



Legislative & Policy Update – March 2017

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The [Council of Western State Foresters \(CWSF\) Legislative & Policy Update](#) provides information on issues of importance to the 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 the CWSF and 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 at bit.ly/CWSFnewsletter.

This month's policy update provides an update on recent hearings of interest in the House of Representatives and the Senate, and an update on fiscal year 2017 and 2018 appropriations.

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House Agriculture Subcommittee Hearing

On March 16, the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation and Forestry hosted a public hearing to receive testimony on *The Next Farm Bill: Forestry Initiatives*. The National Association of State Foresters (NASF) Vice President and Oklahoma State Forester, George Geissler, testified at the hearing. CWSF, the Northeastern Area Association of State Foresters (NAASF), and the Southern Group of State Foresters (SGSF) assisted NASF in developing the testimony. Other witnesses included the American Forest Foundation, the Federal Forest Resources Coalition, the National Wild Turkey Federation, and Tom Harbour, retired USDA Forest Service National Director of Fire and Aviation Management, testified as a concerned citizen.

NASF Vice President Geissler's testimony addressed the important role that state and private forests, and state forestry agencies have in supporting the Nation's forests. In the testimony, State Foresters recommend six priorities that a 2018 Farm Bill should address. This included, enhancing the support for State forest action plans in federal agency direction; providing tools to increase the pace and on-the ground results of active forest management; including strong provisions for forests in conservation title programs; examining the extent to which a Farm Bill can address a comprehensive wildfire funding fix, and others.

NASF Vice President Geissler's testimony along with the other public witnesses' testimonies, and an archived video of the hearing can be found [here](#). Additionally, the Forests in the Farm Bill Coalition submitted a [letter](#) to Subcommittee Chairman Frank Lucas (OK-03) and Ranking-member Marcia L. Fudge (OH-11) that outlines the Coalition's five priorities in a Farm Bill. NASF, a steering committee member of the Coalition, signed on in support of the letter. CWSF, NAASF and SGSF policy staff also participate in the Coalition.

Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works Hearing

During the week of March 13, the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Working (EPW) hosted a hearing to examine innovative solutions to control invasive species and promote wildlife conservation. Witnesses included members from the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, the World Wildlife Fund, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Invasive Species Council Secretariat, and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. The EPW Committee Chairman, John Barrasso (R-WY), also recently reintroduced the “[Federal Land Invasive Species Control, Prevention and Management Act](#)” (S.509) that addresses invasive species on federal lands. Additional information on the hearing can be found here: <https://www.epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/hearings?ID=40C0CE17-9913-4336-AE5A-5EEF87975159>.

Appropriations – Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 and 2018

Government spending under the current Continuing Resolution ([P.L. 114-254](#)) is set to expire on April 28, 2017. Congress will need to act to pass the remaining appropriations bills, including the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies bill, by that time in order to keep federal agencies operating through the conclusion of the fiscal year (September 30). In early March, the House voted 371-48 to pass the FY 2017 Department of Defense spending measure; sending the bill to the Senate. There has been speculation on if the defense bill could serve as the vehicle for a larger omnibus, that bundles the remaining appropriations bills into a single spending package. However, details remain unclear on if the interest in Congress exists for this to occur. The White House has also issued a [supplemental budget request for FY 2017](#) that seeks a \$33 billion boost in certain Department of Defense and Department of Homeland Security programs in conjunction with an \$18 billion reduction in non-defense discretionary program. It remains unclear how Congress will respond. In the absence of new appropriations, another CR will be necessary to close-out this fiscal year.

Last week, the Trump Administration released the President’s first [budget proposal](#) that provides a blueprint for the 2018 fiscal year. This ‘vision’ document may serve to assist Congress in developing formal spending legislation, and serves to officially start the annual appropriations cycle for FY 2018. The proposal provides high level information; detailed federal agency budget justifications and program information is expected this May. In the blueprint, President Trump calls for a \$54 billion-dollar increase in defense spending in FY 2018 that is offset by a \$54 billion reduction to non-defense discretionary programs. Among other details, the proposal calls for reduction of \$4.7 billion, or a 21 percent decrease, to the US Department of Agriculture from 2017 CR levels. It includes a request to fund wildland fire preparedness and suppression activities at \$2.4 billion; funding 100 percent of 10-year average for suppression operations. It proposes to reduce funding for lower priority activities in the USDA Forest Service National Forest System program of work, such as limiting new federal land acquisitions. More information can be found here: https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/omb/budget/fy2018/2018_blueprint.pdf.

The National Association of State Foresters (NASF) has posted state forester FY 2017 and FY 2018 appropriations recommendations here: <http://stateforesters.org/current-issues-and-policy/current-issues/appropriations-0>