



Chairman Ken Calvert

*Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations*

**U.S. Forest Service FY18 Supplemental Appropriations Request
Wednesday, November 29, 2017
Opening Statement As Prepared**

Good morning. I would like to welcome Chief Tony Tooke of the U.S. Forest Service to the Subcommittee. This is his first appearance as Chief at an Interior and Environment Subcommittee hearing. We look forward to your testimony today and working with you in the future.

The Subcommittee's oversight of annual and supplemental appropriations requests as well as the spending decisions of the agencies under its jurisdiction is critical to ensure taxpayer funds are used appropriately and wisely. We hold this hearing to review the fiscal year 2018 Hurricane Supplemental appropriations request for the Forest Service, as was submitted to the Committee by the Office of Management and Budget on November 17.

Before we get into the details of the request, first I must express my admiration and appreciation for the Forest Service's staff, especially those affected by this year's hurricanes and fires. Their determination to rebuild and willingness to carry-on in tough times are what make the Forest Service a great agency.

Chief, your staff in Washington was most helpful to the Subcommittee as we sought information on how this year's hurricanes and fires affected Forest Service facilities, programs, and activities. My staff and I could not do our work without them.

The Forest Service requests \$96,652,000 for a variety of activities to help our national forests recover from Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria. These activities include debris removal, stream clean up, rebuilding facilities, repairing roads and bridges, and providing technical assistance to States and private forest land owners to support their clean-up efforts and control invasive species.

Most of the request –approximately \$81,000,000 – is needed in Puerto Rico for El Yunque National Forest and the International Institute of Tropical Forestry. El Yunque is unique in that it is the only tropical rain forest in the national forest system. This forest is special, and the Institute does important work for tropical forests around the world. These places are well worth the effort needed to repair and restore them.

As we review this supplemental appropriations request, we will be keeping our eyes open for duplicative efforts, a demonstration of a clear role for the Federal government, and safeguards against waste, fraud, and abuse.

We also will want to discuss the outlook for recovery in the affected forests and whether additional supplemental funds may be needed in the future.

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