



**To:** House Committee on Natural Resources Republican Members  
**From:** Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands Republican Staff; Aniela Butler ([Aniela.Butler@mail.house.gov](mailto:Aniela.Butler@mail.house.gov)) and Brandon Miller ([Brandon.Miller@mail.house.gov](mailto:Brandon.Miller@mail.house.gov)) (x6-7736)  
**Date:** April 26, 2021  
**Subject:** Republican Arbor Day Forum on H.R. 2639, the “Trillion Trees Act”

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On **Friday, April 30<sup>th</sup> (Arbor Day)**, at **10:00 am EST**, the Committee on Natural Resources Republicans will host a forum on H.R. 2639 (Westerman), the “Trillion Trees Act.” This is a virtual forum, but Members may participate virtually from **2168 Rayburn (the Gold Room)** if they choose. HNR Republican staff will be in 2168 Rayburn to assist during the forum. Members who wish to participate from 2168 Rayburn should bring their own devices, including headphones.

Member offices are requested to notify Brandon Miller no later than **Tuesday, April 27, at 10:00 am EST**, if their Member intends to participate. Please contact Bailey La Sage ([Bailey.LaSage@mail.house.gov](mailto:Bailey.LaSage@mail.house.gov)) should any technical difficulties arise.

## **I. KEY MESSAGES**

- Trees are currently the most cost-efficient carbon sequestration tool available. The Trillion Trees Act is a responsible, pragmatic approach to tackling climate change and making forests healthier at home and across the globe. Studies have shown that planting one trillion new trees globally can sequester 205 gigatons of carbon, an amount equivalent to roughly two-thirds of the man-made carbon currently in the atmosphere.
- The Trillion Trees Act also addresses catastrophic wildfires and their associated carbon emissions by both streamlining reviews for certain critical forest management projects, and by permanently reauthorizing successful programs that promote partnerships with states and expedite necessary forest management activities. Without these reforms, catastrophic wildfires will continue to emit tens of millions of metric tons of carbon into the atmosphere annually and shift our forests from being carbon sinks to carbon sources.
- The utilization of harvested wood products is not only good for the environment, it’s beneficial for our economy as well. From mass timber construction to new and innovative products like biochar, the Trillion Trees Act will help us find new ways to utilize wood products that can provide multiple benefits for forest health, job creation, and carbon storage and sequestration.

## II. WITNESSES

- **Dr. Dennis Becker, Ph.D.**, Dean and Professor of Natural Resource Policy, College of Natural Resources, University of Idaho
- **Mr. Zach Freeze**, Senior Director II of Strategic Initiatives, Sustainability, Walmart, Inc.
- **Mr. Collin O'Mara**, President and CEO, National Wildlife Federation
- **Mr. David Tenny**, President and CEO, National Alliance of Forest Owners

## III. BACKGROUND

Last week, Natural Resources Committee Ranking Member Bruce Westerman (R-AR) re-introduced the “Trillion Trees Act” as part of the larger GOP Energy Innovation Agenda with over 70 bipartisan cosponsors. The bill solidifies the United States as a global leader of the One Trillion Trees Initiative to conserve, restore and grow one trillion trees worldwide.

This year, the Trillion Trees Act also incorporates several priority bills from Republican members including H.R. 2477 (Rep. Nicole Malliotakis), the Urban Forests Act of 2021; H.R. 2500 (Rep. Blake Moore), the Forest TECH Improvement Act; H.R. 2562 (Rep. Cliff Bentz), the SOS for Seedlings Act; H.R. 2581 (Rep. Yvette Herrell), the BIOCHAR Act of 2021; and H.R. 2621 (Rep. Russ Fulcher), the Forestry Education and Workforce Act of 2021. The Trillion Trees Act is divided into three parts to enhance our nation’s forests: regeneration, management, and utilization.

### **Regeneration**

Studies show that restoring one trillion new trees globally would sequester 205 gigatons of carbon, an amount equivalent to two-thirds of all manmade emissions remaining in the atmosphere today.<sup>1</sup> Forest carbon already offsets approximately 11 percent of domestic emissions annually,<sup>2</sup> and this number stands to increase if forests can be successfully managed to sequester more carbon while maintaining other forest ecosystem benefits and services. Unfortunately, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) currently has a reforestation backlog of approximately 1.3 million acres and is currently treating less than 5 percent of its reforestation needs annually.<sup>3</sup> Sadly, this backlog is likely a conservative estimate and does not account for the 2020 wildfire season, which will likely add hundreds of thousands of acres in need of treatment to the existing backlog. Many barriers exist to addressing our current reforestation needs including limited resources through the Reforestation Trust Fund, labor shortages, seedling shortages, and gaps in critical technology.

Title I of the Trillion Trees Act addresses our current barriers to reforestation by developing national targets to increase domestic forest carbon stock while still meeting other resource

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<sup>1</sup> Bastin, et al. “The global tree restoration potential,” July 2019, *Science*, <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/365/6448/76>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.fs.fed.us/nrs/pubs/jrnl/2019/nrs\\_2019\\_smith-j\\_001.pdf](https://www.fs.fed.us/nrs/pubs/jrnl/2019/nrs_2019_smith-j_001.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Data provided by the U.S. Forest Service.

management objectives of our forests. The bill also provides increased resources through the Reforestation Trust Fund and creates a new Trillion Trees Challenge Fund to leverage private sector resources to reforestation efforts on non-Federal lands. As mentioned above, Title I of the bill contains priorities of several members that address seedling shortages, education and workforce capacity constraints, technological barriers, and limitations in our current urban and community forestry programs. Finally, Title I also includes a subtitle on international forests to create an International Forest Foundation and coordinate existing international forestry programs.

## Management

The enormity of the wildfire crisis in the United States cannot be overstated. Over 68 million acres have burned in the last decade, and over 10 million acres burned in 2020 alone.<sup>4</sup> Forests have historically been carbon sinks, that capture significant amounts of carbon as they grow. However, in recent years, there has been a concerning shift, with many forests in the western United States now emitting more carbon than they capture.<sup>5</sup> As trees mature, the rate that they capture carbon slows down. As the trees die and decompose, they release that stored carbon back into the atmosphere.<sup>6</sup> The amount of carbon emitted by these unhealthy forests is further increased by the catastrophic wildfires, which expedites the release of carbon.<sup>7</sup> The wildfires in California alone last year emitted roughly 112 million metric tons of carbon dioxide, which is equivalent to the emissions of 24.2 million passenger cars driving in a single year.<sup>8</sup> When U.S. travel came to a near halt during the COVID-19 pandemic, the wildfires in California and Oregon alone wiped out all the carbon reductions that otherwise resulted from the travel slow-down.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the fact that over 63 million acres of national forest remain at high or very high risk of wildfire,<sup>10</sup> the USFS is carrying out only 2 percent of needed fuel reduction treatments per year.<sup>11</sup> At this paltry treatment pace, the Forest Service will neither tackle its high-risk backlog, nor keep pace with additional problem areas, for several decades.<sup>12</sup> The Trillion Trees Act addresses this problem in a variety of ways, including by streamlining environmental reviews of forest management projects in priority areas that protect watersheds, critical infrastructures, and

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.iii.org/fact-statistic/facts-statistics-wildfires>

<sup>5</sup> Murphy, Zoeann, and Chris Mooney. "Montana's Forests Have Swung from Pulling Carbon Dioxide out of the Air to Putting It Back Again." *The Washington Post*. January 29, 2019. Accessed January 31, 2019.

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/national/gone-in-a-generation/forest-climate-change.html?utm\\_term=.8d7a6e691000](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/national/gone-in-a-generation/forest-climate-change.html?utm_term=.8d7a6e691000).

<sup>6</sup> O'Neil, Dr. Elaine. "Cut Trees to Save the Environment? – Who Knew." *Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities*. Accessed January 31, 2019. [https://www.facebook.com/healthyforestshealthycommunities/videos/290559738314129/?\\_\\_tn\\_\\_=,d,P-R&eid=ARBUZgWqI7gqN3mlpbli0iJ7itV-11oVHdrHMegqY8YUBoDhE5FgAqpMuusNI0QBz9cNCCpEk-ssB7Zu](https://www.facebook.com/healthyforestshealthycommunities/videos/290559738314129/?__tn__=,d,P-R&eid=ARBUZgWqI7gqN3mlpbli0iJ7itV-11oVHdrHMegqY8YUBoDhE5FgAqpMuusNI0QBz9cNCCpEk-ssB7Zu).

<sup>7</sup> Malmshemer, Robert W., Patrick Heffernan, Steve Brink, Douglas Crandall, Fred Deneke, Christopher Galik, Edmund Gee, John A. Helms, Nathan McClure, Michael Mortimer, Steve Ruddell, Matthew Smith, and John Stewart. "Forest Management Solutions for Mitigating Climate Change in the United States." *Journal of Forestry*, April/May 2008, 119. Accessed January 31, 2019. [https://www.ntc.blm.gov/krc/uploads/399/Forest\\_Management\\_Solutions\\_for\\_Mitigating\\_Climate\\_Change.pdf](https://www.ntc.blm.gov/krc/uploads/399/Forest_Management_Solutions_for_Mitigating_Climate_Change.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> "California's 2020 Wildfire Emissions Akin to 24 Million Cars." *Bloomberg Law*, [news.bloomberglaw.com/environment-and-energy/californias-2020-wildfire-emissions-akin-to-24-million-cars](https://www.bloomberglaw.com/environment-and-energy/californias-2020-wildfire-emissions-akin-to-24-million-cars).

<sup>9</sup> Dormido, Hannah, et al. "Smoke from Wildfires Wiped out the U.S. Pandemic-Related Clean Air Gains in 2020." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 17 Mar. 2021, [www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2021/03/17/air-pollution-us-wildfires/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2021/03/17/air-pollution-us-wildfires/).

<sup>10</sup> Fretwell, Holly, and Jonathan Wood. "Fix America's Forests: Reforms to Restore National Forests and Tackle the Wildfire Crisis." *PERC*, 12 Apr. 2021, [www.perc.org/2021/04/12/fix-americas-forests-reforms-to-restore-national-forests-and-tackle-the-wildfire-crisis/](https://www.perc.org/2021/04/12/fix-americas-forests-reforms-to-restore-national-forests-and-tackle-the-wildfire-crisis/).

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

wildlife-urban interfaces or restore wildlife habitat. This section does not waive any National Environmental Policy Act reviews; rather, it allows the USFS to complete reviews via programmatic environmental impact statements to avoid duplicating work across several projects. Title II of the bill also permanently reauthorizes the hugely successful Good Neighbor Authority and adds reforestation as an eligible activity to the program.

## **Utilization**

Harvested wood products are important sources of carbon sequestration and can create jobs and expand our economy. In fact, the USFS estimated that in 2018, harvested wood products stored 98.8 million metric tons of carbon, the second highest source of forest carbon storage after aboveground biomass.<sup>13</sup> A prime example of carbon sequestration through harvested wood products is Walmart’s new corporate headquarters, which will be designed using mass timber and will be the largest mass timber campus when completed.<sup>14</sup> The Trillion Trees Act promotes the utilization of harvested wood products in two ways. First, the bill includes a sustainable building and residence tax credit to incentivize large-scale construction and remodeling with sustainable processes and materials, such as constructing or re-modeling buildings using mass timber. Second, the bill incentivizes new uses of forest products and byproducts by creating research and grant programs for biochar, bioplastics, and biochemicals. In particular, the potential of biochar to be used as a carbon sequestration tool is enormous. In fact, one study suggested that biochar could potentially offset 12 percent of global carbon emissions.<sup>15</sup>

## **IV. MAJOR PROVISIONS & ANALYSIS (or SECTION-BY-SECTION)**

Please see the Trillion Trees Section by Section available [here](#).

## **V. BIPARTISAN COSPONSORS**

Reps. Allen, Amodei, Armstrong, Babin, Bacon, Baird, Barr, Bentz, Bishop (GA), Burchett, Calvert, Carl, Carter (GA), Cheney, Cole, Crawford, Crenshaw, Cuellar, Curtis, Davis, Fishbach, Fortenberry, Foxx, Fulcher, Gonzales, González (OH), Gonzalez-Colon, Gosar, Granger, Graves (LA), Guthrie, Herrell, Higgins, Hill, Johnson (SD), Joyce (OH), Lamborn, Kelly (MS), Kim, Latta, Lesko, Lucas, Mace, Malliotakis, Mann, McCarthy, McCaul, McMorris Rodgers, Meijer, Meuser, Miller-Meeks, Moore (UT), Newhouse, Nunes, Obernolte, Owens, Radewagen, Reschenthaler, Rogers (AL), Rouzer, Schrader, Scott (GA), Simpson, Smith, Stauber, Stefanik, Stewart, Stivers, Thompson (PA), Tiffany, Valadao, Weber, Webster, Wenstrup, Wilson, Wittman, Womack, and Young (AK).

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<sup>13</sup> U.S. Forest Service, “Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Removals from Forest Land, Woodlands, and Urban Trees in the United States, 1990-2018,” 2020.

<sup>14</sup> Barlett, Dan, “Modern Home Office Building Materials to Reflect the Natural Beauty of Arkansas,” Walmart, December 9, 2019, <https://corporate.walmart.com/newsroom/2019/12/09/modern-home-office-building-materials-to-reflect-the-natural-beauty-of-arkansas>.

<sup>15</sup> Dave Levitan, “Refilling the Carbon Sink: Biochar’s Potential and Pitfalls,” December 9, 2010, Yale Environment 360, [https://e360.yale.edu/features/refilling\\_the\\_carbon\\_sink\\_biochars\\_potential\\_and\\_pitfalls](https://e360.yale.edu/features/refilling_the_carbon_sink_biochars_potential_and_pitfalls).

## **VI. SUPPORTERS**

ACRE Investment Management, American Forest Resource Council, American Forest and Paper Association, American Wood Council, Arkansas Farm Bureau, Arkansas Forestry Association, Binational Softwood Lumber Council, Bipartisan Policy Center Action, Boone and Crockett Club, Charmin, Colorado Farm Bureau, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, ConservAmerica, Citizens for Responsible Energy Solutions, Ducks Unlimited, Enviva, Evangelical Environmental Network, Federal Forest Resource Coalition, Forest Products Industry Labor-Management Committee, Forest Resources Association, Hardwood Federation, Healthy Forests Healthy Communities, Idaho Forest Group, Intermountain Forest Association, Mississippi River Trust, Mule Deer Foundation, National Alliance of Forest Owners, National Association of Counties, National Association of State Foresters, National Wild Turkey Federation, National Wildlife Federation, Pheasants Forever, PotlatchDeltic, Procter & Gamble, Quail Forever, Rayonier, Resource Management Service, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Safari Club International, Sierra Pacific Industries, Society of American Foresters, Southeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, U.S. Biochar Initiative, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Walmart, and Wildlife Mississippi.