



## Legislative & Policy Update – July 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](#).

For more information, please contact Kelsey Delaney, Policy Director, 303.893.0327, [kdelaney@westernforesters.org](mailto:kdelaney@westernforesters.org).

There has been significant activity on policy and legislative issues of interest to CWSF and WFLC over the last month. This includes actions by the House and the Senate on the fiscal year (FY) 2019 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies (Interior) appropriations bill and progress on the House and Senate versions of a five-year Farm Bill. This policy update offers highlights and brief summaries on these and other issues of likely interest to CWSF/WFLC members.

### Farm Bill

On June 6, Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Pat Roberts (R-KS) and Ranking Member Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) introduced the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (S. 3042) - commonly referred to as the Farm Bill. The 1000+ page legislation, if passed, would establish agriculture, conservation, forestry and food policy for the next five years. The bipartisan bill was marked up in the Senate Agriculture Committee on June 13, 2018 and passed on a vote of 20-1. The bill was then moved before the full Senate where it was swiftly considered and passed on a bipartisan vote of 86-11. More information on the Senate version of the Farm Bill including legislative text, a section-by-section, and accepted amendments is available on the Senate Agriculture Committee [website](#).

The White House issued a [Statement of Administration Policy \(SAP\)](#) that outlines the Administration's viewpoint on the Senate legislation. Among other comments, the Administration welcomed the Senate Farm Bill's adoption of reforms proposed in the President's FY 2019 budget for the United States Department of Agriculture but listed concerns about reforms not included in the bill that the Administration wishes to see to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

The House Farm Bill (Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018 or H.R.2) initially failed to pass from the lower chamber due to Democrat opposition and House Freedom Caucus members interest in a vote on the separate issue of immigration (further information included in the [CWSF May Newsletter](#)). In June, the bill was brought forth for reconsideration and passed the House on a narrow margin of 213-211, with Democrats maintaining their opposition to the bill. Detailed information on the House version of the Farm

Bill including legislative text, a section-by-section, and amendments is available on the House Agriculture [website](#). See also the [White House issued SAP](#) in support of the House Farm Bill from May 2018.

The House and Senate will next move to a conference on the two bills, a process where the two chambers work together to reconcile the differences between their Farm Bill versions. There are key differences to overcome between the House and Senate bills, including approaches to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Congress has until September 30, 2018 - when much of the current Farm Bill expires - to pass a new Farm Bill.

## **FY 2019 Appropriations**

In early June, the full House Appropriations Committee held a mark up on its version of the FY 2019 Interior appropriations bill that funds the USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) and the Department of the Interior (DOI) among other federal agencies. The bill was passed from the Committee on a 25-20 party line vote. Up next, it is anticipated that the House version of the FY 2019 Interior bill may be packaged with several other appropriations bills into a “mini-bus” and sent to the full House for consideration. An Appropriations Committee press release on the FY 2019 Interior Bill markup is available [here](#). Details on the House FY 2019 Interior bill can be found in the [CWSF May Newsletter Policy Update](#).

On June 12, the Senate Appropriations Interior Subcommittee approved its version of the FY 2019 Interior bill. Later that week, the full Senate Appropriations Committee unanimously voted (31-0) to pass the bill from the Committee - an action that hasn't happened since 2010. The FY 2019 Interior bill provides \$35.85 billion in funding, \$600 million more than FY 2018 enacted levels.

In the Senate bill, the Forest Service would receive \$6.29 billion, an increase of \$363.77 million from FY 2018 enacted and \$1.64 billion above the Administration's FY 2019 request. Several key highlights of the bill include:

- Forest and Rangeland Research would receive \$300 million; \$3 million over FY 2018 enacted levels and \$41.20 million above the President's FY 2019 budget request.
- State and Private Forestry (S&PF) would receive \$333.99 million; \$4.40 million over FY 2018 enacted levels and \$161.69 million above the President's FY 2019 budget request.
- National Forest Systems would receive \$1.93 billion; \$13.90 million over FY 2018 enacted levels and \$217.70 above the President's FY 2019 budget request.
- Capital improvement and maintenance would receive \$449 million; equivalent to FY 2018 enacted levels and \$354.29 million above the President's FY 2019 budget request.
- Wildland Fire Management would receive \$3.22 billion; \$349.28 million over FY 2018 enacted levels and \$789.63 million above the President's FY 2019 budget request.

Appropriations levels in the Senate FY 2019 Interior bill for programs noted as priority by the National Association of State Foresters (NASF) are as follows:

- Landscape Scale Restoration - \$14 million
- Forest Health Management, Cooperative Lands - \$41 million
- State Fire Assistance - \$80 million
- Volunteer Fire Assistance - \$16 million
- Forest Stewardship - \$20.50 million

- Forest Legacy - \$65.49 million
- Urban and Community Forestry - \$28.50 million
- Forest Inventory and Analysis - \$77 million

Additionally, the bill fully funds the 10-year rolling average for wildfire suppression for the Forest Service and DOI. The Forest Service suppression operations budget line item would be funded at \$1.16 billion and the agency would receive an additional \$724.64 million in anticipation of regular suppression funding being insufficient. More details on the Senate FY 2019 Interior bill including bill highlights, legislative text, and report language are available on the Senate Appropriations Committee [website](#).

Information on NASF/State Forester FY 2019 appropriations recommendations can be found on the NASF [website](#). Additionally, the NASF letters to the House and Senate in support of FY 2019 funding for Forest Service State and Private Forestry programs are available [here](#).

### **U.S. House Natural Resources Committee Hearing**

In early June, the House Natural Resources Committee held an oversight hearing titled, “Wildfire Risk, Forest Health, and Associated Management Priorities of the U.S. Forest Service.” Forest Service Interim Chief Vicki Christiansen testified, focusing [her remarks](#) on the agency’s efforts to prepare for and respond to wildfires and improve the condition of America’s forests and grasslands. An archived recording of the hearing and hearing memo are available [here](#).

### **U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Hearing**

In early June, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing to “Examine the 2018 Wildland Fire Outlook and Wildland Fire Management Programs.” Witnesses at the hearing included Forest Service Interim Chief Vicki Christiansen and DOI Office of Wildland Fire Director Jeff Rupert. Chief Christiansen’s [remarks](#) were similar to those provided during the House Natural Resources Committee hearing. Director Rupert’s [testimony](#) addressed DOI’s Wildland Fire Management program, a summary of the 2017 Fire Year, the 2018 Fire Season, and DOI’s fuels management work.