Washington DC Update

Government shutdown. As expected, the federal government shut down after Republicans and Democrats failed to reach agreement on funding federal departments and operations ahead of the September 30 end to the fiscal year. On September 19, House Republicans approved H.R. 5371, a "clean" seven-week Continuing Resolution (CR), but it failed to get 60 votes in the U.S. Senate. A competing CR proposal from Senate Democrats, which would also extend expiring COVID-era subsidies for Obamacare health insurance policies and reverse recent cuts to Medicaid, did not receive a single Republican vote.

Unfortunately, the standoff could stretch on for weeks and highlights larger conflicts around executive power and Congress' Constitutional power of the purse. Democrats are eager to restrain the ability of the President to ignore or modify funding decisions made by Congress, including through the controversial use of "pocket recissions." While some Republicans in Congress may share these concerns, few want to create a rift with the President.

AFRC is following the impacts of the shutdown closely and is in communication with department and agency contacts related to their timber programs. Various agencies have issued guidelines and operations procedures during the shutdown, including the Department of Agriculture-Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management.

The USDA guidance specific to the Forest Service (page 19) indicates that "Implementation of Executive Order (EO) 14225, Immediate Expansion of American Timber Production to increase domestic timber production" is among those "activities that will continue during a lapse." Despite some confusion in the document, the agency has confirmed awarded timber sales will continue and indicated that new timber sales will move forward.

Interior and the BLM will likely follow suit. While the BLM's Plan does not explicitly discuss timber sales, page five identifies "Inspections and enforcement for oil and gas and logging operations" among those activities that will continue during the lapse in funding. The agency has confirmed awarded timber sales will continue and indicated new sales will move forward.

While we are confident that this Administration will continue to prioritize agency functions that support active timber harvesting, a lengthy shutdown could impact future planning and reviews beyond Fiscal Year 2026, making it more difficult for the Administration to meet its goal of increasing federal timber sale outputs consistent with EO 14225 and the mandates of the One Big Beautiful Bill (Reconciliation bill).

Hearing on Public Lands Bills Postponed. The Senate Energy and Natural Resources' Public Lands, Forests, and Mining Subcommittee had scheduled an October 1 hearing to consider more than two dozen public lands, wildfire, and mining proposals, including several of interest to AFRC:

S.1737 – the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers Act (Sen. Patty Murray -WA) to designate 132,000 acres of Wilderness and potential Wilderness on the Olympic National Forest. The legislation would also add 13 new Wild & Scenic Rivers spanning 464 miles and impacting the management of another 60,000 miles within the Wild & Scenic buffers.

S.888 – The Oregon Recreation Enhancement (ORE) from Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) to designate a 30,000-acre Molalla Recreation Area, a 90,000-acre Rogue Canyon Recreation Area, a 60,000-acre expansion of the Wild Rouge Wilderness Area, and a mineral withdrawal across 100,000 acres of Forest Service lands.

S.140 – The Wildfire Prevention Act from Senator John Barrasso (R-WY) to establish increasing annual targets for federal forest management treatments, including mechanical thinning.

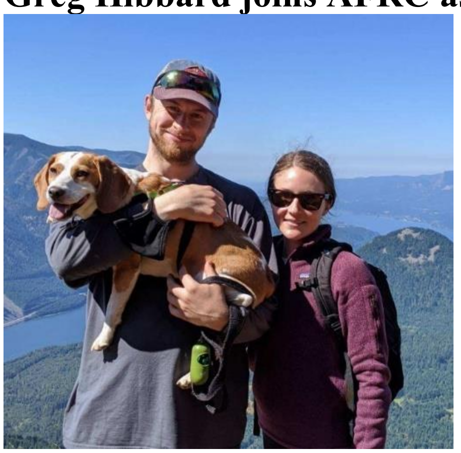
S. 2042 – Perennial legislation from Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) to codify the 2001 Clinton Roadless Rule, which has taken on new interest given the Trump Administration's proposal to rescind the rule.

While the hearing was postponed due to the government shutdown, we expect the it to be rescheduled soon.. AFRC sent a letter to the Committee ahead of the hearing outlining concerns with the Wild Olympics proposal and the ORE Act, which included past comment letters sent to Congressional Committees and the bill sponsors.

SPEED Act. On September 10, the House Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on Chairman Bruce Westerman's (R-AR) bipartisan "Standardizing Permitting and Expediting Economic Development Act" (SPEED Act). AFRC sent a letter endorsing the bill, which would streamline NEPA, improve permitting processes and expedite forest management projects.

Permitting reform legislation remains a high priority for Republicans, although the steep partisan divide in Congress will likely make it difficult to secure the 60 votes needed in the Senate. For months, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce organized a "Permit America to Build" campaign urging Congress to pass bipartisan, comprehensive permitting reform to fix our broken system to meet rising energy demand and build resilient infrastructure. AFRC also joined a September 2 letter to Congress from a broad coalition organized by the Chamber, which was also planning a Capitol Hill lobbying day on October 9. That event may be cancelled if a shutdown continues. /*Heath Heikkila*

Greg Hibbard joins AFRC as a Staff Attorney



Greg Hibbard joins AFRC after serving as a litigator in private practice for several years. Greg will be based in Washington and will contribute to ARFC's legal program in all the state and federal courts that AFRC practices in. He will also provide support to AFRC's political and policy work.

Greg is very excited to return to AFRC after previously working with AFRC as a law clerk between 2018–2019. Greg comes back to AFRC after gaining behind-the-scenes court experience, general natural resources litigation experience, and extensive experience litigating timber sales on Washington State trust lands. Following his AFRC clerkship, he worked as a judicial clerk for the Oregon

Court of Appeals. There, he assisted in drafting published legal opinions. That experience provided a look behind the curtain on the types of advocacy that judges consider the most persuasive and the processes judges use to make their decisions.

Greg most recently worked out of the Portland and Seattle offices of Northwest Resource Law for four and a half years. During his time with Northwest Resource Law, Greg remained involved with AFRC as outside counsel for AFRC and individual AFRC members on various timber sale appeals in Washington Superior Court and Washington Court of Appeals. In particular, Greg assisted in intervening and defending against the ongoing series of challenges to Washington State Department of Natural Resources timber sales involving older growth forests.

Beyond the timber context, Greg was involved in significant litigation both supporting and challenging federal and state agencies. Greg was a part of a successful effort before the Ninth Circuit to intervene on behalf of rural Alaskan fishers and defend against Endangered Species Act and National Environmental Policy Act claims that sought to close their entire fishery. Greg also represented members of the aquaculture industry to challenge Washington state administrative orders and regulations that ban specific forms of aquaculture in state-owned waters by intervening on the industry's behalf in existing litigation and initiating new litigation. Greg is eager to build on that experience and apply it to the timber industry full-time and looks forward to engaging with AFRC's members to learn how to best serve them and AFRC's mission of promoting active forest management on public lands during this critical time.

Greg grew up in Olympia, Washington and is a graduate of Pacific Lutheran University (B.S. Geosciences and B.A. Economics); the University of Washington (J.D.); and Lewis and Clark Law School (L.L.M. Environmental, Natural Resources, and Energy Law). Greg, his wife, young daughter, and their beagle live in Issaquah, Washington where they enjoy the nearby hiking and camping opportunities. */Greg Hibbard*

Forest Service Fiscal Year Wrap-up

Forest Service Regions concluded their Fiscal Year 2025 timber sale programs last month with varying results. Please note that "official" targets assigned by the National Office are shown at the top of each table. Forest targets assigned by each Region often deliberately exceed the nationally-assigned targets.

Region 1 finished a very successful year, particularly given the recent challenges they have faced with litigation. The Region exceeded their target of 317 MMBF by 32 percent. Excluding permits (which are primarily personal-use firewood), they still exceeded their target by 14% with commercial timber products.

USFS R1 – Target 317 MMBF			
Forest	**Target (MMBF)**	**Volume sold**	**% Accomplishment**
Idaho Panhandle	90.0	77.8	86%
Nez-Clear	58.4	54.0	92%
Kootenai	63.0	69.8	111%
Lolo	38.8	50.2	129%
Flathead	38.0	35.9	94%
Bitterroot	13.5	8.7	64%
B-D	14.0	15.9	114%

Helena-Lewis & Clark	15.2	16.3	107%
Custer-Gallatin	26.2	21.2	81%
	357.1	**349.8**	**94%**
Add-on Volume to Awarded Contracts		12.3	
Permits		55.0	
Total Accomplishment		**417.1**	**132%**

Region 5, on the other hand, had a disappointing year for the timber program. The Region only attained 62% of its assigned target. Furthermore, of the 239.1 MMBF attained, less than half was in sawtimber products (119 MMBF) with the remainder in personal-use firewood and biomass.

USFS R5 – Target 386 MMBF				
Zone	**Forest**	**Regional Zone Target**	**Volume sold**	**% Accomplishment**
Central	Eldorado	166	1.5	21%
	Plumas		27.6	
	Lake Tahoe Basin		0.0	
	Tahoe		6.5	
North	Klamath	176	11.8	48%
	Lassen		34.4	
	Shasta-Trinity		20.8	
	Mendocino		0.0	
	Modoc		16.5	
	Six Rivers		1.7	
Southern	Sequoia	77	49.4	111%
	Sierra		5.3	
	Stanislaus		21.4	
	Inyo		9.2	
Total		**419**	**206.1**	**49%**

Permits	33.0	
Total Accomplishment	**239.1**	**62%**

Region 6 had a successful year, exceeding their target by almost 8 percent. Excluding personal-use firewood permits, the Region still attained over 97% of its target.

USFS R6 – Target 562 MMBF			
Forest	**Target (MMBF)**	**Volume sold***	**% Accomplishment**
Colville	116.0	119.1	103%
Deschutes	23.0	26.3	114%
Fremont-Winema	102.0	104.0	102%

Gifford Pinchot	26.0	22.7	87%
Malheur	42.0	18.6	44%
Mt Baker-Snoqualmie	10.0	13.7	137%
Mt Hood	14.0	10.7	76%
Ochoco	15.0	15.1	101%
Okanogan-Wenatchee	18.0	19.1	106%
Olympic	11.0	16.7	152%
Rogue River-Siskiyou	32.0	32.1	100%
Siuslaw	43.0	45.3	105%
Umatilla	35.0	37.2	106%
Umpqua	25.0	29.6	118%
Wallowa Whitman	17.0	19.1	112%
Willamette	63.0	76.8	122%
Total	**592.0**	**606.1**	**102%**

*** Permit volume of 57.6 MMBF included**

While Fiscal Year 2026 targets are still being drafted, National Forests in Regions 1, 5, and 6 are developing plans to attain outputs of roughly 330 MMBF, 393 MMBF, and 622 MMBF respectively. /*Andy Geissler*

BLM End-of-Year Wrap up

Following a disappointing FY24in which the Western Oregon BLM timber program offered only 205 MMBF to local purchasers, every District improved to offer a combined total of 236 MMBF in FY25. The BLM came up short of their stated target of 250 MMBF, but we hope this increase signals a welcome trend from the agency in the coming years.

BLM 2025 Accomplished Volume					RMP ASQ Requirements		
District	Assigned Target	Total Offered Volume	ASQ Contribution	Total Awarded Volume	Target ASQ	Min ASQ	Max ASQ
						%40 Variance	
Salem	70	65.9	63.6	65.9	65	39	91
Eugene	62	59.1	34.8	59.1	53	31.8	74.2
Roseburg	26	26.7	26.7	26.7	32	19.2	44.8
Coos bay	32	29.4	11.6	29.4	12	7.2	16.8
Medford	56	49.9	43.6	34.1	37	22.2	51.8
Klamath Falls	4	4.9	4.9	4.9	6	3.6	8.4
Total	250	235.9	185.1	220.0	205.0	123.0	287.0

Statewide, the agency fell short of hitting their RMP ASQ target of 205 MMBF by offering 185 MMBF in FY25 (up from 137 MMBF in FY24). Most Districts were near or exceeded their RMP ASQ target, but the Eugene District experienced the most significant shortfall. This is due, in part, to the higher-than-average amount of LSR acres treated in FY25 resulting from the N126 LSR Landscape Plan EA, where the highest number of acres have been analyzed.

The Medford District continues to make headway in tackling the ongoing issue of Douglas-fir mortality impacting the Rogue Basin, awarding three salvage sales that target dead and dying Douglas-fir in FY25. Because the 2016 RMPs prohibit salvage harvest in Late-Seral Reserves, these sales generally fall within the Harvest Land Base; hence, the District's overperformance in offered ASQ volume for FY25. The Medford District posted the State's only two no-bid sales.

Looking ahead, it's still unclear what each District's assigned target volumes will be in FY26 as we have yet to receive that information from the State Office. With that said, the sale plans posted online indicate that the agency will offer 277 MMBF in FY26 – a high-water mark since at least 2020 when we witnessed significant volume increases from unprecedented fires and subsequent salvage efforts from several Districts.

BLM 2026 Sale Plan		
District	**Total Planned Volume**	**ASQ Contribution**
Eugene	**75.4**	**66.7**
Salem	**83.0**	**82.4**
Medford	**52.0**	**35.4**
Roseburg	**30.7**	**19.6**
Coos Bay	**32.3**	**9.4**
Kfalls*	***4.0***	***4.0***
Total	**277.4**	**217.4**
*** Indicates no sale plan posted as of 10/02/2025**		

We will continue to monitor each District to ensure that they meet their projected targets in FY26. /*Corey Bingaman*

AFRC and Calforests Submit Joint Comments Urging Rescission of Roadless Rule

AFRC and the California Forestry Association (Calforests) submitted joint comments to the U.S. Forest Service in support of rescinding the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. Together, the two associations say the rule has undermined science-based forest management at a time when wildfire threats, drought, and insect infestations are growing more severe.

The Roadless Rule restricts access and active management on nearly 59 million acres of National Forest System lands, including some of the most fire-prone landscapes in the West. Since the rule was enacted, more than 8 million acres of these lands have burned. Nearly half of all Inventoried Roadless Areas are now rated as high or very high wildfire hazard potential. AFRC and Calforests argue that the rule's blanket prohibitions on road construction have hi ndered thinning, fuels reduction, and safe firefighting access while duplic ating existing environmental protections such as NEPA, the ESA, the Clean Water Act, and site-specific forest plans.

Photo: Oregon's Umpqua National Forest, where the 2020 Archie Creek Fire burned severely in an Inventoried Roadless Area near the community of Steamboat. This area is also located in Late-Successional Reserves under the Northwest Forest Plan and designed as "critical habitat" for the Northern Spotted Owl. (AFRC/Corey Bingaman)

The organizations also highlight the implications for the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP), which governs 19.7 million acres of federal forests in western Oregon, Washington, and northern California. When the NWFP was adopted in 1994, more than 80 percent of its land base was placed into reserves off-limits to sustained-yield timber production. Matrix lands, the small share of land expected to provide a reliable timber supply, was further reduced when the Roadless Rule overlaid in 2001. Today, roughly 400,000 acres of Matrix lands (about 10 percent) are overlain with Roadless Area designations, effectively placing them off-limits as well. Since 2002, the Forest Service has only carried out commercial harvest on about 638 acres within roadless Matrix lands, just 0.15 percent in over 20 years

AFRC and Calforests emphasize that rescinding the Roadless Rule will restore flexibility for local forest managers to consider limited road access where needed for forest restoration, fuels treatment, and emergency response, while still complying with all environmental safeguards and forest plan restrictions. Now that the comment period has ended, the U.S. Forest Service is reviewing public feedback and plans to develop a draft Environmental Impact Statement and proposed rule, anticipated in early 2026, with a final rule and Record of Decision expected later next year. /*Nick Smith*

Click here to listen to Episode 49. Our podcast is also available on Spotify and Apple Podcasts

The AFRC Podcast is a monthly discussion examining key issues and news relating to forestry, forest products and public lands management.

Episode 49 features Amanda Kaster, Director of the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. She returns to The AFRC Podcast to discuss Montana's new 20-year Shared Stewardship agreement with the U.S. Forest Service, a partnership to restore forests, reduce wildfire risk, and support local communities. Beginning with 200,000 acres in northwest Montana, the agreement sets ambitious targets and transparent reporting. We cover what makes it historic and what success will look like.

Fremont-Winema Continues to Leverage G-Z Contracting

Last month the Fremont-Winema National Forest awarded two contracts designed to augment their ability to plan, prepare, and execute vegetation management treatments. The Bull Meadow G-Z and Tiny G-Z contracts were awarded to Collins Pine Company and Gilchrist Forest Products respectively and will generate an estimated 40 MMBF of timber. Tiny and Bull Meadow differ in that the timber value on Tiny exceeds the cost of the included service work, while Bull Meadow's timber value will only partly offset the higher service work costs.

G-Z stewardship contracting is a relatively new approach that leverages timber value and expertise from the private sector to increase the pace and scale of forest management. Following the completion of NEPA analysis, private contractors are entrusted with the full identification, preparation and implementation of forest restoration and timber removal activities. This contracting tool has helped the Fremont-Winema grow its timber program from 60 MMBF to over 100 MMBF while also expanding the footprint of non-commercial and hazardous fuels reduction work across the Forest.

The Fremont-Winema's first G-Z contract, called Go-Big, was awarded to Collins Pine Company in 2023 with an estimated 45 MMBF of timber. Implementation of Go-Big has been underway since that award and has included both commercial (Unit 1) and non-commercial (Unit 2) treatments. Most units that include timber removal also require post-harvest removal of small diameter material and logging slash.

Unit 1

Unit 2

G-Z contracts have also been awarded on the Plumas and Stanislaus National Forests in California.   The G-Z model is designed to be scaled up or down as needed. For example, the Spirit G-Z contract on the Plumas covers approximately 70,000 acres while the Bull Meadow G-Z contract on the Fremont-Winema covers only 2,500 acres. The tool can also be adapted to varying levels of timber value as illustrated by the Tiny G-Z award where the timber value exceeded the service work value by $4 million. /*Andy Geissler*

AFRC Presents at REAL Montana

The REAL Montana Program is a two-year leadership initiative designed to build a network of informed and engaged leaders in Montana's natural resource industries. Through classes, tours, networking, and travel, participants gain valuable knowledge and skills while analyzing complex issues related to agriculture and natural resources. The program also provides intensive leadership training and exposure to diverse perspectives.

Now in its sixth class, REAL Montana currently includes about twenty participants. From September 11–13, the group met in Whitefish for a session themed "Timber & Culture." Highlights included a tour of a Forest Service timber sale, a visit to the F.H. Stoltze sawmill, and a stop at Weyerhaeuser's Medium Density Fiberboard plant.

On September 12, AFRC Consultant Tom Partin joined a panel discussion titled "Forest Policy, Practices and National Issues." He emphasized the critical role National Forest timber plays in sustaining

Montana's sawmills, as well as the ongoing challenges posed by litigation that delays needed forest treatments.

Partin was joined by Betsy Earls of Weyerhaeuser, who spoke about the Administration's approach to federal forest management and pending legislation in Congress, and Sean Steinebach of Sun Mountain Lumber, who highlighted the importance of local forest collaboratives. AFRC Board Member Tim McEntire, a current REAL Montana participant, helped organize and facilitate the session.

AFRC extends its appreciation to the REAL Montana Program for introducing emerging leaders from diverse industries to the realities and opportunities of the forest products sector. It remains an outstanding platform for education and collaboration. /*Tom Partin*

Poised to Produce: Plumas National Forest's Push for Resilience

Across the mosaic of ridges, canyons, and valleys that make up the Plumas National Forest (PNF), managers are moving from planning to action on a suite of forest-resilience projects. These efforts aim to protect communities, restore post-fire landscapes, and reduce hazardous fuels. From "protection" projects around Quincy and the American Valley to landscape-scale "recovery" work on lands burned by megafires, treatments include mechanical thinning, hand crews, and prescribed fire.

Why Now?

The common goal is straightforward: forest resilience and restoration. Projects focus on reducing stand-replacing wildfire near communities, improving evacuation safety, and accelerating ecological recovery after drought and high-severity fire. Many treatments occur where forests meet towns and infrastructure, with prescriptions to help post-burn stands transition toward more resilient structures. Byproducts will support sawmills, biomass facilities, and local economies.

Forest Resiliency Projects

Claremont Forest Resiliency Project — This 30,000-acre initiative near Quincy and Meadow Valley received a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in spring 2023. It will improve forest health, reduce hazardous fuels in the wildland-urban interface (WUI), treat invasive weeds, and reduce road impacts.

Treatments include mechanical thinning, mastication, hand thinning, grapple-piles, and prescribed burning. Legacy trees and snags will be retained where possible, with reforestation in larger openings. About 32,000 acres are slated for implementation beginning FY26.

Community Protection — Central and West Slope Project — One of the largest, this proposal covers about 218,000 acres and reduces wildfire risk to communities, infrastructure, and evacuation corridors. Tools include mechanical and manual thinning, mastication, prescribed fire, selective herbicide use, and reforestation. The Forest Service aims to reduce surface and ladder fuels near communities while retaining mature forest patches in habitat areas. Implementation is expected to begin in FY26.

North Quincy Wildfire Resilience Project — Covering nearly 9,000 acres on the Mount Hough Ranger District, this regional priority targets fuel reduction in WUI defense zones around American Valley. Treatments include hand thinning, mastication, mechanical thinning, and prescribed fire to protect structures, evacuation routes, and infrastructure. Because of its proximity to neighborhoods, the project emphasizes hand crews, small equipment, and careful use of prescribed fire. Local partners such as the Feather River Resource Conservation District are involved. Implementation begins in 2026.

Forest Recovery Projects

Tributaries Forest Recovery Project — Designed to restore lands hit by high-severity fire, this project addresses erosion, invasive species, and poor regeneration. Treatments include hazard-tree removal along travel corridors, reforestation, fuels reduction, and limited prescribed burns. Recovery prescriptions focus on removing dead trees near infrastructure, replanting desired species, and controlling invasive plants. About 163,000 acres are proposed, with a FONSI expected in late 2025 or early 2026.

North Fork Forest Recovery Project — The largest in scope, this 167,000-acre initiative addresses legacy fire impacts from the Dixie (2021), Walker (2019), and Moonlight (2007) fires. Prescriptions vary by site: variable-density thinning in partially surviving stands; stabilization, planting, and re-introducing fire in severely burned areas; and protection of old-forest remnants and cultural resources. A FONSI was signed in June 2025, with sub-projects under development for implementation in 2026.

Next Steps

Timelines vary: some projects are moving from environmental review to implementation, while others remain in draft public comment. Units closest to communities and supported by grants are prioritized. Long-term plans emphasize repeated prescribed burns and follow-up thinning to ensure durable results.

As the Plumas moves from analysis to action, managers are applying a pragmatic toolbox including mastication, thinning, prescribed fire, and planting to protect homes today and rebuild resilient forests for tomorrow. The months ahead, with implementation, monitoring, and community dialogue, will show whether the strategy delivers on its promise. /*Jake Blaufuss*