



Legislative & Policy Update – August 2022

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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](#), Director of Policy.

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) became law this month through the reconciliation process. It represents another major investment in forestry following the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). Climate resilience and a focus on underserved communities are two major themes running through IRA. Another large package of bills to address wildfires and drought passed the House and the Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG) is open for proposals. This BIL grant program aims to help communities prepare for and reduce risks from wildfires.

Inflation Reduction Act of 2022

IRA ([H.R.5376](#)) passed the Senate on August 7 by a vote of 51 to 50 and the House on August 12, 220-207. It was [signed into law](#) by President Biden on August 16. This bill is a slimmed-down version of the previously proposed Build Back Better Act, resulting from extensive negotiations on the Democrat side of the aisle. This bill went through the reconciliation process, meaning it required the support of every single Democrat with Vice President Harris casting the tie-breaking vote. It also restricts the measures in the bill to those that directly change federal spending and revenue.

The IRA represents the largest federal clean energy and climate reform investment in U.S. history at more than \$300 billion. Some provisions of interest to the forestry sector include:

- \$1 billion to provide conservation technical assistance through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS);
- \$300 million for a carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) quantification program in which NRCS through technical service providers and other partners will collect data to assess carbon sequestration and GHG emissions reduction trends and outcomes for USDA;
- \$8.45 billion to Environmental Quality Incentives Program for agricultural conservation practices or enhancements that directly improve soil carbon or reduce nitrogen losses or GHG emissions, or capture or sequester GHG emissions, associated with agricultural production;
- \$4.95 billion to Regional Conservation Partnership Program for prioritized partnership projects that assist agricultural producers and nonindustrial private forestland owners in directly improving soil carbon or reducing nitrogen losses or GHG emissions, or capturing or sequestering GHG emissions, associated with agricultural production;
- \$1.8 billion for hazardous fuels reduction projects on National Forest System (NFS) land within the wildland-urban interface;

- \$200 million for vegetation management projects on NFS land conducted in accordance with a water source management plan or a watershed protection and restoration action;
- \$100 million to provide for more environmental reviews under the National Environmental Policy Act;
- \$50 million for the protection of old-growth forests on NFS land and to complete an inventory of old-growth and mature forests within the NFS;
- \$450 million to provide cost sharing or grants through the Landscape Scale Restoration program for forest landowners with a focus on specific carbon sequestration, climate mitigation, and forest resilience practices;
- \$100 million for grants under the wood innovation grant program including for facilities and for the hauling of material removed to reduce hazardous fuels to locations where that material can be utilized;
- \$700 million to provide competitive grants to states through the Forest Legacy Program; and
- \$1.5 billion to provide multiyear grants through the Urban and Community Forestry Assistance program for tree planting and related activities.

Wildfire and Drought Package

The Wildfire Response and Drought Resiliency Act ([H.R. 5118](#)) passed the House just prior to the August recess. It combines various measures into one larger package aimed at authorizing measures to address wildfires and drought. Some provisions of the proposed legislation include:

- Codification of the 10-year Wildfire Plan: Directs the Secretary of Agriculture to, in coordination with the Secretary of the Interior, implement a 10-year National Wildfire Plan, which includes dedicated funding for Hazardous Fuels and Joint Fire Science as well as other programs to implement the plan;
- Directs the President to establish a National Wildland Fire Risk Reduction Program with the purpose of achieving major measurable reductions in the losses of life and property from wildland fires through a coordinated federal effort, largely through supporting and disseminating relevant research;
- Creates a new job classification for federal wildland firefighters, waives premium pay limitations in certain circumstances, and provides hazardous duty pay and seven consecutive days of mental health leave for firefighters;
- Directs the Secretary of Agriculture, for each region of the USDA Forest Service (Forest Service), to establish and maintain at least one community mitigation assistance team;
- Creates and authorizes funding for a long-term burned area recovery account within the Forest Service;
- Ensures agreements local fire departments enter with the Forest Service are completed more transparently and in a timely manner, helping give fire departments clarity about when and how much they will be reimbursed for wildfire costs;
- Requires the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to establish at institutions of higher education four centers, each of which shall be known as a “Center of Excellence for Wildfire Smoke”; and
- Requires the EPA to establish a competitive grant program to assist communities in developing and implementing collaborative community plans for mitigating the impacts of smoke emissions from wildland fires.

BIL Community Wildfire Defense Grant

The FY 2022 Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG) program is open for applications. The BIL provided \$1 billion over five years for the CWDG program to provide grants to at-risk communities to develop or revise a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) or implement projects in a CWPP that is less than ten years old.

CWSF hosted trainings for federal and state program managers to equip them with the information and resources needed to assist applicants. The Forest Service also hosted applicant webinars, with two sessions for the West receiving a combined 700 registrations. The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is open until October 7, 2022. Applicants should contact their state or federal point of contact listed in the NOFO for more information.

CWDG prioritizes at-risk communities that are in an area identified as having high or very high wildfire hazard potential, are low-income, and/or have been impacted by a severe disaster. The program is anchored in the three goals of the [National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy](#):

- Restore and Maintain Landscapes: Landscapes across all jurisdictions are resilient to fire-related disturbances, in accordance with management objectives.
- Create Fire Adapted Communities: Human populations and infrastructure can withstand a wildfire without loss of life and property.
- Improve Wildfire Response: All jurisdictions participate in making and implementing safe, effective, efficient risk-based wildfire management decisions.

More information on this program, including the fiscal year 2022 NOFO, application, and other resources, can be found at:

- [Forest Service CWDG webpage](#);
- [CWSF CWDG webpage](#);
- Western and Tribal NOFOs are available on [grants.gov](#);
- [Wildfirerisk.org Eligibility and Prioritization Data](#); and
- [Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network CWDG Primer: Preparing to Apply for Community Wildfire Defense Grants](#).