



CWSF
COUNCIL OF WESTERN
STATE FORESTERS

Legislative & Policy Update – May 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:

- Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill Text Released
- Senate Confirms Steve Pearce to Lead the BLM
- Farm Bill Passes the House of Representatives
- Legislation Introduced to Establish a Commission on Natural Disaster Risk Management and Insurance
- Bill Introduced to Establish a National Wildlife Corridors System
- Bill Introduced to Require Information Technology Compatibility between USDA and DOI
- FEMA Review Council Final Report

Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill Text Released

On May 20, 2026, the House Appropriations Committee released bill text for the fiscal year (FY) 27 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Bill, which funds Department of the Interior (DOI) agencies and the USDA Forest Service (Forest Service).

Rather than advancing the structural changes and cuts proposed in the [Forest Service Budget Justification](#), the Committee's bill would fund the Forest Service at \$8.79 billion, a \$180 million increase from FY26.

The bill would fund primary Forest Service accounts at the following levels.

- **Forest Service Operations \$1,000,283,000**; a \$90 million decrease from FY26.
- **Forest and Rangeland Research \$295,000,000**; a \$13.7 million decrease from FY26.
- **State, Private, and Tribal Forestry \$283,500,000**; a \$27 million decrease from FY26.
- **National Forest System \$1,876,907,000**; a \$19 million increase from FY26.
- **Wildland Fire Management \$2,628,000,000**; a \$201.9 million increase from FY26.

It would provide a \$2 million boost to the Forest Inventory and Analysis program and retain it within Forest and Rangeland Research, rather than transfer it to the National Forest System. Within the National Forest System, the bill provides \$185 million for hazardous fuels and authorizes up to \$30 million of that funding for grants to incentivize increased use of biomass from federal lands. It also authorizes up to \$20 million in

hazardous fuels funding for contracts, grants, and agreements on non-federal land, provided the activities benefit resources on federal land.

Within DOI, the bill provides \$1.16 billion to fund the newly created U.S. Wildland Fire Service.

Report language and additional budget line-item details should be available following the Committee's markup, scheduled for May 20, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. ET.

Watch the [markup](#).

View the Committee's [press release](#).

View the [bill text](#).

Senate Confirms Steve Pearce to Lead the BLM

Steve Pearce, President Trump's nominee to be the Director of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), was confirmed by the Senate on May 18, 2026. Pearce is a former New Mexico Congressman and the owner of an oil and gas well servicing company. Environmental groups have largely [opposed](#) his nomination, while organizations such as the [National Cattlemen's Beef Association](#) and [Western Energy Alliance](#) have supported him. He and 48 other nominees were confirmed along party lines in a 46-43 en bloc vote.

Farm Bill Passes House of Representatives

On April 30, 2026, the House of Representatives passed the [Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026](#), commonly referred to as the Farm Bill, by a margin of 224-200.

The bill aims to support work on state and private land and accelerate active management on federal forest lands with a diversity of forestry programs. In addition to the forestry provisions detailed in the [February Newsletter](#), several forestry provisions were added to the bill during the floor amendment process, including:

- Directs the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a [grant program](#) to facilitate tree planting that reduces residential energy consumption.
- Directs the Secretary of Agriculture, in coordination with the Secretary of the Interior, to [identify priority federal lands](#) for ecological restoration involving vegetation removal and authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to provide up to \$220 million in loan guarantees to eligible entities to establish, reopen, retrofit, expand, or improve sawmills or wood-processing facilities located within proximity to identified federal lands under the Timber Production Expansion Guaranteed Loan Program.
- Directs the Secretary of Agriculture to [conduct a study](#) to evaluate the effectiveness of wildfire mitigation methods in shrubland ecosystems.
- [Enhances forest management](#) practices to protect the last remaining giant sequoia groves from catastrophic wildfires.

The Congressional Research Service has produced a line-by-line [comparison](#) of existing law and provisions in the bill.

The bill now heads to the Senate for consideration, where Agriculture Committee Chairman John Boozman (R-AR) [applauded](#) the House's passage of the bill and stated that Senate legislative text would be available in mid-May. Senate [Democrats stated](#), "We look forward to working with Senate Republicans on a bipartisan Farm Bill that can be successful on the Senate floor."

Legislation Introduced to Establish a Commission on Natural Disaster Risk Management and Insurance

Congressman Salud Carbajal (D-CA) has introduced H.R. 8439, the [Commission on Natural Disaster Risk Management and Insurance Act](#). The bill would establish an independent, nonpartisan Commission on Natural Disaster Risk Management and Insurance. The 24 members would be appointed by Congress for their expertise across a range of specialties from disaster response to financial services and insurance.

The Commission would be responsible for examining 16 topics, including the current risks posed by natural disasters such as wildfires, flooding, and droughts; the impact of land-use planning; and the impact of federal, state, and local laws on insurance affordability. The Commission would also be responsible for producing a report outlining its findings and making recommendations for legislative, regulatory, or administrative actions at the federal, state, or local levels.

The bill is co-sponsored by Congressmen Gabe Evans (R-CO), Troy Carter (D-LA), and Mike Ezell (R-MS). It has been referred to the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the House Financial Services Committee.

Bill Introduced to Establish a National Wildlife Corridors System

Congressman Donald Beyer (D-VA), along with Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), Vern Buchanan (R-FL), and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), have introduced H.R. 8438, the [Wildlife Corridors and Habitat Connectivity Conservation Act of 2026](#).

The bill would create a National Wildlife Corridors System on federal land and water to maintain, restore, or improve habitat connectivity. The bill would allow state, tribal, and local governments, non-governmental organizations, and collaborative groups to nominate federal lands and waters as National Wildlife Corridors, which could be created by statute, rulemaking, or incorporation into land use management plans. It would prohibit human infrastructure, development, and activities that impede wildlife movement and withdraw lands designated as National Wildlife Corridors from operations under patent mining, mineral, and geothermal leasing laws.

The bill would also establish a Wildlife Corridor Grant Program to encourage wildlife movement on private, state, local, and federal land and authorize appropriations of up to \$75 million per year for the grant program.

The bill has been referred to four House Committees: Agriculture, Natural Resources, Transportation and Infrastructure, and Armed Services.

Bill Introduced to Require Information Technology Compatibility between USDA and DOI

Senators Adam Schiff (D-CA) and Pete Ricketts (R-NE) have introduced S. 4453, the [USDA–DOI Linking Information Networks for Knowledge-sharing \(LINK\) Act](#). The bill would require the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to ensure that U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and DOI information technology, cybersecurity, and information security systems are interoperable for federal land management activities, disaster and emergency response, procurement, aviation management, and personnel management.

The bill has been referred to the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee.

FEMA Review Council Final Report

On May 7, 2026, the FEMA Review Council released its [final report](#) recommending a major restructuring of federal disaster policy and the role of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The report is organized around a central principle that disaster response should be “locally executed, state managed, and federally supported,” signaling a shift toward greater state and local responsibility for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

Generally, the Council recommends:

- Faster and more flexible disaster funding based on pre-defined event criteria and projected recovery cost estimates.
- Expanded state and local authority and responsibility. This includes raising certain thresholds for disaster assistance and using performance metrics to determine assistance levels.
- Increased emphasis on preparedness, mitigation, and resilience investments.

It also recommends replacing the existing Hazard Mitigation Grant Program with a two-phased funding structure named the Refined Risk Program. In this program, up to 15% percent of the disaster estimate would be available to reduce disaster risk and strengthen community resilience. Within 30 days, up to 5% of the federal contribution would be available for mitigating high-risk residences, and then 10% would be available for critical infrastructure and federal administration priorities that mitigate repetitive-loss properties.

The report has been submitted to the White House for consideration. Many recommendations in the report would require legislation to be enacted, while others could be implemented through executive action or rulemaking.