



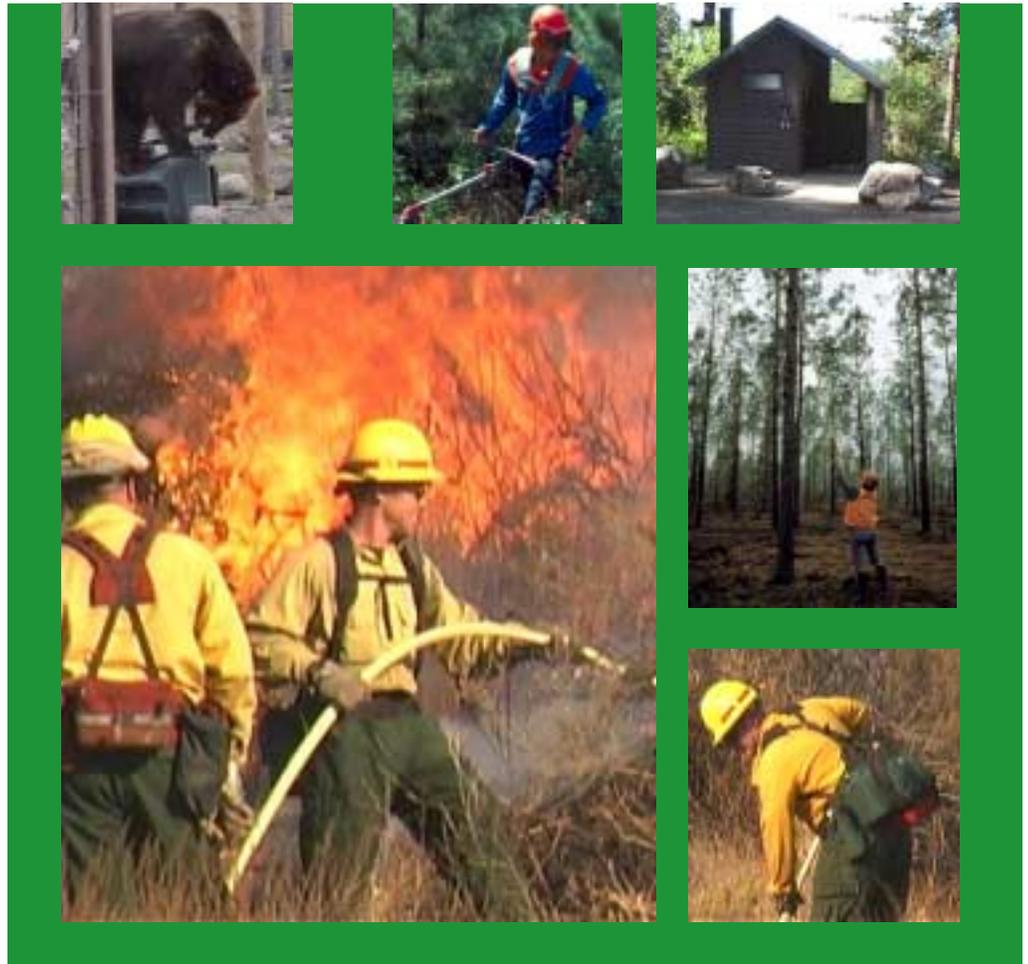
News

Release

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Colville National Forest

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Colville National Forest contributions to fire deficit come mostly from fire savings, non-essential projects

Colville, Wash., -- The Colville National Forest contributed funds in August to help pay for an estimated \$1.3 billion in national wildland fire suppression costs.

The forest turned back \$548,000 from various programs of work, the majority of which was salary savings made while employees were away fighting fires during the past summer.

Officials say these savings represent money that had not yet been spent for nonessential projects.

Nora Rasure, forest supervisor for the Colville National Forest,

said the projects that were not completed or cancelled this summer do not include any funded by Title II (Payments to States) grants to counties.

"The money we sent back to the region to be used for paying firefighting expenses was taken from general program management accounts for nonessential purchases, installations or maintenance," Rasure said. "Most of these projects have been postponed until next season or cancelled all-together," she said.

Rasure said funding returned was originally for projects that range from new toilet

installation and placement of bear-proof dumpsters in several campgrounds to precommercial thinning projects.

The funds set aside for emergency clearing of trails in the advent of a wind storm was also sent back.

"We looked closely at our program and selected those that can wait a while," Rasure said. "Every national forest is expected to continue to meet responsibilities for customer services and protect the health and safety of the public," she said, "and we are doing that while providing necessary

support to the firefighting emergency."

In June, the Forest Service predicted it would exhaust the \$321.3 million available for wildland fire suppression this season, including \$66 million in emergency contingency funds.

By September, the agency had spent more than \$1.3 billion -- \$288 million of which was spent in Oregon and Washington. National forests throughout the U.S. were asked to help pay for these expenses by "lending" money from nonessential programs that hasn't been spent this year. The Office of Management and

Technical

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Add One

Budget (OMB) has agreed to pay \$636 million of the borrowed money back to the forests. So far, all of the national forests have anted up, some more than others. The Wenatchee and Okanogan National Forests recently contributed \$4,936,000.

According to Rex Holloway, the Pacific Northwest Region of the Forest Service contributed approximately \$53 million which included \$18 million targeted for use in facility and road maintenance, \$13 million for project planning, contracting and purchases, \$9 million for fire related activities and \$7.8 million for land acquisition.

Holloway said \$5 million for State and Private grants and agreements for states was also diverted to help pay for fire expenses -- \$50,000 of which was earmarked for use in the Pend Oreille Valley for a skateboard and business park and a revitalization project communities. He said Congress has discretion over this funding and has placed a temporary hold on expenditures, but he expects this money will be reimbursed by OMB in October, 2002.

According to Holloway, \$200,000 is available from the Region's Recreation Fee Demonstration Project -- a loan that is permitted by legislation governing those funds. He said, however, this money hasn't been used and if it is, will be some of the first money to be reimbursed.

Some of the money (\$82,000) contributed by the Colville National Forest was to be used this summer for precommercial thinning in forest stands for improving overall forest health and species diversity. Forest ecosystem management officials say the money would have been used to pay for contracts through which small (under five inches in diameter) and diseased trees would

Precommercial Thinning

Precommercial thinning helps to promote the growth of larger trees sooner by creating more growing space for the most healthy, vigorously-growing and site-adapted trees.

Thinning increases the amount of essential nutrients, sunlight and water available to the "leave" trees selected for their hardiness, and resistance to insects, diseases and fire.



Resources for the
Crews thin small-diameter trees by hand, taking the smallest, diseased or stressed and leaving those with good vigor and tolerance to fire, insects and diseases.



Fire Borrowing



Left: Contracts for pruning western white pine stands in the Colville National Forest have been put on hold to help provide funding to pay for fire suppression activities throughout the United States.

The pruning work is done to increase the harvest value of commercial trees by reducing wood defects caused by branches. Pruning planned for 20-30 year-old white pine poles also helps to "aerate" shady, moist understories where insects, diseases, molds and other pathogens thrive and reduce the vigor of the trees.

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Add Two

be cut but not sold. Officials say these thinning projects will be postponed until next fiscal year.

Funds for cone collection (\$5,000), pruning western white pine (\$14,400) and the award of several other timber stand improvement contracts (\$24,000) were also contributed.

The removal of hazard trees along several trails in the Kettle Crest (\$10,000), reconstruction of the Hoodoo Canyon Trail (\$1,400), construction of a loading ramp at the Little Pend Oreille Off-Road Vehicle Trail (\$2,000) and reconstruction of portions of other all-terrain vehicle trails in the Pend Oreille Valley (\$4,500) have been postponed.

Other funds (\$72,000) were diverted from the purchase and placement of three new toilets in Pierre, South Skookum and Ten-Mile Campgrounds and the disposal of the old toilets into landfills. The new toilets will be placed in the campgrounds next summer. The purchase of animal-proof garbage containers (\$17,000) for major developed campgrounds throughout the national forest will also be postponed for a year.

Approximately \$56,000 to decommission abandoned wells, \$15,000 to close mine entrances, \$9,861 to install access gates and purchase security locks and \$29,000 to rewrite the Deadman Draft Environmental Impact Statement were also contributed.

The remaining costs of over \$200,000 include savings from salaries of employees who were away fighting fire, unfilled positions, cancelled vehicle replacements, unpurchased supplies and postponed travel.

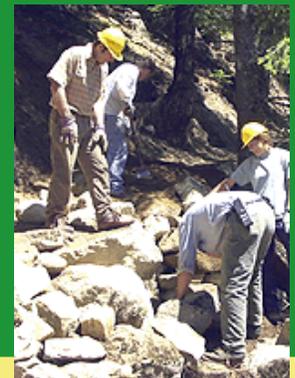
According to Rasure, the Colville National Forest continues to fully provide public services to recreationists and existing contractors. "We are doing what we can to support the excellent work of our firefighting community and that is my responsibility," Rasure said. "We will not sacrifice the welfare of employees, public or natural resources while looking for ways to provide financial help to the nation but we will have to tighten our expenses and suffer some minor frustrations while we reschedule this work," she said.



Above: Accessible toilets, such as this, will not be placed in Pierre, South Skookum and Ten-Mile Campgrounds this year to help pay for fire suppression costs. Animal-resistant garbage containers will not be purchased this season for placement at major developed campgrounds throughout the national forest.



Below: Funds to remove hazard trees -- dead or dying trees -- along the Kettle Crest Trail System will be postponed until next summer. Emergency trail maintenance funding that is kept for use in the advent of blowdown by unforeseen wind or ice storms has also been contributed by the Colville National Forest to help pay for fire suppression costs



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