planting, and inventory from being performed. The lack of housing also prevents seasonal employees and interns from gaining valuable field experience required to be successful in many full-time Tribal and BIA Forestry Program positions. Conference rooms, break rooms, and daycare facilities are also needed to attract and retain quality employees. Several Tribal and BIA Forestry positions continue to remain vacant at remote locations across the country.

The National Indian Forest Resources Management Act (NIFRMA) mandates that an independent assessment of Indian forestry be completed and sent to Congress every 10 years. The 4th IFMAT report is currently underway and will be sent to Congress in early 2023. The Indian Forest Management Assessment Team (IFMAT) is conducting on-site interviews with Tribes and BIA staff. In some cases, they have seen first-hand the dilapidated state of forestry offices. As a result, the IFMAT had specific questions regarding funding for BIA Forestry facilities. Unlike Fire facilities, Bureau of Indian Education facilities, and Detention facilities, there is no funding specifically allocated for construction, repair, or replacement of BIA Forestry facilities.

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Small Infrastructure

BIA Forestry strives to find creative ways to assist Tribes in the management of their trust forest resources and recognized the need for small / portable infrastructure, because many large local sawmills have closed. Upgrading and retooling large sawmills is costly and thus far, funding to address this has been unavailable. Further, transportation costs have risen and some material that does not meet the size and/or grade for sawlog material, needs to be removed to reduce fuel loading.

In 2018, the BIA Forestry began funding small / portable infrastructure projects. The portable infrastructure initiative was designed to provide smaller scale processing capabilities, accomplish important management activities including harvesting the Allowable Annual Cut, improve forest health, reduce the threat of wildland fire, and provide support to Indian communities through the creation of jobs. The BIA is still promoting this initiative as funding levels allow.

Examples of Small / Portable Infrastructure include small sawmills, firewood processors, chippers, portable pelletizers, and support and transportation equipment.

The Picuris Pueblo own a portable sawmill and submitted a project proposal to fund needed upgrades and attachments to handle large sawlogs. BIA Forestry funded their proposal, and the Tribe is utilizing the equipment to make use of larger commercial size timber, reduce hazardous fuels, improve forest health, create additional forest products, revenue, and provide education and employment. The Tribal Forestry Department staff presented and demonstrated the use of the sawmill equipment to students of Picuris Pueblo Boys and Girls Club, Ohkay Owingeh Elementary, and the Penasco Elementary School.

BIA Forestry funded a portable sawmill for the Tanana Chiefs Conference which was shipped to Nulato, Alaska in 2019. Two tribal members have been trained to operate the sawmill, and they are processing standing dead spruce which are being processed for use as house timbers.

The Nez Perce Tribe has implemented and expanded their existing firewood program. BIA Forestry provided $208,000 and Nez Perce contributed Tribal dollars to purchase a firewood processor (complete with separator and conveyor), and a self-loading log truck. The Nez Perce Tribe delivers two cords per household to over one hundred and seventy-five applicants per year, equating to 350 plus cords annually to Seniors, Elders, Disabled, and Single parents. The self-loader transports more than 50 firewood loads from the Tribe's ceded territories.

Sawmill operating at Picuris

Sawmill processing fire-killed trees at

Utilizing a portable sawmill has allowed Tribes to produce value-added products on-site that otherwise would have eventually decayed or burned in a fire. The Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians (CCBUTI) utilized a sawmill to salvage and process approximately 8 million board feet timber from the Milepost 97 fire in 2019. Approximately $244,004.98 of BIA Forestry funding was initially utilized for the sawmill purchase. The Tribe also contributed funding for the project..

Since 2018, BIA Forestry has funded approximately $4.7 million for 19 Tribal proposals across eight regions. Tribes will be notified by the Regional Offices for future opportunities to propose projects.

Land Assessments and Surveys

The use of new technology is becoming increasingly important. In many cases, work that required more staffing and hours in the field, can now be completed using Light Detection and Ranging (Lidar). Lidar can gather large amounts of data relevant to forest inventories, forest health, invasive species, range lands, roads, riparian areas and wildlife habitat, and therefore can be very cost effective and useful across our forestry and natural resources programs. In FY2022, BIA Forestry received a 1-year increase of approximately $2.1 million to, in part, provide funding for Lidar projects. BIA Forestry expects to receive and fund additional requests for Lidar projects in FY2022 and in future years, subject to annual budget appropriations.

Lidar data can be utilized by land managers for a variety of uses. The following are two examples of Tribal Lidar projects that BIA Forestry recently funded:

The Crow Tribe Lidar-Assisted Complete Natural Resources and Forest Inventory will acquire high-resolution Lidar and high-resolution aerial imagery on 773,004 acres of forestland, woodland, and rangeland on the Crow Tribe Reservation. When combined with field data, this information will be used to develop a complete landscape-scale resource assessment and mapping. The single-tree forest and woodland inventory produced will be used for growth and yield modeling to help the tribe develop future management goals.

The Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians (CTCLUSI) are partnering with the Oregon State University (OSU) College of Forestry to develop a comprehensive lidar-derived single-tree inventory for the forestlands that were conveyed through the 2018 Western Oregon Tribal Fairness Act. This project will allow the forestry program to prioritize areas for forest development projects and model fuels. The tools developed by CTCLUSI and OSU will be shared with other tribal forest managers.