

1192 Mrs. CHENOWETH. Thank you.

1193 Ms. COULOMBE. Thank you.

1194 Mr. COUFAL. Thank you.

1195 Mrs. CHENOWETH. Now I will introduce our final witness,
1196 Mr. Larry Payne, who is the Assistant Deputy Chief for State
1197 and Private Forestry of the United States Forest Service.

1198 Mr. Payne. If you will please stand and raise your right
1199 hand.

1200 [Witness sworn.]

1201 Mrs. CHENOWETH. Please proceed.

1202 TESTIMONY OF LARRY PAYNE, ASSISTANT DEPUTY, STATE AND PRIVATE
1203 FORESTRY, UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE

1204 Mr. PAYNE. Madam Chairman and members of the
1205 subcommittee, I appreciate being asked to come here today to
1206 testify on this draft bill for the Administration. I
1207 would--as the others have done before me, I would like to
1208 request that my written testimony go into the record, and for
1209 the sake of time, I will just summarize it briefly.

1210 Mrs. CHENOWETH. Without objection, thank you.

1211 Mr. PAYNE. As you said in your introduction, my name is
1212 Larry Payne, I am the Assistant Deputy Chief for State and
1213 Private Forestry.

1214 It is my understanding that we had some comment and some

1215 input on the previous draft bill back in September of 1997 in
1216 the 105th Congress, and we appreciate the work that you have
1217 done to address those concerns in the new revised version of
1218 the draft bill

1219 We also want to make clear that there is implications in
1220 ~~that~~ for the Bureau of Land Management in your draft
1221 legislation, and I wouldn't want anything I say here today to
1222 be construed as speaking for the Bureau. This is just Forest
1223 Service and administration.

1224 We appreciate the modifications that you made in the past
1225 on this bill. We continue to have concerns on certain
1226 elements of the draft legislation, and I would like to
1227 summarize those if I could now and then explain to you, to
1228 the Madam Chairman and the subcommittee, some efforts that we
1229 have under way that we think are quite helpful.

1230 We have four major points that I would like to cover. The
1231 first point is that we believe at the Forest Service that we
1232 have sufficient authority, both existing authority and some
1233 of the new expanded authorities, that we have to do a better
1234 job of meeting the objectives that you have in your draft
1235 legislation

1236 We have what we consider substantive concerns on the cost
1237 effectiveness and the special funds provision of the draft
1238 legislation.

1239 In addition, we have some concerns on the definition of

1240 certain terms, like what exactly is wildland/urban interface,
1241 that ~~is an~~ area, and other witnesses talked about that
1242 earlier.

1243 And also we believe that the appropriations that are
1244 available to the Forest Service in different forms and
1245 different methods and the expanded authorities that we have
1246 been given or we expect to be given are adequate and
1247 sufficient to help us meet this need in fuel reduction.

1248 The conclusion of those concerns is that we believe that
1249 the bill, the draft legislation, is unnecessary at this time,
1250 and I would like to talk about some of the efforts that we
1251 have under way that we think are going to take us in a
1252 positive direction. One of those has already been mentioned
1253 today, and that is the forest risk health mapping that we are
1254 now doing where we are going to have on a map the
1255 high-priority, the high-risk areas mapped out for fire,
1256 insect and disease, wildland/urban interface areas, and
1257 threatened and endangered species. It is our effort to set
1258 priorities and focus efforts on where to meet the highest
1259 priority needs.

1260 Other efforts that we have under way, you could call
1261 current authorities with the Cooperative Forestry Assistance
1262 Act and with the Knutson-Vandenberg Act and the Brush
1263 Disposal Act. Among the three of those, they give us quite
1264 broad authorities, depending on, of course, the funding and

1265 | the focus and prioritization of the agency. Those give us,
1266 | we believe, sufficient authority to move on this.

1267 | In addition, it has been mentioned here before we have
1268 | stewardship contracting as a major investment in the Forest
1269 | Service with some special authorities in 22 pilot projects
1270 | that we will be trying in this coming year. In addition, we
1271 | have six new stewardship projects that will be added in
1272 | northern Idaho and Montana. It is our belief and our hope
1273 | that we are going to learn a lot from these, and that to do
1274 | anything on a broad basis now would be a bit premature.

1275 | One other item. We have a new budget line item of \$15
1276 | million planned for the year 2000 for forest health treatment
1277 | that will happen outside of the timber production areas, and
1278 | we believe that will be helpful.

1279 | In conclusion, Madam Chairman and subcommittee members,
1280 | we agree with the priority that your draft legislation gets
1281 | at and the importance of it. Although we have serious
1282 | concerns, we certainly support that priority. We think that
1283 | there needs to be more analysis and more discussion; and for
1284 | the reasons I mentioned earlier, we think that the bill is
1285 | unnecessary at this time.

1286 | I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at
1287 | this time

1288 | Mrs. CHENOWETH. Thank you, Mr. Payne.