



Fire Funding Impacts

Ozark-St. Francis National Forests

Arkansas

FOREST OVERVIEW

The Ozark National Forest covers 1.2 million acres, mostly in the Ozark mountains of northern Arkansas. You'll find the tallest mountain in the State, Mount Magazine, and an incredible, living underground cave--Blanchard Springs Caverns. The St. Francis National Forest covers 22,600 acres in eastern Arkansas, one of the smallest and most diverse forests in the country. Both forests are generously endowed with recreational opportunities for camping, hiking, swimming, fishing, hunting, boating, scenic drives, picnics sites, and opportunities for wildlife viewing also abound.

Redirected funds will restrict the ability to accomplish mission critical programs, such as the following.

ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION, NONNATIVE INVASIVE SPECIES AND RANGE MANAGEMENT

Ecosystem restoration budgets have been flat to declining over the last decade, reducing our ability to address growing restoration needs. In 2015, the Ozark-St. Francis was unable to adequately treat more than 8,000 acres of nonnative invasive species (NNIS) due to budget shortfalls, further contributing to the expansion of NNIS on Forest Service lands. Our goal to reestablish native vegetation was reduced by 1,000 acres due to inadequate funding. The Ozark-St. Francis was also not able to adequately address 13,000 acres of range improvement programs do to the underfunding.

PARTNER IMPACTS RELATED TO FERAL SWINE CONTROL

Reduced program funding prevented the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests from contracting with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to hire a crew to trap feral hogs on National Forest System lands. With this program in place we could have eradicated 15,000 swine and improved 400,000 acres over the last 10 years.



Feral hogs on the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests.

AQUATIC ORGANISM PASSAGE/SAFE STREAM CROSSINGS

On average we are only accomplishing one to two public road crossing improvements a year at a cost of \$600,000/crossing. With unreduced funding we could have replaced up to three of these a year at current capacity.

GLADE RESTORATION

We currently have partner capacity (but not funding) to do an additional 10,000 acres of glade and woodland restoration. This terrestrial work directly improves the habitat areas of threatened and endangered species, such as the gray, Indiania, and Ozark big-eared bats.

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Glade and woodland restoration improve habitat for threatened and endangered species.

LAKE HABITAT IMPROVEMENT

The Ozark-St. Francis National Forests could have accomplished an additional 2,000 acres of lake habitat improvement with our partners, especially on the St. Francis National Forest.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

Timber budgets have been mostly unchanged since the early 2000s and have not kept pace with the cost to produce timber sales. In the early 2000s our timber funding per 100 cubic feet (CCF) of wood was around \$40/CCF, in 2015 that figure was \$27/CCF. Since funding has not kept pace with inflationary cost, the forest has had to limit volumes offered. If funding had kept pace, it is estimated the forest could be producing approximately 30,000 CCF more than current production.

LAND ADJUSTMENTS

Trespass and title issues continue to climb on the Ozark-St. Francis with more reported than resolved each year (600+ currently recorded in database with only 3-6 resolvable per year with current resources).

- 75-100 miles of national forest boundary cannot be maintained each year due to budget shortfalls. Over 1,000 miles have never been surveyed to Forest Service standard, thus putting the public and the Forest Service in danger of inadvertent encroachments.
- Rights-of-way to allow for legal access for the Forest Service and the public are not being processed in a timely manner due to inadequate funding. This adversely affects public access to recreational opportunities, and operator access to timber sales to boost local economy.
- 30-50 special use permits per year are not being processed in a timely fashion for the public, due to lack of funding.
- Special Use Permits for on-Forest public recreational events cannot be processed timely with current resources, causing proposals for these activities to be denied when time to process is a factor.
- Mineral Material Contracts cannot be monitored, thus limiting business opportunities that boost local economies.

ROADS

Roads funding has diminished by 43 percent since 2009, from \$2,052,583 to \$1,166,491 in 2015. This equates to 4,028 miles not being bladed OR 1,990 miles of blading and brushing not being performed.

FACILITIES

The Ozark-St. Francis NFs have three office buildings that do not meet accessibility requirements. Two of our offices are the most over-utilized in the Southern Region, built in 1963 and 1978 respectively. Currently, there's no known replacement schedule due to lack of funds.

RECREATION

- Diminished funding for recreation places at least six campgrounds at risk of being closed, and the removal of swim area designations at six locations.
- Safety issues due to high-hazard dams falling into disrepair, as well as overall inconvenience to the public are of concern.