



CWSF
COUNCIL OF WESTERN
STATE FORESTERS

Legislative & Policy Update – May 2018

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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](#).

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This month's policy section provides an update on the House Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018 (Farm Bill) and details about the House fiscal year (FY) 2019 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies (Interior) appropriations bill. This section also includes highlights from a wildfire briefing this month in Washington, D.C. for Members of Congress.

2018 Farm Bill

In May, the House took up consideration of its version of the [2018 Farm Bill](#) (H.R. 2). The House version was introduced in April and quickly thereafter passed out of the Agriculture Committee on a party-line vote. While Farm Bills in the past have commonly been bipartisan, this bill has been controversial due largely to disagreements between Democrats and Republicans over changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. This impasse was evident on the House floor where Democrats maintained their opposition to the bill. Thirty Republicans also opposed the bill's passage, including many House Freedom Caucus members who voted down the Farm Bill when they were unable to secure a promise of a future vote on immigration. The House Farm Bill ultimately failed 198 to 213 on May 18. The House has since scheduled a reconsideration of the bill for June 22.

House Agriculture Committee Chairman, K. Michael Conaway (R-TX) offered the [following comments](#) after the Farm Bill failed to pass, "We experienced a setback today after a streak of victories all week. We may be down, but we are not out. We will deliver a strong, new farm bill on time as the President of the United States has called on us to do. Our nation's farmers and ranchers and rural America deserve nothing less."

Ranking Member of the House Agriculture Committee, Collin Peterson (D-MN), issued [a statement](#) with these comments, "As I said in my remarks Wednesday, this job is too big for one party. Let's come together and figure out a bill that works for everyone. We don't have to let this process be held hostage by the demands of the extremes of our parties. We can and should take the time to get the farm bill right."

House FY 2019 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill

Also in May, the House Appropriations Committee released its [FY 2019 Interior appropriations bill](#), which funds the USDA Forest Service, the Department of the Interior, and other federal agencies. The bill provides \$35.25 billion, an amount equivalent to the FY 2018 enacted level. The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies voted the bill out of subcommittee shortly after its release. The full House Appropriations Committee will next markup the bill.

The House FY 2019 Interior bill would fund the USDA Forest Service at approximately \$6.13 billion, about \$197.47 million above the FY 2018 enacted level and \$1.47 billion above the FY 2019 Administration's budget request. Some key highlights from the bill include:

- Forest and Rangeland Research would receive \$297 million; equivalent to FY 2018 enacted and \$38.20 million above the President's FY 2019 budget request.
- State and Private Forestry (S&PF) would receive \$334.95 million; \$5.36 million over FY 2018 enacted and \$162.65 million above the President's FY 2019 budget request.
- National Forest System would receive \$1.97 billion; an increase of \$48.25 million from FY 2018 enacted and \$252.05 million above the President's FY 2019 budget request.
- Capital Improvement and Maintenance would receive \$499.00 million; an increase of \$50 million from FY 2018 enacted and \$404.29 million above the President's FY 2019 budget request.
- Wildland Fire Management would receive \$3 billion; an increase of \$124.65 million from FY 2018 enacted and \$565.00 million above the President's FY 2019 budget request.

Appropriations levels for programs noted as priority by NASF/State Foresters are as follows:

- Landscape Scale Restoration - \$10 million
- Forest Health Management, Cooperative Lands - \$51 million
- State Fire Assistance - \$80 million
- Volunteer Fire Assistance - \$16 million
- Forest Stewardship - \$20.5 million
- Forest Legacy - \$48.45 million
- Urban and Community Forestry - \$30 million
- Forest Inventory and Analysis - \$77 million

Additionally, the Forest Service suppression operations budget line item would be funded at the 10-year rolling average of \$1.17 billion. The bill also supplies the Agency with an additional \$500 million for wildfire suppression over the 10-year average. The Hazardous Fuels program would receive \$450 million, Forest Products would receive \$380 million, and the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program would be maintained at \$40 million.

The House Appropriations Committee press release on the FY 2019 Interior appropriations bill can be found [here](#). The report language that provides additional details to accompany the Interior bill can be found [here](#).

Earlier this month, Senate Appropriations Committee leadership released a [markup schedule](#) for FY 2019 appropriations bills. The announcement shares that the Senate Appropriations Committee is planning a markup on their version of the FY 2019 Interior bill the week of June 11, 2018.

2018 Wildfire Briefing

This month, Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue and Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke hosted a fire briefing for Members of Congress to hear the forecast for wildfires in 2018. The members of Congress in attendance were largely from western states including Colorado, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, California, Arizona, and New Mexico. After the meeting, the secretaries sent a memorandum to wildland fire leadership highlighting the importance of inter-departmental collaboration to increase firefighter, public and community safety as the wildfire season approaches. The USDA press release on the wildfire briefing can be found [here](#).