



Legislative & Policy Update – April 2021

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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 Danielle Okst, Associate Policy and Grants Director at dokst@westernforesters.org.

The President's budget request was released in short-form, outlining high level priorities with greater program level detail still forthcoming. The USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) discussed agency priorities and the appropriations request for fiscal year (FY) 2022 at the House Subcommittee budget hearing. The Administration also outlined a comprehensive infrastructure proposal this month, including some provisions that have sparked the reintroduction of forestry legislation within Congress.

FY2022 Appropriations

The Biden Administration has released a “skinny” budget request for FY2022. The full detailed budget is anticipated to be released in mid to late May. Within this [skinny budget](#), \$1.7 billion is requested for high priority hazardous fuels and forest resilience projects (an increase of \$476 million over FY2021 enacted levels) and it calls for “significant investments within the Forest Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service to support the health and resilience of public and private lands.” To learn more about the priorities of State Foresters in the west and across the country, please see [NASF's FY2022 Appropriations Recommendations](#).

Forest Service [Chief Vicki Christiansen appeared](#) before the House Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies on April 15 to discuss the Forest Service budget request for FY2022. During her [testimony](#) and subsequent question period, she highlighted numerous State and Private Forestry programs, including the [Forest Stewardship Program](#), Urban and Community Forestry, State Fire Assistance, and Volunteer Fire Assistance. A summary of these state-focused highlights are available on [NASF's blog](#), along with the [written public testimony from NASF President Joe Fox](#).

Administration's Infrastructure Plan

The [American Jobs Plan](#) outlining President Biden's infrastructure proposal was unveiled this month. Within the plan, the President calls “on Congress to invest in protection from extreme wildfires, coastal resilience to sea-level rise and hurricanes, support for agricultural resources management and climate-smart technologies, and the protection and restoration of major land and water resources.” The proposal also highlights protecting and restoring nature-based infrastructure. A fact sheet on the plan is available [here](#).

The infrastructure plan states it will “empower local leaders to shape these restoration and resilience project funds in line with the [Outdoor Restoration Force Act](#).” This Act was introduced [previously by Senator Bennet \(D-CO\)](#) and this month was introduced in both the [Senate](#) and the [House](#) as the [Outdoor Restoration Partnership Act](#). The bill includes the establishment of an Outdoor Restoration Fund to support restoration of forests and watersheds, reduce wildfire risk, clean up public lands, enhance wildlife habitat, remove invasive species, and expand outdoor access. \$20 billion dollars would be made available to state and local governments, tribes, special districts, and nonprofits to be utilized for resilience, restoration, and mitigation projects across all lands. \$40 billion would be invested through partnerships with states and tribes for targeted projects in wildlife habitat restoration and wildfire risk reduction.

The type of funding outlined within this Act would not only increase the ability to accomplish much needed work across our landscapes, but also create jobs and support rural economies across the country. Support of western State Foresters through NASF, including a quote from NASF President Joe Fox can be found within the [press release](#) from Senator Bennet. The release also outlines numerous other partners in support this greatly needed legislation to support our nation’s forests.