



Legislative & Policy Update – September 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.

This month, all eyes are on the infrastructure and reconciliation bills. The infrastructure bill has already passed the Senate, and a non-binding agreement for a vote in the House by September 27 is in place. Meanwhile, the text of the forestry section of the reconciliation bill was released by the House Agriculture Committee. It contains a potential influx of \$40 billion for forestry.

Infrastructure Bill

The \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill ([S. 3684](#)) may be considered by the House by the end of September. It contains \$1.5 billion for fiscal years (FY) 22-26 for the USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) State and Private Forestry (S&PF). The S&PF sections of the infrastructure bill are covered generally in [last month's policy update](#). This month's policy update provides a closer look at other forestry-focused sections found within the over 2,700 page piece of legislation.

The bill provides \$2.9 billion for the National Forest System over the five FYs (\$529.8 million per FY). The National Forest System section also contains \$514 million for hazardous fuels management activities (\$102.8 million per FY), including up to \$12 million a year to use S&PF authorities to create incentives for increased use of biomass on National Forest System lands. This includes the Community Wood Energy Program and the Wood Innovation Grants Program. \$225 million is allocated for burned area recovery (\$45 million per FY).

The infrastructure package calls for the creation of a Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission. The aim of this commission is “to study and make recommendations to improve federal policies related to the prevention, mitigation, suppression, and management of wildland fires and the rehabilitation of land devastated by wildland fires.” The commission would be led by representatives from the U.S. Department of the Interior, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The commission would be composed of members from various leadership and coordination groups, as well as 18 non-federal stakeholders.

The [Repairing Existing Public Land by Adding Necessary Trees \(REPLANT\) Act](#) has been incorporated into the infrastructure bill. It has the potential of quadrupling investments to support reforestation projects on national forests by removing the current funding cap of \$30 million per year on the Reforestation Trust Fund. It would use funds that are being collected through current tariffs on foreign wood products, without

increasing the tariffs or using taxpayer funds. A focus of the REPLANT Act section is on reforestation following wildfires and other unplanned events.

Reconciliation Bill

The House Agriculture Committee released the [text of the reconciliation bill](#) forestry and agriculture sections for markup (fact sheet found [here](#)). They spent most of September 10 discussing the proposal and amendments, voting on said amendments on September 13, and advancing the legislation out of the committee by a vote of 27-24 along party-lines. The bill includes \$40 billion for forestry over 10 years, to be spent by September 30, 2031. The \$28 billion Conservation Title text is still forthcoming, likely to be added as an amendment on the House floor or before floor consideration.

Some highlights from the forestry title include:

- \$10 billion for grants for non-federal land forest restoration, wildfire risk reduction, and Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) implementation
- \$1.25 billion for the Landscape Scale Restoration Program, with a focus on underserved and small landowner access to carbon markets
- \$3 billion for Urban and Community Forestry grants for tree planting and related activities
- \$250 million for State Fire Assistance and Volunteer Fire Assistance
- \$250 million for implementing State Forest Action Plans
- \$50 million for Forest Health on non-federal lands
- \$250 million to the Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program for various climate-related priorities
- \$250 million to non-FIA Forest Service Research and Development for various climate-related priorities
- \$1.25 billion for Forest Legacy Program, with a focus on carbon benefits and community resilience
- \$1 billion for Wood Innovation Grants
- \$100 million for Community Forest and Open Space for acquisition of urban and community forests
- \$19.55 billion for National Forest System Restoration and Fuels Reduction Projects

The House Natural Resources Committee [advanced their portion](#) of the reconciliation bill as well. While the committee has deferred Forest Service spending to the Agriculture committee, their bill does include \$900 million of funding for the Department of Interior to "reduce wildfire risk on landscapes and communities through fire preparedness, fire science and research, emergency rehabilitation, rural fire assistance, fuels management activities, the renovation or construction of fire facilities, and for expenses necessary to support firefighter workforce reforms."

The current price tag of the reconciliation bill is \$3.5 trillion, but funding levels may change as this bill makes its way through negotiations in the House and eventually the Senate. These funds would be in addition to normal FY22 appropriations. Democrats intend to move the combined spending package through the [budget reconciliation process](#), which allows passage in the Senate without any Republican votes.