



Legislative & Policy Update – October 2023

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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 [Neil Simpson](#), Director of Policy.

This month's policy update highlights [ON FIRE: The Report of the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission](#), and the newly released [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) (NOFO) for Wood Innovations, Community Wood, and Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance Grants, and updates from Washington D.C.

ON FIRE: The Report of the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission

In response to the ongoing wildfire crisis, the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law created the Wildland Fire and Management Commission. The Commission, which began its work in September 2022, was [tasked](#) with making policy recommendations to Congress on how to improve the nation's management of wildfire across the country. The Commission is comprised of 50 members representing federal agencies, state, local, and tribal governments, and the private sector. State Foresters were represented by Nevada State Forester and Past President of the National Association of State Foresters (NASF), Kacey KC, and Washington State Forester George Geissler served as a subject matter expert.

The Commission reviewed “every facet of the crisis, including mitigation, management, and post-fire rehabilitation and recovery” including the wildland environment, the built environment, and the impacts on communities and people. This enormous undertaking led to a comprehensive and holistic report based on decades of experience and reams of scientific research. The report identified “seven overarching themes that underpin and unite” the 148 recommendations. The seven themes are:

- Urgent New Approaches: Holistic and comprehensive structures
- Collaboration: Shared decision-making
- Proactive Action: Planning, mitigating, and recovering with resilience
- Enabling Beneficial Fire: Fire-adapted ecosystems and communities
- Workforce: Supporting and expanding
- Modernized Tools for Decision-Making: Science, data, and technology
- Investing in Resilience: Dedicated and sustained funding

The report details that there is no one solution to the wildfire crisis and urges Congress to take an “all of the above approach” to enact policy changes to meet the “need for immediate action and investment at a scale commensurate with the crisis.”

CWSF, in conjunction with the Northeast-Midwest State Foresters Alliance, the Southern Group of State Foresters and NASF, is analyzing the report and developing a coordinated plan to support enacting the recommendations in the report.

Funding Opportunities

The USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) [announced](#) nearly \$50 million in grant funding to strengthen the forest products economy.

There are three specific funding opportunities. Eligible applicants include state, local, and tribal governments, special purpose districts (e.g., public utilities, fire, school, and conservation districts), for-profit and not-for-profit entities, and institutes of higher education.

Wood Innovations Grants Program to stimulate, expand, and support U.S. wood products and wood energy markets.

- Deadline: December 15, 2023
- A total of \$20 million is available through the program. The maximum for each award is generally \$300,000 with up to \$500,000 available for projects that demonstrate a significant impact. Funding of up to \$1 million is available for stationary wood energy systems rated greater than five Megawatts in thermal output.

Community Wood Grant Program to install thermally led community wood energy systems or build or expand an innovative wood product facility.

- Deadline: December 15, 2023
- A total of up to \$6 million in funding is available, with a maximum individual award of \$1 million. Awards up to \$1.5 million may be considered with advanced approval from a Forest Service Regional Coordinator.

Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance Grant Program to provide financial assistance to facilities that purchase and process byproducts from ecosystem restoration projects in areas at risk of unnaturally severe wildfire or insect and disease infestation.

- Deadline: December 1, 2023
- A total of \$23.3 million is available with a minimum grant amount of \$50,000 and a maximum amount of \$1 million.

Information provided is from the [Wood Innovations Program webpage](#), where you can find applications, instructions, webinars, fact sheets, and more information about these funding opportunities.

Appropriations and the Race for the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives

In a last-minute effort to fund the federal government beyond September 30, 2023, former Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) brought a Continuing Resolution (CR) to the House floor for a vote. While the CR passed with bipartisan support, it led Matt Gaetz (R-FL) to force a vote on a motion to vacate, which passed, removing McCarthy from the Speakership. Since McCarthy was removed on October 3rd, the House has been unable to elect a new Speaker or consider any new legislation, including the appropriations bills needed to keep the federal government running beyond November 17th and the Farm Bill.

Information on this topic is rapidly evolving. Tuesday night, the House GOP [nominated](#) its fourth candidate, Mike Johnson (R-LA), for Speaker of the House, and he was [elected](#) on Wednesday. We will continue to monitor the issue and provide updates as information becomes available.