



LEGISLATIVE & POLICY UPDATE

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This document, intended to inform the WFLC membership on key legislative and policy issues, is published every two months and posted on www.wflcweb.com in the member section. For more information on the following items, please contact Caitlyn Peel.

1. Farm Bill

- **House**

The House passed their version of the 2007 Farm Bill, the *Farm, Nutrition and BioEnergy Act of 2007*, before the August recess. HR 2419 is a five-year, \$286 billion farm bill and was passed by a vote of 231-191. The bill contains significant increases in funding for energy and conservation programs. Summaries of the Conservation and Forestry Titles are included in this Legislative & Policy Update, but the details of the other Farm Bill Titles are available at the Farm Bill Website. The House Farm Bill website contains fact sheets on the various titles as passed by the House (<http://agriculture.house.gov/inside/2007FarmBill.html>). The 2007 Farm Bill as passed by the House and the accompanying report language is available at www.thomas.gov.

Conservation Title

Forest lands were included in both the Conservation Security Program (CSP) and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). These changes will increase the opportunities for forest landowners to receive cost share payments for conservation practices on forested land. Another positive change is the new requirement for a State Forester to participate on the State Technical Committee (used to be handled at the discretion of the Secretary). \$54 million in mandatory funding for the Healthy Forest Reserve Program (HFRP) was also included in the Conservation Title (HFRP reauthorized in the Forestry Title).

Forestry Title

The Forestry Title includes national priorities for private forest conservation, statewide assessment requirements, language restoring forestry assistance to the Freely Associated States, directives for the competitive allocation of State & Private Forestry funds, reauthorizing language for the HFRP and the creation of an emergency Forest Restoration program. A new program called the Cooperative Forest Innovation Partnership Projects has also been created. This cost-share program will allow the Secretary to competitively allocate up to five percent of funding available under the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act. The funding will support innovative national, regional or local education outreach or technology transfer projects that are determined to increase the ability of the Dept. of Agriculture to address national priorities as laid out in the Title.

- **Senate**

The Senate plans to begin discussions on their version of the 2007 Farm Bill after reconvening on September 4. No dates have been scheduled for committee meetings but it is expected one will be scheduled for mid-September. The Senate Ag Committee will not begin their discussions until Senator Harkin has secured floor time for the bill.

Draft versions of several titles have been sent out for comments, and NASF and the CWSF have offered comments on the Conservation Title and the Forestry Title. Both titles include benefits for private forest landowners. Please watch the *WFLC Update* for updates and scheduled hearings.

2. Energy Bills

The House and the Senate have both approved energy bills (HR 2331 and HR 6). The House and Senate will set up a conference committee to work towards a single, compromise bill that will be voted on by both the House and the Senate and, if approved, be sent to the President for his signature. Please watch the *WFLC Update* for information on the conference committee.

- **House**

HR 2331, the *New Direction for Energy Independence, National Security, and Consumer Protection Act*, includes language from numerous pieces of legislation that have been packaged together. There are many biomass provisions that highlight woody biomass including the Forest Bioenergy Research Program that will be funded through the Commodity Credit Corporation (this is similar to the Forest Bioenergy Program included in HR 2419). The Greenhouse Gas Inventory section contains an Urban and Wildland-Urban Forestry Program Study which requires the USFS to study the opportunities of urban and wildland-urban interface forestry programs to enhance net carbon sequestration. A “biomass utilization pilot program” is also included in this bill. The program would include 10 pilot projects on national forests providing technical assistance and grants in support of biomass-related activities. The bill is available at www.thomas.gov.

- **Senate**

HR 6, the *Renewable Fuels, Consumer Protection, and Energy Efficiency Act of 2007*, contains many forestry-related provisions. The *Biofuels for Energy Security and Transportation Act* includes forest biomass as an integral part of the Act. Both the *Carbon Capture and Sequestration Act* and the *Energy Diplomacy and Security Act* contain numerous provisions related to forest and woody biomass. HR 6 was originally approved by the House and sent to the Senate for approval. The House version was significantly different from HR 6 as approved by the Senate. Due to the differences, the House opted to “start over” on their energy bill and drafted and approved HR. 2331 (discussed above). The complete bill language is available at www.thomas.gov.

3. Wildland Fire Suppression Costs and Budgeting

Senator Max Baucus (D-MT) and Senator Jon Tester (D-MT) have co-sponsored the *Stable Fire Funding Act of 2007* (S. 1770). The Act creates a trust fund to be used by the US Forest Service (USFS) and the Department of the Interior (DOI) for emergency wildland fire suppression activities that exceed the annually-appropriated amount for suppression.

This legislation is a starting point and will aid in further discussions on more comprehensive, long-term solutions for wildland fire suppression costs. As it currently stands, it will not solve the budget formulation problems associated with current wildfire suppression funding methodologies. An important part of the solution is budgetary relief for the Agencies. S. 1770 is available at www.thomas.gov.