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Forest Service and Environmental Protection Agency Increase Coordination to Improve Water Quality

WASHINGTON (September 28, 2007) – The U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have agreed on new steps designed to improve water quality on National Forests and Grasslands. Forest Service Chief Abigail Kimbell and EPA Assistant Administrator for Water Benjamin Grumbles signed today a Memorandum of Agreement that enables both agencies to increase coordinated efforts to manage, protect, and restore the health of the Nation's water resources.

"This agreement highlights the benefits that can be created when federal agencies acknowledge a shared vision and come together to work toward a common goal," said Kimbell. "By combining the organizational strengths and capabilities of the Forest Service with EPA's Office of Water, we are leveraging the best assets of both agencies to improve water quality on national forest lands."

"Healthy forests need clean water, and clean water needs healthy forests," said Grumbles. "This EPA-Forest Service agreement is a blueprint for protecting America's watersheds on national forests and grasslands."

More than 60 million Americans get their water from sources on the National Forests in addition to municipal water supplies. Watersheds play an important role in supporting aquatic species and biodiversity and provide recreational opportunities to millions of visitors each year. Data shows that approximately eight percent of all water quality impairments nationally are located on National Forest System lands. Leading causes of these impairments include elevated temperatures, excess sediment, and habitat modification.

This agreement identifies areas in which the Forest Service and EPA will increase coordination of activities and cooperation with states, territories and tribes to address water quality impairments on National Forest System lands and accelerate attainment of water quality standards.

More information can be found at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/biology/> and <http://www.epa.gov/owow/tmdl/>.

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