



CWSF
COUNCIL OF WESTERN
STATE FORESTERS

Legislative & Policy Update – September 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.

Read the latest policy update from Neil Simpson, CWSF/WFLC Director of Policy. This month's policy update covers:

- Legislation Introduced to Make Changes to the Forest Legacy Program
- Congress to Move a Continuing Resolution in Time to Prevent a Government Shutdown
- Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources to Consider Several Forestry Bills
- Fix Our Forest Act Passes the House

Legislation Introduced to Make Changes to the Forest Legacy Program

Representative John Garamendi (D-CA) reintroduced the “Forest Legacy Management Flexibility Act” with Representatives Jared Huffman (D-CA), Ann M. Kuster (D-NH), Jim Costa (D-CA), and Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR).

The bill would allow states to designate accredited, nonprofit land trusts to hold conservation easements purchased through the USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) Forest Legacy Program. Current law authorizing the Forest Service [Forest Legacy Program](#) requires that only federal or state governments hold conservation easements purchased under the Forest Legacy Program.

The bill has been referred to the House Committee on Agriculture.

[Press Release](#)

[Bill Text](#)

Congress to Move a Continuing Resolution in Time to Prevent a Government Shutdown

After the House failed to pass a Continuing Resolution (CR), which included the [SAVE Act](#), House and Senate leaders have agreed to a CR that would fund the government until December 20, 2024.

A House of Representatives vote on the CR is expected on September 25 and it is widely expected to pass and move to the Senate. In a [Dear Colleagues](#) letter, House Speaker Johnson (R-LA) writes that the House will take up a “clean, three-month CR to prevent the Senate from jamming us with a bill loaded with billions in new spending and unrelated provisions” and Senate Appropriations Committee Chair Patty Murray (D-WA) has [urged swift passage](#) of a CR.

In addition to extending funding at fiscal year 2024 levels, the CR would extend States’ ability to retain revenue under the Good Neighbor Authority and the Forest Service’s Agriculture Conservation Experienced Services (ACES) program.

[Bill Text](#)

Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources to Consider Several Forestry Bills

The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources is considering over 70 natural resources related bills. A meeting was scheduled for September 26, but has been postponed. Bills being considered that relate to forestry and wildfire include:

[S1764 - Western Wildfire Support Act of 2023](#) introduced by Senator Cortez Masto (D-NV). The purpose of the bill is to improve federal activities relating to wildfires, and for other purposes.

[S2132 - Catastrophic Wildfire Prevention Act of 2023](#) introduced by Senator Lee (R-UT). The purpose of the bill is to require the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a pilot program for the establishment and use of a pre-fire-suppression stand density index, and for other purposes.

[S2151 - Utah Wildfire Research Institute Act of 2023](#) introduced by Senator Lee (R-UT). The bill would amend the Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act of 2004 to require the establishment of an additional institute in Utah.

[S2867 - Promoting Effective Forest Management Act of 2023](#) introduced by Senator Barrasso (R-WY). The bill is intended to address the forest health crisis on the National Forest System and public lands and for other purposes.

[S2991 - America’s Revegetation and Carbon Sequestration Act of 2023](#) introduced by Senator Manchin (I-WV). The bill addresses revegetation, biochar, mass timber, research, and other items in an effort to improve carbon sequestration and revegetation.

[S4424 - National Prescribed Fire Act of 2024](#) introduced by Senator Wyden (D-OR). The bill would direct the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to encourage and expand the use of prescribed fire on land managed by the Department of the Interior or the Forest Service, with an emphasis on units of the National Forest System in the western United States, to acknowledge and support the long-standing use of cultural burning by Tribes and Indigenous practitioners, and for other purposes.

Fix Our Forest Act Passes the House

On September 24, the House of Representatives passed the Fix Our Forests Act introduced by House Natural Resources Committee Chair Bruce Westerman (R-AR). In an earlier [press release](#), the bill was described as a “comprehensive, bipartisan bill that will restore forest health, protect communities from megafires, and reduce catastrophic wildfires that contribute to pollution and climate change.”

Prior to passing the bill, the House agreed to [16 amendments](#) to the bill, including:

- Ensuring grazing is one of the authorized hazardous fuels reduction activities.
- Allowing Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) revenue to be used for reconstruction, repair, and restoration of non-NFS roads and new permanent roads on federal lands.
- Expands GNA to special districts.
- Expand nursery and seed capacity work to support reforestation and restoration by state, Tribal, and local governments and institutions of higher education.

The bill generally seeks to expedite the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and improve forest management activities on National Forest System Lands, with some sections aimed at implementing recommendations in the [Wildland Fire Management and Mitigation Commission Report](#).

[Bill Text](#)