

**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources**  
**Oversight Hearing**  
**1324 Longworth House Office Building**  
**March 12, 2019**  
**10:00 a.m.**

**Legislative Hearing on**

“Examining the Policies and Priorities of the Bureau of Land Management, the United States Forest Service, and the Power Marketing Administrations.”

**Questions from Rep. DeGette (D-CO)** for Mr. Chris French, Acting Deputy Chief for National Forest Systems, U.S. Forest Service.

Question from Rep. DeGette (D-CO):

1. The Farm Bill passed by Congress last year includes a provision (Section 8630) that would help utilities protect their electric infrastructure from the threat of passing wildfires. This vegetation management provision is very important to my home state of Colorado, where our mountain communities are under continual threat of forest fires due to climate change and insect infestation. This common-sense, bipartisan language authorized a pilot program allowing utilities to work with the USFS to clear vegetation adjacent to transmission rights-of-way. What is the USFS doing to implement this section in a timely manner before the 2019 fire season begins?

**Answer:** The 2018 Farm Bill, signed in December, included a number of provisions related to management of National Forest System lands. The Forest Service has begun work to implement those provisions, including the language authorizing a pilot program for utility rights of way. The Forest Service is working to implement provisions by developing agency-wide policy on pilot projects for vegetation management work outside of electric powerline rights-of-way and coordinating the implementation of this provision with new utility rights-of-way authorities provided in the 2018 Omnibus Appropriations Bill. Thank you for your support for active management of vegetation around utility corridors to reduce fire risk.