



## Legislative & Policy Update – October 2024

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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](#). 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.

Read the latest policy update from Neil Simpson, CWSF/WFLC Director of Policy. This month's policy update covers:

- Funding Opportunity for Wood Innovations, Community Wood, and Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance Grant Programs
- State Foresters' Policy Resolutions
- Forest Service Bracing for Budget Cuts
- Post-election Congressional Outlook

### **USDA Forest Service Announces Funding for Wood Innovations, Community Wood, and Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance Grant Programs**

The USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) [announced](#) it is making up to \$34 million in funding available through its Wood Innovations, Community Wood, and Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance grant programs.

The Forest Service is seeking proposals that support links between resilient, healthy forests, strong rural economies, and jobs in the forestry sector. Eligible applicants include state and local governments, tribes, non-profit, business, and for-profit entities, institutions of higher education, as well as public utility, fire, conservation, and school districts.

Applications for the Wood Innovations Grant Program are due December 11, 2024. Applications for the Community Wood Grant Program and Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance Grant Program are due December 18, 2024.

Find application instructions, webinars, fact sheets, links to the Notice of Funding Opportunities, and other resources on the [Wood Innovations webpage](#).

**State Foresters approved three new policy resolutions during the 104th Annual Meeting of the National Association of State Foresters held in Providence, Rhode Island, September 23-26.**

**Resolution 2024-01: “In support of Forest Markets for Wood Products and their Positive Impact on Forest Resource Management”**

The resolution updates a 2023 policy statement on emerging markets to recognize the important role of both traditional and emerging markets. It states robust and diverse markets for wood products offer landowners important economic incentives to retain and properly care for their forests. Only with robust markets can landowners manage forests for the economic, environmental, and social benefits that are essential to society. The resolution recognizes that forest markets have been changing drastically over the last three decades, and it supports policies and programs that strengthen existing markets and create new markets for emerging products.

**Resolution 2024-02: “Study on Deforestation from Utility-scale Solar Siting”**

The resolution recognizes that forests, forest products, and renewable energy production all play critical roles in addressing threats and that there is increasing concern about deforestation occurring from the siting of large-acreage solar projects. It recommends that the United States Department of Agriculture, led by the Forest Service study, issue a report on the current and projected loss of forested lands from the siting and construction of utility-scale solar energy facilities.

**NASF RESOLUTION NO. 2024-03: In Support of the Recommendations of the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission**

The resolution articulates support for the recommendations developed by the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission and found in the “Aerial Equipment Strategy Report” and “ON FIRE: The Report of the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission.” Read the reports on the Commission's [webpage](#). The resolution also adopts as official NASF policy positions 19 recommendations from the commission that were found to be actionable and timely, reflect new approaches, require Congressional action, and would result in significant changes.

**Forest Service Bracing for Budget Cuts in 2025**

Although fiscal year (FY) 2025 appropriations have not been passed, appropriations levels from separate House and Senate appropriations bills are available. These bills give federal agencies some foresight into what funding levels may be when a final appropriations bill is passed. Seeing a potential for reduced budgets, coupled with increased costs such as federal employee cost of living adjustments, the Forest Service is bracing for reduced budgets in FY2025. [Local](#) and [national](#) news outlets have reported that the Forest Service has paused seasonal hiring and is taking other steps to prepare for a budget shortfall in FY2025.

Read more about FY 25 appropriation bills in the CWSF [August Policy Update](#).

**Post-election Congressional Outlook**

With Congress adjourned, there has been little to no movement on the Farm Bill, FY 2025 appropriations, or the many forestry and wildfire related bills that have been introduced in 118th Congress, but a busy lame duck session is expected when lawmakers return after the election. Congress must pass FY 2025 appropriations or extend the current continuing resolution (CR) that expires on December 20, 2024, and they

must address the Farm Bill, which was extended as part of the CR with varying expiration dates for specific programs.

There is also a bipartisan, bicameral push for Congress to take up disaster relief funding. In a [letter to congressional leaders](#), 34 lawmakers from Southeastern states urged Congress to “make appropriations as soon as possible.” The letter references the needs from Hurricane Helene and acknowledges that producers across the nation have faced multiple growing seasons without sufficient support. Additionally, Senator Rick Scott (R-FL) sent a [letter](#) to President Biden stating relief should come in the form of block grants urging him to direct the Office of Management and Budget to assess the costs of recovering from Hurricane Milton and Helene and submit a supplemental appropriations request to Congress.

Meanwhile, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee continues working on numerous natural resource-related bills. It has rescheduled its meeting to mark up over 70 natural resources-related bills for [November 19, 2024](#). While the list of bills being considered has not yet been posted, the previously scheduled meeting was set to include markups of several forestry and fire bills, which are detailed in the CWSF [September newsletter](#).