



Legislative & Policy Update – May 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.

During the 2025 Spring Meeting, CWSF/WFLC Director of Policy Neil Simpson shared a policy update with attendees, including updates on budget reconciliation, the fiscal year (FY) 2026 budget outlook, and State Foresters' recent trip to Washington, D.C.

This month's policy update also highlights a letter from USDA Forest Service Chief Schultz on workforce reshaping and a joint fire memo from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI).

For a summary of select wildland fire bills in the 119th Congress, click [here](#). For a summary of Executive Actions related to forestry, wildfire, and federal lands, click [here](#).

Budget Reconciliation

On May 22, 2025, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 1, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act by a vote of 215-214.

In a [press release](#) after the vote, House Speaker Mike Johnson stated "Today, the House passed generational, truly nation-shaping legislation to reduce spending and permanently lower taxes for families and job creators, secure the border, unleash American energy dominance, restore peace through strength and make government work more efficiently and effectively for all Americans." The bill now moves to the Senate, which is expected to take the bill up during its June work period and make significant changes to the bill.

The comprehensive bill includes the following forestry-related provisions:

- Rescinds all unobligated balances from the Inflation Reduction Act for the Forest Legacy Program and the Forest Landowner Support Program (sec. 10105).
- Reauthorizes and extends until 2026 the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (sec. 10105).
- Rescinds remaining funds appropriated in the Inflation Reduction Act to protect old-growth forests on National Forest System land and complete an inventory of old-growth and mature forests within the National Forest System (sec. 80306).
- Requires the USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) (sec. 80311) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) (sec. 80312) to enter into timber sale contracts with a minimum 20-year contract duration.

For FY 2025 through 2034 the BLM must enter into one contract per year, and the Forest Service must enter into one contract per year in each Forest Service region.

- Requires a 25% increase in timber harvest from National Forest System lands (sec. 80313) and public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (sec. 80314).

Read a summary of the 1,000 plus page bill on [Speaker Johnson's website](#) and the bill text on [Congress.gov](#).

Fiscal Year 2026 Budget

The FY 2026 budget outlook is based on President Trump's proposed "[skinny budget](#)," which would reduce federal, discretionary, and non-defense spending to \$557.4 billion, the lowest level since 2017 and a 22.6% decrease from FY 25.

The skinny budget proposes drastic cuts to Forest Service programs, including zeroing out funding for all State, Private, and Tribal Forestry programs and Forest and Rangeland Research. The budget states that the Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program would be retained, but it zeroes out funding for Forest and Rangeland Research, in which the FIA program is housed. The proposal would also reduce the National Forest System Management budget by \$392 million (21%) and the Forest Service Operation Budget by \$391 million (34%).

The budget would also consolidate firefighting responsibilities into a new Federal Wildland Fire Service at DOI. According to the budget request, "The new service would be distinct in command and appropriations from existing wildland firefighting agencies and would streamline Federal wildfire suppression response, risk mitigation efforts, and coordination with non-Federal partners to combat the wildfire crisis."

The President's budget is the first step in the long appropriations process. During this process, the public can provide input to Congress, who is ultimately responsible for negotiating and passing federal appropriations.

State Foresters Travel to Washington, D.C.

In April, State Foresters traveled to Washington, D.C., to stress the importance of active forest management and the role Forest Service State, Private, and Tribal Forestry Programs play in protecting communities from wildfire, increasing forest health, and bolstering America's economy. Eighteen State Foresters made the trek and collectively took part in over 100 meetings with members of their Congressional Delegation, USDA leadership, and Forest Service Leadership.

[Read more about the National Association of State Foresters' appropriations positions.](#)

Forest Service Chief Schultz's Letter Outlines Priorities During Workforce Reshaping

On May 6, 2025, Chief Schultz published a [letter in Inside the Forest Service](#). In the letter, the Chief writes, "We are implementing interim governance structures and operating plans to ensure proper and intentional coverage resulting from attrition and voluntary separation program departures." The letter stresses that the Forest Service will ensure that safety is a top priority and that this is an interim framework as reorganization plans are finalized. Acting Associate Chief Chris French provided additional details in a May 20 [Update on Interim Operational Planning](#).

Reorganization plans mentioned in the Chief's letter have not been released due to a 14-day temporary restraining order halting the implementation of federal reductions in force. The order, issued by U.S. District Court Judge Susan Illston, expires May 23, 2025.

Forest Service Chief Schultz's Wildfire Letter of Intent

On May 21, 2025, Chief Schultz published the [Wildfire Letter of Intent 2025](#). In the letter, the Chief stressed safety and the importance of collaborating with local governments, states, tribes, landowners, industry, and conservation groups to reduce wildfire risk. Schultz writes, "[W]e will continue to focus on safe, aggressive

initial attack. We will make appropriate risk informed efforts to fully suppress small fires before they become large, complex incidents to ensure we can protect lives, property, valuable timber and natural resources.”

The letter voices appreciation for the passion and dedication of Forest Service staff and contains expectations of Forest Service Leaders, including:

- Eliminate barriers and unnecessary procedures that impede resource capability or mobilization.
- Prioritize employees’ ability to maintain or update their fireline qualifications (red cards) and make red-carded personnel available for fire assignments.
- Adjust program output and service expectations as wildfire and all-hazard response grows.

USDA and DOI Sign Joint Fire Memo

USDA and DOI announced in a May 20 [press release](#) that U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins and U.S. Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum signed a [joint memo](#) on wildfire preparedness. The Secretaries write, “The scope and complexity of today's wildfires require unity. Success demands the seamless collaboration of Federal, State, Tribal, and local agencies, along with community partners to maximize resources; enhance effectiveness; and ensure swift, coordinated responses.” The memo also recognizes the importance of increasing fuels management to reduce wildfire impacts.

In a separate [Secretarial Memo](#), Secretary Rollins directs all USDA mission areas to assess their ability to assist in wildfire response and prioritize funding for communities and private landowners to reduce wildfire risk. The memo also directs the Chief of the Forest Service to utilize the non-fire workforce to respond to wildfires and adjust other work priorities to accommodate this need.