



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

October 29, 2003
(Senate)

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY
H.R. 1904 –Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003
(Senator Cochran (R) MS)

The Administration commends the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee for reporting H.R. 1904, which would provide authorities and authorizations for appropriations that in large part are consistent with the President's Healthy Forests Initiative. The Administration strongly supports Senate passage of H.R. 1904 and the bipartisan manager's amendment (SA 1828), but opposes any further amendment, to assure quick resolution with the House. The Healthy Forests Restoration Act will provide the Administration with the needed flexibility to manage public lands wisely, and implement the kind of active forest management that is good for both the environment and our economy. This bill would further equip Federal land managers with the additional tools they need to restore forest health, safeguard habitat and watersheds, combat disease and insects, and protect lives and communities. The Administration is concerned that the authorization level in the Senate bill is well above recently enacted funding levels and above the increased funding levels the Administration requested and continues to support for FY 2004.

The Healthy Forests Restoration Act establishes procedures to expeditiously implement hazardous fuels reduction projects on Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands: (1) near communities in the wildland urban interface; (2) on high risk lands in the proximity of municipal water sources; (3) on high risk lands that encompass habitat for threatened and endangered species where federal wildlife officials have identified catastrophic wildfire as a threat to the viability of the species; and (4) on high risk landscapes particularly susceptible to disease or insect infestation. Additionally, the bill would: (1) facilitate the utilization of wood, brush, residue, and other biomass removed in conjunction with forest health projects in the production of biomass energy; (2) authorize federal programs to support community-based watershed forestry partnerships that address critical forest stewardship, watershed protection, and restoration needs at the state and local level; (3) direct additional research focused on the early detection and containment of insect and disease infestations; and (4) establish a voluntary private forestland easement program focused on recovering forest ecosystem types in decline.

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