



CWSF
COUNCIL OF WESTERN
STATE FORESTERS

Legislative & Policy Update – November 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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Congress has returned to Washington D.C. following the November 6 elections with a limited number of legislative days to act on priorities. At the top of the list is finalizing fiscal year (FY) 2019 appropriations for the remaining seven appropriations bills. Additionally, House and Senate Agriculture Committee leadership continue to express their preference for completing a Farm Bill this year. This policy update covers recent activity on both priority issues. Please note that these items are highly fluid and may become out of date very quickly as new action is taken by Congress and the Administration.

FY 2019 Appropriations

Prior to the close of FY 2018 on September 30, Congress enacted two appropriations minibuses that provide funding for five of the 12 FY 2019 appropriations bills. The second minibus included a short-term continuing resolution (CR) that allowed federal agencies funded by appropriations bills not passed before the end of FY 2018 to continue operating in the beginning of FY 2019.

Congress must now act to pass the remaining seven appropriations bills before the CR expires on December 7. If agreement remains elusive on federal spending, another CR will be needed to avoid a partial federal government shutdown. House and Senate leaders have shared that they want to avoid a shutdown. However, the Administration's request for funding for a border wall has complicated negotiations and there is a possibility that the President may veto a spending measure that does not supply the Administration's preferred amount.

The FY 2019 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies (Interior) bill that funds the USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) and the Department of the Interior (DOI) was one of the bills that failed to pass before FY 2019 began. Senate majority leadership on the Appropriations Subcommittee for the Interior bill has eluded to having resolved the differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill, signaling that the Interior bill may be ready to move forward.

Farm Bill

Negotiations on a 2018 Farm Bill continue as the window narrows to pass a final bill before the 115th Congress concludes. Agriculture Committee leadership in both chambers continue to work through differences between the House and Senate versions and leadership has indicated that they may be close to striking a deal on a final bill. However, as of the finalization of this policy update on Tuesday November 27, negotiations on the Forestry title have recently been elevated to House and Senate leadership after announcements were made by the Administration about forest management and wildfire.

Following the devastating wildfire fires in California, President Trump called for Congress to pass a Farm Bill that includes the fire protection and forest management provisions found in the House-passed version. Both USDA Secretary [Sonny Perdue](#) and DOI Secretary [Ryan Zinke](#) have echoed the President's request. A White House [fact sheet](#) on the announcement references several House Farm Bill forestry provisions, including renewing and expanding Forest Service and DOI authority to remove insect & disease infested trees from federal lands and expanding the Good Neighbor Authority to counties and tribes. The fact sheet also calls for expediting salvage operations in response to catastrophic events and expediting management on National Forest System lands surrounding at-risk communities. The Senate version of the Farm Bill does not address the broad federal forest management reforms that are in House-passed bill.