

**Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Oversight Hearing**  
**1324 Longworth House Office Building**  
**October 18, 2023**  
**2:00 PM**

**Oversight Hearing titled “Securing Our Border, Saving Our National Parks.”**

**Questions from Rep. Raúl Grijalva** for Chris French, Deputy Chief, National Forest System

1. House Republicans’ FY 2024 Interior funding bill proposes a \$312 million cut to the U.S. Forest Service budget. How would such a cut impact the National Forest System’s ability to manage illegal marijuana grow sites and other operations related to border security?

**Response:** Forest Service Law Enforcement and Investigation (LEI) is funded within the National Forest System account. The House FY 2024 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies bill proposed to keep the Law Enforcement Operations program funding flat to FY 2023 enacted levels, but it decreased National Forest System Salaries and Expenses funding, which funds LEI personnel costs, by 11%. A reduction in funding will result in a negative impact towards the law enforcement presence on National Forests.

2. A recent report by the Government Accountability Office on the southern border wall’s impacts to natural and cultural resources features the construction of a large staging area for a border fence near the top of a mountain in the Pajarito Mountains on the Coronado National Forest in Arizona. According to the Forest Service, this project has created an issue of silt draining down the side of the mountain and filling a human-made pond, threatening to eliminate the pond as a drinking source for cattle and wildlife. What steps are being taken by the Forest Service and other agencies to address this and prevent other erosion issues from construction along the southern border from occurring in the future?

**Response:** Coronado National Forest engineers have been working with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection and their contractors to include erosion mitigation measures in their construction contracts. These measures include slope benching, sediment traps, erosion control maps, and seeding. These measures reduce erosion and sedimentation taking place as construction projects are undertaken.