



Legislative & Policy Update – July 2026

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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](#). 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, which provides 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](#), CWSF/WFLC Director of Policy.

This month's policy update covers:

- Senate Commemorates the 70th Anniversary of the Institute of Pacific Island Forestry
- Arbitrator Orders Forest Service to Roll Back Return to Office Orders
- Government Accountability Office Releases Report on Forest Service Timber Sales Program
- House of Representatives Passes Continuing Resolution for Fiscal Year 2027

Senate Commemorates the 70th Anniversary of the Institute of Pacific Island Forestry

The Senate has passed [Senate Resolution 742](#) to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the USDA Forest Service's (Forest Service) Institute of Pacific Islands Forestry (IPIF). The resolution also "reaffirms the Senate's strong support for the critical ongoing operations of IPIF and its staff."

Introduced by Senator Mazie Hirono (D-HI), the resolution notes IPIF has been serving the Pacific region since 1956 and was congressionally authorized in the 1990 Farm Bill. It emphasizes IPIF's important role in the region, including critical wildfire and invasive species work. It also recognizes its location "makes it the premier Forest Service institute and hub for scientific research in the Pacific region" and is "vital to ensuring the institute is able to carry out the research goals set forth by Congress in a fiscally responsible manner."

The resolution was passed by unanimous consent on July 14, 2026.

Arbitrator Orders Forest Service to Roll Back Return to Office Orders

An arbitrator has determined that the Forest Service's April 2025 direction requiring workers to return to the office violated union contracts. The arbitrator has ordered the Forest Service to reinstate telework and remote agreements that existed prior to President Trump's [January 2025 directive](#) requiring federal employees to return to in-person work at their duty stations. Additionally, the Forest Service must restore leave balances and provide workers who left the agency due to the change an opportunity to return to work.

The challenge was brought by the National Federation of Federal Employees. The Forest Service has 30 days to appeal the ruling.

Read press coverage from the [Federal News Network](#).

Government Accountability Office Releases Report on Forest Service Timber Sales Program

In accordance with the direction in the House Report accompanying the 2024 Department of Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) has released a report titled [“Forest Service: Opportunities Exist to Improve Timber Sale Management.”](#) The report notes that the Forest Service only reached approximately 90% of its timber harvest targets in fiscal years (FY) 2014 through 2024. The report describes factors Forest Service officials identified as limiting the agency’s ability to meet its targets and examines agency officials’ and stakeholders’ views on how to improve the Forest Service timber sale program.

It documents the Forest Service timber sale process and mechanisms by which the agency can sell timber. It also identifies barriers, such as staffing challenges and timber sale planning, and numerous opportunities to improve timber sale management, including designing timber sales to improve economic viability and develop additional performance measures. The GAO streamlined these opportunities into four recommendations for Executive Action, stating the Chief of the Forest Service should:

- “Conduct strategic workforce planning related to managing timber sales and develop tailored strategies to address any skills and knowledge gaps.”
- “Take steps to more frequently and consistently communicate information related to timber sales to industry, other stakeholders, and the public.”
- “Develop additional performance goals to better measure the effects of timber sales on the agency’s multiple-use mission.”
- “Assess the agency’s current operating environment and opportunities to improve timber sales management and take steps to comprehensively implement and institutionalize the opportunities as appropriate.”

The report is part two of a two-part series. The first report, [“Forest Service: Timber Sales in Fiscal Years 2014 - 2023,”](#) examined how the Forest Service sets harvest levels and detailed the annual volume of timber sold. According to the report, the Forest Service agreed with the GAO’s findings and recommendations.

House of Representatives Passes Continuing Resolution for Fiscal Year 2027

The House of Representatives has passed a [continuing resolution \(CR\) for FY27](#) months before the September 30 deadline for passing annual appropriations bills. The legislation passed by a margin of 220 - 205, generally along party lines. In a committee [press release](#) for the bill's introduction, Chairman Cole stated it is a short-term, clean stopgap that will prevent a government shutdown and “take partisan politics and posturing off the table” before the mid-term elections. The press release also notes that the House has advanced all 12 appropriations bills through committee and passed three bills, but no appropriations bills have passed the Senate Appropriations Committee.

The CR extends funding at FY26 levels through December 4, 2026, with direction that agencies must spend in the “most limited” manner possible to continue operations until final FY27 appropriation levels are enacted by Congress. Section 125 provides an exception for USDA and Department of Interior wildfire suppression, allowing funding to be apportioned to the agencies “up to the rate for operations necessary for wildfire suppression activities.”

News outlets are reporting Senate appropriators are working on a [bipartisan deal](#) to bring a Senate CR to the floor for a vote before the August recess. The Senate is working to include [White House-requested anomalies](#), or specific exceptions to the duration, amount, or purpose of specific appropriations. These requested anomalies include:

- Ability to expend wildfire appropriations and wildfire operations reserve funds at rates necessary for suppression operations.
- Language to expand authorities for the U.S. Wildland Fire Service to perform hazardous fuels mitigation.
- Language to increase the number of acres of federal lands excluded from NEPA requirements.