

Trump administration orders half of national forests open for logging

An emergency order removes protections covering more than half the land managed by the U.S. Forest Service as the president aims to boost timber production.

April 5, 2025



By [Angie Orellana Hernandez](#)

The Trump administration has removed environmental protections covering more than half of the land managed by the U.S. Forest Service as part of the president's aim to significantly bolster the U.S. logging industry.

In a memo issued Thursday, Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins said "heavy-handed federal policies" have prevented the United States from making use of its "abundance of timber resources that are more than adequate to meet our domestic timber production needs."

The directive, which established an "Emergency Situation Determination," comes a month after President Donald Trump signed an executive order seeking changes to forest management to increase timber production by 25 percent.

Rollins added that, of the land that fell under the directive, almost 67 million acres were determined to be at a "very high" or "high" wildfire risk, and almost 79 million acres were experiencing "declining forest health" from insects and disease.

Forest management can help prevent wildfires by thinning the amount of fuel available for blazes to feed upon. But forestry experts often suggest the removal of undergrowth that doesn't yield timber, and they warned during similar efforts in Trump's first term that you can't log your way out of fire danger, [The Washington Post reported](#). Removing large, fire-resistant trees also gives way to young trees that are more susceptible to fires.

"I am proud to follow the bold leadership of President Trump by empowering forest managers to reduce constraints and minimize the risks of fire, insects, and disease so that we can strengthen American timber industry and further enrich our forests with the resources they need to thrive," Rollins, who co-founded the Trump-aligned America First Policy Institute think tank, said in a statement.

Rollins's memo, which does not make a reference to climate change, instructed Forest Service field leadership to fast-track timber production by removing National Environmental Policy Act regulations, making it easier to obtain permits and reducing "contracting burdens."

The same day Rollins issued the memo, Christopher French deputy chief of the National Forest System, followed up with his own letter to regional foresters and deputy chiefs, notifying them that they had embarked on a “new era.”

“Our efforts will lead to an increase in America’s wood independence, a thriving wood products economy, and the protection of our water supply,” French wrote. “The value of wood products derived from projects on national forests will play a crucial role in driving economic growth while supporting essential efforts to reduce wildfire risk and promote forest health.”

Under President Joe Biden, national forests received new protections after logging projects were banned in select areas to protect carbon-rich trees, most of which were more than 100 years old, from being cut down. Scientists say those trees play an essential role in fighting climate change, provide habitats for wildlife and are more likely to survive wildfires.

“We think this will allow us to respond effectively and strategically to the biggest threats that face old growth,” Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack told The Post at the time, pointing to wildfire, disease and pests as examples. “At the end of the day, it will protect not just the forests, but also the culture and heritage connected to the forests.”

What readers are saying

The comments overwhelmingly criticize the Trump administration's decision to remove environmental protections to boost the logging industry. Many express concern over the potential destruction of national forests, emphasizing the ecological damage, loss of biodiversity, and... [Show more](#)

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