



CWSF
COUNCIL OF WESTERN
STATE FORESTERS

Legislative & Policy Update – August 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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The month of August usually means quieter times in Washington, D.C. With the House away for their summer recess, this was somewhat true, however the Senate, following Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's (R-KY) call earlier this year, has had a truncated summer recess with limited time spent back in their home states. This month, the policy section provides updates on the Senate's naming of nine conferees to the Farm Bill Conference Committee and then focuses on Administration activities, including a new USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) strategy to improve forest conditions and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries proposed reforms to the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Senate Names Farm Bill Conferees

The Senate voted in early August to move forward with a 2018 Farm Bill Conference Committee, naming [nine Senators](#) to serve on the Committee. Those Senators include:

- Agriculture Committee Chairman Pat Roberts (R-KS)
- Agriculture Committee Ranking Member Debbie Stabenow (D-MI)
- Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY)
- John Boozman (R-AR)
- Sherrod Brown (D-OH)
- Joni Ernst (R-IA)
- Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND)
- John Hoeven (R-ND)
- Patrick Leahy (D-VT)

As mentioned in the [CWSF July Policy update](#), the House voted earlier this summer to go to conference with the Senate, naming 47 conferees. Both House and Senate conferees have the difficult job of reconciling the differences in the House and Senate Farm Bill versions into a single conferenced bill, and under the clock as there are limited legislative days before much of the current 2014 Farm Bill expires.

USDA Forest Service Announces New Strategy

This month, the USDA Forest Service [announced](#) a new strategy on shared stewardship to address catastrophic wildfire and the impacts of invasive species, drought, and insect and disease epidemics. The report, "[Toward Shared Stewardship Across Landscapes: An Outcome-Based Investment Strategy](#)", outlines the Forest Service's plans to work with states and others to identify landscape-scale priorities for targeted treatments in areas with the highest likelihood of results. The Forest Service's concept for an outcome-based investment strategy is based on the following activities:

1. Working with states to co-manage risk across broad landscapes;
2. Using new scenario investment planning tools for targeted investments;
3. Focusing work on broad outcomes;
4. Capitalizing on the authorizing environment created by recent legislation;
5. Changing the Forest Service's own internal processes to get more work done on the ground;
6. Using a full suite of active management tools, including the right kind of fire at the right times in the right places; and
7. Applying a risk-based response to wildfire.

USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue was joined by Forest Service Interim Chief Vicki Christiansen and Senators Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Steve Daines (R-MT), and Ron Wyden (D-OR) in Washington, D.C. to make the announcement. National Association of State Foresters President and Washington State Forester, George Geissler, were also notable attendees at the event. "This new approach will have state forestry agencies and the USDA Forest Service working together as we should, shoulder-to-shoulder, to manage wildfire," [said George Geissler](#). "With guidance from our state [Forest Action Plans](#), hazardous fuels work initiated by the states and the federal government can now be implemented in the highest priority areas first, and our shared wildfire suppression efforts will be more focused and coordinated."

USFWS & NOAA Fisheries Propose Reforms to ESA

The USFWS and NOAA Fisheries have [proposed revisions](#) to certain regulations that implement ESA and are seeking public comment. The USFWS [press release](#) explains that the revisions - to regulations governing sections 4 and 7 of ESA - are part of continued efforts to improve how ESA is implemented. The revisions were published in the Federal Register in late July with a comment deadline of September 24, 2018. A presentation video and PowerPoint slides about the proposed changes are available on the [USFWS ESA regulation webpage](#).