

## **SESSION NOTES**

**SESSION NAME:** FOREST SERVICE BUDGETS

**DAY & TIME:** OCT 19, 2PM

**SPEAKER #1 NAME:** KATE WALKER, BUDGET DIRECTOR REGION ONE  
USFS

### **MAJOR POINTS:**

- Never enough money!
- Explained Congressional budgetary process and counties should engage there as well though NACO or state associations.
- Appropriations bill also gives lots of policy direction
- Currently in a continuing resolution through December. Therefore same levels as last year.
- USDA is only 2% of Federal Discretionary Budget and USFS is only 20% of that 2%
- Allocation to regions based on Chief's strategic goals
- Congress expects outputs and chiefs budget meant to meet those
- Chiefs budget priorities consistent with Cohesive Strategy along with workforce and promoting safety
- Allocations within Regions based on three year data, built from ground up with forest and RF priorities
- Projects determined at forest and grassland levels
- Fire transfer from preparedness and suppression. Congress often pays it back eventually but it might not come back to accounts where it was originally taken from.

Questions:

National Christmas Tree funding is 20k from USFS. Better used for work on the ground? Given \$270 million budget for whole region, it is a very small amount.

Over half of USFS budget now going to fire suppression/personnel. Unobligated funds can get fire transferred. Not personnel funds but those related to projects and partnerships. Payroll safe. Only what is not nailed down.

Region has developed a strategy to ensure key commitments are locked down by June 1 to avoid fire borrowing take away. Fiscal year starts October 1 but often no budget until April so a very big budgeting challenge for USFS.

Weed control budget? Region 1 a pilot for Integrated Restoration so one pot of dollars to control weeds and other restoration needs. Budget for weeds has diminished so up to line officers to make it a priority. Commissioners can influence line officers because more discretion at that level. Competing against major targets, however, like stream mile restoration and timber.

Forests in Focus has leveraged additional dollars to the region. Supplemental Hazardous Fuels and need to show partnership “match.” Powerful incentive to attract this additional funding. State needs to coordinate closely with federal budget cycle deviations to best match up resources. Mo Bookwalter as DNRC/Region 1 Liaison is key staff to help maximize and leverage extra USFS funds for Montana.

#### LESSONS/BIG TAKEAWAYS:

Commissioners can be involved in both Congressional level budgeting as well as in building projects from the ground up. Work closely with

line officers at the local level and help them set their priorities regularly.

State Forest in Focus dollars should be synced with Forest Service budget timing that varies from year to year.

It is important to have an understanding of the threat posed by ongoing fire borrowing situation. It could get dire on non-fire programs especially as percentage of budget taken up by fire continues to rise from 50% to much higher projections in future years.

#### REFERENCED MATERIALS:

[See FS Budget Power Point](#)