

Amendment – to eliminate International Forestry Programs at the U.S. Forest Service

The Forest Service’s Office of International Forestry Programs receives \$8 million annually (authorized at \$10 million annually in the Senate Agricultural Committee’s latest Farm Bill draft) to “promote sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation internationally.”¹

All of its initiatives overlap partially, or in most instances, entirely with other federal programs and agencies including: US Agency for International Development (USAID), U.S. Customs and Border Enforcement, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Department of Justice Environment and Natural Resources Division, the U.S. Trade Representative, Millennium Challenge Corporation, Department of the Treasury (Tropical Forest Conservation Act), and the Department of State.

International Forestry programs focus on assisting other nations adopt more sustainable forest management practices and policies, developing international trade, providing disaster preparedness and mitigation, migratory species recovery and habitat management, and in enforcing illegal timber harvesting.

In each of these initiatives, another Federal agency already has programs in place with far greater resources and legal authority. For instance,

- **Illegal Timber Harvesting-** While the International Programs office notes that it “actively works around the globe to reduce illegal logging,” the primary statute governing illegal logging enforcement (Lacey Act) rests with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).
- **Invasive Species-** This is one of the most duplicated activities in the federal government with more than \$1 billion spent annually, including more than a dozen programs at the Department of the

¹ <http://www.fs.fed.us/global/aboutus/welcome.htm>

Interior and several more at USDA, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), EPA, Defense, and USFWS.² As the latter remarks on its invasive species programs, it “is the only agency of the U.S. Government whose primary responsibility is the conservation of the nation’s fish, wildlife, and plants.”³

- Migratory Species/Habitat Management- Again, this is a primary responsibility of USFWS through its multiple species protection programs and species conservation funds. Additionally, NOAA, State Department, EPA and other federal agencies maintain international divisions that provide technical and policy assistance.
- Disaster/Humanitarian Aid- The Office of International Programs maintains the Disaster Assister Support Program (DASP) and the Disaster Mitigation Program to provides disaster training, incident command, and to assist USAID “with essential technical support in disaster response management, planning, operations, preparedness, and prevention.” These activities are already offered in whole or part by USAID, the State Department, and FEMA’s International Affairs Division.
- Climate Change- Though multiple agencies maintain climate change programs, the EPA is primarily responsible for international climate changes programs.
- International Timber Trade- International programs is working to “level the playing field in international trade” and to “**advance US forestry interests at international policy deliberations.**” According to the agency, “International Programs works with other governments, industry and environmental organizations and universities on sustainable management of forests overseas through

² “Back in Black, Interior,” Office of Senator Tom Coburn,
http://www.coburn.senate.gov/public//index.cfm?a=Files.Serve&File_id=5119513d-d693-4734-afd8-f215706e84be.

³ <http://www.fws.gov/invasives/>

addressing the related policy, technical, and socioeconomic issues.” Interestingly, these activities are already prominently handled by the US Trade Representative, USAID, and State Department.

- Finally, the agency notes that its International Programs office is important because it “provide[s] an invaluable experience in diversity.” According to the agency, this supplements its “diversity and civil rights training.”⁴ Of note, the Department of the Interior already has a separate Office of Civil Rights that promotes diversity and enforces all applicable civil rights laws and regulations for agency employees.

The Administration, in proposing to cut the Office by half, noted that the “assistance offered through International Forestry programs is duplicative of more substantial funding assistance provided through other Federal agencies, and is therefore of a lower priority.”⁵

The White House points to a study by USAID that notes FS International Forestry funds account for only six percent of federal international forestry management and conservation spending.

As it is difficult to pinpoint any function of the Office of International Programs that is unique, or that cannot be handled by other Forest Service personnel or other Federal agencies, the authorization for FS International Programs should be eliminated entirely.

⁴ <http://www.fs.fed.us/global/aboutus/policy/welcome.htm>

⁵ White House, Office of Management and Budget, “Cuts, Consolidations and Savings, FY 2013.”