



Legislative & Policy Update – September 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 [Neil Simpson](#), Director of Policy.

This month's policy update includes information on three resolutions passed at the National Association of State Foresters (NASF) Annual Meeting, Good Neighbor Authority, the Farm Bill, the Treating Tribes and Counties as Good Neighbors Act, and the possibility of a government shutdown.

Resolutions

State Foresters at the NASF Annual Meeting in Baton Rouge unanimously passed three resolutions. Each resolution was crafted by the relevant NASF committee(s), reviewed by State Foresters and staff, and voted on by the full membership. Past NASF's policy positions may be found [here](#). The new resolutions are detailed below.

Emerging Markets for Wood and Their Positive Impacts on Forest Resource Management Resolution, # NASF-2023-01

- Outlines active management's economic, environmental, and social benefits to society.
- Details that strong markets are essential to keep forested landowners performing active management and not converting to another use.
- Details several new products and markets.
- Concludes "As harvest levels continue to decline nationally and the resultant increased standing inventory pose forest health problems, it is important to support the research and development of emerging wood markets, accompanied by growth and evolution of institutions that support science-based sustainable management."

The Elements of a Credible Forest Carbon Markets Program, Resolution # NASF 2023-02

- The resolution "Strongly supports this (carbon offset) market opportunity for landowners" and views the credibility of given programs key to a sustainable market.
- The resolution explains the rapid increase in the carbon offset market and its potential importance and value to landowners.
- Explains carbon offset programs "vary widely in their approach and perceived rigor, causing criticism in some corners as to the validity of carbon markets in general, and particularly forest carbon markets, to actually have a positive influence on global warming" and details what should be included in a program to withstand scrutiny.

Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) Urban and Community Forest (U&CF) Sustainability Standard, Resolution # NASF 2023-03

- SFI has developed standards to “Promote sustainable U&CF forests based on 16 objectives.” Under this new SFI certification process, which runs similarly to existing SFI certification processes, any organization that owns, manages or is responsible for urban forests can become certified under the SFI’s Sustainability standards.
- State Foresters resolve to support the SFI U&CF Sustainability Standard, promote it to NASF members, and assist organizations with awareness and the certification process for the standard.
- Information on the standard can be found [here](#).

Good Neighbor Authority and the Farm Bill

The Farm Bill, and the Good Neighbor revenue provision within it, is set to expire on September 30, 2023. All indicators show there is a low likelihood a new Farm Bill will be passed before the expiration or that there will be extensions of individual authorizations such as the revenue provision. If it does temporarily expire, it should not impact any projects that are already included in signed agreements. Protocols for new timber sales that need to be added into an agreement and sold during a lapse of the revenue provision would default to the 2016 grants and agreements rules pertaining to program income and Forest Service Handbook guidance for operational procedures. These were collaboratively developed with state representation and used successfully prior to the 2018 Farm Bill. Official USDA Forest Service guidance is expected in the coming weeks.

Treating Tribes and Counties as Good Neighbors Act

The Treating Tribes and Counties as Good Neighbors Act ([HR 1450](#)) has passed the House and now rests with the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee. This bill expands the revenue provision to include counties and tribes and extends the provision for states, tribes, and counties until September 30, 2028.

Appropriations, Continuing Resolutions, and a Potential Government Shutdown

There is constant change in the news regarding funding the federal government beyond the end of the federal fiscal year (FY) on September 30, but there is still no clear path to avoid a government shutdown. [Politico reports](#) the House of Representatives has voted to start debate on four government spending bills to fund the Departments of Defense, State, Homeland Security, and Agriculture for FY 2024. However, the federal government is funded by 12 appropriations bills, so a continuing resolution would still be needed to avoid a disruption to government functions. [The Hill](#) reports the Senate has voted to consider a continuing resolution to fund the government through November 17, 2023, but even if the bill were to pass the Senate there is no guarantee the House will take up the bill, therefore a shutdown is still highly likely.