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Topic 5. The role of State Forests in maximising the delivery of a range of environmental, economic and social outcomes and options for diverse management, including Aboriginal forest management models

The newsletter below highlights the importance of adaptive management and bipartisan approaches that use forestry skills and expertise and support forestry. Not a race to destroy forestry as NSW is undertaking. The US get it, using a bipartisan approach, not Australia.

Healthy Forests Healthy Communities. News and Views Sat 12 October 2024

Fix Our Forests Act Passes U.S. House with Bipartisan Support

In a significant move towards improving forest management and reducing wildfire risks, the U.S. House of Representatives has passed H.R. 8790, the Fix Our Forests Act. Sponsored by Chairman Bruce Westerman (R-Ark.) and Rep. Scott Peters (D-Calif.), the legislation received strong bipartisan support, passing with a vote of 268-151. The full Roll Call vote can be found here.

The Fix Our Forests Act aims to enhance the management of U.S. forests and protect communities near wildland-urban areas. It simplifies environmental reviews, reduces bureaucratic delays, and encourages collaboration between federal, state, tribal, and local land managers. The legislation is designed to address the growing risk of catastrophic wildfires, which have already burned more than 7 million acres in 2024 alone, resulting in billions of dollars in damages and the loss of homes and lives.

Chairman Bruce Westerman emphasized the urgency of the bill, calling for swift action to protect forests from further destruction. Rep. Scott Peters highlighted the impact of wildfires on communities like San Diego, reflecting on the devastating Cedar Fire of 2003. Both lawmakers emphasized the need for responsible land management and proactive steps to prevent future wildfires.

The Fix Our Forests Act includes provisions to streamline forest restoration projects, improve the safety of infrastructure like powerlines, and adopt science-based forest management practices. It also encourages the use of livestock grazing in fuels management programs and strengthens the Good Neighbor Authority, which allows states and local entities to collaborate on forest restoration.

While the legislation faces a challenging path in the Senate, the strong bipartisan support in the House reflects a growing consensus on the need for better forest management to mitigate the risks of wildfires and protect natural resources for future generations.

Briefs: Your Monthly Round Up of Forest Management News

As many forests fail to recover from wildfires, replanting efforts face huge odds -- and obstacles Camille Stevens-Rumann crouched in the dirt and leaned over evergreen seedlings, measuring how much each had grown in seven months. 'That's two to three inches of growth on the spruce,' said Stevens-Rumann, interim director at the Colorado Forest Restoration Institute. Her research team is monitoring several species planted two years ago on a slope burned during the devastating 2020 Cameron Peak fire, which charred 326 square miles (844 square kilometers) in

the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. They want to determine which species are likely to survive at various elevations, because climate change makes it difficult or impossible for many forests to regrow even decades after wildfires. [\(Read More\)](#)

Wildfire experts weigh in on the effects of the Davis fire

Dr. Sarah Bisbing is an associate professor of forest ecosystem science and has been the director of the Whittell Forest and Wildlife Area for the last four years. As a lab director, she oversees researchers who work on forest management for both natural and populated areas. The areas that were affected by the fire actually have had treatments done to help prevent wildfire risk. The three treatments that her team studies are resilience, resistance, and transition. Resistance is one of the major treatments that happens in the Tahoe area because it focuses on fuel reduction, clearing the trees that can cause fire to spread. 'What we've seen in fires like the Davis fire, in areas that have fuel sources removed, is two effects: it allows the fire to move through forests with less fuel and provides an anchor point for fire protection,' said Bisbing. 'Removing fuel sources is the only thing you can really control for as a human. We can't control the weather, the humidity, where the fire starts, but removing fuel can really help.' [\(Read More\)](#)

Number of trees that die years after wildfire likely bigger than thought, research shows

One year after a wildfire burns in a forest, the U.S. Forest Service assesses the damage. What the agency finds at this one-year mark informs its post-fire restoration efforts, including how many trees foresters are required to plant to replace ones that died due to the fire. But according to a growing body of research, one year just isn't enough time to determine how many trees have died following a wildfire. Two recent studies, created independently of each other, that examined the effects of wildfires in Oregon, Washington as well as other parts of the West, found that trees scorched by fire can continue to die for as long as five years after a wildfire. While there is as yet no scientific consensus about what these findings mean for post-fire restoration, the implication, according to some scientists, is that the ecological damage caused by wildfires has been underestimated and restoration efforts are not keeping up. [\(Read More\)](#)

Inaction is not an option for a healthy Hoosier National Forest

Managing public lands is a balancing act. There are laws, policies, executive orders, local economies, visitor needs, climate change predictions, effects to threatened and endangered species, the protection of cultural resources and sensitive natural areas, tribal consultation, public input, and the latest science to consider when making decisions. The long-term stewardship of the Hoosier National Forest will require collaboration and the application of the latest science to succeed into the future. [\(Read More\)](#)

'Man-made' disaster: Ruidoso, New Mexico officials say lack of forest thinning and logging contributed to fire

Still reeling from fires and floods that caused two deaths, the destruction of hundreds of homes and a puny summer tourism season, local leaders in the Ruidoso area are asking: How much could have been avoided? Local and tribal officials told a group of state lawmakers gathered Wednesday in Las Cruces they believe insufficient forest thinning and maintenance played a role in scope of the South Fork and Salt fires this summer, as well as the subsequent burn scar flooding that caused heavy damage at the Ruidoso Downs Race Track & Casino, a tourism driver in the cluster of mountain communities. Several said they blame overgrowth in the forests in part on the slowdown of the logging industry in the area. 'This disaster, which affects even the Hondo Valley and the acequias down there was all man-made,' said Mark Fischer, a Lincoln County Commissioner, during a meeting of the Legislature's Economic and Rural Development and Policy Committee. [\(Read More\)](#)

Skamania County: A Timber Community Trapped Between Federal Forces

Sydney Gleason served as an environmental journalism intern for Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities for the summer of 2024. Part 1 and Part 2 of her series on amending the Northwest Forest Plan was published in the Capital Press. HFHC's environmental journalism internship encourages young journalists to learn how forest policy impacts our environment and communities.

Commissioner Tom Lannen guides his sedan down a quiet backroad of Skamania County, Washington and stops in front of a row of rusted mailboxes. The skeletons of tall wooden racks loom to his right. To his left, a chicken wire fence traverses an overgrown grass field. Sixty years ago, the mailboxes were shiny and stuffed to the brim. The barracks were a cone drying shed in Wind River Nursery, one of the largest tree nurseries in the United States. The field nurtured rows of trees. The road bustled with trucks transporting seedlings.

Back then Skamania County was a hub for timber production and one of the wealthiest counties in Washington. Today, restrictive federal policies are continuing to squeeze Skamania's way of life. Trapped between the Northwest Forest Plan and the Columbia River Gorge Scenic Area, the county struggles to provide basic services while communities lack affordable housing.

Seated along the Columbia River with sweeping views of the Gorge, Skamania County houses 12,500 residents and 1.1 million acres of land. But less than two percent of that land is taxed at full market value. 762,000 acres belong to the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, and 87,000 acres lay within the Columbia River Gorge Scenic Area. This abundance of non-taxable federal land limits the county's ability to diversify its economy and grow revenues to sustain services.

Skamania's 2023 operating budget is the same as it was 14 years ago, despite the state's budget having increased 300 percent over the same period of time.

The 1986 Scenic Act, which protects the land along the Columbia River, was the first blow to Skamania's prosperity. The policy restricted urban development in the Scenic Area to just 8,000 unforested acres in the towns of Stevenson, Carson, North Bonneville, and Home Valley. Most of this land has already been developed, so the county now lacks commercial land to build on. 'Not only are we denied the initial bare land, but those parcels will never be sold to be developed, and we've reduced the number of potential housing sites,' Lannen said.

The housing shorting has skyrocketed prices. A basic 1,500 square foot home in Skamania now costs \$450,000. When Ingrid Colvard, Superintendent of Schools in Stevenson-Carson, moved to the county in 2020, there were only three properties on the market. 'My house is astronomically expensive for what it is. It's ridiculous,' Colvard said.

Ten years ago, former sheriff Dave Brown had to start allowing his deputies to move outside of Skamania because they could not afford to live in county limits. Brown believes that decision has impacted local perception of the police. 'When you start taking your police force out of the county, they're no longer a part of that community,' Brown said. 'Now the only people the deputies know are the ones they're arresting every week, not the grocery store owners or the school teachers.' [Click here to read the rest of the story](#)

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Topic 6. Opportunities to realise carbon and biodiversity benefits and support carbon and biodiversity markets, and mitigate and adapt to climate change risks, including the greenhouse gas emission impacts of different uses of forests and assessment of climate change risks to forests

See 5.