



Legislative & Policy Update – January 2023

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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](#), Director of Policy.

This month's policy update highlights fiscal year (FY) 2023 appropriations crossing the finish line through the passage of an omnibus spending package and USDA's announcement to address the wildfire crisis in the western U.S.

FY 2023 Appropriations

After months of negotiation and federal agencies funding operating under continuing resolutions, the President signed the FY 2023 omnibus appropriations bill on Thursday, Dec. 29. The House passed the measure by a 221-205-1 vote on Friday, Dec. 23, following Senate passage by a 68-29 vote on Thursday, Dec. 22. The text of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 can be found [here](#) and the explanatory statement for the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies [here](#).

This omnibus amended the Good Neighbor Authority to allow the U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management to do road maintenance which is often necessary to carry out restoration service work. Examples that this amendment addresses or confirms are road updates needed to allow equipment access to a site, rehabilitation of wear and tear of a road after project completion, or restoration of road surface that was disturbed as part of a restoration action such as fish passage upgrades.

As to the funding levels within FY 2023 appropriations, the USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) National Forest System received a total programmatic increase of \$107.84 million, with increases to hazardous fuels and salaries and expenses at \$19.6 million and \$59.73 million over FY 2022 enacted levels, respectively. State and Private Forestry received a total programmatic increase of \$22.56 million. While salaries and expenses for State and Private Forestry saw an increase of \$7.35 million, Research and Development (R&D) salary and expenses were decreased by \$4.8 million, though R&D did see an increase of \$15.5 million in program dollars compared to FY 2022. Below are some additional funding level details:

- Forest Stewardship Program: \$12.50 million (an increase of \$500 thousand over FY 2022 enacted levels);
- State Fire Assistance (State Fire Capacity): \$76 million (an increase of \$1 million over FY 2022 enacted levels);
- Volunteer Fire Assistance (Volunteer Fire Capacity): \$21 million (an increase of \$1 million over FY 2022 enacted levels);
- Urban and Community Forestry: \$40 million (an increase of \$4 million over FY 2022 enacted levels);

- Landscape Scale Restoration: \$17 million (an increase of \$3 million);
- Forest Health on Cooperative Lands: \$33 million (an increase of \$1 million);
- Forest Inventory and Analysis: \$32.20 million (an increase of \$10 million); and
- Forest Legacy Program: \$77.94 million (a decrease of \$10.94 million).

To see how this compares to recommended funding levels for priority programs for State Foresters, please visit the National Association of State Foresters' [appropriations page](#). The tentative timing of the President's Budget Request for FY 2024 is March 2023.

Wildfire Crisis Strategy Announcement

This month, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack [announced](#) investments to reduce wildfire risk across the West. This builds upon the initial [10 priority landscapes](#) announced last year, with [11 additional landscapes](#) in Arizona, California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington. Forest Service Chief Randy Moore, USDA Undersecretary for Natural Resources and the Environment Homer Wilkes, and Western Forestry Leadership Coalition members Michiko Martin, Regional Forester for the Forest Service Southwestern Region, and Kacey KC, Nevada State Forester, were all in attendance at the [news conference](#) in Mesa, Arizona announcing these expanded efforts.

More than \$490 million will be invested into these 11 key landscapes. When combined with the initial 10 priority landscapes, USDA is investing \$930 million across 45 million acres, made possible through funding within the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#) and [Inflation Reduction Law](#). These landscapes align with the high risk priority areas identified within the Forest Service's [Wildfire Crisis Strategy](#). For more information and resources on the Forest Service's efforts to implement the Wildfire Crisis Strategy and protect at-risk communities and critical infrastructure, see [here](#).