



Legislative & Policy Update – December 2022

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The [Council of Western State Foresters](#) (CWSF) Legislative & Policy Update provides information on issues of importance to CWSF. Policy and legislative updates are found on the CWSF webpage [here](#). Please note that the items highlighted in these updates are only a selection of the issues CWSF and the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition (WFLC) are monitoring. Keep an eye out for our monthly newsletter that will provide summaries on other key legislative and programmatic issues. If you have not yet subscribed, you can do so [here](#). For more information, please contact [Danielle Okst](#), Director of Policy.

The skidder bridge provision of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) is aimed at protecting water resources and reducing water quality degradation during forestry-related operations by supporting the establishment of temporary bridge rental/loan/cost-share programs with states and federally recognized Indian Tribes. The application period is open through December 20, 2022. The Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission (Commission) established by the BIL is continuing its work to develop recommendations and strategies to better prevent, manage, suppress, and recover from wildfires, and provide recommendations for aerial firefighting equipment needs.

BIL Temporary Bridges

Section 40804: Ecosystem Restoration	
“There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service, for the activities described... \$2,130,000,000 for the period of fiscal years 2022 through 2026.”	
Total Amount for FY22-FY26	Activity
\$50M	Division D Title VIII Sec. 40804(b)5: \$50,000,000 shall be made available to the Secretary of Agriculture to award grants to States and Indian Tribes to establish rental programs for portable skidder bridges, bridge mats, or other temporary water crossing structures, to minimize stream bed disturbance on non-Federal land and Federal land

The USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) [announced](#) a funding opportunity for the creation of programs providing portable skidder bridges, bridge mats, or other temporary water crossing structures to loggers or others working in forested areas. These bridges help minimize impacts from trucks or other equipment, particularly in sensitive wetlands. \$8 million is available for fiscal year 2022.

Applications are being accepted through December 20, 2022. Please view the [application](#), [application instructions](#), and [notice of funding opportunity](#) for additional information. Additional wood innovation

opportunities, including the \$12.5 million targeted as financial assistance for owners of facilities that purchase and process byproducts from forest restoration projects, can be found on the [wood innovation programs page](#).

Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission

The [Commission](#) is made up of federal agency, state, local, and Tribal government, and private sector representatives. They are diligently working to complete their report of federal policy recommendations and strategies due to Congress within a year of their initial meeting in September. To facilitate this task, workgroups have been created to tackle the topical areas outlined for recommendations within the BIL, which the full group will then consider for inclusion in their report.

Topics include:

- **Aviation Strategy:** Creation of a strategy to meet aerial firefighting equipment needs through 2030 in the most cost-effective manner.
- **Cohesive Strategy:** A review of the [Cohesive Strategy](#) and recommendations for increasing its effectiveness.
- **Landscapes:** May include recommendations related to landscape treatments, prescribed fire, landscape planning (including a discussion of categorical exclusions and planning capacity), forest products industry, and wood utilization.
- **Communities:** May include recommendations related to the structure ignition zone (e.g., structure modification, defensible space), insurance, Community Wildfire Protection Plans, land-use planning, codes and ordinances, long-term recovery planning, risk assessment, and community risk reduction.
- **Post-fire:** May include recommendations related to social recovery, long-term recovery planning, post-fire flood mitigation, remediation, and reforestation.
- **Response Coordination:** May include recommendations related to evaluation of coordination of response to and suppression of wildfires occurring across jurisdictions, including suppression remediation.
- **Science, Data, and Technology:** May include recommendations related to policy change for modernizing and expanding the use of technology, as well as a consideration of the implications of data mining and data diversity.
- **Public Health and Infrastructure:** May include recommendations related to utilities, transportation, occupational and public health, monitoring and alert systems, water, and evacuation.
- **Appropriations:** An assessment of federal spending, performance measures, and accountability for wildland fire-related programs.
- **Workforce**

Recommendations for policy changes on these topics can be submitted within the dates outlined on the [recommendation page](#). These deadlines align with the workgroup meeting schedule to discuss and consider the submissions.

Additional Resources

It has been one year since the BIL was signed into law, and federal agencies, states, and partners are continuing the effort to implement all of the provisions over this five fiscal year period. Read about the accomplishments thus far, including [efforts to reduce wildfire risk](#) across 10 landscapes in Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Montana, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona in the 'One year of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law at USDA' [fact sheet](#).

More information can be found on the forestry provisions of the BIL in the updated [BIL briefer](#) on CWSF's [publications page](#), which also contains an informational [briefer](#) on the Inflation Reduction Act.