



## Legislative & Policy Update – March 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](mailto:dokst@westernforesters.org).

In response to the ongoing health and economic crises due to the COVID-19 pandemic, another relief and stimulus bill was [signed into law](#). This month also saw the reintroduction of the Invasive Species Prevention and Forest Restoration Act, the Funding Our Roads and Ecosystems Sustainably Together (FOREST) Act, and the Repairing Existing Public Land by Adding Necessary Trees (REPLANT) Act.

### **The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021**

On March 6, the [Senate passed](#) the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 ([H.R. 1319](#)) by a vote of 50-49 and the House subsequently accepted the proposed amendment and passed the bill 220-211. In addition to some of the assistance provided to individuals through direct payments and child tax credits, the Act also contained relief to address the severe budget shortfalls faced by state and local governments. State and local entities suffered major impacts to their normal revenue streams while simultaneously responding to increased needs for services throughout the pandemic (emergency response, testing and vaccination sites, etc.). The Act includes:

- \$350 billion dollars in emergency funding for state, local, territorial, and Tribal governments:
  - \$195 billion for states (\$500 million minimum per state);
  - \$130 billion for local governments;
  - \$20 billion for Tribal governments; and
  - \$4.5 billion for territories.

Additionally, \$1.01 billion is allocated to the USDA to provide assistance and support for socially disadvantaged farmers, ranchers, forest land owners and operators, and groups.

View the priorities of State Foresters in the National Association of State Foresters (NASF) [COVID-19 Stimulus Platform](#).

### **The Invasive Species Prevention and Forest Restoration Act**

[Representative Peter Welch \(D-VT\) reintroduced](#) the Invasive Species Prevention and Forest Restoration Act ([H.R. 1389](#)) to help combat the invasive pests devastating our forests. The bill would:

- “Expand the USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service’s access to emergency funding to combat invasive species when existing federal funds are insufficient and broaden the range of activities that these funds can support;
- Establish a grant program to support institutions focused on researching methods to restore native tree species that have been severely damaged by invasive pests;
- Authorize funding to implement promising research findings on how to protect native tree species; and
- Mandate a study to identify actions needed to overcome the lack of centralization and prioritization of non-native insect and pathogen research and response within the federal government, and develop national strategies for saving tree species.”

#### **The Funding Our Roads and Ecosystems Sustainably Together (FOREST) Act**

Representatives Doug LaMalfa (R-CA) and [Salud Carbajal \(D-CA\) introduced](#) the FOREST Act ([H.R. 1898](#)), similar to the legislation previously introduced in 2019. The USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) currently receives \$18 million to maintain 370,000 miles of roads while the National Park Service receives \$292 million for maintenance of 13,000 miles. This Act would provide \$1.3 billion over ten years in dedicated road funding to the Forest Service for the purpose of maintaining roads for travel, emergency preparedness, and response.

#### **The Repairing Existing Public Land by Adding Necessary Trees (REPLANT) Act**

The bipartisan REPLANT Act ([S. 866](#)) was reintroduced by Senate Agriculture Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Senator Rob Portman (R-OH), Representative Jimmy Panetta (D-CA), and Representative Mike Simpson (R-ID). This Act would remove the \$30 million funding cap currently in place on the Reforestation Trust Fund. All wood product tariffs collected would replenish this Fund, increasing the total available funding for reforestation to an average of \$123 million per year.

The bill directs the Forest Service to create a ten year plan to address replanting backlogs on National Forest System lands by 2031. Areas impacted by fire, disease, pests, and drought that may be unlikely to naturally regrow on their own would be prioritized for reforestation. The REPLANT Act would not only help address these high priority replanting needs, but increase the amount of carbon sequestered and create nearly 49,000 jobs over the next ten years. View a fact sheet [here](#) and State Foresters’ support for this legislation [here](#).