

## **Fix Our Forests Act ([H.R.471](#))**

On January 16, 2025, House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Bruce Westerman (R-AR-4) and Congressman Scott Peters (D-CA-50) reintroduced the [Fix Our Forests Act \(H.R. 471\)](#). The bill is also supported by Congressional Western Caucus Chair Doug LaMalfa (R-CA-1). It is cosponsored by 20 members of the California delegation (including Congressman Peters and Congressman LaMalfa). The bipartisan legislation encourages more active management of federal forest lands, improves the regulatory process for forest health projects on federal lands, promotes federal, state and local government collaboration, coordinates federal grant programs to better serve communities in high fire risk areas, and expands the use of technologies to address wildfire threats. The bill will be brought to the House floor on January 23, 2025.

ACWA supported this legislation in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress and, as the bill is substantially the same, is continuing its support in the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress.

Last year, during the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, the House of Representatives passed the Fix Our Forests Act 268-151. Unfortunately, the bill did not see action in the U.S. Senate. ACWA supported this bill in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress and is continuing to press for its passage in the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress.

Specifically, the legislation would:

- Improve federal agency collaboration by establishing an interagency Fireshed Center Office housed within the U.S. Forest Service that includes representatives from: USFS, DOI, DOE, DHS, DOD, FEMA, NOAA and NASA. The Fireshed Center would work to streamline decision making, procurement, data sharing, and other measures. The bill would also codify cross-boundary stewardship between federal, state, and tribal lands. Cross boundary stewardship would only be provided if requested by a state or tribe.
- Authorize targeted environmental streamlining by expanding the use of Categorical Exclusions (CE) including under power lines, codifies emergency NEPA, NHPA, and ESA regulations in certain high-risk areas. Clarifies that USFS/BLM are not required to reinstitute consultation on an approved land management plan if a new species is listed or critical habitat is designated. Permanently codifies 20 year stewardship contracts.
- Address litigation challenges by expanding litigation reforms found in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and Healthy Forest Restoration Act (no injunction if plaintiff is unlikely to succeed, and balance of harms when considering an injunction). Limits claims on fireshed management projects to 120 days after the agency announces a proposed action.
- Expand good neighbor authorities allowing revenue from timber sales to be retained by counties and tribes. Establishes a joint DOI/USDA Community Wildfire Defense Research Program.