



Legislative & Policy Update – March 2025

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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](#). 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, which provides summaries on other key legislative and programmatic issues. If you have not yet subscribed, you can do so [here](#). For more information, please contact [Neil Simpson](#), CWSF/WFLC Director of Policy.

This month's policy update covers:

- Trump Administration Appeals Reinstatement of Fired Probationary Employees
- Firefighter Pay Increase and Other 2025 Continuing Resolution Details
- Wildfire Response and Preparedness (WRAP) Act Introduced
- Senate Subcommittee holds hearing on Fix Our Forests Act
- USDA Announces New Leadership at the Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Executive Orders Related to Forestry, Wildfire, and Federal Lands

Trump Administration Appeals Reinstatement of Fired Probationary Employees

The Trump Administration filed an emergency appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court in an effort to stop the full return to work of federal probationary employees who were fired from six federal agencies.

Acting Solicitor General Sarah Harris submitted an appeal to Supreme Court Justice Elana Kagen, who handles emergency matters originating in California. The appeal claims that "ordering the government to reinstate federal workers was an unlawful remedy" and the Supreme Court should grant an administrative stay, which would relieve agencies of the requirement to onboard employees to full duty status.

This is an evolving situation and we will continue to monitor how it will impact federal agencies' ongoing efforts to reinstate approximately 16,000 employees.

View the [appeal](#).

Firefighter Pay Increase and Other 2025 Continuing Resolution Details

On March 15, 2025, President Trump signed [H.R. 1968](#), the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act (CR). The CR funds most federal agencies for the remainder of fiscal year (FY) 2025 at FY 2024 levels and extends several existing programs. The CR keeps funding for most USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) programs at FY 24 levels, but it does include a few key differences. Specifically, the CR:

- [Permanently authorizes](#) the federal wildland firefighter pay increase.
- Increases Forest Service Wildland Fire Management budget from \$2,312,650,000 to \$2,426,111,000
- Does not extend Congressionally Mandated Spending (earmarks) from FY 24, including;
 - \$19,806,000 for Forest Resource Information and Analysis

- \$5,130,000 for three Capital Improvement and Maintenance projects.
- Does not include specific budget line items within Forest Service Deputy Areas.

Wildfire Response and Preparedness (WRAP) Act Introduced

Senators Tim Sheehy (R-MT) and Andy Kim (D-NJ) introduced the WRAP Act. The bill would establish a 30-minute national standard response time to evaluate any fire occurring on federal land and include deploying fire suppression assets in under three hours. The bill would also require the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to submit a joint report to Congress that provides:

- A single point of contact for federal wildland fire response at the Department of Interior.
- A unified budget request covering all wildland fire activities.
- A description of key performance indicators for wildland fire response agencies.
- The aviation and ground fleet required to meet the standard response times.
- Proposed changes to the federal ordering and dispatching system to enable quicker deployment of resources.
- Recommendations for streamlining the federal contracting process.
- The resources and authorities needed to ensure year-round wildland firefighting assets are available.

View the [press release with bill text](#).

Senate Subcommittee holds hearing on Fix Our Forests Act

On March 6, the Conservation, Forestry, and Biotechnology Subcommittee of the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee held a [hearing](#) on the [Fix our Forests Act](#). The bill, which generally seeks to improve forest management on National Forests, passed the House in January and is detailed in our [January Newsletter](#).

In his opening statements, Committee Chair Senator Roger Marshall (R-KS) characterized recent losses from wildfire as a “symptom of a disease caused by misguided policies going as far back as the Forest Service’s 1930’s 10:00 a.m. policy” and the “federal government’s inability, or unwillingness, to treat the right acres at the right time at the right scale.”

Verbal and written testimony was also provided by Matt Weiner from Megafire Action, Frank Beum from the National Association of Forest Service Retirees Board of Directors, Tim Vredenburg from the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, Jonathan Houck, County Commissioner of Gunnison County, Colorado, and Robert Gordon from the American Property Casualty Insurance Association.

USDA Announces New Leadership at the Natural Resources Conservation Service

The USDA announced that Aubrey Bettencourt will serve as Chief of the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). A March 21, 2025, [press release](#) describes Bettencourt as a prominent leader in agriculture, water, and sustainability, most recently serving as the Global Director of Government Relations and External Affairs for Netafim, an Orbia Company. Her previous roles include serving as President and CEO of the Almond Alliance and Deputy Assistant Secretary for the U.S. Department of the Interior in the first Trump Administration. The press release also announces that Colton Buckley who was most recently the Chief Executive Officer of the National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils will serve as the Chief of Staff for NRCS.

Executive Orders Related to Forestry, Wildfire, and Federal Lands

Since taking office in January, President Trump has signed ninety-three Executive Orders (EO). Many of the EOs seek to reduce the size of the federal workforce, increase federal government efficiency, and increase the production of minerals, energy, and timber on federal lands. Information about all the EOs can be found in the [Federal Register](#) and on the [White House website](#).

Below is a summary of EOs related to forestry, wildfire, and federal lands management. This information is also available as a PDF in the [CWSF Publication Library](#) and will be updated as new information becomes available.

[Immediate Measures to Increase American Mineral Production](#)

The EO, signed on March 20, aims to bolster domestic mineral production by reducing regulatory barriers and expediting federal permits. It directs the Secretaries of Interior, Agriculture, and Energy to provide a list of all federal lands known to hold mineral deposits and reserves and “prioritize mineral production and mining related purposes as the primary land uses in these areas.”

[Achieving Efficiency Through State and Local Preparedness](#)

The EO, signed on March 18, aims to shift responsibility for disaster preparations and response efforts to state and local governments while reducing the complexity of federal policies and shifting federal functions to a supporting role for disaster preparedness and response. It states, “Federal policy must rightly recognize that preparedness is most effectively owned and managed at the State, local, and even individual levels, supported by a competent, accessible, and efficient Federal Government.”

[Immediate Expansion of American Timber Production](#)

This EO, signed March 1, underscores the importance of timber, lumber, paper, bioenergy, and other wood products to the nation’s economy and directs federal agencies to “issue new or update guidance regarding tools to facilitate increased timber production and sound forest management, reduce time to deliver timber, and decrease timber supply uncertainty increase timber production and reduce regulatory barriers.”

[Addressing the Threat to National Security from Imports of Timber, Lumber](#)

This EO, signed March 1, classifies the wood products industry as essential to U.S. national security and economic stability. It tasks the Secretary of Commerce to investigate the national security implications of timber and lumber imports and recommend policies to fortify the domestic supply chain.

[Council to Assess the Federal Emergency Management Agency](#)

Signed on January 24, this EO establishes the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Review Council. It instructs the Review Council to produce a report analyzing FEMA’s general efficacy historically and in relation to state disaster aid and preparation, evaluating the agency’s potential role as a supplemental support agency, and providing other recommendations for reform.

[Declaring a National Energy Emergency](#)

The EO, signed on January 20, declares a national energy emergency and seeks to address this emergency by expediting energy and infrastructure projects. It directs the heads of executive departments and agencies to “facilitate the identification, leasing, siting, production, transportation, refining, and generation of domestic energy resources, including, but not limited to, on Federal lands.”

[Unleashing American Energy](#)

The EO, signed on January 20, seeks to establish American energy dominance through a combination of new policy actions and rescinding several executive orders from the Carter and Biden Administrations.