

this new year. In Congress, I will embody the calm determination of the snake as I build on my record of effectiveness and deliver results for our southern California communities.

Let me wish everybody a “happy new year” in Korean, “saehae bok mani badeuseyo”; Mandarin, “xinnian kuaile”; Cantonese, “gong hei fat choy”; and Vietnamese, “chuc mung nam moi.” Happy new year.

HONORING BROTHER RONALD GALLAGHER

(Mr. DESAULNIER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DESAULNIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Brother Ronald Gallagher who passed away earlier this month after a distinguished life of service to Lasallian education.

Brother Ron was a son of California. He took his final vows in 1972 and went on to earn his Ph.D. in comparative literature. He began teaching at the high school level before joining the faculty at Saint Mary's College of California in the early 1980s.

After a successful teaching career, Brother Ron served as the college's president from 2005 until 2013. As president emeritus after his term as president, he oversaw academic and athletic facility improvements. Brother Ron was honored for his work during all of that time with the naming of the Brother Ron Gallagher Baseball Stadium at Saint Mary's.

Brother Ron will be remembered for his vocation, for his sense of humor, love of sports, and passion for literature. I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Brother Ronald Gallagher for a life of unwavering commitment to service, education, his faith, and his community.

PROTECTING THE VALUE OF U.S. CITIZENSHIP

(Mr. LAMALFA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, the Birthright Citizenship Act is a necessary step to restore integrity to our immigration system. The 14th Amendment was never intended to grant citizenship to children of individuals who enter or remain in the country illegally. The purpose of the 14th Amendment was to guarantee full rights to freed slaves, not to fuel illegal immigration or exploit U.S. citizenship through birth tourism.

Today, 1 in 10 births in the U.S. is to an illegal mother, and nearly 400,000 of these mothers come across the border illegally every year to give birth. The drafters of the 14th Amendment couldn't have imagined that is how it would be twisted to make that somehow legal.

The loophole also fuels a global birth tourism industry, further undermining

the integrity of our laws. Citizenship is one of America's most precious privileges. By closing these loopholes, this legislation prioritizes the rule of law and the interests of American citizens.

It is about fairness. It is not denying opportunity but ensuring our laws are respected and applied consistently. Let's take this vital step to protect the value of U.S. citizenship.

EVERGLADES COALITION HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE MARY BARLEY

(Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Mary Barley of Florida to celebrate her much-deserved induction into the Everglades Coalition Hall of Fame.

Mary and her late husband, George, brought unmatched passion and commitment for decades to serving America's Everglades. For instance, this award-winning advocate was pivotal in helping pass the bipartisan Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan in 2000. This landmark legislation authorized the world's largest ecosystem restoration effort, one that continues to guide our renewal efforts today.

Mary is also a founding director of the Everglades Foundation, the leading scientific, advocacy, and educational group working to restore this ecological treasure.

Mr. Speaker, Mary Barley has been more than a leading bipartisan force in the historic quest to save the River of Grass. She has been a mentor, friend, and role model to generations of young environmentalists who were fortunate to learn from her passion and devotion to this cherished ecosystem. We are so fortunate to have a persuasive advocate to preserve and protect this unique and magnificent ecosystem. Mary's induction into the Everglades Coalition Hall of Fame is timely and well-deserved.

WELCOMING HOME ROMI GONEN, EMILY DAMARI, AND DORON STEINBRECHER

(Ms. GILLEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. GILLEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of everyone on Long Island to welcome Romi, Emily, and Doron home after more than 470 days in Hamas captivity. We will not rest until every hostage comes home. I thank the previous administration and President Trump for working together to get this deal across the finish line.

We will never forget October 7, the single deadliest day for the Jewish people since the Holocaust. Hamas terrorists brutally murdered 1,200 Israelis, including Omer Neutra of Long Island.

The terrorist attacks of October 7 must never happen again. We must always stand with our ally, Israel.

SUPPORTING HEALTHCARE AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

(Ms. JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the Republican reproductive healthcare surveillance act. I am from Texas. The last thing any Texan wants is the government telling doctors or women what they can or cannot do with their bodies. That is exactly what this bill does.

I was in Texas in the State legislature when Texas Republicans wanted to pass this same bill. They wanted to use Big Government to reach into doctors' offices and make personal healthcare decisions on behalf of women in my State. These are complex medical issues, and no politician should interfere in the lives of women and their families.

Doctors have medical training. Politicians don't. We must protect the doctor-patient relationship. Simply put, Republicans should not have a seat at the table in a doctor's office. It amazes me that my colleagues in the so-called party of small government continue to put forth bills that seek to control women, families, and doctors.

I will always make sure women and families have the tools they need to make their own healthcare-related decisions. This misguided bill endangers the lives of women, and I urge my colleagues to oppose it.

FIX OUR FORESTS ACT

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material on H.R. 471.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BENTZ). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas? There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 53 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 471.

The Chair appoints the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. STRONG) to preside over the Committee of the Whole.

□ 1230

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 471) to expedite under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and improve forest management activities on National Forest System lands, on public lands under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management, and on Tribal lands to return resilience to overgrown, fire-prone forested lands, and for other purposes, with Mr. STRONG in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIR. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed 1 hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and the ranking minority member of the Committee on Natural Resources or their respective designees.

The gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. HUFFMAN) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN).

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Chair, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chair, I rise in strong support of H.R. 471, the Fix Our Forests Act, a bipartisan bill I am leading with my good friend from California (Mr. PETERS), along with 16 other Democrats and 37 additional Republican cosponsors.

Our prayers are with the people of California as they are enduring horrendous wildfires and experiencing loss of life and property. We have a unique opportunity today to put feet to those prayers and prevent those tragedies from happening again in the future.

There are two reasons why we can't afford to wait any longer to reform forest management policies in this country. Number one, the stakes are too high, and number two, what we are doing is not working.

First, let's talk about the stakes. The Los Angeles wildfires have caused unimaginable damage and will likely become the costliest in American history, with early estimates suggesting upward of \$250 billion in damages.

More than 16,000 structures—homes, schools, grocery stores, entire neighborhoods, and communities—have burned. Sadly, at least 28 people have tragically lost their lives.

We all know that such figures can tell only part of the story. No price tag can be placed on the loss of a beloved family member or friend. No property valuation can register the pain a family feels after losing a home where cherished memories were made. No bookkeeping accounts for the lost dreams of a small business owner whose lifework has gone up in smoke. These are the true costs, the human costs, of catastrophic wildfire.

Losing 16,000 structures is nearly unfathomable. Local officials reported that it looked like a bomb was dropped on these communities after the smoke had cleared.

What is truly startling is that there are 44 million homes in the wildland-urban interface nationwide. There are more than 70,000 communities just like Pacific Palisades at risk of being wiped out by catastrophic fire.

This brings me to my second point. What we have been doing is not working. This bill passed the House last September with a strong bipartisan vote. Unfortunately, the Senate failed to move it. In the interim, more than 1.5 million acres burned across the country.

The Fix Our Forests Act offers a broad set of commonsense solutions that must be enacted. This legislation creates a needed framework for prioritizing treatments in our highest risk areas. To identify these areas, FOFA utilizes state-of-the-art technology to determine the most vulnerable firehedges across the country. Then, it incentivizes the use of emergency actions to prevent wildfires.

Many of these actions, like clearing brush and creating fuel breaks, are exactly what local authorities hastily undertook as they scrambled to save threatened neighborhoods in Los Angeles. The key difference, however, is that this bill ensures that such measures take place well before the fires start, not in the heat of an approaching blaze.

Without these tools, completing a single forest management project takes an average of 3 to 5 years. Under FOFA, land managers can act immediately to protect communities.

FOFA also expands existing categorical exclusions up to 10,000 acres so that prevention measures can meet the scale of the crisis. Under the status quo, if land managers want to reduce hazardous fuels in an area roughly the size of the Palisades fire, they would need eight separate categorical exclusions. Under FOFA, they need only two.

This change is based on proven results, like the 10,000-acre CE in the Lake Tahoe Basin. That was a bipartisan effort by Representative MCCLINTOCK and the late Senator Dianne Feinstein. These efforts saved South Lake Tahoe from certain destruction during the Caldor fire.

FOFA also protects communities by creating a community wildfire risk reduction program and clearing hazardous trees from utility rights-of-way to prevent fires like the ones that destroyed Lahaina in Maui and Paradise in California.

FOFA supports wildland firefighters by creating a new casualty assistance program for firefighters killed or injured in the line of duty, ensuring access to the latest technology so they can detect and put out fires faster and standardizing repayment timelines with local fire departments so non-Federal partners aren't waiting years to get the money they are owed.

I have only briefly described some of the important bipartisan pieces in FOFA, but it involves much more to make forests more resilient, healthier, and safer, from sea to shining sea.

All of these tools available in this bill echo a similar theme: We must restore common sense to our approach to forest management. This comprehensive package is a result of years of hard work and bipartisan collaboration formulated through hearings, site visits, and Member feedback.

Fixing our forests should not be a partisan issue, and today, it is not.

Mr. Chair, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Chair, I rise in opposition to H.R. 471, the Fix Our Forests Act, sponsored by Chairman WESTERMAN.

While this bill is flawed, and we will be discussing those flaws here in a moment, I do appreciate that Chair WESTERMAN and Representative PETERS did come together to work on this issue in a bipartisan way that acknowledges our wildfire crisis. That is a good thing. Addressing that should be a bipartisan priority, and the Fix Our Forests Act includes some helpful provisions.

For starters, it has incorporated a number of key Democratic priorities that are in direct alignment with the recommendations of the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission. That is what is referenced in this poster here behind me, 148 nonpartisan consensus recommendations for making us safer from the threat of wildfire.

If this bill simply moved those consensus recommendations forward and also did something that the commission told us we had to do, a critical priority, which is to fund them and make sure that the agencies responsible for overseeing these projects have staffing—if this bill were simply doing that, we wouldn't be here today because this bill would already be law, and many of these good things would already be keeping communities safer.

Mr. Chair, as you will hear in a moment, this bill goes off on some tangents that have nothing to do with fire safety.

Also, with respect to the good provisions it does include, it fails to fund them. That is why we are here. That is why the path of this bill has been more complicated. That is, unfortunately, a missed opportunity.

We were able, in this bill, to include reauthorization of the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program and the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership sponsored by our newly reelected Subcommittee on Federal Lands ranking member, JOE NEGUSE.

The latest version of the bill also includes a revamped version of the Fireshed Center, which aligns with several of the commission's consensus recommendations aimed at enhancing coordination, using predictive services, and unifying decisionmaking capabilities.

I am glad this bill has evolved to include these priorities my Democratic colleagues have championed. In fact, we have Democratic bills that do all of these good things and more because fire safety is a huge concern for all of us, but our Democratic bills do not pair these good provisions unnecessarily with harmful environmental rollbacks. That, unfortunately, is what the bill before us does do.

If you scratch beneath the surface of H.R. 471, you start seeing problems, starting with the fact that the beneficial provisions are totally unfunded.

There is simply no money, no resources, to help any of the good things actually happen.

There are also several poison pills that have the potential to undermine science-based management and public engagement.

On top of doing nothing to address the key driver of catastrophic wildfires, climate change, the so-called Fix Our Forests Act inappropriately co-opts emergency authorities under the National Environmental Policy Act, undercuts the Endangered Species Act, and even makes it more difficult for communities to engage and scrutinize or even know about projects that could directly impact them.

Wildfire is deadly serious. In a matter of minutes, iconic landscapes and entire neighborhoods can be reduced to ashes. I know because it has happened all too often in my district. It is not something politicians should use as a pretext to jam through unrelated industry favors or special interest agendas that undermine our foundational environmental protections.

Let me be clear. House Democrats agree that we need to increase the pace and scale of restoration in our national forests and on public and private land. That is why we worked to secure robust funding in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act. This enabled the Biden-Harris administration to develop the Wildfire Crisis Strategy and other key restoration activities.

Thanks to the funding we provided, the Forest Service has been able to achieve record numbers for both hazardous fuels reduction and prescribed burning. They have even identified southern California as a priority landscape through this work. The only thing holding them back from doing even more beneficial work on the ground is lack of money.

However, as we are seeing with the Los Angeles fires, addressing the wildfire crisis is not all about work in the woods. Southern California is dominated by chaparral, where things like timber sales and clear-cutting simply do not provide a fire safety solution for these communities.

My Republican friends seem to think that logging is a panacea for fire safety. In fact, it will do little or nothing to reduce wildfire risk in many of the most vulnerable communities. The fuel in the Los Angeles fires was not trees. The fuel was homes, schools, and businesses.

We will learn many lessons from this tragedy, but one I hope we can take away right now is that we can't keep taking a siloed, myopic approach to wildfire management and prevention. Built environments, like Los Angeles, must be a priority.

We shouldn't have to fight lies and disinformation as our brave Federal firefighters, who are already underpaid, are out there still fighting fires. I would like to set the record straight on some of the misinformation and

disinformation swirling around this debate.

While Los Angeles has some of the strongest building codes and fire safety requirements in the Nation, there are still thousands and thousands of homes that require retrofitting to ensure that they are adequately protected. Clearly, we have a lot more work to do, and this bill misses the mark by failing to advance that work.

Keeping homes and property resilient also requires constant upkeep and maintenance. Our communities need guidance, and again, more than anything else, they need resources to ensure that this happens.

While the Fix Our Forests Act includes a community wildfire risk program, which is a good thing, it is not enough. We need to pass the Community Protection and Wildfire Resilience Act that I introduced earlier this week with my Republican colleague, Congressman OBERNOLTE. It provides actual resources to help local communities defend themselves from the growing danger of wildfires.

Our bill would empower communities to implement science-based methods for mitigating wildfire damage, and we provide funding to design and implement new community protection and wildfire resilience plans with community members, first responders, and relevant State agencies. It would designate a targeted, specific grant program for home hardening within FEMA and add home hardening as an allowable project under an existing Forest Service program.

The bill provides actual support with an adequate focus on the built environment, and that is why I filed it as an amendment to this bill. Unfortunately, the majority decided to move forward on this bill without allowing a vote on that and many other amendments.

I had been hopeful that the amendment process would be an opportunity to address some of the critical gaps in this bill, especially the absence of a pay raise for our Federal wildland firefighters. That, too, has been left out.

What happened in Los Angeles this month is a national tragedy. In moments like this, we should overcome all politics and find ways to work together on solutions that actually help the people we are here to serve.

With that in mind, I want to discourage any of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who might want to embrace this wrongheaded idea that relief and support for Los Angeles can somehow be a bargaining chip or used as leverage to advance other policy goals.

The majority is not going to turn California into a red State by hijacking critically needed disaster relief. In fact, a thought like that never would have crossed our minds when we had the backs of the people in Florida, North Carolina, and Louisiana. We have simply been fellow Americans helping each other in the face of these terrible tragedies. That is the way it has always worked in this Congress,

and I hope we are not going to set a terrible new precedent now.

Mr. Chair, I will be recommending a "no" vote on this bill today. I hope that we can continue to work together, however, to improve this bill and to address all the critical issues that have been left out. I also hope that when it comes to the broader critical need for Federal disaster relief, we can remember that we are all fellow Americans and that we need to have each other's backs in these moments.

Mr. Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1245

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Chair, if throwing money at a problem would fix it, then we wouldn't be having fires today. Over the past few years, our Federal land managers have been showered with \$12 billion to battle wildland fires and to make our forests more resilient. The result of that is that Forest Service estimates they are going to treat less acreage than they treated before.

It is not a money problem. It is a policy problem and Fix Our Forests will help solve that problem.

Mr. Chair, I yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCLINTOCK).

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Chairman, over the last 10 years, we have lost fully one-quarter of our Federal forests to catastrophic fire.

An untended forest is no different from an untended garden. It will grow and grow until it chokes itself to death, and then it will succumb to disease, pestilence, drought, and ultimately catastrophic fire. This is how nature gardens. She doesn't care that it takes a century or more for a forest to regrow. We mortals do.

Excess timber will come out of the forest in only two ways. Either we will carry it out, or nature will burn it out. That is why we created the Forest Service, to do our own gardening and remove excess timber before it can choke off the forest.

Every year, foresters would mark off surplus timber, and we would auction it off to logging companies who paid us to remove it. For a century, we enjoyed healthy, fire-resistant and resilient forests.

However, then we passed bureaucratic laws which have made the active management of our forests all but impossible. A simple forest management plan now takes an average of 5.3 years to complete, and it costs millions of dollars, more than the value of the timber to be harvested. Since these laws were passed, timber harvested from Federal lands in California has fallen 75 percent with a concomitant increase in acreage destroyed by fire.

My friend, Mr. HUFFMAN, is concerned about climate change and carbon dioxide. He should know that a UCLA study revealed that just the 2020 fires in California alone released twice as much carbon dioxide as had been

prevented by 17 years of the restrictions and regulations that California has imposed, costing its consumers and taxpayers billions of dollars.

Now, we were able to get a categorical exclusion from NEPA for forest thinning projects in the Lake Tahoe Basin in 2016. In the 9 years since its enactment, it has reduced the approval process for forest thinning projects at Tahoe from 5 years to less than 4 months. It has reduced the environmental reports from more than 800 pages down to a few dozen.

Timber harvested has increased from roughly 1 million board feet a year to 9 million board feet a year. The treated acreage has tripled, and the Tahoe forests are returning to fire resiliency. This is what saved the city of South Lake Tahoe from the Caldor fire 2 years ago. The town of Grizzly Flats, which was not protected by this law, was wiped out by the same fire.

I have been trying for years to expand these proven reforms to the rest of the National Forest System through the Proven Forest Management Act. That measure is now included in this legislation, and its enactment is long overdue.

This should not be a partisan issue. The choice is between policies that have proven to work and policies that have proven to fail. Let us return to the policies that work before we run out of forests to burn down.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Chair, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, it is always refreshing to hear my colleagues across the aisle, who typically deny climate science forcefully, to suddenly get interested in things like CO₂ emissions. They have discovered, correctly, that forest fires actually cause CO₂ to go into the atmosphere. I guess that is progress.

I hope now they will begin to listen to the overwhelming majority of climate scientists who are saying that this fossil fuel energy bonanza of theirs is actually the primary driver of catastrophic climate change. It is the reason we have record-breaking disasters, one after another because of this fossil fuel bonanza. I hope that we can build on the progress, this awakening that we have begun to hear on at least some climate science.

Now, it was mentioned by the chairman, I believe erroneously, that forest treatments have gone down since the passage of the legislation that I mentioned two Congresses ago. In fact, we need to do a little bit of correcting there.

Since the passage of these two laws, the Forest Service has been treating a record number of acres, including a record number of prescribed fires in California and across the country. We also know that from 2002 to 2023, the Forest Service consistently increased the acres that it treated.

Nevertheless, let's pick up where the Trump Administration left off. Mr. Chair, 2.65 million acres were treated in 2020, and we know that the Biden ad-

ministration was able to treat 4.3 million acres, a lot more than the Trump administration, in 2023. The numbers, admittedly, leveled off over the last 2 years because of Republican budget cuts, but they have still topped 4 million acres a year, and so it is a very different trajectory than what has been suggested.

Mr. Chair, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BEYER).

Mr. BEYER. Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to the Fix Our Forests Act, and I rise to fight what could be the first successful attempt to undermine the Endangered Species Act.

I believe that the California people deserve our urgent support to recover and rebuild from the tragic wildfires, and I am disappointed that this was not a productive discussion and a bipartisan discussion to help address what they need.

There are many excellent pieces of legislation that we should be looking at for that support, including many that are bipartisan, like the Modernizing Wildfire Safety and Prevention Act.

Those bills provide much-needed funding, deliver desperately needed support to firefighters, and address the needs of frontline communities. This bill does not.

Instead, it regurgitates long-held logging industry priorities to reshape environmental laws on Forest Service land and allow profit, not science, to dictate forest management decisions.

As a co-chair of the Endangered Species Act Caucus, I am particularly troubled by this bill's rollback of Endangered Species Act enforcement by overturning the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals' Cottonwood decision. This decision basically says that when new science emerges or develops on endangered species, it must be considered in the Endangered Species Act protections.

By the way, the science goes both ways. It can both identify new dangers, but it can also identify successes and reduce stresses to threatened species.

The industry has long tried to include the so-called Cottonwood fix in several pieces of must-pass legislation, most recently in the farm bill. They now see in their response to the California wildfires their newest opportunity to undermine Cottonwood.

This industry wish list item would exempt Federal land management agencies from reconsultation under the Endangered Species Act. That process ensures that Federal agencies' land management plans incorporate the best available science as it becomes available. It is absolutely essential, but this is also a rare occurrence. It doesn't happen very often. When it does, it is important to consider it.

As any student of history and science knows, our shared knowledge is continuously evolving through new inquiry and discovery. If we didn't incorporate new knowledge, then we would still be stuck with the geocentric

model of the galaxy, placing the Earth at the center of the universe. Then think about the modern medical system. The modern medical community is built off the 19th century germ theory, which has saved hundreds of millions of lives.

Incorporating new scientific knowledge is the bedrock of our modern society. It makes no sense when new science emerges to close our eyes, put our hands over our ears, and deny what the best science tells us. This antiscience ESA poison pill is dropped in, unconnected to wildlife management.

Yes, we need good-faith forest management efforts to prevent wildfires, but not environmental rollbacks that allow for logging and other ecologically damaging activities that would worsen, not reduce, the risk of destructive wildfires. We need to take real action to mitigate risks and effects, and I am ready to work with all my colleagues to make that happen.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. LAMALFA).

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Chair, I thank the gentleman from Arkansas for his hard work for a long time on this to create a bipartisan bill that is intended to succeed.

The area that I represent in far northern California is one that has seen so much fire and so much destruction over the years. The Fix Our Forests Act is an important step and a meaningful step in having this not occur anymore. So I am really pleased that the effort can be bipartisan, and Chairman WESTERMAN is able to advance this cause.

Indeed, this is what one of my cities looked like, Paradise, California. It has already been 6 years, 85 lives lost, 300 towns affected in my district, 2 of them almost completely gone, Greenville, Canyon Dam, and a third one called Doyle. The fire burned right through that as well.

We are getting tired of this. We are getting really tired of it.

Now, with the tragedy in southern California, I guess that underlines it since it is getting a lot more national press. That is unfortunate.

What I appreciate in this bill is that it is common sense, and it will help with these disasters and keep our power grid more reliable. With the legislation we will have more clearing around the power lines, a bill I was able to pass a while back that we are adding to this bill.

Also, I am pleased to have a provision in here that advances more grazing. Of course, grazing is a very cost-effective way of keeping the fuels down around fire zones, and you can actually get paid for it by those doing the grazing.

So, Mr. Chair, when you see what success looks like, this is a managed forest here. It is thinned out, and it offers a much better opportunity to put fire out and stop fire or at least have it

burn through slowly and much cooler. When you don't manage the lands such—as so much U.S. Forest Service land looks this way—this is a tinderbox. It will burn completely down. We may not see any growth for 50 years after that.

Let's go with success. What Mr. MCCLINTOCK was talking about in the Tahoe area, and even in a small town near Paradise called Magalia, where a private concern had done some of the work, and one-half of Magalia did not burn because of the work that was done adjacent to it.

We know these processes work. Why can't we advance them?

Why do we have to continue to have the destruction of the environment, waterways, and everything?

Let's pass this bill.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Chair, the picture my friend from northern California just showed is instructive because both the right and the left side of that picture are areas that were clear-cut. You can tell that, Mr. Chair, because all the trees were exactly the same height. It is what we call a plantation forest. It is unhealthy. It is absolutely vulnerable to wildfire.

I am glad that they did some thinning on the left side of that picture, but the unhealthy forest on the right side is also a vestige of clear-cutting, which does not make anyone safer. It actually makes communities a lot more vulnerable to wildfire, and it is exactly the kind of project that would go through the huge loophole created in this legislation.

More clear-cutting is not going to make us any safer from wildfire risk.

Mr. Chair, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from San Diego in southern California (Mr. PETERS).

Mr. PETERS. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Chairman, the wildfire crisis is not just a product of inaction, but decades of wrongheaded land management that let our forests, wildlands, and hills turn into tinderboxes. We have suppressed all natural fire, all the time, and let invasive, fire-prone vegetation grow unabated.

The work of clearing dead trees and dry vegetation that fuel fires requires long environmental reviews often followed by years of litigation. While we wait for analysis, forests burn down, habitats are lost, air pollution worsens, and our communities are threatened by catastrophic fire.

The wildfire crisis is also climate change. California wildfires in 2020 contributed more greenhouse gases than the State's entire power sector. It was said before that the fires in that 1 year undid the State's entire progress on emissions reduction from 2003 to 2019.

The Fix Our Forests Act will simplify and expedite the most critical forest management projects while maintaining strong environmental standards. It will reduce the threat of litigation and add new ways for communities to provide input early, something that does

not exist today and is one of the reasons why the National Congress of American Indians supports this bill. The Tribes support this bill.

This bill will also protect communities on the front lines of wildfire crises like Los Angeles and my hometown of San Diego. It helps localities craft modern, fire-resistant building codes. It also promotes public-private partnerships to clear flammable materials where nature meets our homes.

We crafted this bill with input from groups like The Nature Conservancy and the Environmental Defense Fund and others who have their priorities reflected in the text.

While we don't have the firefighting pay increase, which we need and we must get, the grassland firefighters and Western fire chiefs support this bill as is because they know it will help relieve the strain on their already stretched thin resources.

There is more we need to do, and along with Chairman WESTERMAN, we support providing aid for all those hurting in Los Angeles without conditions. No legislation is perfect, but this is a good bill that takes on a problem that is serious throughout the West and the entire country. For once we are not just making speeches. We are passing a bill that can become law and solve problems, and we don't have more time.

I implore my colleagues to join me and vote for this bill and bring some relief to constituents scared that their towns will be next.

□ 1300

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Chair, as a forester, I can say that the only clear-cuts that are happening on Federal lands right now are wildfires. That is nature's way of clear-cutting.

When we see these devastating wildfires that burn everything off of the landscape, that is a clear-cut. What Mr. LAMALFA was talking about was uneven-age forest management and thinning, which we know works.

Mr. Chair, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BENTZ).

Mr. BENTZ. Mr. Chair, I thank Chair WESTERMAN for yielding me time and for his tireless efforts as an engineer and a forester to help save our forests.

Mr. Chair, I am from Oregon. My State has some 15 million acres of Federal forests. H.R. 471 addresses many issues, but the fix of the infamous Cottonwood decision applicable to all 15 million of those Federal acres is one of the most important.

Section 122 of this bill clearly states that no additional consultation under section 7(a)(2) of the ESA will be required under certain circumstances set forth in the bill.

This part of H.R. 471 is one of the key provisions that constitutes the long-awaited fix for the 2015 Cottonwood decision. This reform limits unnecessary litigation, enabling forest management projects to proceed without undue delay, and ensures that critical res-

toration and fire prevention efforts can actually occur.

With this legislation, the Forest Service and BLM will no longer have to delay dozens of wildfire prevention projects anytime a new species is listed, critical habitat is designated, or other information is brought forward. This legislation will fix this wrongfully decided case.

Mr. Chair, I am in full support of this bill.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from central California (Mr. PANETTA).

Mr. PANETTA. Mr. Chairman, in the past few weeks and in the past few years, communities all across America have witnessed the devastation, destruction, and death from wildfires. Much of this calamity and crisis is due to the many communities being in high-risk areas, known as the wildland urban interface. Over 99 million people live in these danger zones, not just in Los Angeles or California, but throughout the entire United States.

In my district in central California, numerous towns are located right next to national forests. Don't get me wrong. It is nice to have national forests as your backyard, but national forests have been neglected and mismanaged, and the risk of wildfires is much worse due to extreme weather and climate change.

Some say that we shouldn't do anything and just let forests manage themselves. Unfortunately, we all bear witness to what can happen when we do nothing.

Fortunately, the Fix Our Forests Act would do something by restoring the health to forests, bolstering the resiliency, and reducing the threat of wildfires. As wildfire seasons have turned to wildfire years, we must be proactive when it comes to our forests.

That is why, rather than just suppress fires, the Fix Our Forests Act would prevent fires, and that is how we protect our communities.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Chair, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. STAUBER).

Mr. STAUBER. Mr. Chair, I rise today in support of H.R. 471, the Fix Our Forests Act, which I am proud to cosponsor. As you can see, it will pass with bipartisan support.

Over recent weeks, Americans have seen the devastating consequences of poor forest management in southern California. Unfortunately, for those of us who hail from rural America, this risk isn't out of the blue for us. It is a risk we face far too often, and that is largely because we are not doing enough to prevent it. Our hands are regularly tied because of the mess of bureaucracy and red tape that is preventing us from acting.

Does the Speaker know what doesn't require a NEPA analysis or doesn't face a threat of years of litigation? It is a wildfire. Until we fix our broken regulatory system that is putting American lives and our pristine national environment at risk, we are going to continue to lose this battle.

The good, bipartisan legislation that will pass before us today will help address this by bringing some sanity back to our forest management practices.

Mr. Chair, I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting this good legislation.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California (Mr. COSTA).

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Chair, I thank the ranking member and the chair for this effort on the legislation.

Over the last 2 weeks, we have seen the devastation that the Los Angeles fires have caused: the lives, the housing, and the commercial structures that have been lost that in some cases will never be replaced.

More than 40,000 acres have burned, the equivalent to over half of Washington, D.C. Lives are at stake, and that is why we need to pass the Fix Our Forests Act.

We know that climate change is having its effect. This bill will better help us maintain our forests by prioritizing the treatment of hazardous fuels in fire-prone areas and expanding wildfire resilience. We also need to recognize that fire management requires different strategies for different geographies.

I am also pleased that my bill, the Headwaters Protection Act, is a part of this package. The bill will strengthen public and private partnerships in forestry and watershed management. Mr. Chair, we will have to find bipartisan additional funding sources.

Our Nation's forests are critically overgrown. We need to have better management. That is clear. The commonsense changes are necessary to prevent wildfires for generations to come, but let's be clear. Much more needs to be done.

We salute the brave firefighters and first responders who are acting today on a 24/7 basis.

The Acting CHAIR. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. CRANK).

Mr. CRANK. Mr. Chair, I thank the gentleman for his leadership on this important wildfire prevention bill. We need these provisions in FOFA to protect our communities and maintain the health of our forests. My own community has seen its share of wildfires. The Hayman fire in 2002 burned 138,000 acres in Pike National Forest and killed five firefighters.

Colorado Springs lies west of Pike National Forest, which contains over 1 million acres of forest. I was evacuated from my own home several years back from a forest fire. Portions of the Pike National Forest are included in the wildfire crisis landscape, and four of the five largest fires in recorded Colorado history have occurred there.

This is a real threat in my backyard, but the pace we are doing fire management is unacceptable, and it has deadly

consequences. The scale and severity of wildfires can be managed and contained. This bill gives us the tools to do that, but we have to be proactive.

Mr. Chair, I urge my colleagues to vote in support of this critical bill.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Chairman, I yield 4 minutes to the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Ms. STANSBURY).

Ms. STANSBURY. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in respectful opposition to H.R. 471 and to also express my concern and my condolences to all who are suffering in California from the devastating wildfires. Like California, communities in New Mexico that were similarly devastated by a wildfire last summer are still picking up the pieces today.

It is very clear that our climate is in crisis, and I rise in opposition to this bill because of the dangerous precedent that this legislation sets for climate and environmental policy as we face a new administration.

There is so much that I like about this bill, but I am extremely concerned about provisions in the bill that undermine NEPA, the Endangered Species Act, judicial remedies that are available to communities and to the environmental community, and that it tries to micromanage instead of putting in place comprehensive solutions to address the climate crisis and forestry practices.

Mr. Chairman, I greatly respect the chair for his forestry expertise. As I said, there is much in this bill that I like, but I am highly concerned especially about the undermining of NEPA and these other environmental bedrock provisions, especially in the wake of 2 days after Donald Trump has taken office and signed a slew of executive orders undermining the fundamental environmental climate and clean energy legislation that we put in place over the last several years.

In these executive orders, he took us out of the Paris climate agreement, opened public lands and offshore for drilling, stopped progress on clean energy projects, revoked spending for the Inflation Reduction Act and the infrastructure bill, and is clearly trying to undermine the bedrock environmental provisions of NEPA with an executive order that would stop the modernization of that bill.

It is in this context that passing new legislation that would give the opportunity for the administration to exploit loopholes in NEPA, as well as the Endangered Species Act and judicial processes, is untenable.

It is not true that our country is facing an energy emergency, as was declared by the President. It is, in fact, facing a climate crisis. The hottest year in human history was 2024. The wildfires in California and New Mexico were not started by bureaucracy. They were the result of the climate crisis.

We must be clear that if we are going to address the catastrophic and increasing wildfires that are happening across the West, we have to stay the

course in our commitment to addressing the climate crisis. We can't stand here and pretend that this bill is actually the result of the deadly wildfires in California. In fact, it is a bill that has been presented in several Congresses, and many of the provisions in it have nothing to do with these wildfires whatsoever.

I ask my friends across the aisle to please join us in actually putting forward comprehensive solutions that will address the climate crisis, that will increase pay and benefits for firefighters, and that will address the resilience needs of our communities and help them rebuild.

Mr. Chair, I respectfully ask my colleagues to vote against this bill because we must address the climate crisis, and we must protect our bedrock environmental laws.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Chairman, I am happy to report that Republicans have an appropriations bill for the Department of the Interior that has firefighter pay increases in that appropriations bill, and I hope that we can all work to pass that as we move forward.

Mr. Chair, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California (Mr. VALADAO).

Mr. VALADAO. Mr. Chairman, the bipartisan Fix Our Forests Act is a critical piece of legislation that will restore forest health and increase our resiliency to catastrophic wildfires.

The fires burning across southern California devastated entire communities and will have lasting impacts on our State for years.

Beyond the terrible loss of life and property, wildfires cause hazardous air conditions that lead to significant health concerns. Smoke and particulate matter from these fires can travel hundreds of miles, and geographic conditions trap these air pollutants in the Central Valley, which creates dangerous conditions for our families, farmworkers, crops, and those already battling respiratory diseases.

In 2023, over 1 million acres burned across California. While fires are inevitable, decades of forest mismanagement have directly contributed to the severity of the wildfires that we are witnessing. While there needs to be serious conversation at the State level about the management of California's natural resources, the Fix Our Forests Act will help address the root causes by providing Federal agencies with the tools necessary to help States practice proactive forest management and mitigate risk.

Mr. Chair, I thank the House Natural Resources Committee chair, BRUCE WESTERMAN, for his leadership on this issue.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. MIN).

Mr. MIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in respectful opposition to H.R. 471, the so-called Fix Our Forests Act.

Right now, as we all have seen, tens of thousands of families are without

homes. Our knowledge right now is that 28 people have died. The scale of the devastation in Los Angeles is just unthinkable.

Mr. Chair, I represent a district just to the south of this catastrophe. Thankfully, we have not been affected, but we are subject to the same dynamics year after year.

In recent years, we had the Santiago Canyon fire, the Laguna fire, the Canyon fire, and a number of others. When you compile 80- to 100-mile-an-hour winds, made worse because of climate change and the annual Santa Ana winds, with dry conditions, that combination is basically creating tinder conditions. That is why we are having this fire.

I just want to note that this particular bill has done nothing to prevent the Los Angeles fires and would do nothing to prevent similar wildfires going forward.

Mr. Chair, firefighters will say that when you have 80- to 100-mile-an-hour winds, little embers can turn into massive fires, and there is nothing that we can do to stop that. Firefighters cannot be deployed and water or other resources cannot be deployed until the wind dies down.

Unfortunately, there has been a lot of misinformation about these L.A. fires, that there is not enough water or that somehow our water systems are inadequate. Many have described these fires as blowtorches, trying to fight a fire that is like a blowtorch.

Mr. Chair, I urge my colleagues who are believing these conspiracy theories to talk to actual firefighters about how they might fight fires like this because I have talked to firefighters, and they have told me that measures like this would not have prevented the L.A. fires.

This particular bill has some important provisions that I support. Some of these have been mentioned in opposition by people on my side of the aisle, but I would note that it lacks the funding mechanisms to actually make these implementable.

It also fails to include any permanent pay increase for Federal wildland firefighters who continue to be underpaid and overworked.

This bill is, at best, a messaging bill, an unfunded mandate. I note that it is wrapped up in this inextricable question of: Will Californians get the aid that our families so desperately need? Unfortunately, that seems to be a question that increasingly looks like the answer is going to be: Only with grossly political conditions.

□ 1315

I note that I introduced an amendment to make clear that Federal disaster assistance to the Los Angeles fire victims needs to be prioritized and must come with no political strings attached. This is something we have done for every other disaster out there in America. When we have had hurricanes in the Southeast, when we have had

flooding in parts of the country, California has stepped up. We get 60 cents back for every dollar we pay in tax funding.

I am disappointed that we are politicizing aid to California now that we need it. I was disappointed that my amendment was blocked from even basic consideration. I am disheartened to know that House and Senate Republicans continue to threaten conditions on the basic aid that Californians need right now.

This is un-American and inconsistent with every other Federal disaster response.

Mr. Chair, I urge my colleagues to vote "no."

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Chair, I had the opportunity just last October to visit Orange County and to fly over the Airport fire with Representative KIM and also to attend the local townhall meeting where I saw residents who were traumatized by these fires, but also residents who had concerns because they either couldn't find homeowners insurance to buy or they couldn't afford it if they could find it.

These fires are devastating. What we are doing is not working. There are provisions in the Fix our Forests Act that will allow us to create these defensible zones around communities in the wildland urban interface.

Mr. Chair, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. KIM).

Mrs. KIM. Mr. Chair, I thank Chairman WESTERMAN for yielding.

Mr. Chair, I rise in strong support of H.R. 471, the Fix Our Forests Act.

At this very moment, multiple fires are burning throughout southern California. My heart goes out to the communities affected and to our first responders, especially as my constituents and I know the devastation of wildfires firsthand.

Just months ago as the chairman mentioned, the Airport fire started in my district and burned over 24,000 acres in Orange and Riverside Counties. Including the surrounding fires that burned at that time, we had over 100,000 acres that burned. That is why the chairman came out to our community and met with my Trabuco Canyon community leadership and saw firsthand the devastation and what we would do. We had our conversation regarding the Fix Our Forests Act. We talked about the innovative technologies that we need to respond to the threat of wildfires.

The Fix Our Forests Act includes the Wildfire Technology Demonstration, Evaluation, Modernization, and Optimization, or DEMO Act, which I introduced to create a public-private partnership to test and deploy emerging wildfire mitigation technologies.

I thank Chairman WESTERMAN and Representative PETERS for making it bipartisan and for including my legislation in this critical bill to protect our forests.

Mr. Chair, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 471.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Chair, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. KILEY).

Mr. KILEY of California. Mr. Chair, today, we will pass this vital legislation to fix our forests, and we will do so with bipartisan support.

This bill has a number of very important provisions. It simplifies and expedites environmental reviews. It ends frivolous legislation and endless agency consultation. It strengthens the Good Neighbor Authority. It creates a new categorical exclusion to increase vegetation management for utility rights-of-way. It prioritizes hazardous fuel reduction in high-risk fire sheds. It protects communities in wildland urban interfaces, and it incorporates technology in a smart way.

I am particularly grateful for those in the California congressional delegation on both sides of the aisle who have spoken in support of this legislation. The contrast could not be clearer to what is going on in Sacramento at the State capital right now where just in the last hour, the runaway supermajority rejected legislation by Assembly Republican Leader James Gallagher to add \$1 billion to the fire prevention budget, the very budget that the current Governor has slashed time and time again. He was even caught by NPR exaggerating the amount of fire mitigation work done by a staggering 690 percent.

Today, we will pass this very much-needed legislation at the Federal level, and it will make a big difference. It will reduce the risk of wildfire, but until California's political leadership gets its act together, our citizens will remain at risk.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Chair, I am prepared to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Chair, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California (Mr. FONG).

Mr. FONG. Mr. Chair, I rise today as a cosponsor in support of the critically needed Fix Our Forests Act. As wildfires continue to threaten communities in southern California, including now a new fire near Castaic that borders my district, it is even more urgent that our Nation prioritizes preventing these catastrophic tragedies through proactive forest management.

In the past 5 years, my district has seen over 600,000 acres burned by wildfires. I have seen the devastation that it leaves behind. Our State has seen millions of acres burned and with preventive forest maintenance, these fires could have been extinguished much sooner and saved countless lives, homes, and businesses.

These out-of-control mega-fires need to be greatly mitigated before reaching the point of complete destruction. Expediting environmental reviews and prioritizing active management of our Nation's forested wildlands will be critical and essential to saving lives and communities.

Mr. Chair, I am grateful for the leadership from Chairman WESTERMAN, who has traveled and visited the forests in my district. I am grateful to the Natural Resources Committee and the House by immediately enacting this bill into law.

The Acting CHAIR. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Chair, I yield an additional 30 seconds to the gentleman from California.

Mr. FONG. Time is of the essence to prevent the next catastrophic wildfire.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Chair, I include in the RECORD 102 supporting organizations. These stakeholders include Tribal and local governments, grazing and forest management organizations, and a diverse coalition of hunters, conservationists, natural resource managers, outdoor recreationists, educators, and scientists.

Mr. Chair, 47 of those organizations also provided support letters. Each letter expresses strong urgency for passing H.R. 471 to ensure improved forest management on Federal land.

The groups that wrote support letters included: American Sportfishing Association, Boone and Crockett Club, Citizens' Climate Lobby, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Federal Forest Resource Coalition, Public Lands Council, American Sheep Industry Association, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, American Farm Bureau Federation, American Forest Resource Council, Association of California Water Agencies, California Farm Bureau Federation, Family Farm Alliance, National Association of Counties, San Bernardino County, and many others.

LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTING THE FIX OUR FORESTS ACT

Agricultural Retailers Association, American Farm Bureau Federation, American Forest and Paper Association, American Forest Foundation, American Forest Resource Council, American Forests, American Loggers Council, American Property and Casualty Insurance Association, American Seed Trade Association, American Sheep Industry Association, American Sportfishing Association, American Wood Council, American Woodcock Society, Archery Trade Association, Arkansas Forestry Association, Associated Oregon Loggers, Association of California Water Agencies, Association of Firetech Innovation, Bipartisan Policy Center Action, Boone and Crockett Club, California State Association of Counties, Camp Fire Club of America, Catch A Dream Foundation, Citizens For Responsible Energy Solutions, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, Conservation Force, Dallas Safari Club, Delta Waterfowl, Edison Electric Institute, Evangelical Environmental Network, Family Farm Alliance, Family Water Alliance, Federal Forest Resource Coalition, Federation of American Scientists, Forest Landowners Association, Forest Resources Association, Grassroots Wildland Firefighters, Hardwood Federation, Houston Safari Club, Idaho Forest Group, Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America, Inc, Intermountain Forest Association, International Inbound Travel Association, Inter-Tribal Timber Council, Kittitas Reclamation

District, Masters of Foxhounds Association, Metzler Forest Products, Minnesota Timber Producers Association, Mississippi River Trust, Mule Deer Foundation, National Alliance of Forest Owners, National Association of Conservation Districts, National Association of Counties, National Association of Forest Service Retirees, National Association of Home Builders, National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies, National Association of State Foresters, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, National Congress of American Indians, National Deer Association, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, National Shooting Sports Foundation, National Special Districts Association, National Wild Turkey Federation, North American Falconers Association, North American Grouse Partnership, Orion: The Hunter's Institute, PG&E, Pheasants Forever, Placer County Water Agency, Pope and Young Club, PotlatchDeltic, Professional Outfitters and Guides of America, Property and Environment Research Center, Public Lands Council, Public Lands Foundation, Quail Forever, Reinsurance Association of America, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Ruffed Grouse Society, Safari Club International, Salt River Project, San Bernardino County, San Bernardino County Professional Firefighters Local 935, Sierra Pacific Industries, Sportsmen's Alliance, The Wildlife Society, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, U.S. Biochar Coalition, Utah Farm Bureau Federation, Western Fire Chiefs Association, Weyerhaeuser Company, White Oak Initiative, Whitetails Unlimited, Wild Sheep Foundation, Wildlife Forever, Wildlife Management Institute, Xcel Energy, and XR Association.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Chair, I am prepared to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Chair, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Chair, I think we can all agree that wildfire is a complex, traumatic, and challenging issue. It is serious stuff. The devastation it can wreak on entire communities and destruction can happen in a matter of minutes.

Addressing our wildfire crisis is a national priority that should never be politicized. House Democrats are committed to supporting a robust all-of-government response, and to doing that in a way that acknowledges critical realities.

Starting with the climate crisis and the role of human-caused climate change, especially the burning of fossil fuels, and these worsening conditions are exacerbating not just wildfires but many other natural disasters.

Second, the reality that solutions, including many of the ones in this bill, actually require resources in order to mean something.

We hope to continue working with our Republican colleagues to address our outstanding concerns about this bill, and we hope that the majority will work with us on additional legislation to address critical issues, like adequate pay for Federal firefighters, that were left out of this bill. They need the resources to do their work. Communities devastated by wildfires also need the resources to rebuild.

There is plenty of work that we still have ahead of us. I hope we can do that together.

It is unfortunate that this bill came up so quickly. In fact, Republicans refused most Democratic amendments. At a time of crisis, we should be trying to find ways to work together.

Democrats have a lot of good ideas. I really think this bill could have benefited from an open and transparent amendment process and, unfortunately, we were denied that.

Forests are critical carbon reserves. They are majestic destinations for outdoor recreation, a habitat for a range of wildlife enjoyed by millions of Americans. Short-circuiting environmental review and not allowing the public to participate in decisionmaking actually has negative consequences. It could put all of these values at risk.

We have to also be able to talk about the climate. Like the recent fires in southern California or the ones that tear through my northern California district all too often and throughout the West all too often, some of the most destructive and devastating fires that we have seen in the past 5 years on non-Federal land started as grass fires, exacerbated by the climate crisis.

In the winter of 2021, the Marshall fire broke out in Boulder, Colorado. At that time, it was the most destructive fire in Colorado history, with over 1,000 homes lost. At the time, Boulder County was experiencing hurricane-force winds just like Los Angeles. The fire blazed across open spaces that had been desiccated by months of extreme drought conditions.

Everything about the Marshall fire was unusual: the level of high winds, the condition of the landscape from an unstable climate, and the proximity to an urban interface. What was once considered unusual is rapidly becoming the norm. We need to acknowledge that reality.

Like the Marshall fire, the fires in Maui started on non-Federal grassland. They were fueled by hurricane-force winds and significant drought. This is a climate disaster.

Fix Our Forests would not have stopped either of these fires. Communities like the ones in southern California; Boulder, Colorado; and Lahaina, Hawaii need resources so they can prepare and respond and be more resilient.

Unfortunately, even the sections of this bill that purport to help in these situations completely lack funding. They need to be refined. They need to be backed up by dedicated funding in order to mean more than just thoughts and prayers.

Rushing bills like this to the floor to capitalize on a crisis does not always lead to the best outcome. We should know that by now.

Let's hope this is not a model for the entire 119th Congress.

Mr. Chair, I close by urging my colleagues to oppose this bill and by urging my Republican colleagues to do a better job of working with Democrats. We should be tackling these issues together.

Mr. Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Chair, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Chair, I will state again that Republicans have a firefighter funding fix in the appropriations bill that, when it came to the floor, was not supported by my friends across the aisle. We want to provide more funding to our firefighters. This is an authorization bill. It is not an appropriation bill.

It is regrettable that we are having to bring this bill up again already because we passed it last year with large bipartisan support. We had 55 of our friends across the aisle vote with every Republican to pass this bill, but unfortunately, it went nowhere in the Senate.

We are bringing it back again because this is bipartisan legislation. I hope this is an example of how this Congress will go because I don't know that I have worked on a more bipartisan piece of legislation during my time in Congress.

I thank my colleague, Representative PETERS, for all of his time and effort in bringing this bill to the floor once again.

I will say that the time to fix our forests is now.

Actually, now is not the real time to fix our forests. The time to have fixed our forests was yesterday. It was last year. It was 10 years ago. It was 30 years ago.

The condition our forests are in now is as a result of bad management decisions over a long period of time. It is like the saying about planting a tree. The best time to have done it was when you were a child. The next best time is today. If not today, we need to do it tomorrow.

□ 1330

Regardless of where and when catastrophic wildfires occur, they offer a grim lesson: The costs of thoughtful prevention would have been far less than those inflicted by merciless flames. The old adage that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure is never more true than when it comes to managing our forests.

We spend billions of dollars fighting fires every year. Our forests should be an income stream to our Federal Government, not a cost. People manage forests all over the country, and they actually produce great products that go into homes and sustainable buildings and that become a carbon sink because wood is 50 percent by weight carbon. This table was atmospheric carbon that was stored in this wood at some point in history. It is still in this wood.

Instead of burning these forests up and spewing more carbon into our atmosphere, we should be looking at innovative ways to use our forests, to keep them healthy and resilient. Forests provide clean air, clean water, and wildlife habitat, but they don't do that when they are burned to the ground.

These fires oftentimes are so hot that they burn the organic material out of the soil, so it is hard to get trees to

grow back. We have seen this in the Angora fire. I visited it several years ago, 12 years after the fire. It had been replanted six times, and the trees still wouldn't grow on it because the soil had been so damaged by these intense wildfires.

The argument has been made that these fires are the result of climate change. If that is the case, the question still remains, what are we going to do about it?

We have unhealthy forests. They are way overstocked with way more trees per acre than we have ever seen. Small trees are competing with other trees for light, water, and nutrients. They get weakened and die. Insects and disease come in. This isn't just in California. It is all across our country.

We know what to do. The question is, will we do it? The Fix Our Forests Act will give us the opportunity to do what we know needs to be done.

I have talked to many of our Federal land managers across the country. They wanted to commit their life to working in an area to make a difference, and it is disheartening to them to have gone to forestry school or whatever educational experience they had and then to see these resources they are charged with taking care of going up in flames. Instead of being land managers and forest managers, they are firefighters. That is really what most of the budget for our Federal agencies goes to anymore, to fight fires. It doesn't have to be that way.

This is something that should be bipartisan. It is going to be bipartisan today. It is something the Senate should take up in a bipartisan manner and get to President Trump's desk as soon as possible.

Again, I encourage everyone to support the Fix Our Forests Act, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CALVERT. Mr. Chair, the bipartisan Fix Our Forests Act is desperately needed to better manage our forests in California and across the country.

Wildfires are an unfortunate part of our lives. We were just reminded of this horrific reality in the greater LA area. In the wake of these fires, there's been a lot of discussion about state policies that need to be examined to better protect our residents and I wholeheartedly support reform at the state level. There are also several federal policies that must be reformed, which is why we're here today.

On average, the Forest Service spends four years on paperwork before a fuel management project, like clearing dead or overgrown brush, can even start. That length of time increases by more than three years when a NEPA lawsuit is filed. Those delays can be deadly.

The bipartisan Fix Our Forests Act would simplify and expedite environmental reviews for forest management projects as well as enact other reforms to help prevent wildfires. As the recent California fires make clear, we can no longer neglect our duties to manage our forests in a responsible but expeditious way. The American people demand and deserve competence at every level of govern-

ment. This bill is an important step in re-establishing faith that Congress will lead from the front and do what is necessary to mitigate the devastating impacts of wildfires.

I urge my colleagues to support this important bipartisan bill and protect Americans from wildfires.

Ms. HOYLE of Oregon. Mr. Chair, after the House considered the Fix Our Forests Act last fall, I led a multi-member letter to Senate leadership urging them to pass comprehensive wildfire legislation and adopt the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission's consensus recommendations. Today's version of the Fix Our Forests Act addresses more of the Commission's recommendations by expanding on the purpose and role of the inter-agency fireshed center. It also includes a new provision to ensure that local fire departments receive timely wildfire reimbursements from the federal government.

I applaud House Natural Resources Committee Chairman BRUCE WESTERMAN and Congressman SCOTT PETERS' work on this bill, but this Congress must do more—more to ensure that federal wildland firefighters are paid fairly, more to prioritize the stewardship of our public lands, and more to ensure our communities get the help they need after disaster strikes.

Federal wildland firefighters deserve pay and benefits that reflect their service and sacrifice. I've supported every effort, including joining as a cosponsor of Tim's Act, to permanently increase firefighter pay. I will do everything in my power to get this done.

Additionally, the wildfire crisis cannot be solved without funding the stewardship of our public lands. I have co-led efforts to secure full funding for Forest Service staffing and tribal forestry programs, and I will continue to do so. I also plan to re-introduce my bill, the Wildfire Resilient Communities Act, which would provide consistent funding for hazardous fuels reduction.

Following the ongoing wildfires that are devastating the Los Angeles area, I am gravely concerned by the new administration's threats to withhold disaster aid from Americans who've lost everything just because of who they elected. I believe that Oregon could be in a similar situation if disaster strikes. Proactive forest management is our best chance to stop these disasters and avoid that kind of political cruelty. We must also continue our longstanding commitment to all American communities and provide federal aid after a disaster strikes.

While imperfect, the Fix Our Forests Act takes meaningful steps to protect our forests, our communities, and my constituents, and that's why I will vote yes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Chair, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 471, the Fix Our Forests Act.

Many forests across the Nation continue to be undermanaged and face significant forest health challenges. This includes forests such as the Allegheny, located in my district, which has its own difficulties with invasives among other issues.

The devastating fires in Los Angeles and throughout southern California are the latest reminder of what can happen when we fail to properly manage our forests and the risk of catastrophic fire in fire prone areas.

Unfortunately, these fires show that much work remains to help mitigate or prevent such catastrophes from occurring in the first place.

Even with the additional treatments the Forest Service has been performing, tens of millions of acres of national forest and adjacent lands throughout the west are still at risk of wildfire and are in need of treatments. Many of these acres are tinderboxes ready to ignite due to decades of mismanagement, which has led to declining forest health and dangerous levels of overgrowth.

We have continued to witness some of the most destructive wildfires on record in just the past decade, leading to significant property loss, recovery costs, and most sadly, the loss of human life. This truly is an urgent crisis that must be immediately addressed, and Congress must do more to better support the Forest Service and firefighters.

As Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, I am proud of the forestry title we included in last year's farm bill to expand the Forest Service's tools and authorities. Such reforms will enable the agency to improve forest health; reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire; increase the pace and scale of restoration; and ultimately protect communities, property and lives.

Similar to the farm bill, the Fix Our Forests Act will provide the Forest Service with such tools to proactively address invasive species, forest health, and wildfire conditions which threaten many rural communities across the national forest system.

With that, I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense legislation and encourage a YES vote on final passage.

In conclusion, I thank the firefighters and first responders for their work these past weeks and many sacrifices they have made. And we keep the those affected by these devastating wildfires in our thoughts and prayers as they endure this difficult time.

The Acting CHAIR. All time for general debate has expired.

Pursuant to the rule, the bill shall be considered for amendment under the 5-minute rule.

The bill shall be considered as read.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 471

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This Act may be cited as the “Fix Our Forests Act”.

(b) **TABLE OF CONTENTS.**—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
- Sec. 2. Definitions.

TITLE I—LANDSCAPE-SCALE RESTORATION

Subtitle A—Addressing Emergency Wildfire Risks in High Priority Firesheds

- Sec. 101. Designation of fireshed management areas.
- Sec. 102. Fireshed center.
- Sec. 103. Fireshed registry.
- Sec. 104. Shared stewardship.
- Sec. 105. Fireshed assessments.
- Sec. 106. Emergency fireshed management.
- Sec. 107. Sunset.

Subtitle B—Expanding Collaborative Tools to Reduce Wildfire Risk and Improve Forest Health

- Sec. 111. Modification of the treatment of certain revenue and payments under good neighbor agreements.
- Sec. 112. Fixing stewardship end result contracting.

- Sec. 113. Intra-agency strike teams.
- Sec. 114. Locally-led restoration.
- Sec. 115. Joint Chiefs landscape restoration partnership program.
- Sec. 116. Collaborative forest landscape restoration program.
- Sec. 117. Utilizing grazing for wildfire risk reduction.
- Sec. 118. Water source protection program.
- Sec. 119. Watershed condition framework technical corrections.

Subtitle C—Litigation Reform

- Sec. 121. Commonsense litigation reform.
- Sec. 122. Consultation on forest plans.

TITLE II—PROTECTING COMMUNITIES IN THE WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE

- Sec. 201. Community wildfire risk reduction program.
- Sec. 202. Community wildfire defense research program.
- Sec. 203. Vegetation management, facility inspection, and operation and maintenance relating to electric transmission and distribution facility rights-of-way.
- Sec. 204. Categorical exclusion for electric utility lines rights-of-way.
- Sec. 205. Seeds of success.
- Sec. 206. Program to support priority reforestation and restoration projects of Department of the Interior.
- Sec. 207. Fire department repayment.

TITLE III—TRANSPARENCY, TECHNOLOGY, AND PARTNERSHIPS

Subtitle A—Transparency and Technology

- Sec. 301. Biochar innovations and opportunities for conservation, health, and advancements in research.
- Sec. 302. Accurate hazardous fuels reduction reports.
- Sec. 303. Public-private wildfire technology deployment and demonstration partnership.
- Sec. 304. GAO study on Forest Service policies.
- Sec. 305. Forest Service Western headquarters study.
- Sec. 306. Keeping forest plans current and monitored.
- Sec. 307. Container Aerial Firefighting System (CAFFS).
- Sec. 308. Study on pine beetle infestation.

Subtitle B—White Oak Resilience

- Sec. 311. White Oak Restoration Initiative Coalition.
- Sec. 312. Forest Service pilot program.
- Sec. 313. Department of the Interior white oak review and restoration.
- Sec. 314. White oak regeneration and upland oak habitat.
- Sec. 315. Tree nursery shortages.
- Sec. 316. White oak research.
- Sec. 317. USDA formal initiative.
- Sec. 318. Authorities.

TITLE IV—ENSURING CASUALTY ASSISTANCE FOR OUR FIREFIGHTERS

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

- (1) **DIRECTOR.**—The term “Director” means the Director of the Fireshed Center appointed under section 102.
- (2) **FIRESHED.**—The term “fireshed” means a landscape-scale area that faces similar wildfire threat where a response strategy could influence the wildfire outcome.
- (3) **FIRESHED MANAGEMENT PROJECT.**—The term “fireshed management project” means a project under section 106.
- (4) **FIRESHED REGISTRY.**—The term “Fireshed Registry” means the fireshed registry established under section 103.
- (5) **FOREST PLAN.**—The term “forest plan” means—

(A) a land use plan prepared by the Bureau of Land Management for public lands pursuant to section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1712);

(B) a land and resource management plan prepared by the Forest Service for a unit of the National Forest System pursuant to section 6 of the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (16 U.S.C. 1604); or

(C) a forest management plan (as defined in section 304 of the National Indian Forests Resources Management Act (25 U.S.C. 3104)) with respect to Indian forest land or rangeland.

(6) **GOVERNOR.**—The term “Governor” means the Governor or any other appropriate executive official of an affected State or Indian Tribe or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

(7) **HAZARDOUS FUELS MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES.**—The term “hazardous fuels management activities” means any vegetation management activities (or combination thereof) that reduce the risk of wildfire, including mechanical thinning, mastication, prescribed burning, cultural burning (as determined by the applicable Indian Tribe), timber harvest, and grazing.

(8) **HFRA TERMS.**—The terms “at-risk community”, “community wildfire protection plan”, and “wildland-urban interface” have the meanings given such terms, respectively, in section 101 of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6511).

(9) **INDIAN FOREST LAND OR RANGELAND.**—The term “Indian forest land or rangeland” means land that—

(A) is held in trust by, or with a restriction against alienation by, the United States for an Indian Tribe or a member of an Indian Tribe; and

(B)(i)(I) is Indian forest land (as defined in section 304 of the National Indian Forest Resources Management Act (25 U.S.C. 3103)); or

(II) has a cover of grasses, brush, or any similar vegetation; or

(ii) formerly had a forest cover or vegetative cover that is capable of restoration.

(10) **INDIAN TRIBE.**—The term “Indian Tribe” has the meaning given that term in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

(11) **NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM LANDS.**—The term “National Forest System lands” has the meaning given the term in section 11(a) of the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (16 U.S.C. 1609).

(12) **PUBLIC LANDS.**—The term “public lands” has the meaning given that term in section 103 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1702), except that the term includes Coos Bay Wagon Road Grant lands and Oregon and California Railroad Grant lands.

(13) **RELEVANT CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.**—The term “relevant Congressional Committees” means—

(A) the Committees on Natural Resources and Agriculture of the House of Representatives; and

(B) the Committees on Energy and Natural Resources and Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate.

(14) **RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL.**—The term “responsible official” means an employee of the Department of the Interior or Forest Service who has the authority to make and implement a decision on a proposed action.

(15) **SECRETARIES.**—The term “Secretaries” means each of—

(A) the Secretary of the Interior; and

(B) the Secretary of Agriculture.

(16) **SECRETARY.**—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Agriculture.

(17) **SECRETARY CONCERNED.**—The term “Secretary concerned” means—

(A) the Secretary of Agriculture, with respect to National Forest System lands; and

(B) the Secretary of the Interior, with respect to public lands.

(18) SPECIAL DISTRICT.—The term “special district” means a political subdivision of a State that—

(A) has significant budgetary autonomy or control;

(B) was created by or pursuant to the laws of the State for the purpose of performing a limited and specific governmental or proprietary function; and

(C) is distinct from any other local government unit within the State.

(19) STATE.—The term “State” means each of the several States, the District of Columbia, and each territory of the United States.

TITLE I—LANDSCAPE-SCALE RESTORATION

Subtitle A—Addressing Emergency Wildfire Risks in High Priority Firesheds

SEC. 101. DESIGNATION OF FIRESHED MANAGEMENT AREAS.

(a) DESIGNATION OF FIRESHED MANAGEMENT AREAS.—

(1) INITIAL DESIGNATIONS.—For the period beginning on the date of enactment of this Act and ending on the date that is 5 years after the date of enactment of this Act, there are designated fireshed management areas, which—

(A) shall be comprised of individual landscape-scale firesheds identified as being a high risk fireshed in the “Wildfire Crisis Strategy” published by the Forest Service in January 2022;

(B) shall be comprised of individual landscape-scale firesheds identified by the Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior, as being in the top 20 percent of the 7,688 firesheds published by the Rocky Mountain Research Station of the Forest Service in 2019 for wildfire exposure based on the following criteria—

(i) wildfire exposure and corresponding risk to communities, including risk to life and structures;

(ii) wildfire exposure and corresponding risk to municipal watersheds, including tribal water supplies and systems; and

(iii) risk of forest conversion due to wildfire;

(C) shall not overlap with any other fireshed management areas;

(D) may contain Federal and non-Federal land, including Indian forest lands or rangelands; and

(E) where the Secretary concerned shall carry out fireshed management projects.

(2) FURTHER FIRESHED MANAGEMENT AREA DESIGNATIONS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—On the date that is 5 years after the date of the enactment of this Act and every 5 years thereafter, the Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior, shall submit to the relevant Congressional Committees an updated map of firesheds based on the Fireshed Registry maintained under section 103.

(B) DESIGNATION.—Not later than 60 days after submitting an updated fireshed map under subparagraph (A), the Secretary shall, based on such map, designate additional fireshed management areas that are identified as being in the top 20 percent of firesheds at risk of wildfire exposure based on the criteria specified in subparagraphs (B), (C), (D), and (E) of paragraph (1).

(b) APPLICABILITY OF NEPA.—The designation of fireshed management areas under this section shall not be subject to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.).

SEC. 102. FIRESHED CENTER.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service, and

the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the U.S. Geological Survey, shall jointly establish an interagency center, to be known as the Fireshed Center (hereinafter referred to as the “Center”) to carry out the purposes in subsection (b).

(2) COMPOSITION.—

(A) DIVISIONS.—The Center shall be comprised of the following divisions:

(i) Technology and Engineering.

(ii) Data Services.

(iii) Analysis and Prediction.

(iv) Education and Consultation.

(B) REPRESENTATIVES.—The Center shall be comprised of at least one career representative from each of the following:

(i) The Forest Service.

(ii) The Bureau of Land Management.

(iii) The National Park Service.

(iv) The Bureau of Indian Affairs.

(v) The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

(vi) The U.S. Geological Survey.

(vii) The Department of Defense.

(viii) The Department of Homeland Security.

(ix) The Department of Energy.

(x) The Federal Emergency Management Agency.

(xi) The National Science Foundation.

(xii) The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

(xiii) The National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

(xiv) The National Institute of Standards and Technology.

(xv) The United States Fire Administration.

(c) APPOINTMENTS.—Each representative of a Department, Agency, or other entity specified in subparagraph (B) shall be appointed by the head of that Department, Agency, or other entity, as applicable.

(3) DIRECTOR.—The representatives appointed under paragraph (2) shall, by majority vote, appoint a Director of the Center, who—

(A) shall be an employee of the U.S. Geological Survey or the Forest Service;

(B) shall serve an initial term of not more than 7 years;

(C) may serve one additional term of not more than 7 years after the initial term described in subparagraph (B); and

(D) shall be responsible for the management and operation of the Center.

(4) ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS.—In consultation with the representatives appointed under paragraph (2), the Director may appoint such Associate Directors as the Director determines necessary.

(5) ADDITIONAL REPRESENTATION.—The Secretary, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service, and the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the U.S. Geological Survey, may jointly appoint additional representatives of Federal agencies, States, Indian Tribes, or local governments to the Center, as the Secretaries determine necessary.

(b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of the Center are to—

(1) comprehensively assess and predict, using data tools (including artificial intelligence) and other decision support products, fire and smoke in the wildland and built environment interface across jurisdictions to inform—

(A) land and fuels management;

(B) community (including at-risk communities identified in fireshed assessments conducted under section 105) and built environment risk reduction, including the support and development of community wildfire protection plans and evacuation decisions; and

(C) public health risk reduction related to wildland fire and smoke, including air quality monitoring and forecasting and smoke prediction models;

(D) fire response and management, including the pre-positioning of wildfire suppression personnel and assets based on real-time risk; and

(E) post-fire recovery activities, including activities related to vegetation recovery, debris flows and flooding, watershed recovery and protection, and ecosystem health;

(2) provide data aggregation, real-time land and fuels management services, and science-based decision support services to inform the purposes specified in subparagraph (A) through (E) of paragraph (1);

(3) reduce fragmentation and duplication across Federal land management agencies with respect to predictive service and decision support functions related to wildland fire and smoke, including through the provision of data aggregation described in paragraph (2);

(4) promote coordination and sharing of data regarding wildland fire and smoke decision making (including through the provision of data aggregation described in paragraph (2)) to each of the entities specified in subparagraphs (A) through (F) of paragraph (8);

(5) streamline procurement processes for technologies (including technologies identified under the pilot program established under section 303) and cybersecurity systems related to addressing wildland fire and smoke for the purposes of scaling such technologies and systems across Federal agencies;

(6) amplify and distribute existing, and develop as necessary, publicly accessible data, models, technologies (including mapping technologies), assessments, and National Weather Service fire weather forecasts to support short- and long-term planning regarding wildland fire and smoke risk reduction and post-fire recovery while avoiding duplicative efforts, as determined by the Director;

(7) maintain the Fireshed Registry established under section 103; and

(8) disseminate data tools (including artificial intelligence) and other decision support products, for use in manners consistent with the purposes described paragraphs (1) through (7), to the following:

(A) Federal agencies.

(B) Indian Tribes.

(C) State and local governments.

(D) Academic or research institutions.

(E) Wildland firefighting entities, including applicable incident management teams and geographic coordination centers.

(F) Other entities, including public, private, and nonprofit entities, with expertise in land management, air quality, water management, or public health, as determined appropriate by the Director.

(c) MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING.—The Center may enter into memoranda of understanding, contracts, or other agreements with State governments, Indian Tribes, local governments, academic or research institutions, and private entities to improve the information and operations of the Center.

(d) ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT, TECHNICAL SERVICES, AND STAFF SUPPORT.—

(1) USGS SUPPORT.—The Secretary of the Interior shall make personnel of the U.S. Geological Survey available to the Center for such administrative support, technical services, and development and dissemination of data as the Secretary determines necessary to carry out this section.

(2) USFS SUPPORT.—The Secretary shall make personnel of the Forest Service available to the Center for such administrative support, technical services, and the development and dissemination of information related to fireshed management and the Fireshed Registry as the Secretary determines necessary to carry out this section.

(3) FUNDING.—Notwithstanding section 708 of title VII of division E of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (Public Law 117-328), the Secretary of the Interior and Secretary may enter into agreements to share the management and operational costs of the Center.

(e) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to affect the ownership of any data sources.

SEC. 103. FIRESHED REGISTRY.

(a) FIRESHED REGISTRY.—The Secretary, acting through the Director of the Fireshed Center appointed under section 102, shall maintain a Fireshed Registry on a publicly accessible website that provides interactive geospatial data on individual firesheds, including information on—

(1) wildfire exposure delineated by ownership, including rights-of-way for utilities and other public or private purposes;

(2) any hazardous fuels management activities that have occurred within an individual fireshed in the past 10 years;

(3) wildfire exposure with respect to such fireshed delineated by—

(A) wildfire exposure and corresponding risk to communities, including risk to life and structures;

(B) wildfire exposure and corresponding risk to municipal watersheds, including tribal water supplies and systems; and

(C) risk of forest conversion due to wildfire;

(4) the percentage of the fireshed that has burned in wildfires in the past 10 years, including, to the extent practicable, delineations of acres that have burned at a high severity;

(5) spatial patterns of wildfire exposure, including plausible extreme fire events; and

(6) any hazardous fuels management activities planned for the fireshed, including fireshed management projects.

(b) COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLANS.—The Director shall make data from the Fireshed Registry available to local communities developing or updating community wildfire protection plans.

(c) REQUIREMENT TO MAINTAIN.—As part of the website containing the Fireshed Registry, the Director shall—

(1) publish fireshed assessments created under section 105; and

(2) maintain a searchable database to track—

(A) the status of Federal environmental reviews, permits, and authorizations for fireshed management projects, including—

(i) a comprehensive permitting timetable;

(ii) the status of the compliance of each lead agency, cooperating agency, and participating agency with the permitting timetable with respect to such fireshed management projects;

(iii) any modifications of the permitting timetable required under clause (i), including an explanation as to why the permitting timetable was modified; and

(iv) information about project-related public meetings, public hearings, and public comment periods, which shall be presented in English and the predominant language of the community or communities most affected by the project, as that information becomes available;

(B) the projected cost of such fireshed management projects; and

(C) in the case of completed fireshed management projects, the effectiveness of such projects in reducing the wildfire exposure within an applicable fireshed, including wildfire exposure described in subparagraphs (A) through (C) of subsection (a)(3).

(d) RELIANCE ON EXISTING ASSESSMENTS.—In carrying out this section, the Director may rely on assessments completed or data

gather through existing partnerships, to the extent practicable.

SEC. 104. SHARED STEWARDSHIP.

(a) JOINT AGREEMENTS.—Not later than 90 days after receiving a written request from a Governor of a State or an Indian Tribe, the Secretary concerned shall enter into a shared stewardship agreement (or similar agreement) with such Governor or Indian Tribe to jointly—

(1) promote the reduction of wildfire exposure, based on the criteria in section 101(a)(1)(B), in fireshed management areas across jurisdictional boundaries; and

(2) conduct fireshed assessments under section 105.

(b) ADDITIONAL FIRESHED MANAGEMENT AREAS.—With respect to a shared stewardship agreement (or similar agreement) with a Governor of a State or an Indian Tribe entered into under subsection (a), the Secretary concerned, if requested by such Governor or Indian Tribe, may—

(1) designate additional fireshed management areas under such agreement; and

(2) update such agreement to address new wildfire threats.

SEC. 105. FIRESHED ASSESSMENTS.

(a) FIRESHED ASSESSMENTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date on which the Secretary concerned enters into an agreement with a Governor of a State or an Indian Tribe under section 104, the Secretary concerned and such Governor or Indian Tribe shall, with respect to the fireshed management areas designated in such State, jointly conduct a fireshed assessment that—

(A) identifies—

(i) using the best available science, wildfire exposure risks within each such fireshed management area, including scenario planning and wildfire hazard mapping and models; and

(ii) each at-risk community within each fireshed management area;

(B) identifies potential fireshed management projects to be carried out in such fireshed management areas, giving priority—

(i) primarily, to projects with the purpose of reducing—

(I) wildfire exposure and corresponding risk to communities, including risk to life and structures;

(II) wildfire exposure and corresponding risk to municipal watersheds, including tribal water supplies and systems;

(III) risk of forest conversion due to wildfire; or

(IV) any combination of purposes described in subclauses (I) through (III); and

(ii) secondarily, to projects with the purpose of protecting—

(I) critical infrastructure, including utility infrastructure;

(II) wildlife habitats, including habitat for species listed under the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.);

(III) the built environment, including residential and commercial buildings;

(IV) resources of an Indian Tribe, as defined by the Indian Tribe; or

(V) any combination of purposes described in subclauses (I) through (IV);

(C) includes—

(i) a strategy for reducing the threat of wildfire to at-risk communities in the wildland-urban interface on both Federal and non-Federal land;

(ii) a timeline for the implementation of fireshed management projects;

(iii) long-term benchmark goals for the completion of fireshed management projects in the highest wildfire exposure areas so that such projects contribute to the development and maintenance of healthy and resilient landscapes;

(iv) policies to ensure fireshed management projects comply with applicable forest plans and incorporate the best available science; and

(v) a strategy for reducing the threat of wildfire to improve the effectiveness of wildland firefighting, particularly the effectiveness of fuels treatments that would improve wildland firefighter safety during wildfires;

(D) shall be regularly updated based on the best available science, as determined by the Secretary concerned; and

(E) shall be publicly available on a website maintained by the Secretary concerned.

(2) LOCAL GOVERNMENT PARTICIPATION.—Upon the written request of a local government, the Secretary concerned and the Governor of the State in which the local government is located may allow such local government to participate in producing the fireshed assessment under paragraph (1) for such State.

(3) INFORMATION IMPROVEMENT.—

(A) MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING.—In carrying out a fireshed assessment under this subsection, the Secretary concerned may enter into memoranda of understanding with other Federal agencies or departments (including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), States, Indian Tribes, private entities, or research or educational institutions to improve, with respect to such assessment, the use and integration of—

(i) advanced remote sensing and geospatial technologies;

(ii) statistical modeling and analysis; or

(iii) any other technology or combination of technologies and analyses that the Secretary concerned determines will benefit the quality of information of such an assessment.

(B) BEST AVAILABLE SCIENCE.—In using the best available science for the fireshed assessments completed under subsection (a)(1), the Secretary concerned and Governor shall, to the maximum extent practicable, incorporate—

(i) traditional ecological knowledge from Indian Tribes;

(ii) data from State forest action plans and State wildfire risk assessments;

(iii) data from the Fireshed Registry maintained under section 103; and

(iv) data from other Federal, State, Tribal, and local governments or agencies.

(b) APPLICABILITY OF NEPA.—Fireshed assessments conducted under this section shall not be subject to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.).

SEC. 106. EMERGENCY FIRESHED MANAGEMENT.

(a) FIRESHED MANAGEMENT PROJECTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary concerned, acting through a responsible official, shall carry out fireshed management projects in fireshed management areas designated under section 101 in accordance with this section.

(2) FIRESHED MANAGEMENT PROJECTS.—The responsible official shall carry out the following forest and vegetation management activities as fireshed management projects under this section:

(A) Conducting hazardous fuels management activities.

(B) Creating fuel breaks and fire breaks.

(C) Removing hazard trees, dead trees, dying trees, or trees at risk of dying, as determined by the responsible official.

(D) Developing, approving, or conducting routine maintenance under a vegetation management, facility inspection, and operation and maintenance plan submitted under section 512(c)(1) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1772(c)(1)).

(E) Removing trees to address overstocking or crowding in a forest stand, consistent with the appropriate basal area of the forest stand as determined by the responsible official.

(F) Using chemical or re-seeding and planting treatments to address insects and disease and control vegetation competition or invasive species.

(G) Any activities recommended by an applicable firehatched assessment carried out under section 105.

(H) Any activities recommended by an applicable community wildfire protection plan.

(I) Any combination of activities described in this paragraph.

(3) EMERGENCY FIRESHED MANAGEMENT.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—For any firehatched management area designated under section 101, the following shall have the force and effect of law:

(i) Section 220.4(b) of title 36, Code of Federal Regulations (as in effect on the date of enactment of this Act), with respect to lands under the jurisdiction of the Secretary.

(ii) Section 46.150 of title 43, Code of Federal Regulations (as in effect on the date of enactment of this Act), with respect to lands under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior.

(iii) Section 402.05 of title 50, Code of Federal Regulations (as in effect on the date of enactment of this Act).

(iv) Section 800.12 of title 36, Code of Federal Regulations (as in effect on the date of enactment of this Act).

(B) UTILIZATION OF EXISTING STREAMLINED AUTHORITIES IN FIRESHED MANAGEMENT AREAS.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—Firehatched management projects carried out under this section shall be considered authorized projects under the following categorical exclusions:

(I) Section 603(a) of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6591b(a)).

(II) Section 605(a) of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6591d(a)).

(III) Section 606(b) of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6591e(b)).

(IV) Section 40806(b) of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (16 U.S.C. 6592b(b)).

(V) Section 4(c)(4) of the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act (Public Law 106-506; 114 Stat. 2353).

(ii) ADDITIONAL EMERGENCY ACTIONS.—Subsection (d) of section 40807 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (16 U.S.C. 6592c) shall apply to firehatched management projects under this section in the same manner as such subsection applies to authorized emergency actions (as defined in subsection (a) of such section 40807) under such section 40807.

(iii) USE OF EXPEDITED AUTHORITIES.—In carrying out a firehatched management project, the Secretary shall apply a categorical exclusion under clause (i)—

(I) in a manner consistent with the statute establishing such categorical exclusion; and

(II) in any area—

(aa) designated as suitable for timber production within the applicable forest plan; or

(bb) where timber harvest activities are not prohibited.

(iv) FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT REQUIREMENTS.—In carrying out this section, the Secretary concerned shall ensure compliance with the amendments made to the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) by the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 (Public Law 118-5).

(v) USE OF OTHER AUTHORITIES.—To the maximum extent practicable, the Secretary concerned shall use the authorities provided under this section in combination with other authorities to carry out firehatched management projects, including—

(I) good neighbor agreements entered into under section 8206 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (16 U.S.C. 2113a) (as amended by this Act);

(II) stewardship contracting projects entered into under section 604 of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6591c) (as amended by this Act);

(III) self-determination contracts and self-governance compact agreements entered into under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5301 et seq.); and

(IV) agreements entered into under the Tribal Forest Protection Act of 2004 (25 U.S.C. 3115a et seq.).

(b) EXPANSION.—

(1) HFRA AMENDMENTS.—The Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 is amended—

(A) in section 3 (16 U.S.C. 6502), by inserting at the end the following:

“(3) LOCAL GOVERNMENT.—The term ‘local government’ means a county, municipality, or special district.

“(4) SPECIAL DISTRICT.—The term ‘special district’ means a political subdivision of a State that—

“(A) has significant budgetary autonomy or control;

“(B) was created by or pursuant to the laws of the State for the purpose of performing a limited and specific governmental or proprietary function; and

“(C) is distinct from any other local government unit within the State.”.

(B) in section 603(c)(1) (16 U.S.C. 6591b(c)(1)), by striking “3000 acres” and inserting “10,000 acres”;

(C) in section 603(c)(2)(B) (16 U.S.C. 6591b(c)(2)(B)), by striking “Fire Regime Groups I, II, or III” and inserting “Fire Regime I, Fire Regime II, Fire Regime III, Fire Regime IV, or Fire Regime V”;

(D) in section 605(c)(1) (16 U.S.C. 6591d(c)(1)), by striking “3000 acres” and inserting “10,000 acres”;

(E) in section 606(g) (16 U.S.C. 6591e(g)), by striking “4,500 acres” and inserting “10,000 acres”.

(2) INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT AMENDMENT.—Section 40806(d)(1) of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (16 U.S.C. 6592b(d)(1)), by striking “3,000 acres” and inserting “10,000 acres”.

(3) LAKE TAHOE RESTORATION ACT AMENDMENTS.—Section 4(c)(4)(C) of the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act (Public Law 106-506; 114 Stat. 2353) is amended—

(A) by striking “Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit”; and

(B) by inserting “applicable to the area” before the period at the end.

SEC. 107. SUNSET.

The authority under this subtitle shall terminate on the date that is 7 years after the date of enactment of this Act.

Subtitle B—Expanding Collaborative Tools to Reduce Wildfire Risk and Improve Forest Health

SEC. 111. MODIFICATION OF THE TREATMENT OF CERTAIN REVENUE AND PAYMENTS UNDER GOOD NEIGHBOR AGREEMENTS.

(a) GOOD NEIGHBOR AUTHORITY.—Section 8206 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (16 U.S.C. 2113a) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(6), by striking “or Indian tribe”;

(2) in subsection (a), by inserting the following:

“(11) SPECIAL DISTRICT.—The term ‘special district’ means a political subdivision of a State that—

“(A) has significant budgetary autonomy or control;

“(B) was created by or pursuant to the laws of the State for the purpose of per-

forming a limited and specific governmental or proprietary function; and

“(C) is distinct from any other local government unit within the State.”.

(3) in subsection (b)—

(A) in paragraph (1)(A), by inserting “, Indian Tribe, special district,” after “Governor”;

(B) in paragraph (2)(C)—

(i) in clause (i)—

(I) by inserting “special district,” after “Indian Tribe,” each place it appears;

(II) in subclause (I)—

(aa) by striking “on”; and

(bb) by striking “; and” and inserting a semicolon;

(III) in subclause (II)(bb), by striking the period at the end and inserting a semicolon; and

(IV) by adding at the end the following:

“(III) to construct new permanent roads on Federal lands that are—

“(aa) necessary to implement authorized restoration activities; and

“(bb) approved by the Federal agency through an environmental analysis or categorical exclusion decision;

“(IV) to complete new permanent road construction to replace and decommission an existing permanent road that is adversely impacting forest, rangeland, or watershed health; and

“(V) if there are funds remaining after carrying out subclauses (I) through (IV), to carry out authorized restoration services under other good neighbor agreements and for the administration of a good neighbor authority program by a Governor, Indian tribe, special district, or county.”; and

(ii) in clause (ii), by striking “2028” and inserting “2030”; and

(C) in paragraph (3), by inserting “, Indian Tribe, special district,” after “Governor”; and

(D) by striking paragraph (4).

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section 8206(a) of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (16 U.S.C. 2113a(a)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)(B), by inserting “, Indian Tribe, special district,” after “Governor”; and

(2) in paragraph (5), by inserting “, Indian Tribe, special district,” after “Governor”.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section apply to any project initiated pursuant to a good neighbor agreement (as defined in section 8206(a) of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (16 U.S.C. 2113a(a)))—

(1) before the date of enactment of this Act, if the project was initiated after the date of enactment of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-334; 132 Stat. 4490); or

(2) on or after the date of enactment of this Act.

SEC. 112. FIXING STEWARDSHIP END RESULT CONTRACTING.

Section 604 of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6591c) is amended—

(1) in subsection (b), by inserting “, including retaining and expanding existing forest products infrastructure” before the period at the end;

(2) in subsection (d)(3)(B), by striking “10 years” and inserting “20 years”; and

(3) in subsection (h), by adding at the end the following:

“(4) SPECIAL RULE FOR LONG-TERM STEWARDSHIP CONTRACTS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—A long-term agreement or contract entered into with an entity under subsection (b) by the Chief or the Director shall provide that in the case of the cancellation or termination by the Chief or the Director of such long-term agreement or

contract, the Chief or the Director, as applicable, shall provide 10 percent of the agreement or contract amount to such entity as cancellation or termination costs.

“(B) DEFINITION OF LONG-TERM AGREEMENT OR CONTRACT.—In this paragraph, the term ‘long-term agreement or contract’ means an agreement or contract under subsection (b)—

“(i) with a term of more than 5 years; and
“(ii) entered into on or after the date of the enactment of this paragraph.”.

SEC. 113. INTRA-AGENCY STRIKE TEAMS.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary concerned shall establish intra-agency strike teams to assist the Secretary concerned with—

(1) any reviews, including analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), consultations under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.), and consultations under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.), with the intent to accelerate and streamline interagency consultation processes;

(2) the implementation of any necessary site preparation work in advance of or as part of a firehatched management project;

(3) the implementation of firehatched management projects under such section; and

(4) any combination of purposes under paragraphs (1) through (3).

(b) MEMBERS.—The Secretary concerned may appoint not more than 10 individuals to serve on an intra-agency strike team comprised of—

(1) employees of the Department under the jurisdiction of the Secretary concerned;

(2) employees of a different Federal agency, with the consent of that agency’s Secretary;

(3) private contractors from any nonprofit organization, State government, Indian Tribe, local government, quasi-governmental agency, academic institution, or private organization; and

(4) volunteers from any nonprofit organization, State government, Indian Tribe, local government, quasi-governmental agency, academic institution, or private organization.

(c) SUNSET.—The authority provided under this section shall terminate on the date that is 7 years after the date of enactment of this Act.

SEC. 114. LOCALLY-LED RESTORATION.

(a) THRESHOLD ADJUSTMENT.—Section 14(d) of the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (16 U.S.C. 472a(d)) is amended by—

(1) striking “\$10,000” and inserting “\$55,000”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following: “Beginning on January 1, 2027, and annually thereafter, the amount in the first sentence of this subsection shall be adjusted by the Secretary for changes in the Consumer Price Index of All Urban Consumers published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the Department of Labor.”.

(b) FIRESHED MANAGEMENT PROJECTS.—Beginning on the date that is 30 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall solicit bids under section 14 of the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (16 U.S.C. 472a(d)) for firehatched management projects under section 106.

SEC. 115. JOINT CHIEFS LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM.

Section 40808 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (16 U.S.C. 6592d) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(2)—

(A) in subparagraph (B), by striking “or” at the end;

(B) in subparagraph (C), by striking the period at the end and inserting a semicolon; and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

“(D) to recover from wildfires; or

“(E) to enhance soil, water, and related natural resources.”;

(2) in subsection (d)(1)—

(A) in subparagraph (A), by inserting “and post-wildfire impacts” after “wildfire risk”; and

(B) in subparagraph (F), by inserting “, as identified in the corresponding State forest action plan or similar priority plan (such as a State wildlife or water plan)” before the semicolon;

(3) in subsection (g)(2), by inserting “and at least once every 2 fiscal years thereafter” after “and 2023”; and

(4) in subsection (h)(1), by striking “and 2023” and inserting “through 2030”.

SEC. 116. COLLABORATIVE FOREST LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PROGRAM.

Section 4003 of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (16 U.S.C. 7303) is amended—

(1) in subsection (b)(3)—

(A) in subparagraph (D), by striking “species;” and inserting “species or pathogens;”;

(B) in subparagraph (G), by striking “and” at the end;

(C) in subparagraph (H), by adding “and” after the semicolon at the end; and

(D) by adding at the end the following:

“(I) address standardized monitoring questions and indicators;”;

(2) in subsection (c)(3)(A)—

(A) in clause (i), by striking “and” at the end;

(B) in clause (ii), by adding “and” at the end; and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

“(iii) include a plan to provide support to collaborative processes established pursuant to subsection (b)(2);”;

(3) in subsection (d)—

(A) in paragraph (2)—

(i) in subparagraph (E), by striking “and” at the end;

(ii) in subparagraph (F), by striking the period at the end and inserting “; and”; and

(iii) by adding at the end the following:

“(G) proposals that seek to use innovative implementation mechanisms, including good neighbor agreements entered into under section 8206 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (16 U.S.C. 2113a);

“(H) proposals that seek to remove or treat insects or diseases, including the removal of trees killed by, or infested with, bark beetles in Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming;

“(I) proposals that seek to facilitate the sale of firewood and Christmas trees on lands under the jurisdiction of the Secretary or the Secretary of the Interior;

“(J) proposals that seek to reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire or increase ecological restoration activities—

“(i) within areas across land ownerships, including State, Tribal, and private land; and

“(ii) within the wildland-urban interface (as defined in section 101 of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6511)); and

“(K) proposals that seek to enhance watershed health and drinking water sources.”;

(B) in paragraph (3)—

(i) by amending subparagraph (A) to read as follows:

“(A) 4 proposals in any 1 region of the National Forest System to be funded during any fiscal year; and”;

(ii) by striking subparagraph (B); and

(iii) by redesignating subparagraph (C) as subparagraph (B); and

(4) in subsection (f)(6), by striking “2019 through 2023” and inserting “2025 through 2030”.

SEC. 117. UTILIZING GRAZING FOR WILDFIRE RISK REDUCTION.

The Secretary, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service, in coordination with holders of permits to graze livestock on Federal land, shall develop a strategy to increase opportunities to utilize livestock grazing as a wildfire risk reduction strategy, including—

(1) completion of reviews (as required under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (U.S.C. 4321 et seq.)) to allow permitted grazing on vacant grazing allotments during instances of drought, wildfire, or other natural disasters that disrupt grazing on allotments already permitted;

(2) use of targeted grazing;

(3) increased use of temporary permits to promote targeted fuels reduction and reduction of invasive annual grasses;

(4) increased use of grazing as a postfire recovery and restoration strategy, where appropriate; and

(5) use of all applicable authorities under the law.

SEC. 118. WATER SOURCE PROTECTION PROGRAM.

Section 303 of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6542(g)(4)(B)) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) by redesignating paragraphs (1) through (7) as paragraphs (2) through (8), respectively;

(B) by inserting before paragraph (2), as so redesignated, the following:

“(1) ADJACENT LAND.—The term ‘adjacent land’ means non-Federal land, including State, local, and private land, that is adjacent to, and within the same watershed as, National Forest System land on which a watershed protection and restoration project is carried out under this section.”; and

(C) in paragraph (2), as so redesignated—

(i) by redesignating subparagraphs (G) and (H) as subparagraphs (K) and (L), respectively; and

(ii) by inserting after subparagraph (F) the following:

“(G) an acequia association;

“(H) a local, regional, or other public entity that manages stormwater or wastewater resources or other related water infrastructure;

“(I) a land-grant merced;

“(J) a local, regional, or other private entity that has water delivery authority.”;

(2) in subsection (b)—

(A) by striking “The Secretary shall” and inserting the following:

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall”; and

(B) by adding at the end the following:

“(2) REQUIREMENTS.—A watershed protection and restoration project under the Program shall be designed to—

“(A) protect and restore watershed health, water supply and quality, a municipal or agricultural water supply system, and water-related infrastructure;

“(B) protect and restore forest health from insect infestation and disease or wildfire; or

“(C) advance any combination of the purposes described in subparagraphs (A) and (B).”

“(3) PRIORITIES.—In selecting watershed protection and restoration projects under the Program, the Secretary shall give priority to projects that would—

“(A) provide risk management benefits associated with: drought; wildfire; post-wildfire conditions; extreme weather; flooding; resilience to climate change; and watershed and fire resilience, including minimizing risks to watershed health, water supply and

quality, and water-related infrastructure, including municipal and agricultural water supply systems;

“(B) support aquatic restoration and conservation efforts that complement existing or planned forest restoration or wildfire risk reduction efforts; or

“(C) provide quantifiable benefits to water supply or quality and include the use of nature-based solutions, such as restoring wetland and riparian ecosystems.

“(4) CONDITIONS FOR PROJECTS ON ADJACENT LAND.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—No project or activity may be carried out under this section on adjacent land unless the owner of the adjacent land agrees in writing that the owner is a willing and engaged partner in carrying out that project or activity.

“(B) EFFECT.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to authorize any change in—

“(i) the ownership of adjacent land on which a project or activity is carried out under this section; or

“(ii) the management of adjacent land on which a project or activity is carried out under this section, except during the carrying out of that project or activity.”;

(3) in subsection (c)—

(A) in paragraph (1), by striking “with end water users” and inserting “with end water users to protect and restore the condition of National Forest watersheds and adjacent land that provide water—

“(A) to the end water users subject to the agreement; or

“(B) for the benefit of another end water user.”;

(B) in paragraph (2)—

(i) in subparagraph (C), by striking “or” at the end;

(ii) by redesignating subparagraph (D) as subparagraph (E); and

(iii) by inserting after subparagraph (C) the following:

“(D) a good neighbor agreement entered into under section 8206 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (16 U.S.C. 2113a); or”;

(C) by adding at the end the following:

“(3) COOPERATION WITH NON-FEDERAL PARTNERS.—The Secretary shall cooperate with non-Federal partners in carrying out assessments, planning, project design, and project implementation under this section.”;

(4) in subsection (d)—

(A) by amending paragraph (2) to read as follows:

“(2) REQUIREMENT.—A water source management plan shall be—

“(A) designed to protect and restore ecological integrity (as defined in section 219.19 of title 36, Code of Federal Regulations (as in effect on the date of enactment of this subparagraph));

“(B) based on the best available scientific information; and

“(C) conducted in a manner consistent with the forest plan applicable to the National Forest System land on which the watershed protection and restoration project is carried out.”; and

(B) by adding at the end the following:

“(4) REDUCING REDUNDANCY.—An existing watershed plan, such as a watershed protection and restoration action plan developed under section 304(a)(3), or other applicable watershed planning documents as approved by the Secretary may be used as the basis for a water source management plan under this subsection.”; and

(5) in subsection (e)(1), by striking “primary purpose of” and all that follows through the period at the end and inserting “primary purpose of advancing any of the purposes described in subsection (b)(2).”.

SEC. 119. WATERSHED CONDITION FRAMEWORK TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS.

Section 304(a) of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6543(a)) is amended in paragraphs (3) and (5) by striking “protection and”.

Subtitle C—Litigation Reform

SEC. 121. COMMONSENSE LITIGATION REFORM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—A court shall not enjoin a covered agency action if the court determines that the plaintiff is unable to demonstrate that the claim of the plaintiff is likely to succeed on the merits.

(b) BALANCING SHORT- AND LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF COVERED AGENCY ACTION IN CONSIDERING INJUNCTIVE RELIEF.—As part of its weighing the equities while considering any request for an injunction that applies to a covered agency action, the court reviewing such action shall balance the impact to the ecosystem likely affected by such action of—

(1) the short- and long-term effects of undertaking such action; against

(2) the short- and long-term effects of not undertaking such action.

(c) LIMITATIONS ON JUDICIAL REVIEW.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law (except this section), in the case of a claim arising under Federal law seeking judicial review of a covered agency action—

(A) a court shall not hold unlawful, set aside, or otherwise limit, delay, stay, vacate, or enjoin such agency action unless the court determines that—

(i) such action poses or will pose a risk of a proximate and substantial environmental harm; and

(ii) there is no other equitable remedy available as a matter of law; and

(B) if a court determines that subparagraph (A) does not apply to the covered agency action the only remedy the court may order with regard to such agency action is to remand the matter to the agency with instructions to, during the 180-day period beginning on the date of the order, take such additional actions as may be necessary to redress any legal wrong suffered by, or adverse effect on, the plaintiff, except such additional actions may not include the preparation of a new agency document unless the court finds the agency was required and failed to prepare such agency document.

(2) EFFECT OF REMAND.—In the case of a covered agency action to which paragraph (1)(B) applies, the agency may—

(A) continue to carry out such agency action to the extent the action does not impact the additional actions required pursuant to such paragraph; and

(B) if the agency action relates to an agency document, use any format to correct such document (including a supplemental environmental document, memorandum, or errata sheet).

(d) LIMITATIONS ON CLAIMS.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law (except this section), a claim arising under Federal law seeking judicial review of a covered agency action shall be barred unless—

(1) with respect to an agency document or the application of a categorical exclusion noticed in the Federal Register, such claim is filed not later than 120 days after the date of publication of a notice in the Federal Register of agency intent to carry out the firehatched management project relating to such agency document or application, unless a shorter period is specified in such Federal law;

(2) in the case of an agency document or the application of a categorical exclusion not described in paragraph (1), such claim is filed not later than 120 days after the date that is the earlier of—

(A) the date on which such agency document or application is published; and

(B) the date on which such agency document or application is noticed; and

(3) in the case of a covered agency action for which there was a public comment period, such claim—

(A) is filed by a party that—

(i) participated in the administrative proceedings regarding the firehatched management project relating to such action; and

(ii) submitted a comment during such public comment period and such comment was sufficiently detailed to put the applicable agency on notice of the issue upon which the party seeks judicial review; and

(B) is related to such comment.

(e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) AGENCY DOCUMENT.—The term “agency document” means, with respect to a firehatched management project, a record of decision, environmental document, or programmatic environmental document.

(2) COVERED AGENCY ACTION.—The term “covered agency action” means—

(A) the establishment of a firehatched management project by an agency;

(B) the application of a categorical exclusion to a firehatched management project;

(C) the preparation of any agency document for a firehatched management project; or

(D) any other agency action as part of a firehatched management project.

(3) NEPA TERMS.—The terms “categorical exclusion”, “environmental document”, and “programmatic environmental document” have the meanings given such terms, respectively, in section 111 of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4336e).

SEC. 122. CONSULTATION ON FOREST PLANS.

(a) FOREST SERVICE PLANS.—Section 6(d)(2) of the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (16 U.S.C. 1604(d)(2)) is amended to read as follows:

“(2) NO ADDITIONAL CONSULTATION REQUIRED UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary shall not be required to reinstitute consultation under section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1536(a)(2)) or section 402.16 of title 50, Code of Federal Regulations (or a successor regulation), on a land management plan approved, amended, or revised under this section when—

“(A) a new species is listed or critical habitat is designated under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.); or

“(B) new information reveals effects of the land management plan that may affect a species listed or critical habitat designated under that Act in a manner or to an extent not previously considered.”.

(b) BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT PLANS.—Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1712) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(g) NO ADDITIONAL CONSULTATION REQUIRED UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary shall not be required to reinstitute consultation under section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1536(a)(2)) or section 402.16 of title 50, Code of Federal Regulations (or a successor regulation), on a land use plan approved, amended, or revised under this section when—

“(1) a new species is listed or critical habitat is designated under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.); or

“(2) new information reveals effects of the land use plan that may affect a species listed or critical habitat designated under that Act in a manner or to an extent not previously considered.”.

TITLE II—PROTECTING COMMUNITIES IN THE WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE

SEC. 201. COMMUNITY WILDFIRE RISK REDUCTION PROGRAM.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 30 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretaries shall jointly establish an interagency program to be known as the “Community Wildfire Risk Reduction Program” that shall consist of at least one representative from each of the following:

- (1) The Office of Wildland Fire of the Department of the Interior.
- (2) The National Park Service.
- (3) The Bureau of Land Management.
- (4) The United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

- (5) The Bureau of Indian Affairs.
- (6) The Forest Service.
- (7) The Federal Emergency Management Agency.

- (8) The United States Fire Administration.
- (9) The National Institute of Standards and Technology.

- (10) The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

(b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of the program established under subsection (a) is to support interagency coordination in reducing the risk of, and the damages resulting from, wildfires in communities (including tribal communities) in the wildland-urban interface through—

- (1) advancing research and science in wildfire resilience and land management, including support for non-Federal research partnerships;

- (2) supporting adoption by Indian Tribes and local governmental entities of fire-resistant building methods, codes, and standards;

- (3) supporting efforts by Indian Tribes or local governmental entities to address the effects of wildland fire on such communities, including property damages, air quality, and water quality;

- (4) encouraging public-private partnerships to conduct hazardous fuels management activities in the wildland-urban interface;

- (5) providing technical and financial assistance targeted towards communities, including tribal communities, through streamlined and unified technical assistance and grant management mechanisms, including the portal and grant application established under subsection (c), to—

- (A) encourage critical risk reduction measures on private property with high wildfire risk exposure in such communities; and

- (B) mitigate costs for and improve capacity among such communities.

- (c) PORTAL AND UNIFORM GRANT APPLICATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—As part of the program established under subsection (a), the Secretaries and the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency shall establish a portal through which a person may submit a single, uniform application for any of the following:

- (A) A community wildfire defense grant under section 40803(f) of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (16 U.S.C. 6592(f)).

- (B) An emergency management performance grant under section 662 of the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 (6 U.S.C. 761).

- (C) A grant under section 33 of the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 (15 U.S.C. 2229).

- (D) A grant under section 34 of the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 (15 U.S.C. 2229a).

- (E) Financial or technical assistance or a grant under sections 203, 205, 404, 406, or 420 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5133, 5135, 5170c, 5172, 5187).

(2) SIMPLIFICATION OF APPLICATION.—In establishing the portal and application under paragraph (1), the Secretaries and the Administrator shall seek to reduce the complexity and length of the application process for the grants described in paragraph (1).

(3) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretaries shall provide technical assistance to communities or persons seeking to apply for financial assistance through the portal using the application established under paragraph (1).

(d) SUNSET.—The program established under this section shall terminate on the date that is 7 years after the date of enactment of this Act.

SEC. 202. COMMUNITY WILDFIRE DEFENSE RESEARCH PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretaries shall, acting jointly, expand the Joint Fire Science Program to include a performance-driven research and development program known as the “Community Wildfire Defense Research Program” for the purpose of testing and advancing innovative designs to create or improve the wildfire-resistance of structures and communities.

(b) PROGRAM PRIORITIES.—In carrying out the program established under subsection (a), the Secretaries shall evaluate opportunities to create wildfire-resistant structures and communities through—

- (1) different affordable building materials, including mass timber;

- (2) home hardening, including policies to incentivize and incorporate defensible space;

- (3) subdivision design and other land use planning and design;

- (4) landscape architecture; and

- (5) other wildfire-resistant designs, as determined by the Secretary.

(c) COMMUNITY WILDFIRE DEFENSE INNOVATION PRIZE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out the program established under subsection (a), the Secretaries shall carry out a competition through which a person may submit to the Secretaries innovative designs for the creation or improvement of an ignition-resistant structure or fire-adapted communities.

(2) PRIZE.—Subject to the availability of appropriations made in advance for such purpose, the Secretaries may award a prize under the competition described in paragraph (1), based on criteria established by the Secretaries and in accordance with paragraph (3).

(3) SCALE.—In awarding a prize under paragraph (2), the Secretaries shall prioritize for an award designs with the most potential to scale to existing infrastructure.

(d) COLLABORATION AND NONDUPLICATION.—In carrying out the program established under subsection (a), the Secretaries shall ensure collaboration and nonduplication of activities with the Building Technologies Office of the Department of Energy.

(e) SUNSET.—The program established under subsection (a) shall terminate on the date that is 7 years after the date of enactment of this Act.

SEC. 203. VEGETATION MANAGEMENT, FACILITY INSPECTION, AND OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE RELATING TO ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION AND DISTRIBUTION FACILITY RIGHTS-OF-WAY.

(a) HAZARD TREES WITHIN 150 FEET OF ELECTRIC POWER LINE.—Section 512(a)(1)(B)(ii) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1772(a)(1)(B)(ii)) is amended by striking “10” and inserting “150”.

(b) CONSULTATION WITH PRIVATE LANDOWNERS.—Section 512(c)(3)(E) of such Act (43 U.S.C. 1772(c)(3)(E)) is amended—

- (1) in clause (i), by striking “and” at the end;

- (2) in clause (ii), by striking the period and inserting “; and”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(iii) consulting with a private landowner with respect to any hazard trees identified for removal from land owned by the private landowner.”.

(c) REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS.—Section 512(c)(4)(A)(iv) of such Act (43 U.S.C. 1772(c)(4)(A)(iv)) is amended to read as follows:

“(iv) ensures that—

“(I) a plan submitted without a modification under clause (iii) shall be automatically approved 120 days after being submitted; and

“(II) with respect to a plan submitted with a modification under clause (iii), if not approved within 120 days after being submitted, the Secretary concerned shall develop and submit a letter to the owner and operator describing—

“(aa) a detailed timeline (to conclude within 165 days after the submission of the plan) for completing review of the plan;

“(bb) any identified deficiencies with the plan and specific opportunities for the owner and operator to address such deficiencies; and

“(cc) any other relevant information, as determined by the Secretary concerned.”.

SEC. 204. CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION FOR ELECTRIC UTILITY LINES RIGHTS-OF-WAY.

(a) CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION ESTABLISHED.—Forest management activities described in subsection (b) are a category of activities hereby designated as being categorically excluded from the preparation of an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement under section 102 of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4332).

(b) FOREST MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES DESIGNATED FOR CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION.—The forest management activities designated under subsection (a) for a categorical exclusion are—

- (1) the development and approval of a vegetation management, facility inspection, and operation and maintenance plan submitted under section 512(c)(1) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1772(c)(1)) by the Secretary concerned; and

- (2) the implementation of routine activities conducted under the plan referred to in paragraph (1).

(c) AVAILABILITY OF CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION.—On and after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary concerned may use the categorical exclusion established under subsection (a) in accordance with this section.

(d) EXCLUSION OF CERTAIN AREAS FROM CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION.—The categorical exclusion established under subsection (a) shall not apply to any forest management activity conducted—

- (1) in a component of the National Wilderness Preservation System; or

- (2) on National Forest System lands on which the removal of vegetation is restricted or prohibited by an Act of Congress.

(e) PERMANENT ROADS.—

(1) PROHIBITION ON ESTABLISHMENT.—A forest management activity designated under subsection (b) shall not include the establishment of a permanent road.

(2) EXISTING ROADS.—The Secretary concerned may carry out necessary maintenance and repair on an existing permanent road for the purposes of conducting a forest management activity designated under subsection (b).

(3) TEMPORARY ROADS.—The Secretary concerned shall decommission any temporary road constructed for carrying out a forest management activity designated under subsection (b) not later than the date that is 3 years after the date on which the forest management activity is completed.

(f) APPLICABLE LAWS.—Clauses (iii) and (iv) of section 106(a)(3) shall apply to forest management activities designated under subsection (b).

SEC. 205. SEEDS OF SUCCESS.

(a) STRATEGY ESTABLISHED.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretaries and the Secretary of Defense shall jointly develop and implement a strategy, to be known as the “Seeds of Success strategy”, to enhance the domestic supply chain of seeds.

(b) ELEMENTS.—The strategy required under subsection (a) shall include a plan for each of the following:

(1) Facilitating sustained interagency coordination in, and a comprehensive approach to, native plant materials development and restoration.

(2) Promoting the re-seeding of native or fire-resistant vegetation post-wildfire, particularly in the wildland-urban interface.

(3) Creating and consolidating information on native or fire-resistant vegetation and sharing such information with State governments, Indian Tribes, and local governments.

(4) Building regional programs and partnerships to promote the development of materials made from plants native to the United States and restore such plants to their respective, native habitats within the United States, giving priority to the building of such programs and partnerships in regions of the Bureau of Land Management where such partnerships and programs do not already exist as of the date of enactment of this Act.

(5) Expanding seed storage and seed-cleaning infrastructure.

(6) Expanding the Warehouse System of the Bureau of Land Management, particularly the cold storage capacity of the Warehouse System.

(7) Shortening the timeline for the approval of permits to collect seeds on public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

(c) REPORT.—The Secretaries and the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the relevant Congressional Committees the strategy developed under paragraph (1).

SEC. 206. PROGRAM TO SUPPORT PRIORITY REFORESTATION AND RESTORATION PROJECTS OF DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Interior, in coordination with the heads of covered Federal agencies, shall establish a program to provide support for priority projects identified under subsection (c)(2), in accordance with this section.

(b) SUPPORT.—In carrying out the program under subsection (a), the Secretary may provide support through—

(1) cooperative agreements entered into in accordance with processes established by the Secretary; and

(2) contracts, including contracts established pursuant to the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5301 et seq.).

(c) ANNUAL IDENTIFICATION OF PRIORITY PROJECTS.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act and annually thereafter, the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the heads of covered Federal agencies, shall—

(1) identify lands of the United States administered by, or under the jurisdiction of, the Secretary of the Interior that require reforestation and restoration due to unplanned disturbances and that are unlikely to experience natural regeneration without assistance; and

(2) establish a list of priority projects for reforestation and restoration for the upcoming

year, which may include activities to ensure adequate and appropriate seed and seedling availability to further the objectives of other priority projects.

(d) CONSULTATION.—In carrying out the program under subsection (a) and the requirements under subsection (c), the Secretary shall consult or collaborate with, as appropriate, and inform the following:

(1) State and local governments.

(2) Indian Tribes.

(3) Covered institutions of higher education.

(4) Federal agencies that administer lands of the United States that adjoin or are proximal to lands that are the subject of priority projects and potential priority projects.

(5) Other stakeholders, as determined by the Secretary.

(e) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Secretary of the Interior shall submit to the relevant Congressional Committees a report that includes the following:

(1) An accounting of all lands identified under subsection (c)(1) for the period covered by the report.

(2) A list of priority projects identified under subsection (c)(2) for the period covered by the report and, with respect to each such priority project, any support issued under the program under subsection (a) and any progress made towards reforestation and restoration.

(3) An accounting of each contract and cooperative agreement established under the program under subsection (a).

(4) A description of the actions taken in accordance with subsection (d).

(5) Assessments with respect to—

(A) gaps in—

(i) the implementation of the program under subsection (a); and

(ii) the progress made under the program with respect to priority projects; and

(B) opportunities to procure funding necessary to address any such gaps.

(f) NONDUPLICATION.—In carrying out this section, the Secretary of the Interior shall collaborate with the Secretary and the Secretary of Defense to ensure the non duplication of activities carried out under section 205.

(g) SUNSET.—The authority provided under this section shall terminate on the date that is 7 years after the date of enactment of this Act.

(h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) COVERED FEDERAL AGENCY.—The term “covered Federal agency” means the National Park Service, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Reclamation, or the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

(2) COVERED INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—The term “covered institution of higher education” has the meaning given the term “eligible institution” in section 301(e)(3).

(3) NATURAL REGENERATION; REFORESTATION.—The terms “natural regeneration” and “reforestation” have the meanings given such terms in section 3(e)(4)(A) of the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (16 U.S.C. 1601(3)(4)(A)).

(4) RESTORATION.—The term “restoration” means activities that facilitate the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed, including the reestablishment of appropriate plant species composition and community structure.

(5) UNPLANNED ECOSYSTEM DISTURBANCE.—The term “unplanned ecosystem disturbance” means any unplanned disturbance that disrupts the structure or composition of an ecosystem, including a wildfire, an infestation of insects or disease, and a weather event.

SEC. 207. FIRE DEPARTMENT REPAYMENT.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this section, the Secretaries shall—

(1) establish standard operating procedures relating to payment timelines for fire suppression cost share agreements established under the Act of May 27, 1955 (42 U.S.C. 1856a) (commonly known as the “Reciprocal Fire Protection Act”); and

(2) with respect to each fire suppression cost share agreement in operation on such date—

(A) review each such agreement; and

(B) modify each agreement as necessary to comply with the standard operating procedures required under paragraph (1).

(b) ALIGNMENT OF FIRE SUPPRESSION COST SHARE AGREEMENTS WITH COOPERATIVE FIRE PROTECTION AGREEMENTS.—The standard operating procedures required under subsection (a)(1) shall include a requirement that each fire suppression cost share agreement be aligned with each of the cooperative fire protection agreements applicable to the entity subject to such fire suppression cost share agreement.

(c) PAYMENTS PURSUANT TO COST SHARE AGREEMENTS.—With respect to payments made pursuant to fire suppression cost share agreements, the standard operating procedures required under subsection (a)(1) shall require that the Federal paying entity reimburse a local fire department if such fire department submits an invoice in accordance with cost settlement procedures.

(d) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that the Secretaries should carry out reciprocal fire suppression cost share agreement repayments to local fire suppression organizations as soon as practicable after fire suppression occurs but not later than 1 year after fire suppression occurs.

TITLE III—TRANSPARENCY, TECHNOLOGY, AND PARTNERSHIPS

Subtitle A—Transparency and Technology

SEC. 301. BIOCHAR INNOVATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONSERVATION, HEALTH, AND ADVANCEMENTS IN RESEARCH.

(a) DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS.—

(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Subject to the availability of appropriations made in advance for such purpose, not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the covered Secretaries shall establish a program to enter into partnerships with eligible entities to carry out demonstration projects to support the development and commercialization of biochar in accordance with this subsection.

(B) LOCATION OF DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS.—In carrying out the program established under subparagraph (A), the covered Secretaries shall, to the maximum extent practicable, enter into partnerships with eligible entities such that not fewer than one demonstration project is carried out in each region of the Forest Service and each region of the Bureau of Land Management.

(2) PROPOSALS.—To be eligible to enter into a partnership to carry out a biochar demonstration project under paragraph (1)(A), an eligible entity shall submit to the covered Secretaries a proposal at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the covered Secretaries may require.

(3) PRIORITY.—In selecting proposals under paragraph (2), the covered Secretaries shall give priority to entering into partnerships with eligible entities that submit proposals to carry out biochar demonstration projects that—

(A) have the most carbon sequestration potential;

(B) have the most potential to create new jobs and contribute to local economies, particularly in rural areas;

(C) have the most potential to demonstrate—

(i) new and innovative uses of biochar;

(ii) market viability for cost effective biochar-based products;

(iii) the ecosystem services created or supported by the use of biochar;

(iv) the restorative benefits of biochar with respect to forest health and resiliency, including forest soils and watersheds; or

(v) any combination of purposes specified in clauses (i) through (iv);

(D) are located in areas that have a high need for biochar production, as determined by the covered Secretaries, due to—

(i) nearby lands identified as having high or very high or extreme risk of wildfire;

(ii) availability of sufficient quantities of feedstocks; or

(iii) a high level of demand for biochar or other commercial byproducts of biochar; or

(E) satisfy any combination of purposes specified in subparagraphs (A) through (D).

(4) USE OF FUNDS.—In carrying out the program established under paragraph (1)(A), the covered Secretaries may enter into partnerships and provide funding to such partnerships to carry out demonstration projects to—

(A) acquire and test various feedstocks and their efficacy;

(B) develop and optimize commercially and technologically viable biochar production units, including mobile and permanent units;

(C) demonstrate—

(i) the production of biochar from forest residue; and

(ii) the use of biochar to restore forest health and resiliency;

(D) build, expand, or establish biochar facilities;

(E) conduct research on new and innovative uses of biochar;

(F) demonstrate cost-effective market opportunities for biochar and biochar-based products;

(G) carry out any other activities the covered Secretaries determine appropriate; or

(H) any combination of the purposes specified in subparagraphs (A) through (F).

(5) FEEDSTOCK REQUIREMENTS.—To the maximum extent practicable, an eligible entity that carries out a biochar demonstration project under this subsection shall, with respect to the feedstock used under such project, derive at least 50 percent of such feedstock from forest thinning and management activities, including mill residues, conducted on National Forest System lands or public lands.

(6) REVIEW OF BIOCHAR DEMONSTRATION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The covered Secretaries shall conduct regionally-specific research, including economic analyses and life-cycle assessments, on any biochar produced from a demonstration project carried out under the program established in paragraph (1)(A), including—

(i) the effects of such biochar on—

(I) forest health and resiliency;

(II) carbon capture and sequestration, including increasing soil carbon in the short-term and long-term;

(III) productivity, reduced input costs, and water retention in agricultural practices;

(IV) the health of soil and grasslands used for grazing activities, including grazing activities on National Forest System land and public land;

(V) environmental remediation activities, including abandoned mine land remediation; and

(VI) other ecosystem services created or supported by the use of biochar;

(ii) the effectiveness of biochar as a co-product of biofuels or in biochemicals; and

(iii) the effectiveness of other potential uses of biochar to determine if any such use is technologically and commercially viable.

(B) COORDINATION.—The covered Secretaries shall, to the maximum extent practicable, provide data, analyses, and other relevant information collected under subparagraph (A) with recipients of a grant under subsection (b).

(7) LIMITATION ON FUNDING FOR ESTABLISHING BIOCHAR FACILITIES.—If the covered Secretaries provide to an eligible entity that enters into a partnership with the covered Secretaries under paragraph (1)(A) funding for establishing a biochar facility, such funding may not exceed 35 percent of the total capital cost of establishing such biochar facility.

(b) BIOCHAR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT GRANT PROGRAM.—

(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the Secretary of Energy, shall establish or expand an existing applied biochar research and development grant program to make competitive grants to eligible institutions to carry out the activities described in paragraph (3).

(2) APPLICATIONS.—To be eligible to receive a grant under this subsection, an eligible institution shall submit to the Secretary a proposal at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Secretary may require.

(3) USE OF FUNDS.—An eligible institution that receives a grant under this subsection shall use the grant funds to conduct applied research on—

(A) the effect of biochar on forest health and resiliency, accounting for variations in biochar, soil, climate, and other factors;

(B) the effect of biochar on soil health and water retention, accounting for variations in biochar, soil, climate, and other factors;

(C) the long-term carbon sequestration potential of biochar;

(D) the best management practices with respect to biochar and biochar-based products that maximize—

(i) carbon sequestration benefits; and

(ii) the commercial viability and application of such products in forestry, agriculture, environmental remediation, water quality improvement, and any other similar uses, as determined by the Secretary;

(E) the regional uses of biochar to increase productivity and profitability, including—

(i) uses in agriculture and environmental remediation; and

(ii) use as a co-product in fuel production;

(F) new and innovative uses for biochar by-products; and

(G) opportunities to expand markets for biochar and create related jobs, particularly in rural areas.

(c) REPORTS.—

(1) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the covered Secretaries shall submit to Congress a report that—

(A) includes policy and program recommendations to improve the widespread use of biochar;

(B) identifies any area of research needed to advance biochar commercialization; and

(C) identifies barriers to further biochar commercialization, including permitting and siting considerations.

(2) MATERIALS SUBMITTED IN SUPPORT OF THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET.—Beginning with the second fiscal year that begins after the date of enactment of this Act and annually thereafter until the date described in subsection (d), the covered Secretaries shall include in the materials submitted to Congress in support of the President's budget pursuant to section 1105 of title 31, United States

Code, a report describing, for the fiscal year covered by the report, the status of each demonstration project carried out under subsection (a) and each research and development grant carried out under subsection (b).

(d) SUNSET.—The authority to carry out this section shall terminate on the date that is 7 years after the date of enactment of this Act.

(e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) BIOCHAR.—The term “biochar” means carbonized biomass produced by converting feedstock through reductive thermal processing for non-fuel uses.

(2) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term “eligible entity” means—

(A) a State, local, special district, or Tribal government;

(B) an eligible institution;

(C) a private, non-private, or cooperative entity or organization;

(D) a National Laboratory (as such term is defined in section 2 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (42 U.S.C. 15801)); or

(E) a partnership or consortium of two or more entities described in subparagraphs (A) through (D).

(3) ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION.—The term “eligible institution” means land-grant colleges and universities, including institutions eligible for funding under the—

(A) Act of July 2, 1862 (12 Stat. 503, chapter 130; 7 U.S.C. 301 et seq.);

(B) Act of August 30, 1890 (26 Stat. 417, chapter 841; 7 U.S.C. 321 et seq.), including Tuskegee University;

(C) Public Law 87-788 (commonly known as the “McIntire-Stennis Act of 1962”); or

(D) Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 301 note; Public Law 103-382).

(4) FEEDSTOCK.—The term “feedstock” means excess biomass in the form of plant matter or materials that serves as the raw material for the production of biochar.

(5) COVERED SECRETARIES.—The term “covered Secretaries” means—

(A) the Secretary, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service;

(B) the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the Bureau of Land Management; and

(C) the Secretary of Energy, acting through the Director of the Office of Science.

SEC. 302. ACCURATE HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION REPORTS.

(a) INCLUSION OF HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION REPORT IN MATERIALS SUBMITTED IN SUPPORT OF THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Beginning with the first fiscal year that begins after the date of enactment of this Act, and each fiscal year thereafter, the Secretary concerned shall include in the materials submitted to Congress in support of the President's budget pursuant to section 1105 of title 31, United States Code, a report on the number of acres of Federal land on which the Secretary concerned carried out hazardous fuels reduction activities during the preceding fiscal year.

(2) REQUIREMENTS.—For purposes of the report required under paragraph (1), the Secretary concerned shall—

(A) in determining the number of acres of Federal land on which the Secretary concerned carried out hazardous fuels reduction activities during the period covered by the report—

(i) record acres of Federal land on which hazardous fuels reduction activities were completed during such period; and

(ii) record each acre described in clause (i) once in the report, regardless of whether multiple hazardous fuels reduction activities were carried out on such acre during such period; and

(B) with respect to the acres of Federal land recorded in the report, include information on—

(i) which such acres are located in the wildland-urban interface;

(ii) the level of wildfire risk (high, moderate, or low) on the first and last day of the period covered by the report;

(iii) the types of hazardous fuels activities completed for such acres, delineating between whether such activities were conducted—

(I) in a wildfire managed for resource benefits; or

(II) through a planned project;

(iv) the cost per acre of hazardous fuels activities carried out during the period covered by the report;

(v) the region or system unit in which the acres are located; and

(vi) the effectiveness of the hazardous fuels reduction activities on reducing the risk of wildfire.

(3) **TRANSPARENCY.**—The Secretary concerned shall make each report submitted under paragraph (1) publicly available on the websites of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior, as applicable.

(b) **ACCURATE DATA COLLECTION.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary concerned shall implement standardized procedures for tracking data related to hazardous fuels reduction activities carried out by the Secretary concerned.

(2) **ELEMENTS.**—The standardized procedures required under paragraph (1) shall include—

(A) regular, standardized data reviews of the accuracy and timely input of data used to track hazardous fuels reduction activities;

(B) verification methods that validate whether such data accurately correlates to the hazardous fuels reduction activities carried out by the Secretary concerned;

(C) an analysis of the short- and long-term effectiveness of the hazardous fuels reduction activities on reducing the risk of wildfire; and

(D) for hazardous fuels reduction activities that occur partially within the wildland-urban interface, methods to distinguish which acres are located within the wildland-urban interface and which acres are located outside the wildland-urban interface.

(3) **REPORT.**—Not later than 2 weeks after implementing the standardized procedures required under paragraph (1), the Secretary concerned shall submit to Congress a report that describes—

(A) such standardized procedures; and

(B) program and policy recommendations to Congress to address any limitations in tracking data related to hazardous fuels reduction activities under this subsection.

(c) **GAO STUDY.**—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall—

(1) conduct a study on the implementation of this section, including any limitations with respect to—

(A) reporting hazardous fuels reduction activities under subsection (a); or

(B) tracking data related to hazardous fuels reduction activities under subsection (b); and

(2) submit to Congress a report that describes the results of the study under paragraph (1).

(d) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

(1) **HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION ACTIVITY.**—The term “hazardous fuels reduction activity”—

(A) means any vegetation management activity to reduce the risk of wildfire, includ-

ing mechanical treatments, grazing, and prescribed burning; and

(B) does not include the awarding of contracts to conduct hazardous fuels reduction activities.

(2) **FEDERAL LANDS.**—The term “Federal lands” means lands under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary.

(e) **NO ADDITIONAL FUNDS AUTHORIZED.**—No additional funds are authorized to carry out the requirements of this section, and the activities authorized by this section are subject to the availability of appropriations made in advance for such purposes.

SEC. 303. PUBLIC-PRIVATE WILDFIRE TECHNOLOGY DEPLOYMENT AND DEMONSTRATION PARTNERSHIP.

(a) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

(1) **COVERED AGENCY.**—The term “covered agency” means—

(A) each Federal land management agency (as such term is defined in the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (16 U.S.C. 6801));

(B) the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration;

(C) the United States Fire Administration;

(D) the Federal Emergency Management Agency;

(E) the National Aeronautics and Space Administration;

(F) the Bureau of Indian Affairs;

(G) the Department of Defense;

(H) a State, Tribal, county, or municipal fire department or district operating through the United States Fire Administration or pursuant to an agreement with a Federal agency; and

(I) any other Federal agency involved in wildfire response.

(2) **COVERED ENTITY.**—The term “covered entity” means—

(A) a private entity;

(B) a nonprofit organization; or

(C) an institution of higher education (as defined in section 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001)).

(b) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretaries, in coordination with the heads of the covered agencies, shall establish a deployment and demonstration pilot program (in this section referred to as “Pilot Program”) for new and innovative wildfire prevention, detection, communication, and mitigation technologies.

(c) **FUNCTIONS.**—In carrying out the Pilot Program, the Secretaries shall—

(1) incorporate the Pilot Program into the National Wildfire Coordinating Group;

(2) in consultation with the heads of covered agencies, identify and advance the demonstration and deployment of key technology priority areas with respect to wildfire prevention, detection, communication, and mitigation technologies, including—

(A) hazardous fuels reduction treatments or activities;

(B) dispatch communications;

(C) remote sensing, detection, and tracking;

(D) safety equipment;

(E) common operating pictures or operational dashboards; and

(F) interoperable commercial data; and

(3) connect each covered entity selected to participate in the Pilot Program with the appropriate covered agency to coordinate real-time and on-the-ground testing of technology during wildland fire mitigation activities and training.

(d) **APPLICATIONS.**—To be eligible to be selected to participate in the Pilot Program, a covered entity shall submit to the Secretaries an application at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Secretaries may require, including a pro-

posal to demonstrate technologies specific to the key technology priority areas identified pursuant to subsection (c)(2).

(e) **PRIORITIZATION OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES.**—In selecting covered entities to participate in the Pilot Program, the Secretaries shall give priority to covered entities—

(1) that have participated in the Fire Weather Testbed of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; or

(2) developing and applying emerging technologies for wildfire mitigation, including artificial intelligence, quantum sensing, computing and quantum-hybrid applications, thermal mid-wave infrared equipped low earth orbit satellites, augmented reality, 5G private networks, and device-to-device communications supporting nomadic mesh networks and detection.

(f) **OUTREACH.**—The Secretaries, in coordination with the heads of covered agencies, shall make public the key technology priority areas identified pursuant to subsection (c)(2) and invite covered entities to apply under subsection (d) to deploy and demonstrate their technologies to address such priority areas.

(g) **REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.**—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter for the duration of the Pilot Program, the Secretaries shall submit to the relevant Congressional Committees, the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology of the House of Representatives, and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate a report that includes, with respect to the Pilot Program, the following:

(1) A list of participating covered entities.

(2) A brief description of the technologies deployed and demonstrated by each such covered entity.

(3) An estimate of the cost of acquiring each such technology and applying the technology at scale.

(4) Outreach efforts by Federal agencies to covered entities developing wildfire technologies.

(5) Assessments of, and recommendations relating to, new technologies with potential adoption and application at-scale in Federal land management agencies’ wildfire prevention, detection, communication, and mitigation efforts.

(6) A description of the relationship and coordination between the Pilot Program and the activities of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, including the Fire Weather Testbed.

(h) **SUNSET.**—The authority to carry out this section shall terminate on the date that is 7 years after the date of enactment of this Act.

SEC. 304. GAO STUDY ON FOREST SERVICE POLICIES.

Not later than 3 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall—

(1) conduct a study evaluating—

(A) the effectiveness of Forest Service wildland firefighting operations;

(B) transparency and accountability measures in the Forest Service’s budget and accounting process; and

(C) the suitability and feasibility of establishing a new Federal agency with the responsibility of responding and suppressing wildland fires on Federal lands; and

(2) submit to Congress a report that describes the results of the study required under paragraph (1).

SEC. 305. FOREST SERVICE WESTERN HEADQUARTERS STUDY.

Not later than 5 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Chief of the Forest Service shall—

(1) conduct a study evaluating—

(A) potential locations for a Western headquarters for the Forest Service, including potential locations in at least 3 different States located west of the Mississippi river; and

(B) the potential benefits of creating a Western headquarters for the Forest Service, including expected—

(i) improvements to customer service;

(ii) improvements to employee recruitment and retention; and

(iii) operational efficiencies and cost savings; and

(2) submit to Congress a report that describes the results of the study required under paragraph (1).

SEC. 306. KEEPING FOREST PLANS CURRENT AND MONITORED.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary—

(1) to the greatest extent practicable and subject to the availability of appropriations made in advance for such purpose—

(A) ensure forest plans comply with the requirements of section 6(f)(5)(A) of the Forest and Rangeland Resources Planning Act of 1974 (16 U.S.C. 1604(f)(5)(A)); and

(B) prioritize revising any forest plan not in compliance with such section 6(f)(5)(A);

(2) not be considered to be in violation of section 6(f)(5)(A) of the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (16 U.S.C. 1604(f)(5)(A)) solely because more than 15 years have passed without revision of the plan for a unit of the National Forest System;

(3) not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, submit to the relevant Congressional Committees the date on which each forest plan required by such section 6 was most recently revised, amended, or modified;

(4) seek to publish a new, complete version of a forest plan that the Secretary has been directed to amend, revise, or modify by a court order within 60 days of such amendment, revision, or modification, subject to the availability of appropriations made in advance for such purpose; and

(5) maintain a central, publicly accessible website with links to—

(A) the most recently available forest plan adopted, amended, or modified by a court order as a single document; and

(B) the most recently published forest plan monitoring report for each unit of the National Forest System.

(b) GOOD FAITH UPDATES.—If the Secretary is not acting expeditiously and in good faith, within the funding available to revise, amend, or modify a plan for a unit of the National Forest System as required by law or a court order, subsection (a) shall be void with respect to such plan and a court of proper jurisdiction may order completion of the plan on an accelerated basis.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit a report to the relevant Congressional Committees summarizing the implementation of this section.

SEC. 307. CONTAINER AERIAL FIREFIGHTING SYSTEM (CAFFS).

(a) EVALUATION.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary and the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the National Interagency Aviation Committee and the Interagency Airtanker Board, shall jointly conduct an evaluation of the container aerial firefighting system to assess the use of such system to mitigate and suppress wildfires.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary and the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the National Interagency Aviation Committee and the Inter-

agency Airtanker Board, shall jointly submit to the relevant Congressional Committees a report that includes the results of the evaluation required under subsection (a).

SEC. 308. STUDY ON PINE BEETLE INFESTATION.

Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service, shall—

(1) carry out a study on the causes and effects of, and solutions for, the infestation of pine beetles in the Northeastern region of the United States; and

(2) submit to the relevant Congressional Committees a report that includes the results of the study required under paragraph (1).

Subtitle B—White Oak Resilience

SEC. 311. WHITE OAK RESTORATION INITIATIVE COALITION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The White Oak Restoration Initiative Coalition shall be established—

(1) as a voluntary collaborative group of Federal, State, Tribal, and local governments and private and non-governmental organizations to carry out the duties described in subsection (b); and

(2) in accordance with the charter titled “White Oak Initiative Coalition Charter” adopted by the White Oak Initiative Board of Directors on March 21, 2023 (or a successor charter).

(b) DUTIES.—In addition to the duties specified in the charter described in subsection (a)(2), the duties of the White Oak Restoration Initiative Coalition are—

(1) to coordinate Federal, State, Tribal, local, private, and non-governmental restoration of white oak in the United States; and

(2) to make program and policy recommendations, consistent with applicable forest management plans, with respect to—

(A) changes necessary to address Federal and State policies that impede activities to improve the health, resiliency, and natural regeneration of white oak;

(B) adopting or modifying Federal and State policies to increase the pace and scale of white oak regeneration and resiliency of white oak;

(C) options to enhance communication, coordination, and collaboration between forest land owners, particularly for cross-boundary projects, to improve the health, resiliency, and natural regeneration of white oak;

(D) research gaps that should be addressed to improve the best available science on white oak;

(E) outreach to forest landowners with white oak or white oak regeneration potential; and

(F) options and policies necessary to improve the quality and quantity of white oak in tree nurseries.

(c) ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT, TECHNICAL SERVICES, AND STAFF SUPPORT.—The Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary shall make such personnel available to the White Oak Restoration Initiative Coalition for administrative support, technical services, and development and dissemination of educational materials as the Secretaries determine necessary to carry out this section.

(d) PRIVATE FUNDING OF WHITE OAK RESTORATION PROJECTS.—Subject to the availability of appropriations made in advance for such purpose, the Secretary may make funds available to the White Oak Restoration Initiative Coalition to carry out this section from the account established pursuant to section 1241(f) of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3841(f)).

SEC. 312. FOREST SERVICE PILOT PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service,

shall establish and carry out 5 pilot projects in national forests to restore white oak in such forests through white oak restoration and natural regeneration practices that are consistent with applicable forest management plans.

(b) NATIONAL FORESTS RESERVED OR WITHDRAWN FROM THE PUBLIC DOMAIN.—At least 3 pilot projects required under subsection (a) shall be carried out on national forests reserved or withdrawn from the public domain.

(c) AUTHORITY TO ENTER INTO COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS.—The Secretary may enter into cooperative agreements to carry out the pilot projects required under subsection (a).

(d) SUNSET.—The authority under this section shall terminate on the date that is 7 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 313. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR WHITE OAK REVIEW AND RESTORATION.

(a) ASSESSMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the Interior shall carry out an assessment of land under the administrative jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior, including fish and wildlife refuges and abandoned mine land, to evaluate—

(A) whether white oak is present on such land; and

(B) the potential to restore white oak forests on such land.

(2) USE OF INFORMATION.—In carrying out the assessment under paragraph (1), the Secretary may use information from sources other than the Department of the Interior, including from the White Oak Initiative and the Forest Service.

(3) REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this section, the Secretary shall submit to Congress, and make publicly available on the website of the Department of the Interior, a report regarding the results of the assessment carried out under this subsection.

(b) PILOT PROJECTS.—After the date on which the report required under subsection (a)(3) is submitted, the Secretary shall establish and carry out 5 pilot projects in different areas of land described in subsection (a)(1) to restore and naturally regenerate white oak.

(c) AUTHORITY TO ENTER INTO COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS.—The Secretary of the Interior may enter into cooperative agreements to carry out the pilot projects required under subsection (b).

(d) SUNSET.—The authority under this section shall terminate on the date that is 7 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 314. WHITE OAK REGENERATION AND UPLAND OAK HABITAT.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall establish a non-regulatory program to be known as the “White Oak and Upland Oak Habitat Regeneration Program” (in this section referred to as the “Program”).

(b) DUTIES.—In carrying out the Program, the Secretary shall—

(1) draw upon the best available science and management plans for species of white oak to identify, prioritize, and implement restoration and conservation activities that will improve the growth of white oak within the United States;

(2) collaborate and coordinate with the White Oak Restoration Initiative Coalition to prioritize white oak restoration initiatives;

(3) adopt a white oak restoration strategy that—

(A) supports the implementation of a shared set of science-based restoration and conservation activities developed in accordance with paragraph (1);

(B) targets cost effective projects with measurable results; and

(C) maximizes restoration outcomes with no net gain of Federal full-time equivalent employees; and

(4) establish the voluntary grant and technical assistance programs in accordance with subsection (e).

(c) COORDINATION.—In establishing the Program the Secretary, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service, shall consult with—

(1) the heads of Federal agencies, including—

(A) the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service; and

(B) the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service; and

(2) the Governor of each State in which restoration efforts will be carried out pursuant to the Program.

(d) PURPOSES.—The purposes of the Program include—

(1) coordinating restoration and conservation activities among Federal, State, local, and Tribal entities and conservation partners to address white oak restoration priorities;

(2) improving and regenerating white oak and upland oak forests and the wildlife habitat such forests provide;

(3) carrying out coordinated restoration and conservation activities that lead to the increased growth of species of white oak in native white oak regions on Federal, State, Tribal, and private land;

(4) facilitating strategic planning to maximize the resilience of white oak systems and habitats under changing climate conditions;

(5) engaging the public through outreach, education, and citizen involvement to increase capacity and support for coordinated restoration and conservation activities for species of white oak; and

(6) increasing scientific capacity to support the planning, monitoring, and research activities necessary to carry out such coordinated restoration and conservation activities.

(e) GRANTS AND ASSISTANCE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—To the extent that funds are available to carry out this section, the Secretary shall establish a voluntary grant and technical assistance program (in this section referred to as the “grant program”) to achieve the purposes of the Program described in subsection (d).

(2) ADMINISTRATION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall enter into a cooperative agreement with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (in this subsection referred to as the “Foundation”) to manage and administer the grant program.

(B) FUNDING.—Subject to the availability of appropriations made in advance for such purpose, after the Secretary enters into a cooperative agreement with the Foundation under subparagraph (A), the Foundation shall for each fiscal year, receive amounts to carry out this subsection in an advance payment of the entire amount on October 1, or as soon as practicable thereafter, of that fiscal year.

(3) APPLICATION OF NATIONAL FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION ESTABLISHMENT ACT.—Amounts received by the Foundation to carry out the grant program shall be subject to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Establishment Act (16 U.S.C. 3701 et seq.), excluding section 10(a) of that Act (16 U.S.C. 3709(a)).

(f) SUNSET.—The authority under this section shall terminate on the date that is 7 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 315. TREE NURSERY SHORTAGES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this section, the Secretary, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service, shall—

(1) develop and implement a national strategy to increase the capacity of Federal, State, Tribal, and private tree nurseries to address the nationwide shortage of tree seedlings; and

(2) coordinate such strategy with—

(A) the national reforestation strategy of the Forest Service; and

(B) each regional implementation plan for National Forests.

(b) ELEMENTS.—The strategy required under subsection (a) shall—

(1) be based on the best available science and data; and

(2) identify and address—

(A) regional seedling shortages of bareroot and container tree seedlings;

(B) regional reforestation opportunities and the seedling supply necessary to fulfill such opportunities;

(C) opportunities to enhance seedling diversity and close gaps in seed inventories; and

(D) barriers to expanding, enhancing, or creating new infrastructure to increase nursery capacity.

SEC. 316. WHITE OAK RESEARCH.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may enter into a memorandum of understanding with an Indian Tribe or institution, including a covered land grant college, to collaboratively conduct research on—

(1) white oak genes with resistance or tolerance to stress;

(2) white oak trees that exhibit vigor for the purpose of increasing survival and growth;

(3) establishing a genetically diverse white oak seeds bank capable of responding to stressors;

(4) providing a sustainable supply of white oak seedlings and genetic resources;

(5) improved methods for aligning seed sources with the future climate at planting sites;

(6) reforestation of white oak through natural and artificial regeneration;

(7) improved methods for retaining and increasing white oak trees in forests;

(8) improved methods for reforesting abandoned mine land sites; and

(9) economic and social aspects of white oak forest management across land ownerships.

(b) CONSULT.—In carrying out the research under subsection (a), the Indian Tribe or institution, including a covered land grant college, that enters into the memorandum of understanding under such subsection may consult with such States, nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, and other scientific bodies, as the entity subject to such memorandum determines appropriate.

(c) SUNSET.—The authority under this section shall terminate on the date that is 7 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(d) COVERED LAND GRANT COLLEGE DEFINED.—In this section, the term “covered land grant college” means an 1862 Institution, an 1890 Institution, or a 1994 Institution (as such terms are defined, respectively, in section 2 of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7601)).

SEC. 317. USDA FORMAL INITIATIVE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, acting through the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service and in coordination with the Chief of the Forest Service, shall establish a formal initiative on white oak to—

(1) re-establish white oak forests where appropriate;

(2) improve management of existing white oak forests to foster natural regeneration of white oak;

(3) provide technical assistance to private landowners to re-establish, improve management of, and naturally regenerate white oak;

(4) improve and expand white oak nursery stock; and

(5) adapt and improve white oak seedlings.

(b) SUNSET.—The authority under this section shall terminate on the date that is 7 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 318. AUTHORITIES.

To the maximum extent practicable, the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary shall use the authorities provided under this title in combination with other authorities to carry out projects, including—

(1) good neighbor agreements entered into under section 8206 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (16 U.S.C. 2113) (as amended by this Act); and

(2) stewardship contracting projects entered into under section 604 of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6591) (as amended by this Act).

TITLE IV—ENSURING CASUALTY ASSISTANCE FOR OUR FIREFIGHTERS

SEC. 401. WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT CASUALTY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

(a) DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRAM.—Not later than 6 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Interior shall develop a Wildland Fire Management Casualty Assistance Program (referred to in this section as the “Program”) to provide assistance to the next-of-kin of—

(1) firefighters who, while in the line of duty, suffer illness or are critically injured or killed; and

(2) wildland fire support personnel critically injured or killed in the line of duty.

(b) ASPECTS OF PROGRAM.—The Program shall address the following:

(1) The initial and any subsequent notifications to the next-of-kin of firefighters or wildland fire support personnel who—

(A) are killed in the line of duty; or

(B) require hospitalization or treatment at a medical facility due to a line-of-duty injury or illness.

(2) The reimbursement of next-of-kin for expenses associated with travel to visit firefighters or wildland fire support personnel who—

(A) are killed in the line of duty; or

(B) require hospitalization or treatment at a medical facility due to a line-of-duty injury or illness.

(3) The qualifications, assignment, training, duties, supervision, and accountability for the performance of casualty assistance responsibilities.

(4) The relief or transfer of casualty assistance officers, including notification to survivors of critical injury or illness in the line of duty and next-of-kin of the reassignment of such officers to other duties.

(5) Centralized, short-term and long-term case management procedures for casualty assistance, including rapid access by survivors of firefighters or wildland fire support personnel and casualty assistance officers to expert case managers and counselors.

(6) The provision, through a computer accessible website and other means and at no cost to survivors and next-of-kin of firefighters or wildland fire support personnel, of personalized, integrated information on the benefits and financial assistance available to such survivors from the Federal Government.

(7) The provision of information to survivors and next-of-kin of firefighters or

wildland fire support personnel on mechanisms for registering complaints about, or requests for, additional assistance related to casualty assistance.

(8) Liaison with the Department of the Interior, the Department of Justice, and the Social Security Administration to ensure prompt and accurate resolution of issues relating to benefits administered by those agencies for survivors of firefighters or wildland fire support personnel.

(9) Data collection, in consultation with the United States Fire Administration and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, regarding the incidence and quality of casualty assistance provided to survivors of firefighters or wildland fire support personnel.

(c) LINE-OF-DUTY DEATH BENEFITS.—The Program shall not affect existing authorities for Line-of-Duty Death benefits for Federal firefighters and wildland fire support personnel.

(d) NEXT-OF-KIN DEFINED.—In this section, the term “next-of-kin” means a person or persons in the highest category of priority as determined by the following list (categories appear in descending order of priority):

(1) Surviving legal spouse.

(2) Children (whether by current or prior marriage) age 18 years or older in descending order of precedence by age.

(3) Father or mother, unless custody has been vested, by court order, in another (adoptive parent takes precedence over natural parent).

(4) Siblings (whole or half) age 18 years or older in descending order of precedence by age.

(5) Grandfather or grandmother.

(6) Any other relative (order of precedence to be determined in accordance with the civil law of descent of the deceased former member's State of domicile at time of death).

The Acting CHAIR. No amendment to the bill shall be in order except those printed in House Report 119-1.

Each such amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, by the Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question.

AMENDMENT NO. 1 OFFERED BY MR. PERRY

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 1 printed in House Report 119-1.

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 78, strike lines 15 through 16.

Page 79, strike lines 1 through 2.

Page 79, line 7, strike “through (iv)” and insert “through (iii)”.

Page 79, line 20, strike “through (D)” and insert “through (C)”.

Page 81, line 24, strike the semicolon and insert “; and”.

Page 82, line 3, strike “and”.

Page 82, strike lines 4 through 6.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 53, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PERRY) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Chairman, I thank my good friend, the chairman of the committee, for his hard work to try to save one of our country's greatest assets that we see burning to the ground on an annual basis.

We are always shocked, like we are surprised that it happens. It seems like my good friend, the chairman, continues to work on this issue. I don't know if my colleagues on the other side of the aisle would be included in this statement, but certainly, some in the State and local governments don't seem to get that policies produce these outcomes. Now, we have a great chairman who is prioritizing the solutions here and managing the risks so that we do better.

This amendment, which I think the chairman agrees with, strikes the prioritization of carbon sequestration and ecosystem services in the biochar demonstration projects in this bill.

It is by prioritizing projects based on their impact on carbon sequestration and the impact on ecosystems rather than the impact on forest health and forest fire reduction that we risk throwing more money at the problem while failing to improve the situation on the ground.

Mr. Chairman, I think that is what we all want to focus on today. That is our priority. The chairman's priority is focusing on finding a solution to the problems that we see today occurring in our country.

As the most recent wildfires in California have demonstrated, the continued prioritization of other things at the expense of risk reduction—that is what we are talking about here is risk reduction, not only to property but to lives that are lost—creates deadly disasters that kill Americans and destroy their property over and over again.

The underlying bill makes important changes to improve how our forests are managed to the maximum extent possible. It is not like Mr. WESTERMAN is just some guy here who is trying to do the right thing because he believes it is the right thing. He is the guy in Congress who actually knows how to do this stuff, so it is great that he is the chairman and that he is leading this effort.

This amendment furthers this intent by making sure we are focused on demonstration projects which maximize forest health and resiliency.

Let's remember, Mr. Chairman, we are \$36 trillion in debt. Every 100 days, another trillion dollars go by. We have to really make sure that the resources we are spending get to fixing the problem. We would like to do other things. We would sure like to do a lot of other things, but there are needs and there are wants. The chairman is focused on the needs, and so am I.

Moreover, this amendment ensures that these projects are not hijacked by those who would use them to implement the U.N.'s natural capital ac-

counting to block the actual productive use of land and undermine one of the fundamental values of America, which is personal property rights.

Mr. Chairman, I certainly appreciate Chairman WESTERMAN's support for this commonsense amendment to improve this bill, and I yield to the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN).

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of Representative PERRY's amendment, which would remove certain references from section 301 of the bill.

I wholeheartedly support section 301 of the bill, which provides an opportunity to have a new market for this overgrown material that needs to come off of the land and into biochar.

Biochar can be thought of as a soil amendment that improves soil fertility. It allows more water and nutrients to be stored in the soil. It almost seems like the perfect thing to have in these Western forests where we have water issues and overgrown forests. We can actually make a product that is very beneficial to the whole system out there.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the gentleman's support, and I support his amendment.

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to this amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from California is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Chairman, we were under the impression that this was essentially a closed rule. Many of our beneficial amendments were rejected out of hand or ruled out of order, but apparently, there is always room for an amendment that will make the bill worse. We have a great example of that right now.

CO₂ sequestration benefits and potential ecosystem benefits of biochar are a couple of the most attractive possibilities for this program. I know Chairman WESTERMAN believes that because we have talked about biochar. He has talked about the possibilities of this. The truth is that the science on biochar is not settled.

We have more work to do by way of studies, so establishing a program to carry out demonstration programs for the development and commercialization of biochar could be a good opportunity to better understand its role in a healthy forest and explore some of these interesting potential benefits.

Now, with this amendment, we have to do it with ideological blinders on because apparently merely mentioning words like CO₂ sequestration and ecosystem benefits are triggering, so we are going to end that part of the study. We are going to put the ideological blinders on. We are going to fire the scientists. We are going to burn the books and rename the Gulf of Mexico.

This is just remarkably wrong-headed. I am so surprised and disappointed. The chairman actually put a good provision into his bill.

Let me make it very clear: Democrats like that part of this bill, and we are about to lose the beneficial aspects of it because of this absurd ideological obsession where you have to deny all climate science and not talk about the environment. It is just deeply disappointing.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Chairman, let's not mislead anybody here. We have amendments. This is one, and I think there is another one coming very shortly from the other side of the aisle, which is awesome. We want to have these debates.

This is not ideological. Maybe it is great. Maybe the biochar demonstration needs to happen. The question really is, does the Federal Government need to pay for it? If it is so valuable, then the private sector, private industry, should do this work. Private industry should make this investment because we are out of money.

The American people, this government, is out of money. I don't know how many times we have to tell everybody here.

Mr. Chairman, I support the amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Chairman, if the excuse for this amendment is that we don't have the money, then you do an amendment to strike the whole program. You don't simply single out the parts of it that are environmental or that have to do with climate solutions. That is what is happening with this amendment. It is just the same old ideological blinders.

Mr. Chair, again, I am greatly disappointed that the chairman is allowing a flawed bill to become even worse with this wrongheaded ideological amendment. I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PERRY).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2 OFFERED BY MR. CARBAJAL

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 2 printed in House Report 119-1.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

At the end of subtitle A of title III add the following:

SEC. 309. FIRE SAFE ELECTRICAL CORRIDORS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—In any special use permit or easement on National Forest System land provided to an electrical utility, the Secretary may provide permission to cut and remove trees or other vegetation from within the vicinity of distribution lines or transmission lines without requiring a separate timber sale, if that cutting and removal is consistent with—

(1) the applicable land and resource management plan; and

(2) other applicable environmental laws (including regulations).

(b) USE OF PROCEEDS.—A special use permit or easement that includes permission for cutting and removal described in subsection (a) shall include a requirement that, if the applicable electrical utility sells any portion of the material removed under the permit or easement, the electrical utility shall provide to the Secretary, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service, any proceeds received from the sale, less any transportation costs incurred in the sale.

(c) EFFECT.—Nothing in subsection (b) shall require the sale of any material removed under a permit or easement that includes permission for cutting and removal described in subsection (a).

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 53, the gentleman from California (Mr. CARBAJAL) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, my amendment to H.R. 471 simply allows the U.S. Forest Service to approve the removal of hazardous trees or vegetation near power poles or power lines on Federal land without the need for a timber sale.

Unfortunately, catastrophic wildfires continue to ravage California and the Western United States. We do need some commonsense solutions that balance sustainable forest management practices with reducing wildfire risks. My amendment strives to find this balance.

I firmly believe that if we can take action to prevent wildfires, we should. We know it pays to be prepared. We also know there are solutions that can help mitigate the impacts of wildfires, but apart from this, I also know that we need to act to address the underlying intensity of these extreme weather events fueled by the climate crisis.

Apart from supporting my amendment, I also urge my colleagues to continue to work to find commonsense solutions to act on this crisis impacting so many American families.

My thoughts continue to be with the people who have lost loved ones and their homes in these horrific fires.

I also thank the brave first responders and firefighters who have been battling these fires.

Mr. Chairman, again, I urge passage of my amendment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Chair, I claim the time in opposition to the amendment, even though I am not opposed to it.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentleman from Arkansas is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Chair, I rise today in support of the amendment offered by Representative CARBAJAL, which would enable the Forest Service to approve the removal of hazardous trees near power lines on Federal land without being required to do a formal timber sale.

This would help address a very serious wildfire threat. Downed hazard trees within utility rights-of-way remain one of the biggest ignition threats and have sparked some of the most significant and deadly fires in the country's history.

For example, the largest single wildfire in California's State history, the Dixie fire, ignited when a hazard tree fell onto electric lines. Similarly, the Camp fire, the deadliest wildfire in California's history, was caused by a faulty electrical transmission line. The Camp fire killed 85 people and destroyed the communities of Paradise and Concow.

In recent years, catastrophic fires in Maui and Texas have also been linked to downed utility lines, and early reports suggest this may have been the cause of the Eaton fire near Pasadena and Altadena, California.

To mitigate these threats, utility companies try to maintain clear rights-of-way by removing hazard trees within their utility corridors. This is done under a special use permit.

However, to dispose of the felled timber, utility companies are required to go through a lengthy timber sale process. This frequently leads to wood waste stacking up in piles, which further increases wildfire risk.

It is an unnecessary burden that is preventing active management in some of the highest risk areas in our national forests. This amendment will allow the Forest Service to permit utility companies to fully remove hazard trees and other vegetation within the vicinity of distribution or transmission lines without going through a separate timber sale.

If utilities eventually sell the material, this amendment requires the proceeds to be returned to the Forest Service. This amendment was a bipartisan effort during the 118th Congress and a similar stand-alone bill was passed unanimously out of the House Committee on Natural Resources.

This is a good amendment. It is a commonsense amendment that will empower expedited wildfire mitigation efforts near at-risk communities, and it is a great example of why we need to take action to change bureaucratic policies that have gotten in the way of commonsense forest management.

Mr. Chair, I urge my colleagues to support the amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Mr. Chair, may I inquire as to the amount of time remaining on both sides.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman has 3½ minutes remaining.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. HUFFMAN).

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Chair, we still have concerns, obviously, with the underlying bill, but we do support Congressman CARBAJAL's good amendment. I thank him for his leadership in working on this issue.

Vegetation management around utility lines is a very important priority.

That is why the Forest Service and BLM require operating plans and agreements for maintenance and vegetation of these lines through our public land.

This amendment aims to improve the process and make it easier for utility companies to complete that work, especially when hazardous conditions exist. That is a good thing, and we should all support it.

I should mention that it doesn't fix the underlying problem with section 203 of the bill, which includes some language that will have unintended consequences on this issue.

Utility line operators are already responsible and liable for hazard tree mitigation around their lines, but the Forest Service has told us that the current language in this bill could potentially increase liability for utilities by a factor of 15 making it even more challenging for them to get the insurance that they need to operate.

Utility lines often spark fires. We need to make sure they are operated more safely and efficiently, but it is also critical that whatever relief we seek is carefully drafted and thoughtfully drafted.

Mr. Chair, unfortunately, there is still a lot of work to do on the underlying parts of this bill. Hopefully, that work will take place in the Senate.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Mr. Chairman, I think my amendment provides a glimmer of hope in this bill that certainly could use some improvements. I am happy that my amendment is being considered.

Mr. Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. CARBAJAL).

The amendment was agreed to.

The Acting CHAIR. There being no further amendments, under the rule, the committee rises.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mrs. FISCHBACH) having assumed the chair, Mr. GIMENEZ, Acting Chair of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 471) to expedite under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and improve forest management activities on National Forest System lands, on public lands under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management, and on Tribal lands to return resilience to overgrown, fire-prone forested lands, and for other purposes, and, pursuant to House Resolution 53, he reported the bill, as amended by that resolution, back to the House with sundry amendments adopted in the Committee of the Whole.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the rule, the previous question is ordered.

Is a separate vote demanded on any amendment reported from the Committee of the Whole? If not, the Chair will put them en gros.

The question is on the amendments. The amendments were agreed to.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

BORN-ALIVE ABORTION SURVIVORS PROTECTION ACT

Mr. ROY. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 5, I call up the bill (H.R. 21) to amend title 18, United States Code, to prohibit a health care practitioner from failing to exercise the proper degree of care in the case of a child who survives an abortion or attempted abortion, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FULCHER). Pursuant to House Resolution 5, the bill is considered read.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 21

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS; CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds as follows:

(1) If an abortion results in the live birth of an infant, the infant is a legal person for all purposes under the laws of the United States, and entitled to all the protections of such laws.

(2) Any infant born alive after an abortion or within a hospital, clinic, or other facility has the same claim to the protection of the law that would arise for any newborn, or for any person who comes to a hospital, clinic, or other facility for screening and treatment or otherwise becomes a patient within its care.

(b) CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY.—In accordance with the above findings, Congress enacts the following pursuant to Congress' power under—

(1) section 5 of the 14th Amendment, including the power to enforce the prohibition on government action denying equal protection of the laws; and

(2) section 8 of article I to make all laws necessary and proper for carrying into execution the powers vested by the Constitution of the United States, including the power to regulate commerce under clause 3 of such section.

SEC. 3. BORN-ALIVE INFANTS PROTECTION.

(a) REQUIREMENTS PERTAINING TO BORN-ALIVE ABORTION SURVIVORS.—Chapter 74 of title 18, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 1531 the following:

"§ 1532. Requirements pertaining to born-alive abortion survivors

"(a) REQUIREMENTS FOR HEALTH CARE PRACTITIONERS.—In the case of an abortion

or attempted abortion that results in a child born alive (as defined in section 8 of title 1, United States Code (commonly known as the 'Born-Alive Infants Protection Act')):

"(1) DEGREE OF CARE REQUIRED; IMMEDIATE ADMISSION TO A HOSPITAL.—Any health care practitioner present at the time the child is born alive shall—

"(A) exercise the same degree of professional skill, care, and diligence to preserve the life and health of the child as a reasonably diligent and conscientious health care practitioner would render to any other child born alive at the same gestational age; and

"(B) following the exercise of skill, care, and diligence required under subparagraph (A), ensure that the child born alive is immediately transported and admitted to a hospital.

"(2) MANDATORY REPORTING OF VIOLATIONS.—A health care practitioner or any employee of a hospital, a physician's office, or an abortion clinic who has knowledge of a failure to comply with the requirements of paragraph (1) shall immediately report the failure to an appropriate State or Federal law enforcement agency, or to both.

"(b) PENALTIES.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—Whoever violates subsection (a) shall be fined under this title or imprisoned for not more than 5 years, or both.

"(2) INTENTIONAL KILLING OF CHILD BORN ALIVE.—Whoever intentionally performs or attempts to perform an overt act that kills a child born alive described under subsection (a), shall be punished as under section 1111 of this title for intentionally killing or attempting to kill a human being.

"(c) BAR TO PROSECUTION.—The mother of a child born alive described under subsection (a) may not be prosecuted under this section, for conspiracy to violate this section, or for an offense under section 3 or 4 of this title based on such a violation.

"(d) CIVIL REMEDIES.—

"(1) CIVIL ACTION BY A WOMAN ON WHOM AN ABORTION IS PERFORMED.—If a child is born alive and there is a violation of subsection (a), the woman upon whom the abortion was performed or attempted may, in a civil action against any person who committed the violation, obtain appropriate relief.

"(2) APPROPRIATE RELIEF.—Appropriate relief in a civil action under this subsection includes—

"(A) objectively verifiable money damage for all injuries, psychological and physical, occasioned by the violation of subsection (a);

"(B) statutory damages equal to 3 times the cost of the abortion or attempted abortion; and

"(C) punitive damages.

"(3) ATTORNEY'S FEE FOR PLAINTIFF.—The court shall award a reasonable attorney's fee to a prevailing plaintiff in a civil action under this subsection.

"(4) ATTORNEY'S FEE FOR DEFENDANT.—If a defendant in a civil action under this subsection prevails and the court finds that the plaintiff's suit was frivolous, the court shall award a reasonable attorney's fee in favor of the defendant against the plaintiff.

"(e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section the following definitions apply:

"(1) ABORTION.—The term 'abortion' means the use or prescription of any instrument, medicine, drug, or any other substance or device—

"(A) to intentionally kill the unborn child of a woman known to be pregnant; or

"(B) to intentionally terminate the pregnancy of a woman known to be pregnant, with an intention other than—

"(i) after viability, to produce a live birth and preserve the life and health of the child born alive; or

"(ii) to remove a dead unborn child.