



Legislative & Policy Update – September 2026

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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.

This month's policy update covers:

- Senate Farm Bill Passes Out of Committee
- Wildfire Emissions Prevention Act Passes Out of Committee
- Wildland Firefighter Health and Safety Act Introduced

Senate Farm Bill Passes Out of Committee

On September 16, 2026, the Senate Agriculture Committee voted to advance the [Agricultural Act of 2026](#) (Farm Bill) to the full Senate.

The Farm Bill, which covers an array of topics ranging from commodity pricing to forestry, is traditionally enacted every five years. However, we are currently operating under the third extension of the 2018 Farm Bill, with some provisions updated in July 2025 with the enactment of H.R. 1, the *One Big Beautiful Bill Act*. The House passed its version, [H.R. 7567, the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026](#), in April, and both versions include numerous forestry policy provisions, including:

- Amending the *Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act* to extend the \$10 million authorization of appropriations for State Forest Action Plans and authorize funds to be used for the implementation of State Forest Action Plans. (House sec. 8101, Senate sec. 8231)
- Codifying the Cottonwood Fix to clarify that the USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) does not need to reinitiate endangered species consultation of Forest Plans when new information becomes available. (House sec. 8411, Senate sec. 8220)
- Creating new Categorical Exclusions and enlarging others. (House sec. 8401 - 8407, Senate sec. 8215 - 8219)
- Amending the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) to extend the revenue provision, authorize special districts to retain revenue, and allow new permanent road construction. (House sec. 8412, Senate sec. 8238)
- Reauthorizes the Wood Innovation Grant Program, reduces the non-federal match, and authorizes grants for hauling hazardous fuels reduction materials to locations that can utilize them. (House sec. 8432, Senate sec. 8251)

The House-passed version contains several provisions that are not included in the Senate Agriculture Committee's bill, including:

- Codifies the Reforestation, Nurseries, and Genetic Resources Program. (sec. 8305)
- Creates a Categorical Exclusion for hazardous fuels reduction activities that do not exceed 10,000 acres in size and can include up to 3,000 acres of mechanical thinning. (sec. 8407)
- Codifies that no court may enjoin the use of aerial fire retardant under the *Clean Water Act*. (sec. 10212)
- Requires the Forest Service to suppress wildfires within 24 hours of detection, as seen in Representative Tom McClintock's (R-CA) [H.R. 178](#). (sec. 8408)
- Establishes a new "Deployment and Testbed Pilot Program for new and innovative wildfire prevention, detection, communication, and mitigation technologies" as seen in Senator Barrasso's (R-WY) *Wildfire Prevention Act of 2025* ([S. 140](#)). (sec. 8414)

The Senate Agriculture Committee's bill passed out of committee by a 12-11 party-line vote, with Democrats' unanimous opposition stemming from changes to cost structures in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Ranking Member Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) stated after the vote that "It is my goal, and our goal on the Democratic side, to get this Farm Bill done, and to get it done by the end of the year. We will do that by working with the House leaders. We will do that by working on the remaining issues, and that is key when you see what our farmers and ranchers are facing right now."

Chairman John Boozman (R-AR) remained confident the bill can be completed, telling [Agri-Pulse](#) after the hearing, "When we visit with the average Senator, or member of Congress they really want to get a Farm Bill passed. We're going to go to conference and get this thing done, get it passed."

While the Chairman and Ranking Member remain optimistic that Congress can pass a Farm Bill by the end of 2026, enacting the legislation will require further negotiation to reach 60 votes in the Senate and reconciliation with the House-passed version.

Watch the hearing on the [Agriculture Committee's website](#).

Wildfire Emissions Prevention Act Passes Out of Committee

On September 16, 2026, the Committee on Environment and Public Works unanimously passed S. 5045, the [Wildfire Emissions Prevention Act of 2026](#) (WEPA), sponsored by Senator John Curtis (R-UT) and co-sponsored by a bipartisan group of colleagues on the committee.

The National Association of State Foresters has officially endorsed the bill, which generally seeks to increase the use of prescribed fire. It would amend the Clean Air Act to clarify that prescribed fires are exceptional events and require the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to consult with federal land managers, state air pollution control agencies, State Foresters, and state fish and wildlife agencies in an effort to revise existing regulations to focus on state implementation responsibility. The bill also establishes a "Smoke Ready Communities Program," which authorizes grants for the "assessment, prevention, control, or abatement of wildfire smoke hazards in community buildings" (sec. 3).

In a [press release](#), Senator Curtis stated, "Today's unanimous approval by the Committee brings us one step closer to addressing the glaring irony in our current environmental regulations: They deter prescribed burns

due to pollution concerns, practically guaranteeing catastrophic wildfires that emit far more carbon than proactive management ever would.”

Wildland Firefighter Health and Safety Act Introduced

On September 17, 2026, a bipartisan, bicameral group of legislators announced the introduction of the [Wildland Firefighter Health and Safety Act](#).

The bill would:

- Create an interagency wildland firefighter health task force.
- Codify and authorize funding to be appropriated for a Federal Wildland Firefighter Health and Wellbeing Program.
- Establish a two-year pilot program to test respiratory technology on wildland fires.
- Require OSHA to issue an interim final standard for wildland firefighter health protection.
- Require paid duty time for firefighters to shower, decontaminate gear, and clean vehicles following exposure to smoke or PFAS.

The bicameral legislation is sponsored by Representative Maxine Dexter (D-OR) in the House and Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA) in the Senate. It is co-sponsored by Representatives Jared Huffman (D-CA) and James Gallagher (R-CA) and Senators Jeff Merkley (D-OR), John Curtis (R-UT), and Tim Sheehy (R-MT).

View the [press conference](#) with remarks from sponsors and co-sponsors.

View Representative Dexter’s [press release](#).

View Senator Padilla’s [press release](#).