



CWSF
COUNCIL OF WESTERN
STATE FORESTERS

Western Forestry Issues:

WATER



Water is the lifeblood of the natural systems, economies, and cultures of the western United States and Pacific Islands. Yet across the western region, water quality and quantity continue to be challenging issues.

The 17 western state and six Pacific Island Council of Western State Foresters (CWSF) members identify water as a critical priority within their Statewide Forest Resource Assessments and Strategies, commonly known as Forest Action Plans.

How are forests and water interconnected?

Clean and abundant water is a direct result of healthy, resilient forests. Healthy, resilient forests are the result of sound policies and strategies.

Western forests are the source for two-thirds of the region's water supply¹. Over 64 million residents across 11 states depend on surface water that comes from forests and other lands for their clean drinking water².

The threats to western forested watersheds are many and complex, including:

- Loss of forest cover through human development and forest fragmentation
- Deteriorating forest health
- Catastrophic wildland fire leading to degraded forests and watersheds
- Widespread drought

Of the many uses, benefits, and resources provided by western forests, water is among the most important given its essential value for human life and the health of natural landscapes. Western forested watersheds also contribute to the health of the aquatic habitat of hundreds of fish and wildlife species, including threatened and endangered species. Fresh water is particularly important to the Pacific Islands, where streams provide water for drinking, cooking, bathing, and recreation, as well as support for healthy coral reef ecosystems.

CWSF works to protect, restore, and enhance water quality and quantity across the West through collaboration across state lines and jurisdictional boundaries on forest policy development and program delivery.



¹ USDA Forest Service
² The American Forest Foundation