



Legislative & Policy Update – October 2022

Published October 26, 2022

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.

The firewood banks provision of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) is aimed at providing grants that will help increase the distribution of wood to those households that need it as a cost-effective heating source in winter. The application period is now open through a USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) partnership with the Alliance for Green Heat. The fiscal year (FY) 2023 appropriations bills are still in the works after a continuing resolution (CR) passed at the end of September.

BIL Firewood Banks

Section 40803: Wildfire Risk Reduction	
“There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service, for the activities described... \$3,369,200,000 for the period of fiscal years 2022 through 2026.”	
Total Amount for FY22-FY26	Activity
\$8M	Division D Title VIII Sec. 40803(c)17: to provide feedstock to firewood banks, and to provide financial assistance for the operation of firewood banks (USDA)

As part of the implementation of the above firewood bank provision from the BIL, the Forest Service has [announced](#) the award of more than \$712,000 from this provision to the Alliance for Green Heat (AGH) to expand firewood banks in 2022 and to add more banks in 2023 to serve more people. [Applications are now being accepted](#) on a rolling basis.

For this year, AGH will distribute up to \$590,000, primarily to existing wood banks that served households last winter. They will be providing small grants between \$5,000 and \$15,000 to help to supply firewood banks with needed tools and equipment, such as chainsaws, splitters, and protective gear. Next winter, the Alliance will also focus on newly formed wood banks. To be eligible, entities must be a representative from a wood bank or any kind of organization that provides free year-round, seasonal, or emergency firewood to

heat homes. The application window opened on October 17 and is available at firewoodbanks.org. Additional information can also be found on that website.

FY 2023 Appropriations

On September 30, just before the end of the FY deadline, [Congress passed](#) a stop-gap measure to continue funding the federal government through December 16. [The Continuing Appropriations and Ukraine Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2023](#) also provided \$2.5 billion to help New Mexico communities recover from the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire and authorized the Federal Emergency Management Agency to obligate up to the full year amount available under the CR for the Disaster Relief Fund as needed to respond to hurricanes in the South and severe storm, flooding, and landslides in Alaska.

In a [coalition letter](#), the National Association of State Foresters and other partners urged congressional leaders to support the funding levels approved in the House Appropriations Committee for the State Fire Capacity (SFC, formerly State Fire Assistance) and Volunteer Fire Capacity programs (VFC, formerly Volunteer Fire Assistance). The funding levels approved in the House Appropriations Committee are \$78 million for SFC and \$21 million for VFC, an increase of \$3 million and \$1 million respectively. State and local firefighters are the first responders to nearly 80% of wildfires, regardless of jurisdictional ownership, making this federal support through both of these programs integral to safe and effective response across the country. For more information on other State Forester priority programs and the corresponding FY 2023 appropriations requests, please see [here](#).