



Legislative & Policy Update – February 2021

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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 Danielle Okst, Associate Policy and Grants Director at dokst@westernforesters.org.

President Biden's first 100 days are underway and an Executive Order (EO) has been issued establishing a government-wide approach to addressing climate change. State Foresters have expressed their forestry priorities through the National Association of State Foresters (NASF) [Forest-based Solutions for America](#), outlining recommendations to the new Administration. CWSF, as part of the NASF policy team, submitted public comments on the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) Chapter and the proposed revisions to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) section 7 regarding the "Cottonwood" consultation regulations.

EO on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad

The president's EO on "[Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad](#)" emphasized the important role forest landowners have in combating climate change and the need to increase reforestation, improve recreation access, and increase resilience to wildfires. This order also establishes the White House Office of Domestic Climate Policy, a 21-agency National Climate Task Force, and a Civilian Climate Corps Initiative. The USDA is required to collect input from interested parties on how best to "encourage the voluntary adoption of climate-smart agricultural and forestry practices that decrease wildfire risk." NASF's response to this EO can be found [here](#).

State Forester Priorities for the Biden-Harris Administration

State agencies are still feeling the budget impacts from COVID-19. To ensure the important forestry work to support state, private, and adjacent lands continues to get done in light of these budget shortfalls and to combat the growing wildfire emergency, [specific recommendations](#) have been developed and shared with the new Administration. These recommendations focus on:

- Targeting federal funding to meet immediate State and Private Forestry needs;
- Accelerating the implementation of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy;
- Supporting state-based solutions driven by state Forest Action Plans;
- Implementing forest-based climate solutions; and
- Making organizational improvements.

The accompanying letter to these recommendations can be viewed [here](#) and the one-pager [here](#).

Administrative Comments

GNA Handbook

This month, public comments on behalf of State Foresters were submitted in response to the USDA Forest Service's (Forest Service) [publishing of the GNA Chapter](#). GNA was expanded and permanently authorized in the Agricultural Act of 2014, with subsequent amendments to the authority in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 and the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018. GNA has been utilized by state forestry agencies and the Forest Service to work collaboratively across jurisdictional boundaries to reduce hazardous fuels, improve wildlife habitat, support local communities and their economies, address insect and disease infested trees, increase watershed health, and more. View the specific recommendations from State Foresters on the newly published GNA Handbook language [here](#).

ESA Section 7 Revisions

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service [published a proposal](#) to amend the implementation of section 7 of the ESA. This revision would “clarify that reinitiation of consultation would not be required for previously approved BLM and [Forest Service] land management plans when new information reveals that effects of a plan may affect listed species or critical habitat in a manner or to an extent not previously considered, provided that any authorized actions for which the new information is relevant will be addressed through a separate action-specific consultation.” NASF’s official comments regarding this change are [here](#).