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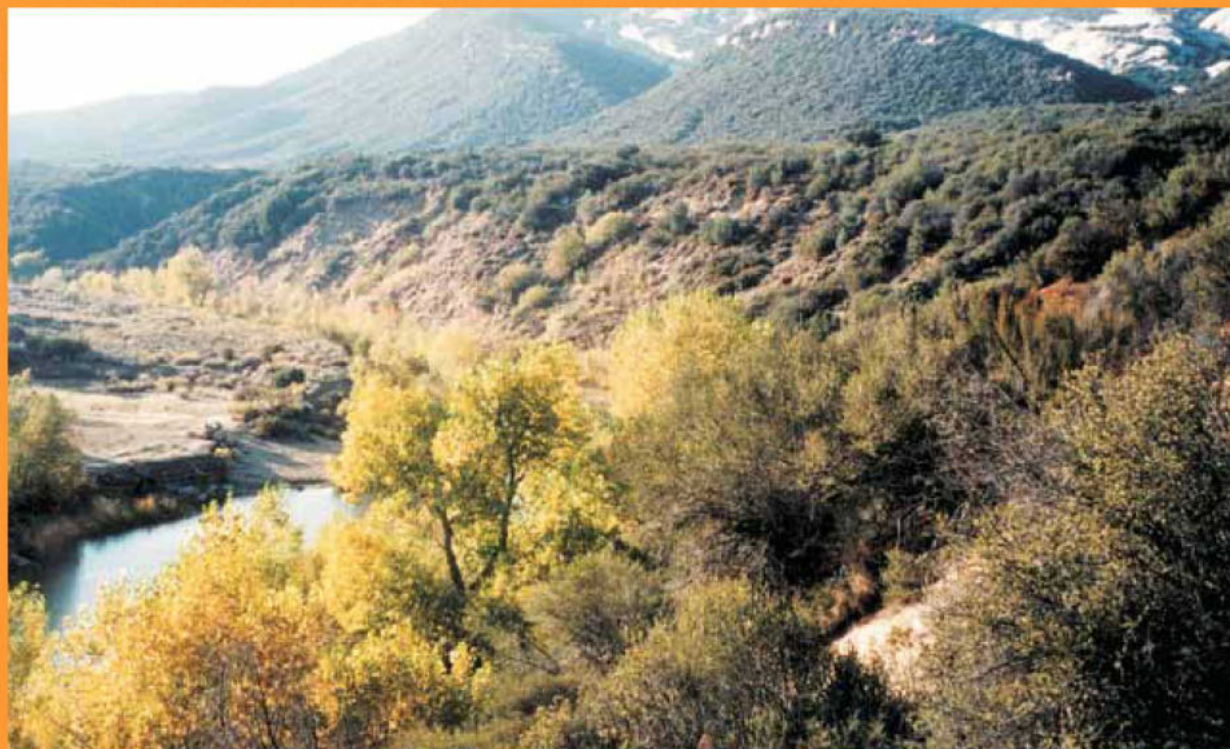
Forest  
Service

Pacific  
Southwest  
Region

R5-MB-022  
July 2003



# Business Plan for the Los Padres National Forest



## A Window of Opportunity

# Welcome to Los Padres National Forest

Volunteers and  
partners are key  
to the future of  
Los Padres  
National Forest.

Join us in  
"Caring for  
the land  
and serving  
people."



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# Introduction

In the spring of 2003, the four forests of the Forest Service's southern California province began a pilot program to develop business plans. This project is an extension of a process initiated by the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) and the National Park Service (NPS) in 1998. Since this National Parks Business Plan Initiative began, more than fifty national parks have participated in the business planning process.

The purpose of the Forest Service Business Plan Initiative (BPI) is to improve the abilities of forests to more clearly communicate their financial condition and operational capabilities with principal stakeholders. A business plan answers such questions as: What is the business of this forest? How much money does this forest need to operate within appropriate standards? What are the functional responsibilities and operational standards of the organization? What is the forest's financial situation?

Forests are undertaking the business planning process to accomplish three key tasks. First, the business plan provides the forest with a synopsis of its funding history. Secondly, it presents a clear, detailed picture of current forest operations and funding. Finally, it outlines forest priorities and funding strategies.

The four national forests of southern California – the Angeles, Cleveland, Los Padres and San Bernardino National Forests – applied a common methodology to develop their business plans. Forest activities were organized into six functional areas, which describe all areas of operations that the forests perform. The functional areas were then separated into 35 programs. This allows each forest to report expenditures in terms of activities rather than funding sources. As a result, each forest can communicate its financial situation more clearly to internal and external audiences. Furthermore, using the same 35-program structure for all forests provides a needed measure of comparability across forest units.

Completion of this business plan has provided managers with a powerful tool to communicate the current and future work of their organizations.

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## Supervisor's Foreword



Forest Supervisor Jeanine A. Derby

Los Padres National Forest evolved from public lands set aside more than a century ago for the purpose of protecting watersheds and nearby communities from wildfires. During the early 1900's, a handful of rangers patrolled the forest watching for poachers, mediating grazing disputes, fighting fires and counseling the few hardy visitors who ventured into the backcountry on the importance of fire safety. Since those days, Los Padres has grown to encompass almost two million acres, and the "business" of the forest has likewise expanded and changed.

Managing Los Padres National Forest is somewhat akin to managing a business, although the land is managed to provide public values instead of profits. The forest's role as a "land of many uses" continues to evolve as demographics and public values and demands change over time. Management of the forest focuses on these emphasis areas:

- Maintaining healthy productive watersheds and fire-dependent ecosystems within the context of the wildland urban interface, and protecting communities from catastrophic fires;
- Sustaining the diverse biological and cultural resources of the area in healthy condition for present and future generations;
- Providing a broad range of outdoor recreation opportunities;
- Providing vast wilderness areas for primitive recreation, solitude and spiritual renewal;
- Providing sites for essential communication services such as radio, television and telephone, as well as utility corridors.

This business plan demonstrates the complexity and costs of managing a national forest in these times to meet diverse public expectations. Innovation and creativity are essential to craft strategic management options for the future. Our congressionally appropriated budget must be leveraged with a variety of community resources, grants and other funding sources.

Los Padres National Forest could not begin to fulfill its mission today without the help of the thousands of volunteers who generously dedicate their time and energy to the betterment of the forest. Their help with everything from maintaining trails, staffing visitor centers, collecting resource data and leading nature hikes is absolutely essential and greatly appreciated.

Through this business plan, I hope to encourage even greater interest in collaborative efforts to sustain the remarkable values this national forest offers to the people of California and the nation.

Jeanine A. Derby  
Forest Supervisor

## Executive Summary

This business plan is designed to identify and document the gap between the current funding of Los Padres National Forest operations and the funds necessary to fulfill the goals and mission of the Forest Service. The following analysis summarizes some of the key findings of the Business Plan Initiative. It is based upon the forest's fiscal year (FY) 2002 budget and staffing levels.

### Significant Findings

Los Padres National Forest provides a variety of uses and services for the diverse and burgeoning populations of the central coast, San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles Basin. As a quintessential "urban national forest," it has several unique challenges that are only now being recognized by funding sources. Foremost among them is meeting the needs of increased usage in times of declining budgets and downsized staffs. In addition to growing demands for public services, factors that have driven up significantly the cost of operations over the past decade include high inflation rates, increased cost of living, and increased fire management costs.

For example, in FY02, the forest was responsible for maintaining more infrastructure (roads, trails, facilities and campgrounds) and offering more public services than in FY93 – on 84 percent of its inflation-adjusted FY93 budget. Also, as communities continue to grow along the forest's boundaries, protection of the "wildland-urban interface" has become increasingly expensive, consuming nearly 37% of the forest's fire budget in FY02.

As a result of steadily declining budgets and increasing needs for wildland-urban interface fire protection, all areas of the forest have been affected, although certain functions have assumed more of the burden. In general, Los Padres has continued to offer the public high levels of recreational opportunities and wildfire protection. However, significant shortfalls in funding exist in the areas of resource protection, facility operations and interpretive services.

The most severe repercussion of these cumulative funding shortfalls is the \$94 million (and growing) deferred maintenance backlog in the forest's roads, trails, facilities and campgrounds. Since this backlog currently represents almost five times Los Padres' annual budget, it is highly unlikely that all of the forest's current infrastructure will remain in use.

### Strategies for the Future

This plan details several strategies for reducing costs, improving operations and increasing non-appropriated funding to Los Padres. The main strategy for addressing the former begins with evaluating the forest's infrastructure standards and perhaps decommissioning that which is no longer in use, beyond repair or too costly to continue to maintain.

The primary strategies to gain more alternative funding are to retain special use permit fees rather than sending them to the U.S. Treasury, and improve the recreation fee program. This assumes these two fee retention authorities are approved by Congress. A third strategy is to continue to expand the forest's highly successful partnership and volunteer programs.

## Forest Overview



Los Padres has an amazing variety of landscapes including the striking Quatal Canyon Badlands within the Mt. Pinos Ranger District.

Los Padres National Forest encompasses approximately 1.76 million acres of the scenic Coast and Transverse Ranges of California. The forest consists of two separate land divisions and extends more than 220 miles north to south from the Big Sur Coast to the Ventura-Los Angeles County line. Los Padres is divided into five management units or “ranger districts” with offices in King City (Monterey Ranger District), Santa Maria (Santa Lucia Ranger District), Santa Barbara/Los Prietos (Santa Barbara Ranger District), Ojai (Ojai Ranger District) and Frazier Park (Mt. Pinos Ranger District). The forest headquarters, or “Forest Supervisor’s Office”, is in Goleta.

While chaparral dominates the landscape, Los Padres encompasses a wide range of ecosystems including oak woodland, mixed conifer, coast redwoods, grasslands, pinyon-juniper, semi-desert scrub and riparian areas. The forest provides habitat for approximately 468 species of wildlife and 26 listed threatened and endangered plant and animal species.

Los Padres is an important year-round recreation resource for the people of southern and coastal California and the Bay Area. Features include more than 1200 miles of riding, hiking, and mountain bike trails, almost 500 miles of off-highway vehicle routes and more than one hundred developed recreation sites. Almost 48 percent of the forest, approximately 875,000 acres, is within ten Congressionally-designated wildernesses. These areas are managed to provide primitive recreation and solitude as well as conserve the areas’ natural state. There are currently three Los Padres rivers in the National Wild and Scenic River System: the Big Sur, Sisquoc and Sespe.

There are approximately 600 non-recreation land uses in the forest including orchards, apiaries, roads and trails, school sites, research facilities, power generation and transmission facilities, communication sites and lines, and water improvements.

The forest’s 500 miles of streams and six reservoirs yield 715,000 acre-feet of water annually for agriculture, industry and domestic use. The forest has an active grazing program. Trees in Los Padres are managed to sustain healthy forest ecosystems with emphasis on visual and recreation values.

Los Padres contains about 2,500 archaeological and historical sites and 53 National Register properties. More than 100 rock art sites, including many that are “world class,” are known to exist within the forest.

Fire-dependent ecosystems cover most of Los Padres National Forest. Wildfires burn an average of 25,000 acres per year. The forest currently conducts prescribed burns on approximately 4,000 acres each year focusing on wildland-urban interface areas. Los Padres has close cooperative relationships with local agencies, Fire Safe Councils and others addressing fire and vegetation management issues.



The spectacular Big Sur Coast attracts visitors from around the world.

## Forest Inventory (2003)

### General

Acres of Land	1,764,000
Wilderness (areas/acres)	10/823,700
Miles of Wild and Scenic Rivers	84
Miles of Coastline	22
Reservoirs / Acre-feet of water	6 / 715,000
Elevation Range	0-8,831 ft.
Permanent Employees (approx.)	250
Temp/Seasonal Employees (approx.)	230

### Natural Features

Habitat Types	9
Animal Species	468
Plant Species (approximate)	1,200
Threatened and Endangered Species (plant and animal)	26
Sensitive Species (plant and animal)	64

### Infrastructure and Visitor Resources

Administrative sites / buildings	55 / 241
Miles of trails	1,238
Miles off-highway vehicle routes	451
Miles of roads	1,557
Campgrounds / Campsites	122 / 2,193
Group Campgrounds	5
Picnic and Day Use Areas	19
Non Recreation Special Uses (including transmission lines, pipelines, communication ites, roads, apiaries)	600

### Heritage Resources

Historic and Prehistoric Properties	2,500
National Register Properties	53

## Enabling Legislation

The **Pine Mountain** and **Zaca Lake** Forest Reserve was established in 1898 by Proclamation of President William McKinley. It was renamed the **Santa Barbara** Forest Reserve in 1903 and was eventually combined with the **Santa Ynez, San Luis** and **Monterey** Forest Reserves. The resulting consolidation was renamed **Los Padres National Forest** by Executive Order of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1938.

## Mission Statement

Los Padres National Forest provides a balanced and sustainable flow of goods and services for a growing, diverse population while ensuring long-term ecosystem health, biological diversity and species recovery. The Forest serves as a classroom and “living laboratory” for learning about our natural and cultural heritage, and the importance of conservation.



# Los Padres National Forest Map



# Historical Context

## Fund Source Analysis

National forests acquire funds from three principal sources. The first source is **appropriations** by Congress to the USDA Forest Service. The amount of the appropriation varies from year to year at the national level. Appropriated funds are allocated to the regional level and then down to each individual national forest. The appropriated base budget provides the largest portion of the forest's total annual budget. The forest uses appropriated funds primarily to pay for operational needs.

The second funding source is **reimbursable income**, collected from other organizations, usually other government agencies, for services rendered by forest employees. A portion comes from private and nonprofit organizations that fund activities on the forest such as monitoring commercial filming activities.

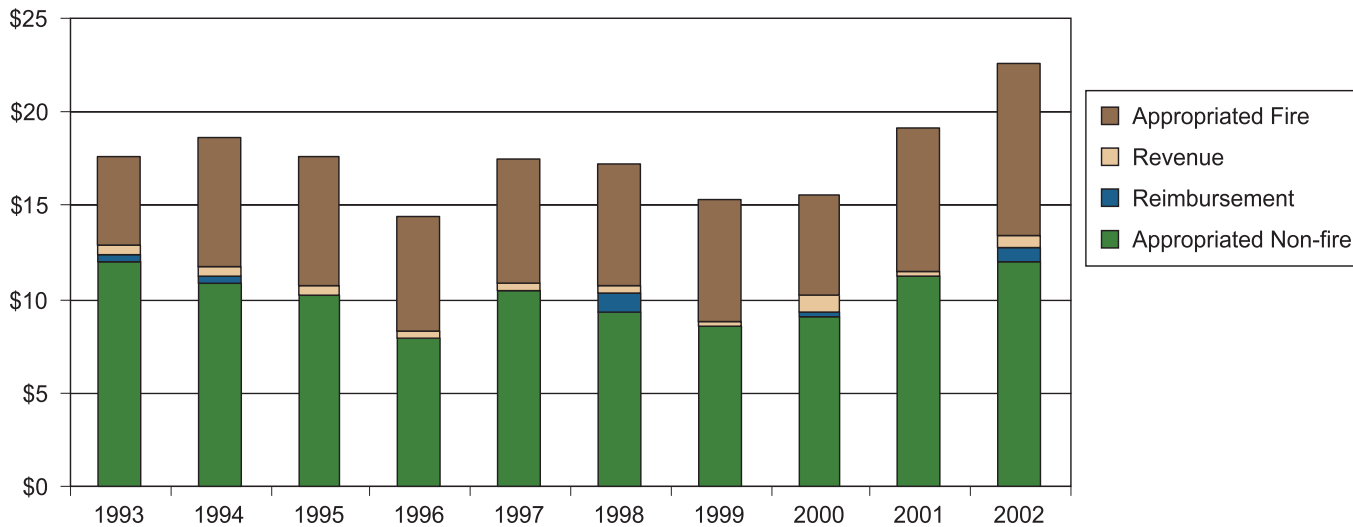
The third funding source is **revenue**. This source of funding has become increasingly important, as it can be

used for a wider range of purposes than can reimbursable revenue and has helped to supplement appropriated funds. The forest receives revenue from a variety of sources including permits, donations and services. Revenue sources include recreation and non-recreational special uses such as concession-operated campgrounds and communication sites. The forest does not retain the majority of the revenue generated by commercial activities. These proceeds are deposited in the U.S. Treasury in accordance with existing law.

One source of retained revenue is the Adventure Pass Recreation Fee Demonstration Project. An Adventure Pass is required at most locations within the forest when visitors park a vehicle for recreation.

As the chart below indicates, activities in Los Padres are extremely dependent on appropriations. As a result, the forest has been trying recently to increase its funds from other sources.

**Cumulative Historical Allocations by Funds Source (in millions)**



Recent increases in appropriations have gone primarily to fire operations (top bar). Appropriations for non-fire activities (bottom bar) can vary greatly from year to year. Non-fire appropriations have been steadily declining in real dollars since the 1970's.

## Adjusted Base Budget

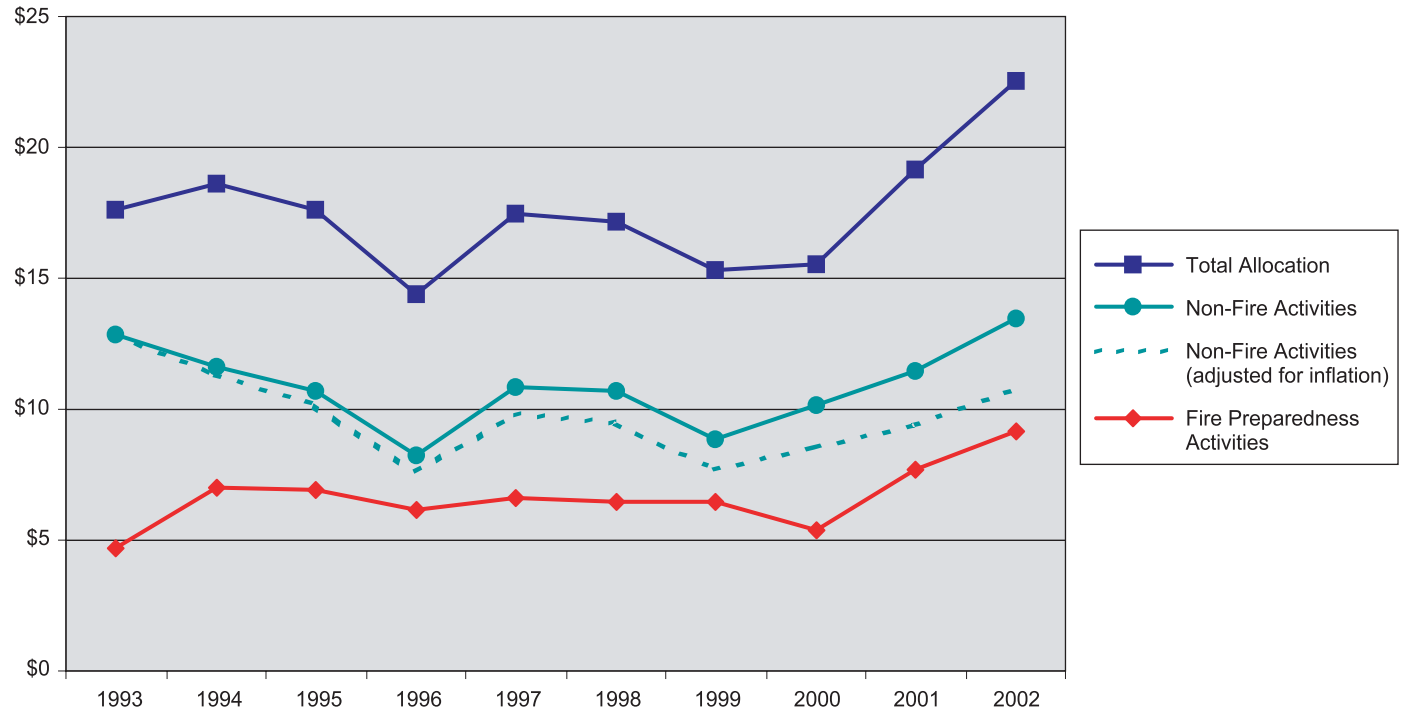
The line of squares in the graph below shows the total annual allocation to the forest for the ten-year period from 1993 to 2002. (Not adjusted for inflation.) It suggests an increase in funding over the decade.

After subtracting the rising allocation for fire preparedness and hazardous fuels reduction (diamonds), the budget for non-fire activities (circles) barely returns to its 1993 level of funding. Adjusting for inflation (dashed line) reveals that in 2002, Los Padres operated its non-fire activities with only 84% of the funds available to it in 1993. It is worth noting

that Los Padres operated with even larger budgets and numbers of personnel prior to the data shown here for 1993-2002.

Two factors – flat budgets and increased costs – present new challenges to the forest as it tries to serve public and resource management needs. Backlogs in maintenance, special use permits monitoring and administration are accumulating. Additionally, even though fire program funding increased significantly over the past decade, so did costs. The program remains short of required funds to meet identified maximum efficiency levels.

**Historical Fire & Non-Fire Allocations (in millions)**



The decrease in Congressional appropriations for non-fire activities over the last 10 years has resulted in a \$94 million deferred maintenance backlog of roads, trails, campgrounds and other facilities.

## Increased Cost Analysis

The impact of a declining budget is further exacerbated by rising costs. Each year it is increasingly difficult to manage operations to legal, regulatory and professional standards. Forest operations are challenged by increased cost drivers such as those explained below.

- **Population growth:** The populations of the six counties most served by Los Padres increased an average of 14% over the last decade while the number of facilities operated by the forest has remained constant. Increased forest visitation and urban influences heighten the need for infrastructure upgrades, recreation improvements, increased maintenance and resource protection.
- **Deferred maintenance backlog:** As the forest's budget decreases and costs rise, deferred maintenance adds to the already substantial backlog. Lack of adequate funding for preventative maintenance and investment has accelerated the deterioration of the forest's roads, trails, facilities and campgrounds, multiplying the costs of maintaining this infrastructure. Furthermore, once a piece of infrastructure is damaged beyond repair, there is also a cost associated with its removal or replacement.
- **Increased cost of living:** Real estate, wages, rents, utilities, fuel costs and more all continue to escalate in communities near the forest. The booming economy of the 1990's dramatically impacted the cost of living in Santa Barbara-Goleta area, the location of the forest headquarters. For instance, according to the Chamber of Commerce, the average cost of a home increased over 60% from 1996 to 2002, to over \$600,000 in the city of Santa Barbara. Recruitment and retention of employees is becoming increasingly difficult.
- **Federal mandates, acts and laws:** Federal mandates such as the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act increase management costs. These costs are particularly reflected in increased staff time and training of resource specialists, but also add increased complexity to other jobs. Growing regulatory demands for safety and materials handling requirements deplete infrastructure maintenance funding.
- **Development within or adjacent to the forest:** The growth of private development on lands contiguous to the forest has increased costs in many areas, such as protection of nearby resources, increased hazardous fuel removal, increased law enforcement and increased numbers of encroachment cases. Public requests for easements, trails, and urban infrastructure continue to escalate.
- **Increased fire management costs:** The most significant cost increase to fire management can be attributed to increased wages. These include a special cost of living pay increase for southern California firefighters, conversion to a more expensive retirement system, pay grade increase requirements to improve retention rates, and the addition of new firefighting resources (fire engines, bulldozers, helicopters) and personnel. There are additional costs associated with new safety requirements. In addition, non-fire employees are strongly encouraged to perform wildland fire support duties, thereby impacting their normal work assignments.

## Analysis of Expenditures

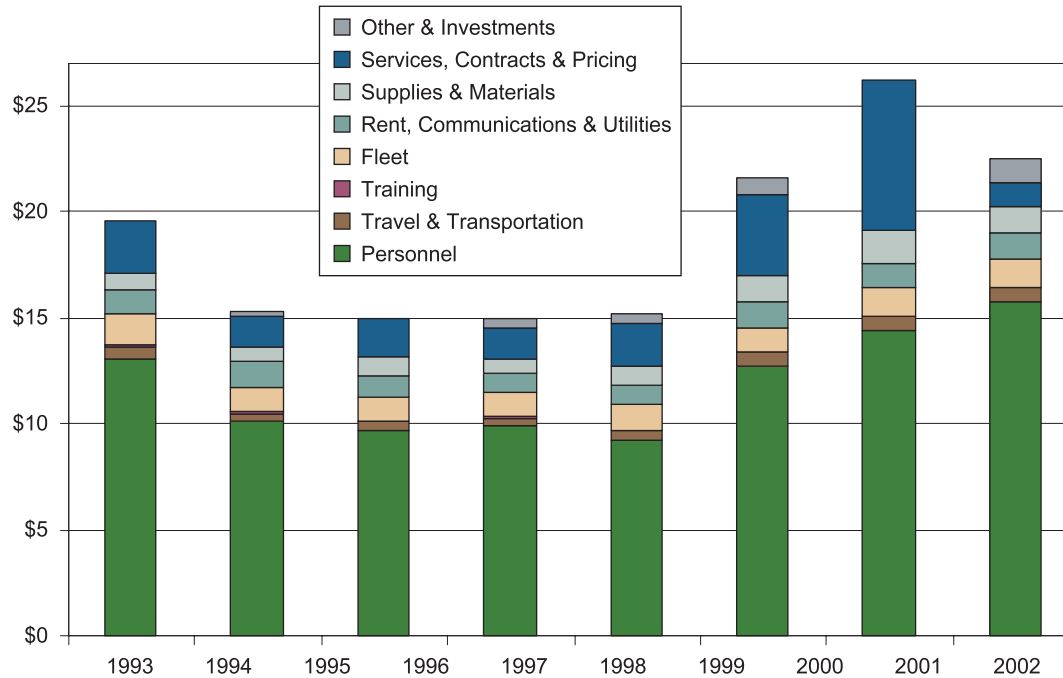


The analysis of expenditures chart shown below takes into account funds from all sources, including base appropriations, reimbursements and revenues.

Personnel expenditures, including salary and benefits, have consistently represented the largest cost item for Los Padres, as it does for most forests. Fluctuations in personnel expenditures over the last four years are primarily due to increased hiring of fire management personnel. Additional increases are attributed to increased retirements and cost of living expenditures.

Services are the next largest expenditure category, and include the hiring of both internal and external contractors for forest activities. Service expenditures increased dramatically in 2000-2001 as the forest acquired and spent a \$3.7 million Federal Highway grant to repair storm-damaged roads. The remaining expenditure categories have been relatively consistent over the last few years.

**Annual Expenditures by Category (in millions)**



The amount the Forest receives each year in funding (appropriations) does not usually equal the amount it spends (expenditures), due to carryovers to future years, obligations to prior years and inter-agency borrowing.

# Current Forest Operations

This Business Plan differentiates between two types of expenditures: those for operations and maintenance and those for investments. Operations and maintenance requirements are those funds needed to carry out everyday operations on the forest. Some examples include annual payroll costs, rents and utilities and managing a telecommunications network. Investments are significant one-time costs of limited duration to fix current problems or add to the forest's inventory of physical or intellectual assets. This section of the business plan focuses on operations and maintenance activities of the forest.

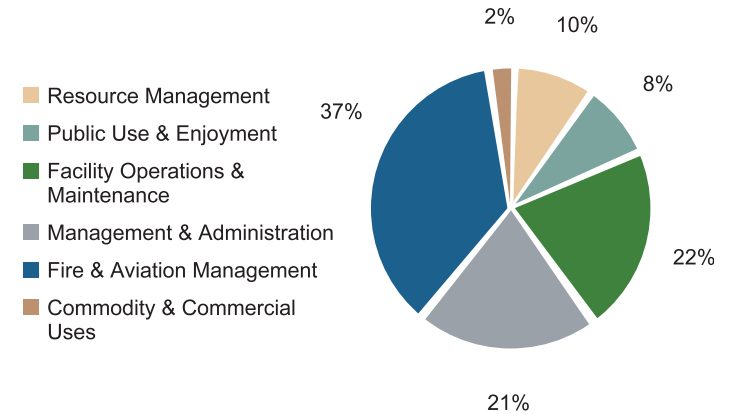
In order to describe the forest's operations, activities were grouped into six functional areas that describe the areas of business for which the forest is responsible. The six functional areas are shown in the graph on the right and described in detail below. The six functional areas were further divided into 35 programs that more precisely describe forest operations. Programs are general in nature in order to cover a broad suite of activities that occur in the forest.

The business planning process required the completion of a "detail sheet" for each program area. The detail sheet, prepared by the program manager, describes the day-to-day activities, actual expenses, unfunded needs and necessary investments of the program.

The detail sheets included a statement of work that describes the suite of activities encompassed by each program. Operational standards were then generated to describe the duties and responsibilities required to meet the critical functions of the program as stated in the statement of work. These standards were then used to determine the total financial resources required to perform the standard tasks of the program. The final step compared current forest activities with the operational standards to identify the gaps between required and available resources.

The following pages describe each of the functional areas in detail.

**Current Forest Operations  
FY02 Expenditures**



**Resource Management** encompasses all activities related to the management, monitoring and protection of the forest's natural and cultural resources including wildlife and vegetation management, watershed, air and geology, specially designated management areas, data management and land ownership and adjustment.

**Public Use & Enjoyment** includes all activities directed at providing visitors with a safe, educational and enjoyable experience in the forest including: visitor information, interpretation, recreation services, fee management, concessions management, visitor safety services and recreational special uses.

**Facility Operations & Maintenance** includes activities required to manage and operate the forest's infrastructure on a daily basis. Buildings, roads, trails, utilities, and campgrounds require a range of operational activities from basic sanitation to maintenance of forest assets.

**Management & Administration** encompasses forest-wide management and administrative support activities including general and district administration, public affairs, planning, human resource management, information technology, leadership and financial management.

**Fire & Aviation Management** encompasses the forest's fire organization activities and programs, which include administration, presuppression and preparedness, hazardous fuels reduction, and national fire and emergency support.

**Commodity & Commercial Uses** encompasses activities related to the production and management of a wide variety of commodities and commercial products. Programs include non-recreational special use management, grazing, minerals, and forest products and timber.

## Resource Management



Los Padres National Forest has played a key role in the successful reintroduction of the California Condor to its historic habitat.

### Complying With the Law

Ensuring compliance with environmental and historic preservation laws is an essential step in the completion of most projects in the forest, including capital improvement projects.

However, due to the sheer volume of regulations and a down-sized forest staff to complete this planning and monitoring, the forest faces daily challenges to meet the requirements for project planning and execution.

Resource management encompasses activities related to the management, monitoring and protection of the Forest's natural, cultural and informational resources. This functional area is comprised of seven program areas:

- Wildlife Management
- Watershed, Air and Geologic Resource Management
- Heritage Resources Management
- Specially Designated Areas Management
- Vegetation Management
- Land Ownership and Adjustment
- Data Management

The focus of the **Wildlife Management** program is the management and protection of plant and animal habitats and species. It constitutes almost 50 percent of the Resource Management functional area's total spending. Emphasis is given to management of federally-listed threatened and endangered species, as well as Forest Service-designated sensitive plants and animals. Activities include development and maintenance of partnerships with national, state and local agencies to establish and maintain species habitat goals; the integration of habitat planning into land management and project plans; and the improvement and maintenance of wildlife and fish habitat. Biologists, ecologists, botanists and other skilled specialists contribute to this program's operations.

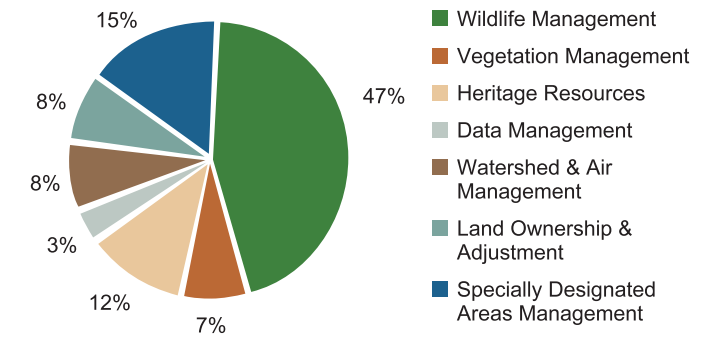
Los Padres was established to protect the precious watershed that supplies water to many Californians. Activities in the **Watershed, Air and Geologic Resource Management** program area include management of water quality, water supply, soil quality and productivity, water rights, air quality and geologic resources and hazards.

The **Heritage Resource** program area has the mission to protect significant heritage resources, to share their values with the American people, and to contribute relevant

information and perspectives to resource management so that future generations will have an opportunity to discover the human story etched in the forest.

Congress has designated ten wilderness areas in this forest as well as two Condor Sanctuaries and three Wild and Scenic Rivers. These and other **Specially Designated Areas** are managed to protect and restore natural ecological values and wilderness character, promote understanding of wilderness benefits, and provide primitive recreation opportunities.

**Resource Management  
FY02 Expenditures by Program**



Total Required		Available		Shortfall	
FTE	Funds	FTE	Funds	FTE	Funds
56.0	\$3,826,094	32	\$2,253,501	24	\$1,572,592

*Fulltime Equivalent (FTE) is equal to one person working 2088 hours which is a full work year.*

The **Vegetation Management** program works to conserve and enhance the overall health and productivity of the forest's vegetation resources. Activities include surveys, reforestation, tree-stand improvement, and invasive and noxious weed eradication.

The **Land Ownership and Adjustment** program handles land exchanges and purchases, rights-of-way acquisitions, boundary and title management.

**Data Management** is the collection and management of the forest's corporate databases. Forest data include the physical, biological, social and economic resource information.

The unfunded needs of the Resource Management functional area are represented in the chart below. For instance, in addition to completing their own projects, the Resource Management staff provides significant support to

other program areas. Five more FTE biologists are needed to complete both resource programs and support work.

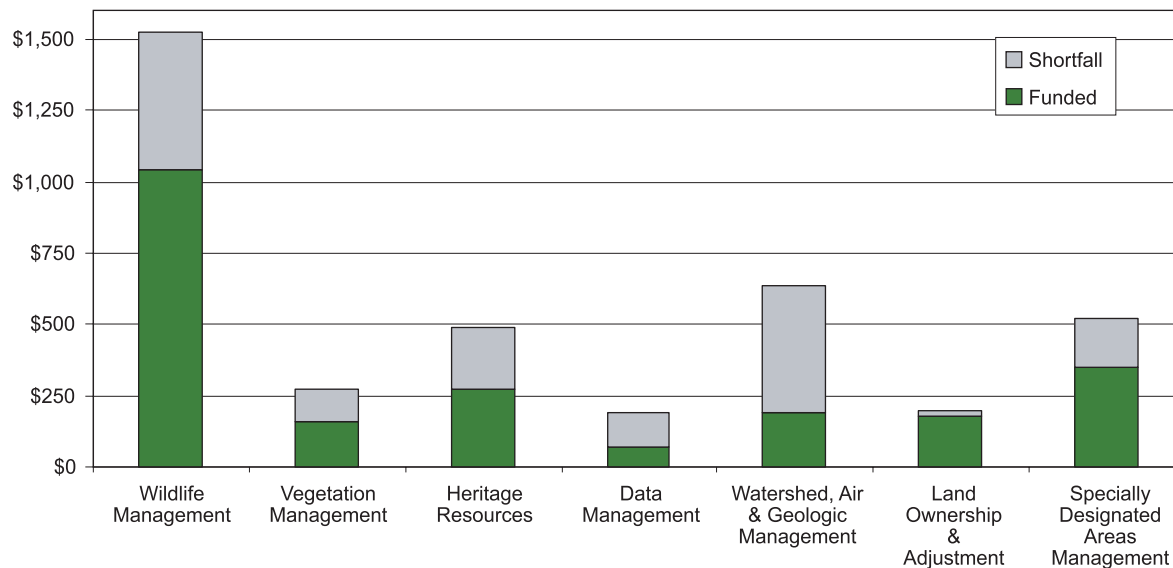
Similarly, the forest does not have funding for a permanent hydrologist or soil scientist. A few additional technicians would significantly improve the watershed management program.

Los Padres has a large number of historical properties. To date, 2,500 sites (historic and prehistoric) have been identified, although only 6 percent of the forest's lands have been surveyed. The need to protect these sites requires 3.5 more FTE archeologists.

Even though Congress provides special funding for wilderness areas, there is a shortfall of five FTE technicians to perform on-the-ground wilderness maintenance, as well as a wilderness program manager.

The Chumash Indians have lived for over 7,000 years along the central coast of California. Their unique and innovative boat, known as a "tomol," allowed the Chumash access to scattered villages up and down the coastline. Their culture also advanced with basketry, stone cookware and the ability to harvest and store food. At the peak of their civilization in the early 1700s, Chumash villages served as trading posts. Proof of trade routes and money systems have been found throughout Los Padres National Forest. Today, the Chumash, of the Santa Ynez Band of Mission Indians, are a federally recognized tribe.

**Resource Management  
FY02 Analysis of Shortfalls (in thousands)**



The Forest and adjacent lands contain many beautiful and fragile Chumash rock art sites.



## Public Use & Enjoyment

The Public Use and Enjoyment area is comprised of five areas of responsibility:

- Concessions and Recreational Special Uses
- Visitor Centers, Information, Interpretation and Education
- Recreation Fiscal Management
- Law Enforcement and Investigations
- Visitor Safety and Protection

The **Concessions and Recreation Special Uses** program incorporates the management and monitoring of all concession and recreational special use permits on national forest system land. These permits authorize private sector entities to operate recreational facilities and services on behalf of the Forest Service. For instance, most campgrounds are government-owned facilities that are offered for operation through a competitive bid process. Other examples include outfitter-guide services and shooting ranges.

**Visitor Information, Interpretation and Education** is intended to build intellectual and personal connections between people and their natural and cultural heritage. Visitor information focuses on providing information regarding recreational opportunities and conditions, public safety and responsible use of the forest. Interpretation is an educational activity that aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply communicating factual information. Interpretive services are provided to forest visitors. Education programs are generally provided in the community rather than in the forest setting.

**Recreation Fiscal Management** includes all forest activities related to the collection and management of

recreational use fees, including the sale of passes and the monitoring of permit compliance.

The **Law Enforcement and Investigation (LEI)** organization is an integral part of the National Forest System, and is primarily responsible for the prevention of crimes and the enforcement of federal laws and regulations on forest lands. Law Enforcement Officers detect and respond to criminal incidents against people, property and forest resources; provide security for forest personnel and facilities; and work closely with other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies.

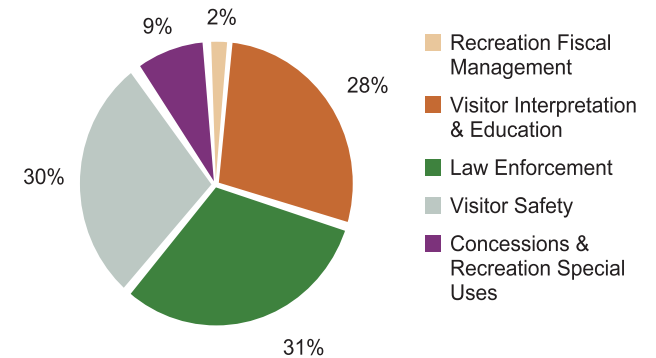
Forest Protection Officers, under the **Visitor Safety and Protection** program, are agency employees engaged in a broad range of activities designed to protect visitors during their visit to the forest. Most Forest Protection Officers (FPO's) perform other work for Los Padres, with part-time collateral duties as FPO's. Duties include encouraging voluntary compliance with regulations; observing and reporting violations of federal laws and regulations; issuing warning and violation notices to persons violating regulations; initiating search and rescue and emergency medical services; and enforcing off-highway vehicle regulations.

There is a large shortfall in the Visitor Information, Interpretation and Education program. This gap is critical, as it has the most direct bearing on the forest's contact with the public and offers the best opportunity to attract and inform partners, volunteers and the next generation of forest stakeholders. Two FTEs are needed at each of the ranger districts, a manager is required at the Supervisor's Office, and additional funds would help provide interpretive resources including kiosks and signs.

### The Adventure Pass Program

Recreation fee collection on the four national forests of southern California is a component of the national Recreation Fee Demonstration Program. In 1996, Congress passed legislation to test the feasibility of charging fees for recreational use. This was a welcome development for the four southern California national forests, whose appropriated recreation "operation and maintenance" funding could not keep pace with demands. The four forests presented a unique idea: a pass for recreational use designed to meet the special needs of the extraordinary geography of the region and address the specific challenges they face with heavy recreation use.

**Public Use & Enjoyment  
FY02 Expenditures by Program**



Total Required		Available		Shortfall	
FTE	Funds	FTE	Funds	FTE	Funds
48.2	\$2,555,981	38.1	\$1,833,736	10.1	\$722,245

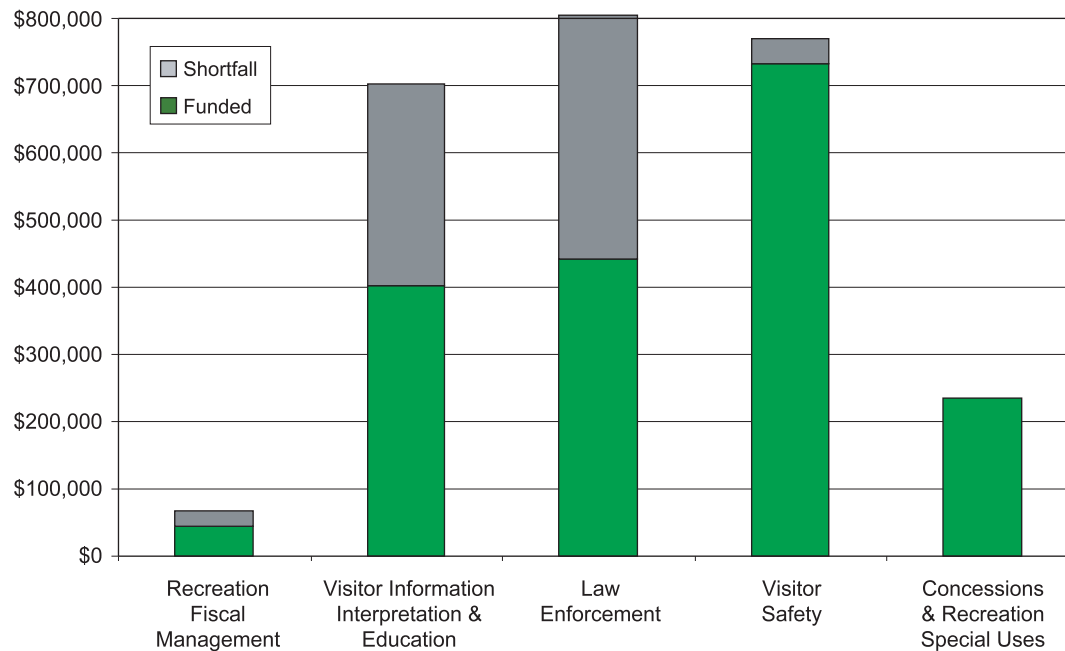
Unlike national or state parks, where vehicles enter through controlled access points, the southern California Forests are accessed round-the-clock via hundreds of different roads. Complicating the management picture is the presence of private parcels, communities and towns, and other agency lands inside the forest boundaries. Consequently, entry kiosks on roads leading into the forests are not feasible. A vehicle pass, which can be purchased prior to the visit and placed on the vehicle, seemed the best way to collect a recreation fee.

The pass is required for vehicles parked on national forest lands for recreation. Bicyclists, visitors walking onto the forests from adjacent

lands, and sightseers driving through the forests without parking, may all enjoy their visit without purchasing a pass. Daily passes are \$5, annual passes are \$30. Various discounts are available for qualified purchasers. In 2003, the recreation fee program was expanded to also accept the Golden Age, Golden Access and Golden Eagle passports in addition to the Adventure Pass.

Approximately sixty percent of Adventure Pass sales in Los Padres occur through private vendors; the remaining direct sales occur at the district offices and forest headquarters. At least 80% of the pass revenues are spent on facility and area maintenance and care, litter pick-up, graffiti removal, visitor information and assistance, conservation education and wildlife habitat improvement.

**Public Use & Enjoyment  
FY02 Analysis of Shortfalls (in thousands)**



## Facility Operations & Maintenance

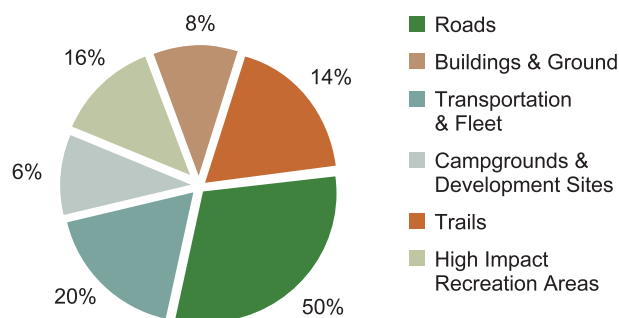


Ensuring accessibility of forest facilities and services for all forest visitors is an important management responsibility.

The Facility Operations and Maintenance functional area (FOM) encompasses all activities directed at operating and maintaining the forest's infrastructure. This includes campgrounds and developed sites, trails, concentrated use areas, roads, transportation and fleet, and buildings and grounds.

The Los Padres contains over 1,500 miles of **roads** (paved and non-paved). Road improvement and maintenance represent the largest expenditure in this functional area. Activities include grading non-paved roads, clearing rock fall, repairing potholes, signage, striping, resurfacing, and bridge maintenance.

**Facility Operations & Maintenance  
FY02 Expenditures by Program**



**Transportation and fleet** expenses are the next-greatest expense, as it requires a full spectrum of over 280 vehicles and pieces of equipment to service the forest's needs, ranging from the transportation of trail crews to fire suppression. Forest assets include vehicles such as trucks, transports and fire engines as well as special equipment for resource management and law enforcement activities.

The forest encompasses a 1,238-mile **non-motorized trail system** that serves hikers, equestrians and mountain bikers. Most of the trail system is maintained through a large volunteer and partnership program.

The forest has 241 **buildings** within 55 administrative sites, as well as utility systems including generators, water, wastewater and solar electric systems. The forest has 122 **campgrounds**; the largest and most-used facilities are managed by concessionaires.

Many visitors prefer to congregate in undeveloped areas of the forest such as road turnouts or along creeks. Additional maintenance is necessary in these **high impact recreation areas** because of impacts such as litter, vandalism and soil compaction and erosion.

The total unfunded operational needs of the FOM functional area are the largest on the forest in terms of absolute dollars. Furthermore, FOM receives only about one-third of the funds it needs to operate its program areas, the smallest percentage of any functional area in the forest.

The largest unfunded need exists in the roads program, where increased regulatory and planning requirements, combined with a downsized staff, created a \$3.5 million operating shortfall. In 2002, forest personnel were required to perform emergency road repairs resulting from earlier floods – leaving little time to devote to regular maintenance and other activities.

A similar scenario exists for buildings, campgrounds and trails. In every program, available funds are spent on

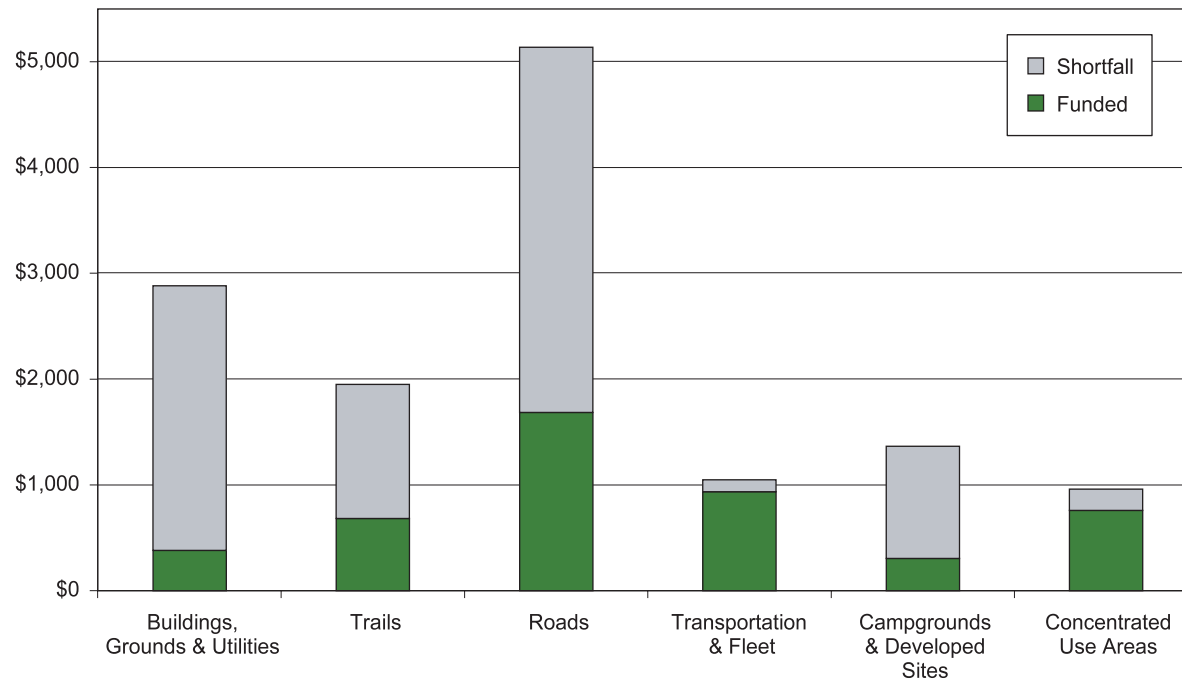
immediate repair needs and diminish the ability to adequately respond to infrastructure maintenance. Inability to maintain infrastructure can have serious long-term effects. A large part of the non-motorized trail system is currently impassable to the public. Almost all of the facilities are over 50 years old, and many contain asbestos or lead-based paints.

The result of this underfunding is that the deferred maintenance backlog of forest infrastructure has grown to

almost \$100 million. Since this amount is unlikely to be garnered soon and has become a liability, Los Padres must begin planning to decommission some of its infrastructure.



**Facilities Operations & Maintenance  
FY02 Analysis of Shortfalls (in thousands)**



### Road Repairs

During an El Nino storm season in 1998, Los Padres suffered \$6 million in damage to its road system. Los Padres road crews, joined by other crews from neighboring national forests, worked steadily for two years to repair the roads.

Engineers from three national forests and the regional office teamed up to complete the design work, which led to multiple contract awards totaling \$3.5 million in 2001. Repair work was substantially completed in December 2002.

The “before and after” photos at left are of a storm-damaged section of Piru Canyon Road on the Ojai Ranger District. Forest Service engineering crews accomplished initial opening of the road at a cost of \$37,000. In May 2002, a contract was awarded to make permanent repairs to the road at a cost of \$433,000. The work was completed in September 2002.

## Management & Administration



Employees and volunteers staff the information desk in the Forest Supervisor's Office.

Seven Management and Administration program areas are required to operate the forest. These functions are completed at the Forest Supervisor's Office and at the ranger district offices and are defined as follows:

- General Management: management and oversight of staff.
- Financial Management: all budget and accounting activities.
- General Administration: procurement, labor relations, contracting, human resource management.
- District Management: management and administrative functions of the District Rangers and their immediate support staff which support a wide variety of programs.
- Planning: large scale programmatic planning, e.g. Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

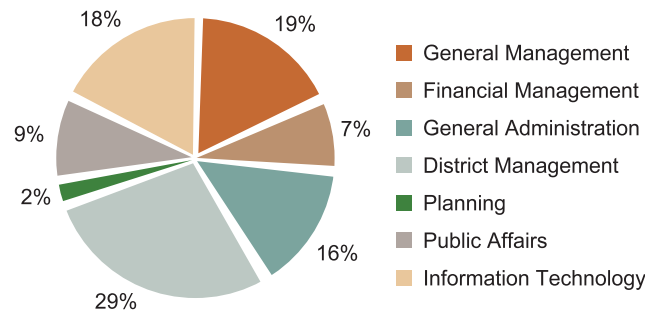
- Public Affairs: public information, community relations, media relations, tribal relations, legislative affairs.
- Information Technology: all telecommunications systems, technical support and management.

**General Management** and **General Administration** together comprise more than a third of the total expenditures for this functional area. The most significant need identified in these areas is more **human resource** assistance, especially because the Forest currently has a number of vacancies and anticipates many more vacancies in the next several years as employees retire.

The next largest expenditure of 29% is in the **District Management** program area. The Forest is divided into five ranger districts: Monterey, Santa Lucia, Santa Barbara, Ojai and Mount Pinos. Each District Ranger and staff is responsible for the development, conservation, and utilization of the natural resources of the district. This responsibility requires working with a variety of internal and external customers, cooperators, and organizations to balance diverse, and often competing, interests, issues and concerns.

The **Planning** program area includes the annual preparation of national reporting requirements as well as managing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), appeals programs, periodic reviews and assessments, and updates to the Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. There is a need for a full-time Environmental Coordinator to help with project-level planning.

**Management & Administration  
FY02 Expenditures by Program**



Total Required		Available		Shortfall	
FTE	Funds	FTE	Funds	FTE	Funds
50.7	\$5,016,723	39.7	\$4,557,197	11.0	\$459,526

The **Public Affairs** staff, based in the Forest Supervisor's Office, assists with the development and maintenance of relationships with local communities, elected officials, interest groups and organizations, federal, state and local governments, news media, and the general public. This staff also is involved in developing partnerships and community-based human resource programs such as volunteers and youth and senior employment programs.

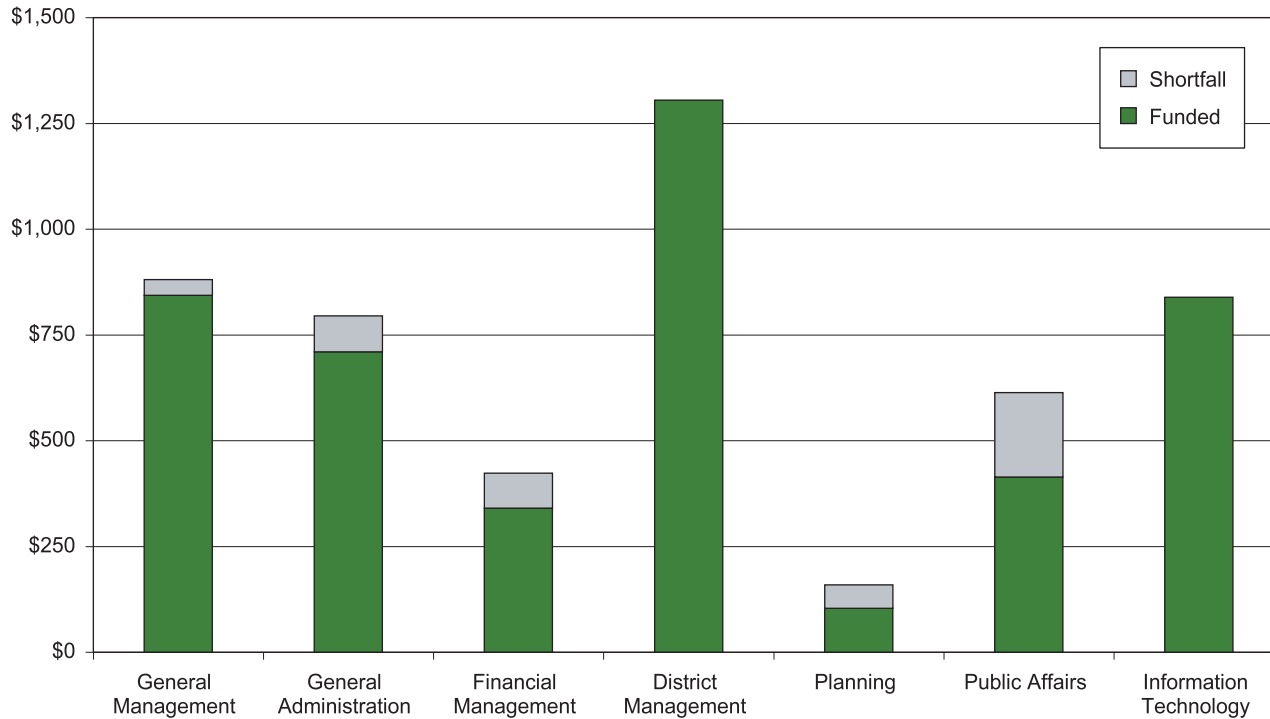
A significant need has been identified for community and partnership development staff at each of the district offices.

This would enhance efforts to expand outreach, engage local communities and explore alternative funding opportunities that would enable the district to better serve the public.

The **Information Technology** program area provides technical support and assistance to the forest in telecommunications, radios, computer networks, telephones, dispatch and alarm systems.

The **Financial Management** program area is responsible for providing oversight on all budget, accounting and financial matters as well as strategic planning.

**Management & Administration  
FY02 Analysis of Shortfalls (in thousands)**



## Fire & Aviation Management

### National Fire Plan Funding at Work

In July 2002, a small plane crashed near Monte Arido Peak on the Ojai Ranger District, starting a wildfire. New firefighting resources provided under the National Fire Plan made a significant difference in the fire's outcome.

Helicopters were quickly deployed to the scene, and water drops and helishot crews were able to successfully hold the fire while other ground crews were en route to the remote location. Without these key resources, the 30-acre fire would likely have burned as many as 2,000 or 3,000 acres at considerably higher costs.



The Fire and Aviation program consists of Presuppression and Preparedness, Hazardous Fuels Management, and Fire Management and Administration.

In 2000, after three years of unusually destructive and expensive fire seasons across the United States, the National Fire Plan was developed to fund fire organizations at 95% of their “Most Efficient Level” or MEL. The forest’s MEL **Presuppression and Preparedness Resources** include fire engine modules, fixed-wing air attack, helicopters, helishots, specialized 20-person hand crews, water tenders and bulldozers. An emergency command center coordinates fire and law enforcement dispatches and field communications.

The aviation program consists of three helicopters and an air attack plane. One unique component of the aviation program is the capability to “rappel” and “fast rope” to the ground to quickly suppress fires in the backcountry where there is no road access and where the terrain is too steep for helicopters to land. This specialized training is given to fire crews and firefighters assigned to certain helicopters.

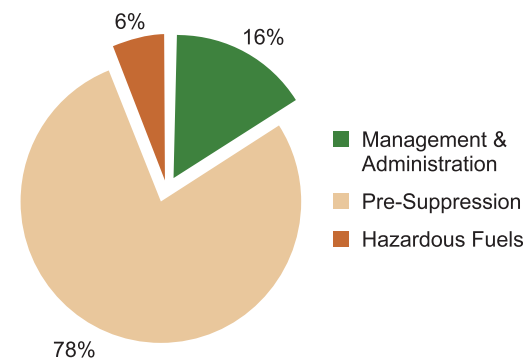
The fire prevention program consists of prevention technicians who perform inspections, fire investigations and public education programs in addition to providing initial attack on fires.

The **Hazardous Fuels Management Program** in Los Padres includes planning and evaluating forest conditions, conducting prescribed burns and mechanically removing hazardous fuels in high-risk areas. (Hazardous fuels consist of brush and other vegetation that is most susceptible to carrying a fire.) Los Padres should be conducting prescribed burns on at least 15,000 to 20,000 acres a year. Current funding does not allow for this level of treatment and associated staffing. In 2002, Los Padres managers

treated 6,700 acres of hazardous fuels, almost four times more than its budgeted target. The fuels management program requires close cooperation and coordination with resource managers, fire agencies, other federal and state agencies, and landowners.

**Fire Management and Administration** provides for overall coordination for the programs described above including budget, training, staffing, direction and operational oversight. The fire management philosophy in Los Padres is to suppress wildfires at their smallest size. At the peak of fire season in late August and September, it is common to have two or more wildfires burning at the same time in the forest. Putting the fires out as quickly as possible ensures that firefighting resources are ready and available to respond to the multi-fire events that often occur.

Fire & Aviation Management  
Pre-Suppression  
FY02 Expenditures by Program

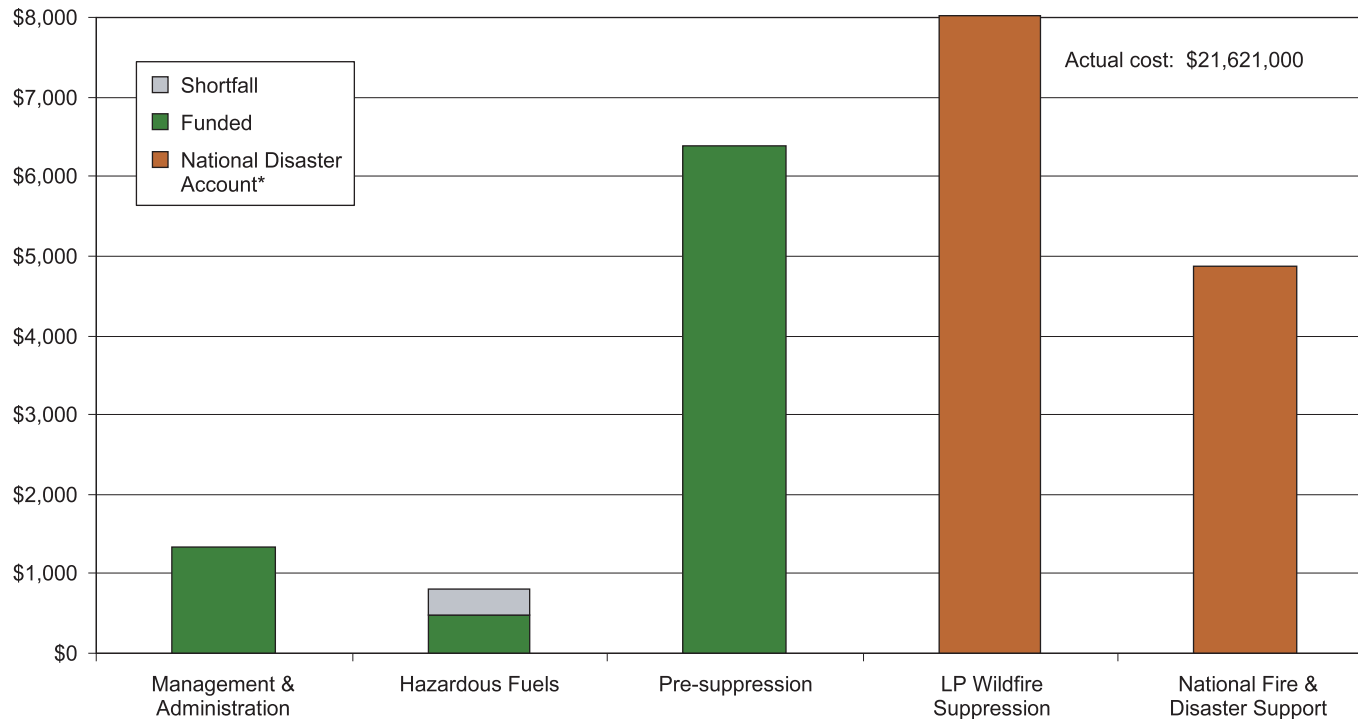


In 2002, the Los Padres fire organization suppressed 47 wildfires at a total cost of \$22 million. While most fires were held to a small acreage, the early season Wolf Fire burned 21,645 acres in the backcountry of the Ojai District. Due to extreme weather and other conditions, that fire had the potential to become much larger. As with most other fires in the national forest, the Wolf Fire was successfully contained with the aid of other national forest fire personnel, fire cooperators and support agencies. Interagency cooperation and mutual aid assistance are essential to successful firefighting within Los Padres National Forest. Los Padres works closely with local fire departments, and manages 27 cooperative fire agreements.

Los Padres personnel respond to four types of emergencies: 1) fires within the national forest; 2) fires that occur on lands outside Los Padres that threaten to move into the national forest; 3) fires that occur elsewhere in California and the United States; and 4) other national and international disasters. When disasters occur (e.g. wildfires, earthquakes or space shuttle clean-up), additional national funding is provided.

Los Padres employees from all other program areas support disaster efforts by assisting with logistics, transportation, communications, public information, finance, timekeeping, security, resource monitoring, and a host of other important functions.

**Fire & Aviation Management  
FY02 Analysis of Shortfalls (in thousands)**



\*Funds for these programs are paid from the national disaster account, not by Los Padres National Forest.



## Commodity & Commercial Uses

### Grazing: A Shared Responsibility

Livestock grazing in Los Padres National Forest is managed to provide forage for livestock in a manner consistent with “multiple use” objectives.

Grazing primarily occurs in the annual grassland ecosystems. These ecosystems are adapted to grazing and are sustainable based on winter rains. Grazing at a moderate level contributes to vegetative species diversity, including wildflowers. In many areas, moderate grazing reduces hazardous fuels.

Grazing in the national forest provides additional forage options for local ranching operations. Our grazing permittees are often ranchers who have been in the business for several generations. They understand the land and share responsibility with the Forest Service in caring for its health and well-being.

This functional area encompasses activities related to both the extraction of commodities (minerals, oil, timber, etc.) and the leasing of land for commercial use (grazing, communication structures, etc). In most cases, the fees charged for these goods and services are set by the federal government and sent directly to the U.S. Treasury. Los Padres manages the process by which these uses are granted and ensures that such use is carried out according to law and Forest Service policy.

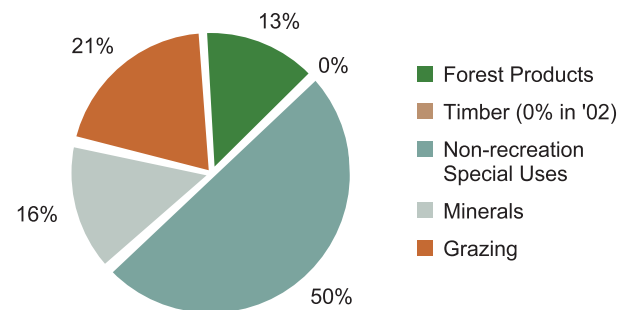
The largest program in this functional area is the administration of approximately 600 non-recreation land uses. These uses can include: agricultural (orchards and apiaries); service (schools, parking lots); hydroelectric; research facilities (weather stations, observatories); power generation, transmission and distribution lines and facilities; oil and gas development; communication (broadcast sites, telephone lines); and water improvements (waterlines, wells).

Non-Recreational Special Uses has the largest unfunded need in this functional area. Many authorized uses have not been reviewed for compliance due to limited personnel and budget. Annual shortfalls in this area contribute to a major backlog of compliance work.

Los Padres contains the only commercial quantities of oil and gas within the national forests of California. There are 22 oil and gas leases on 15,000 acres (less than 1 percent of Forest lands) that contain about 180 wells and associated facilities. There are also several hard rock (e.g., gold) claims and small amounts of mineral (e.g., sand) activity. An oil and gas specialist is needed to work in the areas of supervision, budget management, external relations and environmental analysis, as well as to work with the USDI Bureau of Land Management to designate and manage oil/gas lease parcels.

The livestock-grazing program currently consists of 107 allotments, of which 70 are active. A number of vacant allotments have applications on file, but cannot be processed until an environmental analysis is completed.

**Commodity & Commercial Uses  
FY02 Expenditures by Program**

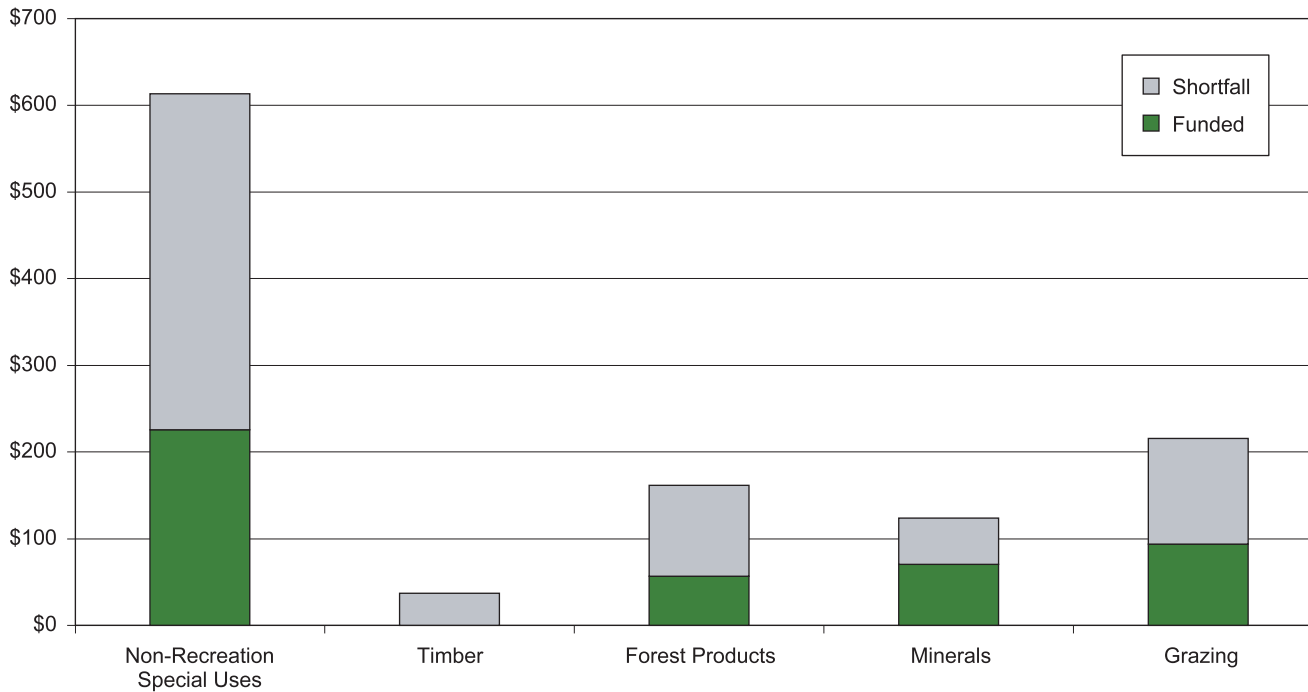


Total Required		Available		Shortfall	
FTE	Funds	FTE	Funds	FTE	Funds
17.1	\$1,151,106	6.02	\$447,083	11.1	\$704,023

The forest manages this program for the sustainability of forage production as well as the protection of soil, water, flora and fauna. Grazing has a large unfunded need primarily in the area of environmental analysis and reporting. The 1995 Rescission Act requires that all grazing allotments be studied by 2010. At an average cost of \$40,000 per allotment, the program cannot meet its mandate with current funding and a substantial analysis backlog has developed.

There has been no significant commercial timber harvesting in Los Padres for many years. Occasionally, forest products are produced as by-products of forest health activities such as thinning and hazardous fuels reduction. Los Padres also provides limited quantities of various forest products such as fuelwood and decorative plant materials. Current staffing is not sufficient to ensure compliance by forest products permit holders.

**Commodity & Commercial Uses  
FY02 Analysis of Shortfalls (in thousands)**



# Financials

## Summary Financial Statement

The pie chart (below left) illustrates the forest’s reliance on a single source of funding, its appropriated base. This base, allocated at the beginning of the year, is adjusted throughout the year.

This dependence on a sole source of annually changing and historically declining funds has encouraged the forest to seek out other funding sources through revenue and reimbursable income streams. These alternative funding mechanisms are anticipated to grow in significance in future years with increased public-private partnerships and better inter-agency relationships.

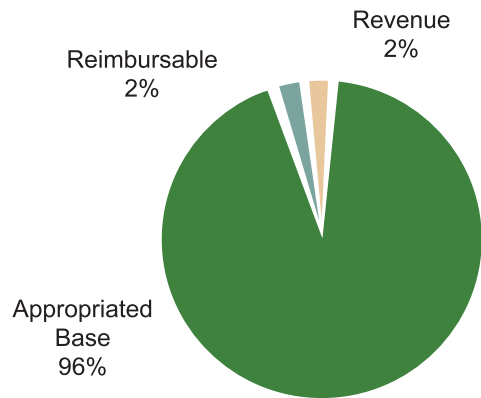
The bar chart (below right) shows the amount of funds that were spent (dark green) in FY02 to operate each of the functional areas described previously, as well as the

additional funds required (gray) to operate each area according to Forest Service standards. Of the six areas, Fire and Aviation Management expended the largest amount of the forest’s funds, while the most severe “shortfall” existed in Facility Operations and Maintenance.

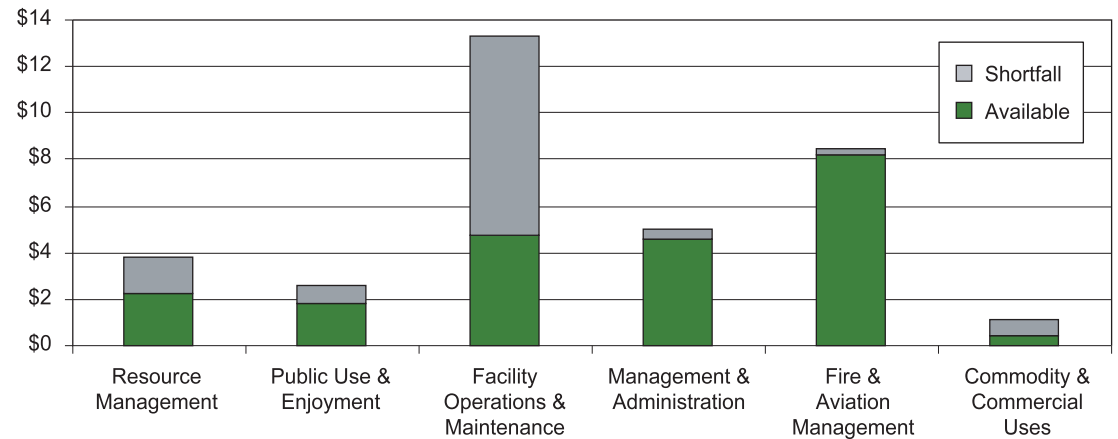
The spreadsheet on the following page breaks down these required and available funds by specific program area and fund source. Personnel required and used in each program area are also displayed in FTEs. Finally, shortfalls in both funds and personnel are shown in the far right columns.

(Note: Total expenditures do not always match appropriations or other funds received because of carryovers to following years or certain obligations that were expensed in prior years.)

**FY02 Expenditures by Fund Source**



**FY02 Required Funds by Functional Area (in millions)**



FUNCTIONAL AREAS & PROGRAM	REQUIRED TO MEET STANDARDS		AVAILABLE FUNDS & PERSONNEL SPENT IN FY02				SHORTFALLS		
	FTE	Funds	Appropriated	Reimbursable	Revenue	FTE	Funds	FTE	Funds
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>									
Wildlife Management	21.9	\$1,524,357	\$1,005,051	\$0	\$33,749	15.3	\$1,038,800	(6.6)	(\$485,557)
Vegetation Management	4.1	\$273,756	\$160,275	\$0	\$0	2.1	\$160,275	(2.1)	(\$113,481)
Heritage Resources	8.3	\$488,152	\$271,091	\$0	\$0	4.8	\$271,091	(3.5)	(\$217,060)
Data Management	3.0	\$188,306	\$66,800	\$0	\$0	1.0	\$66,800	(2.0)	(\$121,506)
Watershed, Air & Geologic Management	6.7	\$632,650	\$181,530	\$0	\$9,883	1.9	\$191,413	(4.8)	(\$441,237)
Land Ownership & Adjustment	2.5	\$198,990	\$177,621	\$0	\$0	2.3	\$177,621	(0.1)	(\$21,369)
Specially Designated Areas Management	9.5	\$519,884	\$347,501	\$0	\$0	4.5	\$347,501	(5.0)	(\$172,383)
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>56.0</b>	<b>\$3,826,094</b>	<b>\$2,209,869</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$43,632</b>	<b>32.0</b>	<b>\$2,253,501</b>	<b>(24.0)</b>	<b>(\$1,572,592)</b>
<b>PUBLIC USE &amp; ENJOYMENT</b>									
Recreation Fiscal Management	1.7	\$44,386	\$13,520	\$0	\$8,673	0.8	\$22,193	(0.9)	(\$22,193)
Interpretive Services & Visitor Information	17.1	\$702,394	\$337,365	\$0	\$64,346	13.1	\$401,711	(4.0)	(\$300,683)
Law Enforcement	9.0	\$803,489	\$431,697	\$0	\$9,577	5.0	\$441,274	(4.0)	(\$362,215)
Visitor Safety & Protection	16.3	\$770,513	\$680,936	\$0	\$52,423	15.1	\$733,359	(1.2)	(\$37,154)
Concessions & Recreation Special Uses	4.1	\$235,199	\$235,199	\$0	\$0	4.1	\$235,199	0.0	\$0
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>48.2</b>	<b>\$2,555,981</b>	<b>\$1,698,717</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$135,019</b>	<b>38.1</b>	<b>\$1,833,736</b>	<b>(10.1)</b>	<b>(\$722,245)</b>
<b>FACILITY OPERATIONS &amp; MAINTENANCE</b>									
Building, Grounds & Utilities	7.1	\$2,882,196	\$231,674	\$0	\$148,140	2.1	\$379,814	(5.0)	(\$2,502,382)
Trails	31.0	\$1,949,346	\$683,913	\$0	\$0	3.0	\$683,913	(28.0)	(\$1,265,432)
Roads	7.2	\$5,136,947	\$1,392,096	\$194,902	\$98,325	3.4	\$1,685,323	(3.8)	(\$3,451,624)
Transportation Fleet	6.9	\$1,047,900	\$918,880	\$15,620	\$0	4.9	\$934,500	(2.0)	(\$113,400)
Campgrounds & Developed Sites	9.3	\$1,366,564	\$304,999	\$0	\$0	4.3	\$304,999	(5.0)	(\$1,061,565)
High Impact Recreation Areas	18.3	\$958,930	\$450,510	\$308,895	\$0	13.3	\$759,405	(5.0)	(\$199,525)
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>79.7</b>	<b>\$13,341,881</b>	<b>\$3,982,071</b>	<b>\$519,417</b>	<b>\$246,465</b>	<b>31.0</b>	<b>\$4,747,953</b>	<b>(48.8)</b>	<b>(\$8,593,928)</b>
<b>MANAGEMENT &amp; ADMINISTRATION</b>									
General Management	4.8	\$880,516	\$843,473	\$0	\$0	3.8	\$843,473	(1.0)	(\$37,043)
General Administration	4.7	\$795,500	\$710,191	\$0	\$0	2.7	\$710,191	(2.0)	(\$85,309)
Financial Management	6.4	\$423,011	\$340,659	\$0	\$0	4.4	\$340,659	(2.0)	(\$82,352)
District Management	13.8	\$1,305,350	\$1,305,350	\$0	\$0	13.8	\$1,305,350	0.0	\$0
Planning	1.8	\$159,037	\$104,215	\$0	\$0	0.8	\$104,215	(1.0)	(\$54,822)
Public Affairs	10.3	\$613,968	\$413,968	\$0	\$0	5.3	\$413,968	(5.0)	(\$200,000)
Information Technology	8.9	\$839,341	\$839,341	\$0	\$0	8.9	\$839,341	0.0	\$0
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>50.7</b>	<b>\$5,016,723</b>	<b>\$4,557,197</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>39.7</b>	<b>\$4,557,197</b>	<b>(11.0)</b>	<b>(\$459,526)</b>
<b>FIRE &amp; AVIATION MANAGEMENT*</b>									
Management Administration	13.6	\$1,335,376	\$1,335,376	\$0	\$0	13.6	\$1,335,376	0.0	\$0
Hazardous Fuels Reduction	9.4	\$796,749	\$488,009	\$0	\$0	5.4	\$488,009	(4.0)	(\$308,740)
Fire Suppression & Preparedness	91.9	\$6,379,837	\$6,379,837	\$0	\$0	91.9	\$6,379,837	0.0	\$0
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>114.9</b>	<b>\$8,511,963</b>	<b>\$8,203,223</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>110.9</b>	<b>\$8,203,223</b>	<b>(4.0)</b>	<b>(\$308,740)</b>
<b>COMMODITY &amp; COMMERCIAL USES</b>									
Non-Recreation Special Uses	10.1	\$613,028	\$225,740	\$0	\$0	3.3	\$225,740	(6.8)	(\$387,288)
Timber	0.4	\$37,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.0	\$0	(0.4)	(\$37,000)
Forest Products	1.8	\$161,734	\$50,302	\$0	\$6,432	0.5	\$56,734	(1.3)	(\$105,000)
Minerals	1.5	\$123,800	\$70,700	\$0	\$0	0.9	\$70,700	(0.7)	(\$53,100)
Grazing	3.3	\$215,544	\$93,909	\$0	\$0	1.3	\$93,909	(2.1)	(\$121,635)
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>17.1</b>	<b>\$1,151,106</b>	<b>\$440,651</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$6,432</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>\$447,083</b>	<b>(11.1)</b>	<b>(\$704,023)</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>366.7</b>	<b>\$34,403,748</b>	<b>\$21,091,729</b>	<b>\$519,417</b>	<b>\$431,548</b>	<b>257.7</b>	<b>\$22,042,694</b>	<b>(109)</b>	<b>(\$12,361,054)</b>
*This functional area only includes presuppression activities. The suppression activities shown below are paid for out of the National Fire Plan account.									
Los Padres Wild Suppression	59.5	\$21,621,018							
Other National Fire Support	74.4	\$4,868,471							

## Partner & Volunteer Contributions



The highly successful FamCamp program introduces families from underserved communities to the joys of their national forest.

Los Padres National Forest has provided public inspiration and natural resources for over a century. Today more than ever, the forest requires a commitment from citizens, organizations and government to work together to ensure these resources remain available in the future.

Partnerships are an important part of the answer. Partnerships help improve the health of the forest, provide recreation opportunities, enhance understanding of natural resources, and foster individual responsibility and stewardship. Here are just a few examples of the many partnerships underway today.

**Partners in Preservation.** Hidden within Los Padres National Forest lies a treasure of prehistoric and historic evidence of the lives of those who lived or worked within the forest. Helping to preserve these “windows on the past” are the volunteer Partners in Preservation who help forest archaeologists protect, evaluate and interpret our cultural treasures.

**Volunteer Wilderness Rangers.** Nearly half of Los Padres National Forest is protected as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. Volunteer Wilderness Rangers work closely with forest wilderness managers to improve recreation opportunities, protect wilderness resources, and provide education about wilderness values.

**Wildlife Challenge Cost Share.** Partnerships with community organizations improve protection of forest plants and animals. For example, forest plants and animals may require removal of exotic pest plants and predatory animals, building fences, or providing signage and brochures to alert visitors to avoid sensitive areas. These needed programs have been provided by sharing costs and expertise with many organizations including the Ventana Wilderness Society, Big Sur Ornithology Lab, Morro Bay Audubon and Keep the Sespe Wild.

**State Off-Highway Vehicle Program.** The California State Parks Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division (OHMVRD) supports opportunities for off-highway motor vehicle recreation throughout the State, including many national forest locations. Grants from the OHMVRD help Los Padres National Forest sustain long-term OHV recreation, protect the environment, and control indiscriminate use.

**Youth Training and Employment Programs.** The forest supports environmentally oriented youth leadership and employment programs through grants and training. For example, the Concerned Resource & Environmental Workers (The CREW) provides leadership and job training opportunities to youth. The California Conservation Corps (CCC) provides opportunities for California residents to protect and enhance the forest and neighboring communities.

**Interpretive Programs.** Helping families discover the joys and values of *America's Great Outdoors* is the goal of the Family Camping, or *FamCamp*, Program. Forest interpreters encourage families to discover their “big backyard” by offering guided hikes, programs and overnight camping.

**Conservation Education.** The forest supports conservation education in schools and communities. For example, the forest contributed to the development of displays and materials for the new Pacific Grove Museum traveling exhibit “Bringing the Condors Home: The Story of the California Condor and the Biologists Struggling to Save It.” The forest also initiated the design of new permanent exhibits at the Santa Barbara Zoological

Garden focusing on threatened and endangered species found within Los Padres National Forest and how the public can help protect these species.

**Visitor Information.** Helping visitors to discover the perfect picnic area, hiking trail, or quiet spot for a sunset is the goal of volunteers and staff at forest offices and interagency visitor centers. For example, visitors to the Outdoors Santa Barbara Visitor Center receive information about the forest, Channel Islands National Park, Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary and the Santa Barbara community. To the north within the heart of California's coastal redwood forest, the Big Sur Station enriches visitor experiences by providing information about the many recreation opportunities available in the area.

**National Fire Plan.** Grants to communities within and surrounding the forest have helped to reduce the wildfire risk to both communities and the environment. Grants have treated hazardous buildup of vegetation, encouraged community-based approaches to addressing wildland fire issues, and provided equipment to reduce community risks within the wildland-urban interface.

**Los Padres Forest Association.** For nearly a quarter century, LPFA has demonstrated conservation leadership through interpretive programs, volunteer activities and distribution of educational materials. For example, LPFA supported students from the University of California Santa Barbara's Bren School of Environmental Studies and Management as they developed a handbook to improve collaboration between the public and the Forest Service. LPFA volunteers have converted a vacant fire station into the Wheeler Gorge Visitor Center, providing information to forest visitors. Other volunteers donate their time to maintain hiking trails and recreation facilities. LPFA's "fund-raising" and "friend-raising" both help improve the Forest.

**Protecting Wildlands Beyond the Forest Boundary.** Conservation leadership sometimes requires Los Padres National Forest to look beyond its own borders. The Forest Service helps to protect land for human enjoyment and well-being by cooperating with others who share our goals. Cooperative partnerships with others help protect the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth.

### **Volunteer Value**

Los Padres enjoys one of the largest and most active volunteer and partnership programs in the national forest system and has received many national awards for their efforts. In 2002, Los Padres provided opportunities for 2,800 people to participate in the care and management of their national forest.

Contributing 103,000 hours of work (valued at \$1.5 million), volunteers supported projects in a variety of resource conservation categories including trail care, stream clean-up, GIS mapping, budget tracking, conservation education and visitor center operations.

Without volunteers, the ability to provide visitor services operate facilities and protect resources would be significantly impaired.

# Priorities & Strategies



Sudden Oak Death targets California oaks and poses a potentially significant threat to the survival of the California spotted owl as well as the trees. Studies are needed that would document the distribution and spread of this tree-killing disease. Cost: \$90,000



The work of the Los Padres Fish Crew helps protect and improve conditions for endangered species.

## Investment Priorities

Operations are supplemented by limited-time strategic investments in assets and intellectual capital. In constructing this plan, program managers identified more than forty investments costing more than \$110 million to be made over the next five years.

In reviewing the data, however, it is clear that the overwhelming majority (\$94 million) of required investment is needed to eliminate the deferred maintenance backlog that has built up from years of underfunding the forest's infrastructure. (See "Deferred Maintenance.")

Funding has been provided for nearly \$9 million of deferred maintenance projects to be completed through 2005 and another \$5.5 million are being proposed for 2006 and beyond.

Most of the remaining \$17 million is needed in the following areas:

- Facility Operations including Fire and Aviation Management (\$9,500,000)
- Resource Management (\$3,000,000)
- Commercial Uses (\$4,590,000)
- Management & Administration (\$175,000)
- Public Use & Enjoyment (\$160,000)

Of the thirty-nine proposed investments, the following are examples of some of the projects from the above functional areas.

### Outreach to Non-Traditional Audiences

(Cost: \$175,000)

Expand outreach to stakeholders underrepresented as visitors to the forest, including minority groups. Includes development of bilingual materials and hosting of community events.

### Replace Interpretive Displays

(Cost: \$396,000)

Update interpretive displays to provide the public with current information on local plants and wildlife, heritage resources, geology, recreation opportunities and rules, regulations and safety tips.

### Heritage Resources

(Cost: \$150,000)

Develop management plans for thematic areas and create specific plans for at-risk sites.

### Mt. Pinos Campground Rehabilitation

(Cost: \$512,000)

Improve accessibility for people with disabilities. This project will establish 19 accessible campsites, as well as wheelchair accessible toilets.

### Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species

(Cost: \$200,000)

Conduct potential habitat surveys for the other 22 of 26 listed T&E species to provide a suitable database for proper management of these species.

### Data Collection, Inventorying and Mapping

(Cost: \$770,000)

Perform data collection, inventory and GIS mapping of resources (including fish and wildlife, riparian and wetland areas, water rights and uses, heritage sites, and geologic conditions) to create an accurate forest-wide database for better resource management and service to the public.

## Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

(Cost: \$150,000)

Over the past years, the forest has received LWCF funds through congressional line item appropriations for purchase of lands within the Big Sur Ecosystem. A shortage exists in additional funds needed to administer this land purchase program.

### Eliminate NEPA Backlogs

Backlogs exist not only in deferred maintenance, but also in project planning. While National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations affect 17 of the 35 program areas, the most severe NEPA backlogs currently exist in:

- Range allotments (Cost: \$1,600,000)
- T&E Species (Cost: \$1,250,000)
- Vegetation (Cost: \$500,000)

### Construct Loop Trails

(Cost: \$371,000)

Loop trails provide a safer and more enjoyable experience for hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians. Proposals include connecting:

- Ventana Double-Cone Trail to Pine Ridge
- Lopez Canyon Trail to Big Falls Trail
- Little Mutau Trail to Agua Blanca Trail

### Decommission Infrastructure

(Cost: \$5,500,000)

Decommission roads, trails and facilities, as determined by their respective Master Plans, whose current level of deferred maintenance makes them unusable now or in the near future. This investment not only saves future maintenance costs and allows remaining infrastructure to be adequately maintained, but also minimizes liability to the forest.

### Eliminate Permit Backlogs

(Cost: \$1,500,000)

Of the forest's 744 special use authorizations, 415 have expired and new authorizations must be issued. Also, there are a number of new permit applications awaiting action. Of the billed permits in 2003, approximately \$500,000 will be collected and sent to the U.S. Treasury. Revenues to the Treasury will increase under the new authorizations.

## Deferred Maintenance

Forest engineers continually maintain an infrastructure resource database known Forest-wide simply as "INFRA." The deferred maintenance backlogs listed below were derived from INFRA calculations and represent the cost to return neglected assets to full usability over five years.

- Roads \$70,544,000
- Trails \$10,570,000
- Water Systems \$5,223,000
- Buildings \$4,204,000
- Wastewater \$1,037,000
- Campgrounds \$2,792,000

If these investments are not made, some infrastructure will need to be decommissioned and removed from use. Although this removal also involves a cost, it will save the forest maintenance expenses in the long run.

It should be noted that projected increases in the surrounding population will warrant an increase in facilities and infrastructure.



## Existing Strategies



The Focus Trails program helps to ensure that limited resources are concentrated on the most vital trails.

Appropriated dollars received from Congress have remained flat (and declined when adjusted for inflation) in recent years. The increasing demands and decreasing funding have required Los Padres to examine other strategies to increase revenues to manage the forest.

The Forest Service has not historically had a Fee Retention program. As such, most of the money the forest collects does not go directly to the forest; rather, it is returned to the U.S. Treasury (and will indirectly return to the forest in future appropriations, although not necessarily in proportion to the money it collects.) In an effort to improve the situation, the forest implemented a few creative strategies.

### Concessionaires

In 1995, in an effort to decrease costs and to provide better public service, the forest began working with concessionaires to manage campgrounds on a permit basis. The current laws allow these concessionaires to retain fees they collect at the site, which help pay for the operations and maintenance. This lessens the burden of campground upkeep for Los Padres staff while improving the upkeep of the facilities for the public.

### Adventure Pass

In 1996, Congress created the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program authorizing national forests, national parks and other public lands to collect and retain campground, day use and other recreation fees. In response, a single fee program – the Adventure Pass – was created for use within the four national forests of southern California. Los Padres National Forest has used revenues from the Adventure Pass to protect the environment, provide visitor information, and maintain trails and facilities.

### Focus Trails

In 2000, because Los Padres did not have the funds to maintain all 1,238 miles of non-motorized trails to standard, the Forest developed the “Focus Trails” program. Focus Trails identifies the most important trails on the forest – chosen according to diversity, location, and access – to concentrate limited resources to ensure that the most vital trails are maintained to standard and fully functional. The forest, in partnership with the Los Padres Forest Association, has established district level “Trail Care Committees” to provide forest stakeholders more opportunities to participate in trail planning and maintenance.

### Grants, Partnerships, Volunteer Programs

Los Padres has aggressively pursued grants, partnerships and volunteer programs in the community to complete work that the forest could not do with its available resources.

## Strategies for Increasing Non-appropriated Funding

Due to national budget trends, more appropriated funds do not appear to be a realistic solution to lessen shortfalls. Therefore, here are a number of possible strategies to increase other funding sources.

### Permit Fee Retention Program

Value to Forest: Moderate

Investment Required: Low

Enabler Required: Congressional approval

Los Padres National Forest issues special use authorizations to individuals, corporations and government entities to use national forest land for a multitude of uses. These include mountaintop sites for essential commercial and government communications facilities, as well as routes for pipelines and electricity transmission lines. Other examples include permits for water systems and roads serving private lands within the national forest boundary, apiaries, organization camps and recreation residences.

Permit holders pay fees based on the fair market value of the use derived. These fees are sent to the U.S. Treasury and do not directly benefit the forest. In 2002, the forest generated about \$576,000 in special use permit fees for uses including land use (\$364,000); recreation (\$130,000); power lines (\$49,000); grazing (\$30,000); and timber (\$3,000).

Retention of the fees on the forest would supplement appropriated funds to help cover costs for the management and administration of the permit programs. Specifically, these fees could pay for most of the Non-Recreation Special Uses shortfall.

In collaboration with the three other southern California forests, Los Padres will work with regional and national management of the Forest Service to address this very important opportunity. The first step will be to develop a strategy for collecting and using the fees. This program will require legislation.

Under a relatively new authority, fees collected for commercial or movie filming in Los Padres are retained by the forest. This is currently not a high revenue source, but it could increase with improved marketing of this opportunity to the film industry.

### Collect Mitigation Fees

Value to Forest: Moderate

Investment Required: Low

Enabler Required: Congressional approval

The Forest Service does not have the authority to collect mitigation fees to offset effects of certain authorized uses of forest lands such as private roads, driveways or utility transmission lines. Los Padres should develop a mechanism to collect mitigation fees for the rehabilitation of other impacted forest lands or acquisition of new lands. Another opportunity would be to seek authority to retain fines collected from citations issued for illegal uses of the forest and use the fines for mitigation purposes.

### Permanent Recreation Fee Demonstration Program

Value to Forest: Moderate

Investment Required: Low

Enabler Required: Congressional approval

The Adventure Pass program has addressed ongoing problems in the forest such as graffiti, trash and crime, and has provided forest managers the ability to better serve the high volume of visitors outside of developed recreation sites. With the introduction of the pilot program, the forest has received revenue to improve facilities and services, as well as conduct education programs including fire prevention and conservation.

Fee demonstration authority will expire in September 2004 unless extended by Congress. Permanent fee authority will enable the Forest Service to make improvements to the fee program that will better serve the public.

## Strategies for Reducing Costs & Improving Operations

### Re-evaluate Infrastructure

Value to Forest: Very High

Investment Required: Moderate

Enabler Required: Forest approval and respective Master Plans

With funding levels well below the annual maintenance costs and no signs of receiving \$94 million for deferred maintenance, steps must be taken to utilize limited funding as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Decommission Infrastructure. Since much of the neglected infrastructure would have to be constructed anew to be usable, one option for the forest is to implement a program to decommission roads, trails and facilities deemed less significant in order to focus on those that can be efficiently maintained. The proposed action would entail:

- Determining a realistic core of maintainable infrastructure within the current budget;
- Developing a closure plan;
- Improving planning and maintenance systems to avoid backlogs.

Cost Incentive. Starting in 2004, the forest will have to pay \$.50 per facility square foot to the national Working Capital Fund (WCF). This fee should provide additional incentive to begin closing facilities before falling further into a deficit.

Evaluate Standards. With the high identified costs of maintaining infrastructure, the forest should evaluate standards to ensure that they are accurate, feasible and legally required.

Re-program Funds. Even though funds are designated to their specific program area, it is possible in some cases to move money from one program area to another. For example, to improve the fire organization's urgent need for improved facilities that meet standards, funds could be reallocated from fire management to facility construction funding.

### Improve Community Fire Protection

Value to Forest: High

Investment Required: Moderate

Enabler Required: Congressional approval

Strategic treatment of hazardous fuels can reduce the risks to adjacent communities by reducing wildfire intensity. By restoring fire to a more natural role in the surrounding landscape, the forest would increase firefighter safety and effectiveness by potentially reducing the intensity of wildfires.

Current funding requirements models evaluate the commodity value of resources within the forest such as timber and recreation, but do not evaluate environmental and social resource protection needs such as the protection of homes and surrounding populations.

### **Enhance Interpretive Services**

Interpretive Services has a dispersed management structure on the forest. Creating a position to oversee this program would result in many benefits to the forest and public. The national “Interpretive Services Strategy” can serve as a guide for improved interpretative services by outlining specific actions to ensure high-quality providers, products and programs.

### **Charge for Processing Applications**

The Forest Service has no mechanism for charging administrative fees for processing special use authorization applications. The Washington Office has drafted regulations that, in lieu of using appropriated dollars, would allow the forest to charge a fee to process special use applications.

### **Improve the Planning Process**

A significant amount of specialist (especially archaeologists and biologists) time is spent on fulfilling legal and regulatory mandates. Many projects cannot be undertaken because of insufficient staff time in critical disciplines. Increased specialist staffing or pre-work contracting would enable more to be completed. This would also allow projects to be planned and put “on the shelf” so the forest would be ready to capture funded opportunities as they become available.

The forest could also focus on more strategically important planning activities on a geographic basis rather than dividing funds evenly across all districts and programs. For example, the forest could spend one year and complete all necessary vegetation management planning solely on one ranger district.

### **Focus on Employment Needs**

Even when funding is available, it often takes up to a year or more to fill a vacant position, resulting in poor service, heavier workloads, expensive overtime and employee burnout.

In the next decade, the forest will experience a significant number of retirements across all disciplines and levels of experience. The forest should start an aggressive recruitment program that involves:

- Hiring more generalists;
- Cross training current employees;
- Developing mentoring programs to pass on experience and knowledge;
- Expanding opportunities to contract appropriate work.

## Partnerships: A Vision for the Future



Logo for the interagency Visitor Center at the Santa Barbara harbor.

Los Padres National Forest managers see the future health and prosperity of the forest as dependent on three types of partnerships: non-profit partnerships, interagency partnerships and partnerships with the public.

### Expand Role of Non-Profit Partnerships

At present, there are individual partnerships for different types of projects and programs. They provide valued services, but they do not capture the collaborative potential among activities. Los Padres should explore development of a long-term, broad-based partner to help make projects and collaborations happen more quickly and efficiently. Such a partnership could collect funds through:

- Membership fees
- Grant writing
- Donation drives
- Gift shops and book stores
- On-line forest merchandise
- Summer camp programs
- Guided interpretive tours

The partnership could use the funds for:

- Project planning
- Contracting NEPA work
- Improving facilities
- Improving habitat
- Conducting specific and broad projects
- Surveying and monitoring
- Enhancing visitor information and interpretive services
- Producing educational materials

### Increase Interagency and Third-Party Relationships

With a future of decreasing funding and increasing population, there is no better time for organizing agencies to form mutually beneficial relationships. This is also the time to think on a larger scale. Managing Los Padres as an “island” is

not the best way to protect the resources and serve the public. For example, three Santa Barbara area land management agencies – Los Padres National Forest, Channel Islands National Park and Channel Islands Marine Sanctuary – have recognized this and have created the new “Outdoors Santa Barbara Visitor Center.” The goal of the Center is to help visitors discover the perfect picnic area, hiking trail, or quiet spot for a sunset. Its formation would not have been possible without the joint efforts of all three agencies.

### Strengthen Relationships with the Public

Los Padres needs to improve education about the forest, build awareness, cultivate responsibility, increase community involvement, and involve socially responsible businesses.

### Partnerships at Work: The Brazil Ranch

Protecting the environment and conserving natural resources requires local, national and global cooperation. When Los Padres National Forest acquired the historic 1,200-acre Brazil Ranch in 2002, community members, public agencies and non-government organizations joined the Forest Service in discussions to create a special vision for this extraordinary place.

### Vision for the Brazil Ranch

People depend on the natural environment for water, food, fuel, shelter, medicine, open space and beauty. Many environmental problems respect no borders and threaten the health, prosperity and even the national security of nations. Addressing these problems and achieving sustainable, socially responsible management of natural resources – locally, nationally, and globally – requires leaders to find new ways to establish and share connections between people and places. Brazil Ranch is the point of convergence for this discussion.



**The Brazil Ranch offers:**

- A place to strengthen relationships between natural environments and human cultures and communities.
- A place to offer educational programming, seminars, and policy forums that foster responsible leadership advocating conservation, stewardship, sustainability, and social responsibility.
- A place of artistic practice and reflection that invites painters, writers, photographers, philosophers, musicians and others to collaborate and communicate the values of natural resources.
- A place to hold unique, small-scale events within the internationally recognized Big Sur coast, including group meetings, corporate retreats, film location, weddings and family reunions.



Brazil Ranch is a historic 1,200-acre ranch located along spectacular coastal bluffs overlooking the Pacific Ocean, only 15 minutes from Big Sur, Carmel and Monterey. Threatened with development, Brazil Ranch was purchased by the conservation community and public funding in 2002, transferring management responsibility to Los Padres National Forest.



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