

2014 Farm Bill Section 602 Report

On March 19, 2014, a letter from the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Forest Service Chief was sent to governors of States with national forests and Puerto Rico, informing them of the opportunity to request insect and disease area designations in their State to address insect and disease infestations. Requests were due from the States by April 8, 2014. The agency received 36 responses from States requesting designations.

All requests were evaluated against the requirements for a landscape-scale area designation stated in Section 602(c) of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6591a), as added by the Agricultural Act of 2014 (2014 Farm Bill). Areas must meet at least one of the following criteria for designation:

1. the area is experiencing declining forest health based on annual forest health surveys;
2. the area is at risk of substantially increased tree mortality over the next 15 years, based on the National Insect and Disease Risk Map; or
3. the area is in an area where hazard trees pose imminent risk to public infrastructure, health or safety.

In 2014, the Chief designated approximately 46.7 million acres of National Forest System lands across these 38 States that were either already experiencing, or are at risk of experiencing, insect and disease infestations.

The Chief also has the authority to designate additional areas under Section 602 of the 2014 Farm Bill and issued direction to the nine Regional Foresters on July 10, 2015, outlining the review process for additional insect and disease designations. Since 2014, a total of 26.8 million additional acres were designated by the Chief, bringing the total designated areas to 75.3 million acres. Figure 1 shows how many acres were designated in each year. Table 1 shows acres designated within each State as of October 2019.

Within the designated areas, the 2014 Farm Bill provides the authority to use the expedited National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) procedures provided for in Section 104 of the HFRA for an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement or the use of the new Categorical Exclusion. These designations do not change or exempt the Forest Service from complying with any other existing law, regulation, and policy such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, National Historic Preservation Act, agency roadless rules, and any other applicable law, regulation, and policy.

The Forest Service will continue to place priority on increasing the pace and scale of restoration and developing resilient landscapes. These designations provide useful tools to plan insect and disease treatment projects more efficiently in designated areas through expedited NEPA procedures. The Forest Service will continue to collaborate with States, Tribes, partners, and stakeholders to develop and implement projects in the designated areas that reduce or eliminate insect and disease infestations or increase resilient landscapes.

The agency has no recommendations for modifications for improvement of the 2014 Farm Bill at this time.

Figure 1: Trends in designated areas by year (2014-2019).

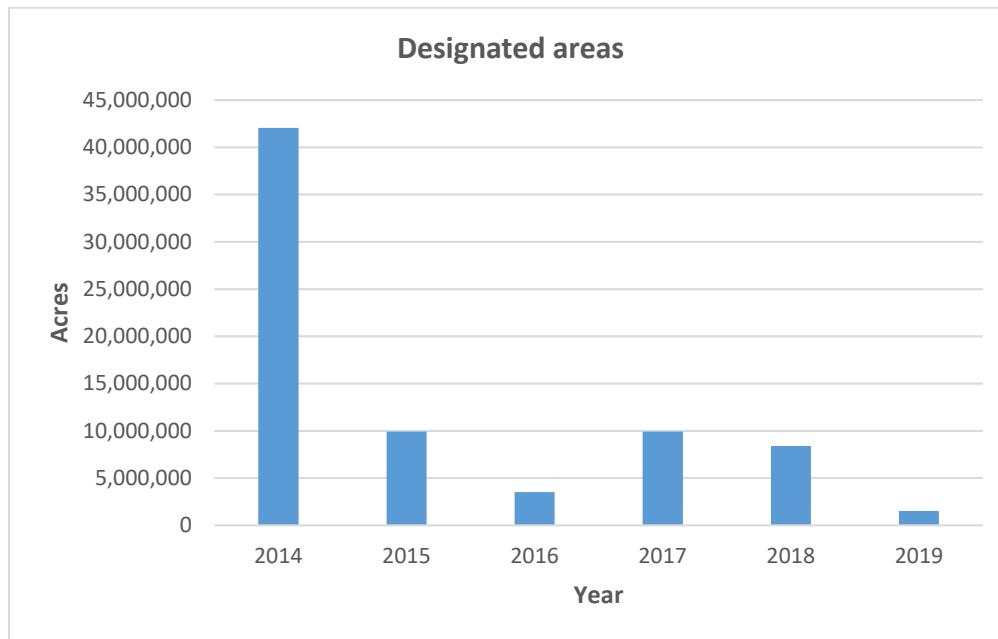


Table 1: National Forest System Lands Designated under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act as of October 1, 2019.

State	Designated Areas	State	Designated Areas
Alabama	532,046	New Hampshire	574,912
Alaska	1,354,656	New Mexico	6,885,449
Arizona	6,696,686	New York	16,352
Arkansas	2,389,125	North Carolina	1,113,656
California	7,983,286	Ohio	158,060
Colorado	9,034,603	Oklahoma	337,596
Florida	874,160	Oregon	7,335,520
Georgia	708,771	Pennsylvania	504,627
Idaho	6,121,956	South Carolina	572,915
Indiana	25,287	South Dakota	992,080
Illinois	116,873	Tennessee	587,876
Kentucky	540,087	Texas	446,037
Louisiana	574,528	Utah	2,369,305
Michigan	1,270,100	Vermont	214,864
Minnesota	1,820,900	Virginia	1,525,161
Mississippi	596,050	Washington	931,470
Missouri	1,187,741	West Virginia	804,376
Montana	4,964,939	Wisconsin	185,603
Nevada	111,673	Wyoming	2,869,149

Total designated areas = 75,328,475 acres