



# United States Congress

NEWS RELEASE

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## **Minnick, Simpson announce \$14 million for Idaho**

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Nampa, ID – The U.S. Department of Agriculture and Secretary Tom Vilsack will spend an additional \$14 million to manage Idaho forests damaged by bark beetle infestation.

Secretary Vilsack pledged the funding late last month after speaking to Idaho Congressman Walt Minnick, who has worked in collaboration with fellow Idaho Congressman Mike Simpson to raise awareness of the serious threat facing Idaho forests.

“This issue has been one of my most important since taking office,” said Minnick, a first-term Idaho Congressman who spent nearly two decades as a business leader in the forest products industry. “I have been fortunate to spend most of my life enjoying time in Idaho’s forests and backcountry. I am committed to making sure that those forests are healthy so that they will not only be enjoyed but can also be managed to help strengthen Idaho’s economy.” ([Click here](#) for more on Minnick’s involvement in the bark beetle issue.)

“Bark beetles are a huge menace to our forests, and throughout Idaho you can see the irreparable damage they are doing as dead and dying trees litter the mountainside,” said Simpson, who is Ranking Member of the Interior and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee which funds the Forest Service. “Sound forest management practices are necessary to battle the bark beetle infestation in the West, and I want to commend Congressman Minnick for his efforts in securing needed funding to implement these programs.”

Bark beetle infestation is advancing throughout the West, and has destroyed thousands of acres of previously healthy forests. The epidemic has negatively impacted forest health and has resulted in dramatic increases in dead and dying trees.

Secretary Vilsack recognizes that Western forests have experienced significant bark beetle infestation, and that Idaho forests are damaged and threatened. He directed \$14 million to the National Forests in Idaho, above amounts previously allocated for forest management and conservation programs. The funds will accelerate actions to improve watershed resiliency, restore forest health and treat areas affected by bark beetles.

“Forest lands play a critical role in providing clean water and a healthier climate for all Americans, and the USDA is committed to protecting and preserving this important resource from pests like the bark beetle,” Vilsack said. “These funds will help manage our forests and improve their health for future generations, and I look forward to continuing to work with the Idaho delegation to address these important forest and watershed health issues together.”