



Legislative & Policy Update – February 2023

Published February 15, 2023

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](#), Director of Policy.

This month's policy update highlights the release of the first report from the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission (Wildland Fire Commission), the introduction of a wildfire legislative package in the House, and funding opportunities through the USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) Wood Innovations and Community Wood Energy grant programs. It also discusses the release of "Strengthening Tribal Consultations and Nation-to-Nation Relationships: A USDA Forest Service Action Plan."

Wildland Fire Commission Aviation Report

This week, the [Wildland Fire Commission](#) created by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) [announced](#) the release of the [Aerial Equipment Strategy Report](#) outlining a strategy to meet aerial firefighting equipment needs through 2030. Findings and recommendations outlined in the report include:

- "the need for the development of new or updated aviation resource benchmarks and national procurement models and the need for greater coordination with partners in these efforts;
- improvements to appropriations, contracting, staffing and interoperability to improve the use and availability of existing resources;
- improvements and limitations to the military surplus process and equipment; and
- additional considerations, including aviation resource use in beneficial fire and the emerging importance of Uncrewed Aerial Systems."

Wildfire Legislative Package Introduction

Representative Joe Neguse (D-CO) [introduced](#) a legislative package aimed at increasing investments to tackle wildfires and fund resiliency projects for communities impacted by the increase of catastrophic wildfires in the western U.S. The package includes the Wildfire Recovery Act ([H.R.480](#)), the Wildfire Smoke Relief Act ([H.R.481](#)), and the Western Wildfire Support Act of 2023 ([H.R.482](#)). A one pager on the wildfire package is available [here](#).

The [Wildfire Recovery Act](#) would establish in statute that the federal cost share for reimbursements for fire suppression costs through Fire Management Assistance Grants be no less than 75%. It would also require rulemaking by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to determine circumstances to increase the federal cost share, taking into account state and local government financial impacts.

The [Wildfire Smoke Relief Act](#) aims to assist at-risk individuals during wildfires by providing low-cost home improvements and smoke inhalation prevention equipment, or providing transitional housing assistance when this equipment is not sufficient to mitigate the risk of illness. These would be authorized through FEMA.

Additional resources for at-risk communities in the West to prevent wildfires before they start, support suppression, and help communities recover and rebuild post wildfire would be provided through the [Western Wildfire Support Act](#).

Wood Innovations and Community Wood Energy Grant Opportunities

The Forest Service [announced](#) applications are now being accepted for the \$41 million in available funding for the 2023 Wood Innovations Grant and 2023 Community Wood Program. This is an increase from previous years due in part to funding provided through the BIL and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). [BIL](#) provided up to \$12 million a year “for the purposes of creating incentives for increased use of biomass from National Forest System lands, including the Community Wood Energy Program and the Wood Innovation Grants Program.” [IRA](#) provided a total of \$100 million to provide grants under the wood innovation grant program. These grants expand wood products and strengthen emerging wood energy markets.

Wood Innovations Funding Opportunity

This [grant program](#) “expands and creates markets for wood products and wood energy that support long-term, sustainable management of National Forest System lands and other forest lands.” Mass timber, renewable energy, and technological development supporting hazardous fuels reduction and forest management are the national focus areas. Please see below for the Notice of Funding Opportunity, application, and application details:

- [Wood Innovations Application Instructions](#)
- [Wood Innovations Application](#)
- [Wood Innovations Application Webinar](#)
- [Presentation from Application Webinar](#)
- [Notice of Funding Opportunity on Grants.gov](#)

Community Wood Grant Program

This grant program supports the installation of thermally led community wood energy systems or building of innovative wood product manufacturing facilities. Emphasis is placed on assisting sawmills in economically challenged areas to retool or add advanced technology.

- [Community Wood Application Instructions](#)
- [Community Wood Application](#)
- [Community Wood Application Webinar](#)
- [Presentation from Application Webinar](#)
- [Notice of Funding Opportunity on Grants.gov](#)

Both applications have a deadline of Thursday, March 23, 2023 at 5 p.m. local time. Please see the application instructions above or the [wood innovations page](#) for further details, including the contact of the Forest Service Regional Wood Innovations coordinator for submission.

Forest Service's Strengthening Tribal Consultations and Nation-to-Nation Relationships Action Plan

This month, the Forest Service [announced](#) the publishing of an action plan: [Strengthening Tribal Consultations and Nation-to-Nation Relationships](#). This plan provides a framework that can be implemented through existing programs and processes with four focus areas:

- Strengthen Relationships Between Indian Tribes and the USDA Forest Service;
- Fulfill Trust and Treaty Obligations;
- Enhance Co-Stewardship of the Nation's Forests and Grasslands; and
- Advance Tribal Relations Within the USDA Forest Service.

The Office of Tribal Relations is housed within the State & Private Forestry deputy chief area. As part of the commitment to this action plan and to reflect better reflect this work, State & Private Forestry has been renamed to State, Private, & Tribal Forestry.