



CWSF
COUNCIL OF WESTERN
STATE FORESTERS

Legislative & Policy Update – March 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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This month's policy update provides details on State Foresters' priority programs funded as part of the recently passed FY 2018 omnibus and on the successful fire funding and forest management reforms agreement. Also covered are highlights about the Forest Service Environmental Analysis and Decision Making (EADM) Regional Partner Roundtables and the Western Governors' Association list of the Top 50 Invasive Species in the West.

FY 2018 Appropriations

The [FY 2018 omnibus measure](#) (H.R. 1625) was released just days before the March 23, 2018 deadline to enact new spending legislation that would keep the federal government open. The 2,000+ page legislation included all 12 annual federal appropriations bills and totaled \$1.3 trillion dollars. The House quickly moved to pass the bill before sending it to the Senate. The Senate then voted to approve the bill early on March 23 and President Trump signed it before the midnight deadline.

The omnibus funds the federal government through the end of the fiscal year and adheres to the spending levels that were agreed upon by Congress as part of the budget deal enacted in February 2018. Of interest to State Foresters, Division G of the bill is the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies (Interior) FY 2018 appropriations that includes funding for the USDA Forest Service (Forest Service). Overall the Forest Service is funded at \$6 billion, with \$2.88 billion in funding for wildland fire prevention and suppression. The State & Private Forestry (S&PF) account is funded at \$329.59 million and includes:

- Landscape Scale Restoration at \$14 million
- Forest Health - Cooperative Lands at \$41 million
- Forest Stewardship at \$20.5 million
- Forest Legacy at \$67.03 million
- Urban and Community Forestry at \$28.5 million
- State Fire Assistance (SFA) at \$80 million
- Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) at \$16 million

The SFA and VFA programs were shifted from the Wildland Fire Management account to the S&PF account. Forest and Rangeland Research is funded at \$297.00 million and includes \$77 million for the Forest Inventory and Analysis Program. Wildland fire suppression is fully funded at the 10-year average and the omnibus includes an additional \$500 million for Forest Service suppression operations if the initial suppression appropriation is exhausted. The bill also included a package comprised of a wildfire funding solution and forest management reforms (details below). Finally, the omnibus fully funds Payments in Lieu of Taxes in FY 2018 at \$530 million.

The Committee Report accompanying the FY 2018 Interior bill language can be found [here](#). A summary document of the Interior bill can be found [here](#). A National Association of State Foresters (NASF) press release on the FY 2018 omnibus can be found [here](#).

Wildfire Funding / Forest Management Reforms Package

After significant negotiations, an agreement was reached on a package that would provide a wildfire funding solution and forest management reforms, paving the way for inclusion in the FY 2018 omnibus. Division O of the omnibus is the Wildfire Suppression Funding and Forest Management Activities Act. The wildfire funding fix provides a budget cap adjustment to access additional funds needed for suppression in excess of the FY 2015 10-year rolling average. The agreement also freezes the Forest Service's suppression budget line item at the FY 2015 10-year average to stop the long-term erosion of the agency's non-fire programs to pay for wildfire. The new disaster cap allocation, starting at \$2.25 billion and ramping up to \$2.95 billion, begins in FY 2020.

Various forest management reforms were included with the wildfire funding solution. Among the reforms in the package are:

- A new categorical exclusion (CE), with similar criteria to the 2014 Farm Bill CE, for wildfire resilience projects;
- An amendment to the Good Neighbor Authority to allow for road reconstruction, repair, and restoration;
- The ability to extend certain Stewardship Contracts to 20 years; and
- An amendment to the Healthy Forest Restoration Act to include installation of fuel breaks and firebreaks under authorized hazardous fuel reduction projects.

Additionally, Title IV of Division O provides a two-year extension of the Secure Rural Schools Program. NASF and individual State Foresters played key roles in the negotiations on the wildfire funding and forest reforms. NASF applauded Congress' hard work and resolution on these critical issues in the following [press release](#).

Forest Service Environmental and Decision Making Roundtables

The Forest Service is convening Environmental Analysis and Decision Making (EADM) Regional Partner Roundtables across each of its regions during the months of February and March 2018. The Agency is undertaking these roundtable as part of an effort to improve processes related to EADM by gaining efficiencies and effectiveness while continuing to value diverse stakeholder perspectives. A FAQ on the Forest Service's EADM effort and the partner roundtables can be found [here](#). Details, including dates and agendas of the regional roundtables, can be found [here](#).

WGA's Top 50 Invasive Species in the West

WGA has released a list of the [Top 50 Invasive Species in the West](#). WGA shares that the list is the first regional assessment completed and includes terrestrial and aquatic invasive species. Invasives such as salt cedar (#1), Emerald Ash Borer (#5), russian olive (#7), and white nose syndrome (#15) are included on the list. More on WGA's top 50 western invasives species list can be found [here](#).