



PROTECTING SOUTH DAKOTA'S FORESTLAND IN THE BLACK HILLS

As a longtime member of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, Sen. Thune has strongly supported proactive management of the Black Hills National Forest and other forestland to reduce impacts from insect epidemics like the [mountain pine beetle](#) and from [catastrophic wildfires](#).

Highlights of Sen. Thune's Commitment to South Dakota's Forestland

Black Hills National Forest

- In 2021, Sen. Thune [led](#) the South Dakota and Wyoming congressional delegations in a letter expression concern with the U.S. Forest Service's (USFS's) recommendation to reduce the Black Hills National Forest timber sale program, which plays a critical role in maintaining the health of the forest and supporting the region's forest products industry.
- Following this effort, Sen. Thune continued to [urge](#) the USFS to improve the Black Hills National Forest timber sale program by meeting timber harvest targets and by collaborating with stakeholders and local officials.
- In 2022, Sen. Thune again [led](#) the South Dakota and Wyoming delegations in a letter urging the USFS to expedite treatment of the BHNF, which would help maintain the timber sale program.
- Sen. Thune also [introduced](#) the Black Hills Forest Protection and Jobs Preservation Act, which would require the Forest Service to conduct vegetative management and timber production projects on the Black Hills National Forest and surrounding national forests in order to maintain forest health and the timber sale program.

Forest Restoration and Treatment

- In 2021, Sen. Thune [introduced](#) the Expediting Forest Restoration and Recovery Act, which would require the Forest Service to expedite the treatment of more than 70 million acres of the National Forest System lands, including portions of the Black Hills National Forest, that have been identified as in-need-of-treatment to reduce the threat of insect and disease infestations and catastrophic wildfires.
- Also in 2021, Sen. Thune [introduced](#) legislation to temporarily increase the availability of H-2B visas for the purpose of restoring American forests. The bill would establish an uncapped, but temporary, carve-out of the H-2B program to permit a surge in workers to address a multi-year backlog in forest management, including wildfire restoration, long-term timber supply, and carbon sinks.