



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **PROPOSED HEALTHY FORESTS PARTNERSHIP ACT DISCUSSED BY OFFICIALS**

DENVER, Sept. 5, 2006 - U.S. Department of Agriculture Under Secretary Mark Rey, U. S. Department of the Interior Deputy Secretary Lynn Scarlett and Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth joined Regional Forester Rick Cables and Director of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources Russell George for an aerial tour of the beetle invested areas of Grand and Summit counties and a media briefing in the State Capitol's Legislative Services Building today. During their visit, they discussed proposed legislation which will afford both the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior opportunities to accomplish work on federal lands through partnerships with state, tribal and local governments.

"The Healthy Forests Partnership Act would provide us additional tools to facilitate partnerships among federal, state, tribal and local governments," said Rey. Added Forest Chief Bosworth, "We've made great progress under the Healthy Forests Initiative (HFI) and have improved the health of millions of acres of forests and rangelands across America. This legislation, however, will allow us to work more effectively with our state and local government partners to fully achieve the desired effects of HFI."

Rey also announced the allocation of an additional \$1 million to the Rocky Mountain Region in an effort to address fuels reduction and the fire hazard created by the bark beetles throughout Colorado.

"The large stands of beetle-kill trees seen today in Colorado pose a threat of severe wildfire, placing numerous communities at risk," said Rey. "To address the magnitude of the problem and the need for immediate action, we are allocating an additional \$1.0 million to the Rocky Mountain Region. Working with their partners, these funds will help the Forest Service address the much needed work in this state."

The proposed Act will allow the departments to perform scientifically based forest, rangeland and watershed restoration and wildland fire reduction projects through partnerships on both federal and adjacent non-federal lands.

It provides authorities to each of the Secretaries permitting their respective departments to easily enter into cooperative agreements or contracts, including sole-source contracts, with state, tribal or local governments. These contracts would allow for the implementation of complementary projects across boundaries to enhance forest, rangeland or watershed restoration projects or to complete projects intended to reduce the risk of wildland fires. The act will enable the Secretaries to designate areas of federal and adjacent non-federal lands as "Healthy Forests Partnership Zones." These zones would be areas either at risk of uncharacteristically severe wildland fire or areas where there is insufficient industry capacity and public infrastructure to implement the required

management activities. This designation would foster non-federal investment in local industry development and provide economic benefits to communities.

Since 2001 in Colorado and 2005 in Utah, the Forest Service has implemented similar authorities through the Good Neighbor Authority in those states. Through these special authorities, the Forest Service has accomplished successful projects in both Colorado and Utah by allowing State Foresters to collaboratively work on adjacent federal lands, according to Bosworth.

The President's Healthy Forests Initiative and Healthy Forest Restoration Act are an ongoing commitment to care for America's forests and rangelands, reduce the risk of catastrophic fire to communities, help save the lives of firefighters and citizens and protect critical natural resources.

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