



CWSF
COUNCIL OF WESTERN
STATE FORESTERS

Legislative & Policy Update – October 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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November 6 is quickly approaching and members of Congress are focusing their attention on the midterm elections. Several of the top issues of interest to CWSF are in a holding pattern until Congress takes them up in the lame-duck session after elections are complete. In this policy section, brief updates are provided on the status of a 2018 Farm Bill and fiscal year (FY) 2019 appropriations. Additionally, this month USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) Chief Vicki Christiansen was officially sworn-in by USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue.

FY 2019 Appropriations

The FY 2019 federal fiscal year began on October 1, 2018. Prior to then, Congress was able to enact two separate minibuses; smaller bundled subsets of the 12 individual appropriations bills. A short-term continuing resolution (CR) was attached to the second spending measure ([H.R. 6157](#)) to provide funding for federal agencies whose respective FY 2019 full-year appropriations bills were not completed before October 1. Following some initial uncertainty, President Trump [signed](#) the second minibus into law on September 28. The attached CR provides funding until December 7, by which time Congress will have to act to address the remaining appropriations bills.

A third minibus was in negotiations in September but failed to reach resolution before the new fiscal year began. That spending measure included the FY 2019 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies (Interior) bill, which funds the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior. In the absence of agreement, the Interior appropriations bill and thus the Forest Service are receiving funding at FY 2018 levels under the short-term CR.

Farm Bill

September also came and went without enactment of a 2018 Farm Bill. House and Senate Farm Bill conferees were unable to resolve the differences between their Farm Bill versions before portions of the 2014 Farm Bill expired following September 30. Negotiations are ongoing and Agriculture Committee

leaders have indicated that they would like to complete a final Farm Bill conference report that could be voted on during the lame-duck session.

While differences remain on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, additional sticking points in negotiations can be found in other titles. House Agriculture Committee Chairman Mike Conaway (R-TX) [commented](#) just before the end of September, “Where we sit right now it is across almost all of the titles, there are legitimate policy differences of opinion across them. It’s not just SNAP, it’s not just the farm bill, it’s not just conservation, it’s not title—it’s a variety of things that we have yet to come to grips with.” Agriculture leaders have kept away from discussing an extension to the 2014 Farm Bill and have instead expressed a strong preference for getting the Farm Bill reauthorization done. If agreement remains elusive as the calendar year draws near, talks of an extension could emerge as a potential option.

Vicki Christiansen Sworn in as Forest Service Chief

In early October, USDA Secretary Perdue announced that Vicki Christiansen would serve as the 19th Chief of the Forest Service. Chief Christiansen has been serving as Interim Chief since March 2018 and was officially sworn in on October 11. In a [statement](#), Secretary Perdue shared, “As a former wildland firefighter and fire manager, Chief Christiansen knows what’s needed to restore our forests and put them back to work for the taxpayers. With seven years at the Forest Service and 30 years with the states of Arizona and Washington, Vicki’s professional experience makes me confident that she will thrive in this role and hit the ground running.”

The National Association of State Foresters (NASF) issued a [press release](#) congratulating Chief Christiansen. “We couldn't be more pleased that Vicki has accepted the role of chief,” said Lisa Allen, NASF president and Missouri State Forester. “She is a tremendous supporter of state and private forestry and just what the Forest Service needs in a new leader. Her experience and balanced perspective will help the agency and our states work across all ownership boundaries to actively manage the nation's trees and forests.”