

Hearing on FY99 forest service budget

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Hearing on FY99 Forest Service Budget
Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee
Statement by Senator Daniel K. Akaka
March 3, 1998

Thank you and good morning, Mr. Chairman. I join you in welcoming Interior Under Secretary Lyons and Forest Service Chief Dombeck and other Administration officials to today's hearing on the Forest Service's 1999 budget request.

Mr. Chairman, I support the administration's request, which represents just a 2 percent increase over last year's funding level. I believe that the \$2.55 billion requested by the Forest Service represents the minimum necessary for the agency to undertake the many important tasks relating to the management of our nation's forest resources.

In addition to overseeing timber production, the Forest Service is responsible for many other activities that take place in the millions of acres under its jurisdiction, including recreational and wildlife conservation activities. Also, as the Forest Service prepares to enter the 21st century, it is rightly taking on complex functions relating to climate change, watershed restoration, and other big picture issues that have impacts beyond the National Forest System.

Mr. Chairman, I understand that there are many controversial issues at play here, including the Forest Service's proposal to suspend new road construction in roadless areas of the forest system pending a comprehensive review of forest road policies and regulations. While I have generally supported efforts to restrict such roads, I know that other members of this committee have deep concerns about this and other Administration initiatives. I look forward to working with you and other members in fully airing these issues, and hope that we can come to an accommodation on most, if not all, of these matters.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to reviewing the results of today's hearing. I have some questions that I would like to pose to Chief Dombeck, at your convenience.

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