



Legislative & Policy Update – July 2024

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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:

- 2025 Appropriations News
- Farm Bill Update
- Wildfire Insurance Coverage Study Act
- Enhancing Mitigation and Building Effective Resilience (EMBER) Act
- The National Prescribed Fire Act

Fiscal Year 2025 Appropriations

On July 24, 2024, the House of Representatives wrapped up debating and voting on amendments to the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, H.R. 8998 but did not vote on the bill, which is strongly opposed by Democrats.

On July 9, 2024, the bill passed the House Appropriations Committee on a party-line vote of 29 - 25. Since then, all twelve appropriations bills have passed through committee, and four of those bills have passed the House. In the Senate, the Appropriations Committee has passed three bills through committee. However, it has yet to mark up or pass an Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies bill or bring any bills to the floor for a vote.

While Department of Interior (DOI) and USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) appropriations remain relatively stable, the bill contains significant cuts and numerous policy provisions opposed by Democrats. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), the top Democrat on the Appropriations Committee, voiced the Democrats' opposition in her [opening remarks](#), and the White House has stated that the President would [veto the bill](#).

The bill provides \$14.69 billion for DOI—\$42.1 million below FY 24 enacted levels—and \$8.43 billion for the Forest Service—\$53.3 million above FY 24 enacted levels. Increases to the Forest Service Budget are primarily geared to permanently increasing wildland firefighter pay.

Policy provisions in the bill would:

- Block the Forest Service’s proposed Old Growth Amendment for Land Management Plans.
- Block EPA’s Particulate Matter 2.5 rule.
- Direct DOI to reissue the final rule delisting the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem population of Grizzly Bears under the Endangered Species Act.
- Address the Cottonwood Decision by mandating DOI issue the final rule for the proposed “Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Regulations for Interagency Cooperation” of January 2021.
- Extends the authorization of Good Neighbor Authority revenue retention until October 1, 2025.

Click below for:

- [Bill Text and Information on Congress.gov](#)
- [House Appropriations Committee Press Release](#)
- [National Association of State Foresters Appropriations Platform and Recommendations](#)

See the table on the following page for details on select Forest Service budget line items.

USDA Forest Service Budget Highlights
Compiled By the Council of Western State Foresters/Western Forestry
Leadership Coalition

This is not a comprehensive list of all the USDA Forest Service programs and budget line items.

USDA Forest Service Budget Highlights [in Millions]

Program	FY 22 Enacted	FY 23 Enacted	FY 24 Enacted Consolidated Approp. Act (enacted)	FY 25 USFS Budget Request	FY 25 House Report
Forest Service Operations	\$1,069.09	\$1,152.74	\$1,150.00	\$1,187.07	\$1,035.00
salaries & expenses^	\$363.00	\$389.41	\$389.00	\$399.23	\$0.00
Forest and Rangeland Research	\$296.62	\$307.27	\$300.00	\$315.62	\$299.76
salaries & expenses	\$210.08	\$215.58	\$212.00	\$221.43	\$207.76
Forest Inventory and Analysis*	\$22.20	\$32.20	\$31.50	\$33.70	\$32.00
State, Private, and Tribal Forestry	\$315.20	\$337.76	\$303.31	\$305.41	\$282.96
salaries & expenses	\$57.74	\$65.09	\$52.00	\$62.91	\$50.96
State Fire Assistance	\$75.00	\$76.00	\$76.00	\$76.00	\$78.00
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$20.00	\$21.00	\$21.00	\$21.00	\$23.00
Forest Stewardship	\$12.00	\$12.50	\$12.00	\$12.50	\$12.00
Forest Legacy Program**	\$88.88	\$77.94	\$92.25	\$94.23	\$94.25
Urban and Community Forestry	\$36.00	\$40.00	\$36.00	\$40.00	\$33.00
National Forest System	\$1,866.55	\$1,974.39	\$1,863.56	\$ 2,007.15	\$ 1,866.47
salaries & expenses	\$1.45	\$1,519.08	\$1,459.35	\$ 1,541.34	\$ 1,430.17
Hazardous Fuels+	\$187.39	\$207.00	\$175.45	\$ 207.00	\$ 202.00
Forest Products	\$38.00	\$40.00	\$39.00	\$ 41.00	\$ 43.00
Wildland Fire Management	\$2,005.11	\$2,116.96	\$2,312.65	\$2,550.44	\$2,407.74
Salaries and Expenses	\$822.11	\$913.96	\$1,109.65	\$1,334.94	\$1,204.74
Preparedness	\$172.00	\$192.00	\$192.00	\$204.50	\$192.00
Suppression	\$1,011.00	\$1,386.00	\$1,011.00	\$1,011.00	\$1,011.00
Total Appropriations for USFS	\$10,846.60	\$10,075.00	\$8,373.32	\$ 8,919.37	\$ 8,426.60

^FY 25 House bill does not allocate specific amounts to any budget line items (BLI) within Forest Service Operations

*NASF continues to request a salaries and expense BLI within Forest Inventory and Analysis

**Forest Legacy is funded by the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

+ The House Bill does not transfer the Hazardous Fuels Management funding to Wildland Fire

Farm Bill Update

[E&E News reports](#) that House Agriculture Committee Chair Glenn “G.T” Thompson (R-PA) and Senator John Boozman (R-AR), the ranking Republican on the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee, discussed the Farm Bill at a forum during the Republican National Convention.

The two discussed the difficulties of passing a Farm Bill. Boozman indicated that extending the 2018 Farm Bill would be preferable to passing a bill without significant changes, and Thompson said that, at a minimum, the Farm Bill will wait until annual appropriations are completed.

Wildfire Insurance Coverage Study Act, H.R. 7462

The Wildfire Insurance Coverage Study Act of 2024, [H.R. 7462](#), sponsored by Representative Maxine Walters (D-CA), has passed the Committee on Financial Services and has been reported to the Union Calendar for consideration on the House floor. The bill would require a Government Accountability Office study regarding insurance for wildfire damage.

The bill contains over thirty individual items for study under four broad groups:

- The extent and nature of wildfire risk.
- Existing state of homeowner and commercial property insurance coverage for damage from wildfires.
- Actions taken by state insurance regulatory agencies in response to increased premiums and exclusion of coverage.
- Challenges faced by private insurers underwriting wildfire risk.

Enhancing Mitigation and Building Effective Resilience (EMBER) Act, S. 4628

Senators Mark Kelly (D-AZ) and Mitt Romney (R-UT) have introduced the Ember Act, [S. 4628](#), which seeks to implement 29 recommendations from the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission's final report, including:

- Updating policies and guidance for post-fire recovery and allowing FEMA to reduce or waive match requirements for wildfire planning and recovery.
- Supporting investments in wood processing facilities.
- Requiring the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency to provide renewable fuels standards identification numbers for biomass derived from fuel reduction and forest restoration activities.
- Expanding training opportunities for local fire entities.

National Prescribed Fire Act, S. 4424 and H.R. 8557

Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Representative Kim Schrier (D-WA) have introduced the bicameral National Prescribed Fire Act of 2024. In the Senate, it is bill [S. 4424](#), and in the House, it is [H.R. 8557](#).

The companion bills seek to:

- Authorize \$300 million for the Forest Service and DOI to plan, prepare, and conduct prescribed burns.
- Establish a collaborative program to implement prescribed burns on county, state, and private land.
- Establish prescribed fire workforce development programs at the Forest Service and DOI.
- Streamline decision-making and approval for use of prescribed fire under state, tribal, or local government smoke management programs.
- Set clear standards for prescribed fire practitioner liability.