



Legislative & Policy Update – May 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 [here](#).

This month's policy update includes a summary of fiscal year (FY) 2017 appropriations, recent activity on FY 2018 appropriations activities, information regarding an oversight hearing by the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Federal Lands, and brief information on the Senate Working Forests Caucus and the USDA reorganization.

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Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 Appropriations

In early May, Congress passed an omnibus spending measure comprised of the 11 remaining appropriations bills to conclude FY 2017. The House voted (309-118) on May 3 to send the measure to the Senate. The Senate quickly followed by voting (79-18) to approve the bill. President Trump signed the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 into law on May 5.

The USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) is funded at \$5.6 billion. This includes \$288.51 million for Forest and Rangeland Research, \$216.92 million for State and Private Forestry, \$1,513.32 billion for National Forest Systems, \$348.01 for Capital Improvement and Maintenance, and \$2,833.42 billion for Wildland Fire Management. More than half of the Forest Service's budget is targeted to wildland fire prevention and suppression. The omnibus bill fully funds the 10-year average for wildland fire suppression for the agency and supplies \$342 million for the FLAME Wildfire Suppression Reserve Fund, dedicated as emergency spending.

The omnibus also fully funds wildland fire suppression at the 10-year average for the Department of the Interior (DOI), and supplies an additional \$65 million (designated as emergency spending) in DOI's FLAME Wildfire Suppression Reserve Fund.

Additional information and provisions that may be of CWSF member interest include:

- The omnibus provides full funding (\$465 million) for the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program.

- The bill rescinds approximately \$12 million in Forest Legacy Program funds from failed or partially failed projects, and cost-savings from others.
- The bill boosts hazardous fuels funding from FY 2016 levels by \$10 million and \$15 million respectively for DOI and the Forest Service.
- Congress accepted the proposal by the previous Administration to consolidate the Forest Service's Land Management Planning, and Inventory and Monitoring budget line items (BLIs) into the single Land Management Planning, Assessment and Monitoring account.
- The bill provides \$400 million for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF); this is a reduction of \$50 million from FY 2016 enacted levels.
- The omnibus provides an increase of approximately \$9 million in funding (to \$68.90 million) to the Bureau of Land Management for greater sage-grouse conservation activities.

A summary of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies (Interior) bill that funds the Forest Service, DOI, the Environmental Protection Agency, and others can be found [here](#). Additionally, the text of the omnibus and explanatory statement can be found [here](#). See Division G for the Interior bill.

The Western Forestry Leadership Coalition (WFLC) has updated the [WFLC summary table of the USDA Forest Service Budget](#) to include the FY 2017 Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 115-31) funding levels. Please note that this table does not include information on all Forest Service programs.

CWSF continues to assist the National Association of State Foresters (NASF) on appropriations activities and efforts. View more information on the NASF FY 2017 and FY 2018 appropriations requests for priority programs [here](#).

FY 2018 Appropriations

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies will hold a budget hearing on May 25, 2017 regarding the Forest Service budget. The U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Sonny Perdue, and Forest Service Chief, Tom Tidwell, will testify at the hearing. More information can be found [here](#).

As was mentioned in the [March 2017 CWSF Newsletter](#), the Trump Administration released the President's [budget proposal](#) earlier this spring. This high level budget blueprint for FY 2018 proposed approximately \$54 billion in spending cuts from nondefense discretionary programs but did not provide details many individual agencies programs. The Administration's full FY 2018 Budget Justification was released earlier this week, which includes FY 2018 Forest Service budget details. CWSF staff are completing a summary of the FY 2018 Forest Service budget justification that will be shared with CWSF and WFLC members.

House Natural Resources Subcommittee Hearing

The House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Federal Lands hosted an oversight hearing on May 17 titled, "Seeking better Management of America's Overgrown Fire-Prone National Forests." The hearing memo (link below) by the majority committee staff shared that the hearing would be focused on the impacts of wildfire, disease and infestation on America's fire-prone federal forests and the need to significantly increase active management on federal lands to improve forest health and resiliency. Witnesses included Dr. John Ball, South Dakota State University, Mr. Steven A. Brink, California Forestry Association, Mr. James L. Cummins, Wildlife Mississippi, and Dr. Tania Schoennagel, University of Boulder Colorado.

[View the archived webcast and read the witnesses testimony.](#) Additionally, a copy of the hearing memo mentioned above can be found on that webpage or [here](#).

Senate Working Forests Caucus

In April, Senators Jim Risch (R-ID) and Angus King (I-ME) launched the Senate Working Forests Caucus. Joined by nine other Senators, the Caucus is intended to “serve as a forum for policies that promote and preserve America’s working forests.” In addition to Senator Risch, other Western Senators on the Caucus include Mike Crapo (R-ID) and Patty Murray (D-WA). A similar caucus was kicked off in the House last year. Senator Risch issued a [press release](#) on the Senate Working Forests Caucus.

USDA Reorganization

Earlier this month, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced a reorganization within USDA. This includes the creation of a new Undersecretary position for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs. A new Undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation will be selected to oversee the Farm Service Agency, the Risk Management Agency and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment will continue to oversee the Forest Service. USDA Secretary Perdue also announced that a reduction in the USDA workforce is not part of this reorganization plan. The USDA press release on this reorganization along with the report detailing the changes can be found [here](#).