



Legislative & Policy Update – October 2021

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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 [here](#). 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 that will provide summaries on other key legislative and programmatic issues. If you have not yet subscribed, you can do so [here](#). For more information, please contact [Danielle Okst](#), Director of Policy.

Negotiations for the infrastructure bill and Build Back Better Act have continued over the last month. Both bills could provide a large influx of funding to support forestry, including many State Forester priority programs. The remaining nine fiscal year (FY) 2022 appropriations bills were [released by the Senate](#). The Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies (Interior) bill was among the released texts. The government is currently operating under a Continuing Resolution (CR) passed at the end of September, which extends funding levels through December 3.

Infrastructure and the Build Back Better Act

The USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) State and Private Forestry provisions of the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill ([S. 3684](#)) were detailed in [August's policy update](#). The Forest Service National Forest System, REPLANT Act, and Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission sections are outlined within [September's policy update](#). The infrastructure bill passed the Senate in August and is still pending a vote in the House. The [Build Back Better Act](#), also referred to as the reconciliation bill or 'human infrastructure' bill, had the text released in December. Please see [September's policy update](#) for greater detail on the forestry title within the reconciliation bill.

The original non-binding deadline at the end of September came and went without a vote on infrastructure or reconciliation. The reconciliation bill currently has a price tag of \$3.5 trillion and moderate Democrats are pushing to cut the overall total down. Tax credits on the wealthy and corporations, climate change provisions, child tax credits, paid family leave, and Medicare/Medicaid expansion appear to be some of the areas being debated within the package. The fates of both bills have been linked through this call for decreased overall funding levels and the Congressional Progressive Caucus members insisting they will not vote on infrastructure without reconciliation. The aim was to have a framework agreement in place on reconciliation in order to move forward on a vote on infrastructure prior to President Biden leaving on October 28 to attend a climate summit. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) released a [statement](#) today, indicating she has asked the House Committee on Rules to hold a hearing on October 28 to discuss the

reconciliation package. Whether this will be enough to get members of the Progressive Caucus on board for a vote on infrastructure or if another non-binding deadline will pass is yet to be seen.

FY 2022 Appropriations

The House has [passed nine](#) of its 12 appropriations bills and the Senate Committee on Appropriations has recently released the text of their remaining bills. The CR currently funds the government through December 3 and the debt ceiling was raised by \$480 billion to ensure the government could continue to meet all obligations. U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen wrote a [letter](#) to congressional leadership urging them to provide a longer-term fix, as the current increase is only a “temporary reprieve” that will require the “use of extraordinary measures through December 3.” Negotiations over the debt ceiling and appropriations funding may end up converging as this deadline fast approaches.

The FY 2022 Senate [Interior bill](#) (see [explanatory statement](#) and [summary](#)) contains \$6.2 billion for the Forest Service, an increase of \$817.3 million over FY 2021. State Fire Assistance is increased by \$1.5 million over FY 2021, Volunteer Fire Assistance is increased by \$1 million, and the Landscape Scale Restoration program is allocated the full amount authorized by the 2018 Farm Bill (\$20 million) which is an increase of \$6 million over FY 2021 levels. Both hazardous fuels and the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program doubled in funding to \$360 million and \$80 million, respectively. Forest Legacy Program saw an increase to \$103.81 million, up from \$94.25 million in FY 2021. Additionally noteworthy within the Senate version of the Interior bill, is the use of a separate appropriated account for congressionally directed spending, otherwise known as earmarks. This will ensure those amounts do not take away from base funding for State and Private Forestry.