



The Challenge

Healthy forests provide many economic and environmental benefits to communities and the planet. Wood products are ubiquitous in the global economy, and forests promote healthier ecosystems by providing food and shelter to a wide range of animals and plants. Importantly, more robust, resilient forests are a natural climate solution. Trees, plants, and greenery purify the air and absorb carbon dioxide. If they aren't properly managed, however, America's forests can be an economic, environmental, and public safety liability.

The Opportunity

Active forest management through controlled burns and timber development will reduce the risk communities face from wildfires and will prevent the release of hundreds of millions of metric tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Establishing defined and legally protected property rights for landowners is essential for economic productivity and environmental stewardship.

The Solutions

To promote healthy forests, reduce wildfire risk, and increase forest restoration, Congress and the administration should:

- Clarify the language for categorical exclusion applications, which currently take an average of seven months to navigate.
- Allow a state environmental review to satisfy all federal requirements of a federal review upon approval from a federal agency.
- Expand the acreage limit for categorical exclusions so that a prescribed burn can safely manage more acres under one restoration project.
- Allow prescribed burns to be excluded from state emissions calculations.
- Narrow the scope of who can file lawsuits, limiting preliminary injunctions and stays to 60 days, and setting a six-month statute of limitation on National Environmental Policy Act challenges.
- Limit Endangered Species Act consultation to projects with on-the-ground impacts on protected species.
- Fund and expedite the permit approval for wildfire detection equipment and the use of satellite data.
- Lift the export ban on unprocessed timber on federal lands.

Key Facts

- Forests in the United States [sequester about 16 percent](#) of annual domestic carbon dioxide emissions.
- A January 2023 [study](#) in the *American Economics Association* totaled the suppression costs for 11 states at more than \$13 billion from 1995-2016.
- In 2020, California’s wildfires emitted more carbon dioxide than the entire state’s fossil fuel emissions.
- A [study](#) from UCLA estimates that the number of days with extreme fire weather in the fall has more than doubled over the past 40 years.
- NEPA review [delays](#) mechanical thinning on federal lands 3.6 years on average and prescribed burns on federal lands by 4.7 years on average.

Legislation to Follow:

Legislation	Bill #s)	House Sponsor	Senate Sponsor	House Cosponsor(s)	Senate Cosponsor(s)
Root and Stem Project Authorization Act of 2023	H.R.674 and S.199	Newhouse (R-WA-4)	Daines (R-MT)	Peters (D-CA-50), Zinke (R-MT-1)	Feinstein (D-CA)
Save Our Sequoias Act	H.R.2989	McCarthy (R-CA-23)		Peters (D-CA-50), Westerman (R-AR-4), Costa(D-CA-21), Valadao (R-CA-22), Panetta (D-CA-19), and more	
Expediting Forest Restoration and Recovery Act of 2023	S.808		Thune (R-SD)		
Invasive Species Prevention and Forest Restoration Act	S.1238		Welch (D-VT)		Braun (R-IN), Hassan (D-NH)
Forest Litigation Reform Act of 2023	H.R.636	Rosendale (R-MT-2)			
Forest Protection and Wildland Firefighter Safety Act of 2023	H.R.1586	LaMalfa (R-CA-1)		Panetta (D-CA-19), Newhouse (R-WA-4), Fulcher (R-ID-1), Scott (R-GA-8), Garamendi (D-CA-8), and more	