



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
**NATURAL RESOURCES**  
CHAIRMAN BRUCE WESTERMAN

**To:** Subcommittee on Federal Lands Republican Members  
**From:** Subcommittee on Federal Lands; Aniela Butler and William Kelleher  
([Aniela@mail.house.gov](mailto:Aniela@mail.house.gov) and [William.Kelleher@mail.house.gov](mailto:William.Kelleher@mail.house.gov); x6-7736)  
**Date:** Monday, June 9, 2025  
**Subject:** Legislative Hearing on 4 Bills

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The Subcommittee on Federal Lands will hold a legislative hearing on 4 bills: H.R. 1045 (Rep. Kennedy), “*Utah Wildfire Research Institute Act of 2025*”; H.R. 1655 (Rep. Bentz), “*Wildfire Communications Resiliency Act*”; H.R. 3187 (Rep. Hill), To require the Secretary of Agriculture to convey a parcel of property of the Forest Service to Perry County, Arkansas, and for other purposes; and H.R. 3444 (Rep. Huffman), “*Tribal Self-Determination and Co-Management in Forestry Act of 2025*.”

The hearing will take place on **Tuesday, June 10, 2025, at 10:15 a.m.** in room 1324 Longworth House Office Building.

Member offices are requested to notify Will Rodriguez ([Will.Rodriguez@mail.house.gov](mailto:Will.Rodriguez@mail.house.gov)) by 4:30 p.m. on Monday, June 9, 2025, if their Member intends to participate in the hearing.

## **I. KEY MESSAGES**

- The pieces of legislation featured in this hearing offer targeted solutions to improve land and forest management, collaborate with non-federal partners to inform science-based management practices, and reduce bureaucratic processes post-natural disaster.
- This hearing helps advance President Trump’s agenda and recent executive actions, including the executive orders on “Immediate Expansion of American Timber Production” and “Restoring Common Sense to Federal Office Space Management.”<sup>1</sup>
- House Committee on Natural Resources Republicans are committed to strengthening Tribal stewardship of fire-prone landscapes and fostering meaningful partnerships between Tribes and the federal government. This hearing complements a prior hearing on related draft legislation, the “Fostering Opportunities to Restore Ecosystems through Sound Tribal Stewardship (FORESTS) Act.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A Presidential Document by the Executive Office of the President, “Immediate Expansion of American Timber Production,” Executive Order 14225, March 1, 2025, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/03/06/2025-03695/immediate-expansion-of-american-timber-production>. A Presidential Document by the Executive Office of the President, “Restoring Common Sense to Federal Office Space Management,” Executive Order 14274, April 15, 2025, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/04/18/2025-06838/restoring-common-sense-to-federal-office-space-management>.

<sup>2</sup> More information on the legislative hearing on the FORESTS Act can be found here: <https://naturalresources.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=417109>.

## II. WITNESSES

### Panel I (Members of Congress):

- *To Be Announced*

### Panel II (Administration Witnesses):

- **Mr. John Crockett**, Deputy Chief of State, Private and Tribal Forestry, U.S. Forest Service, Washington, D.C. [*All bills*]

### Panel III (Outside Experts):

- **The Honorable Larry Blackmon**, Judge, Perry County, Perryville, AR [*H.R. 3187*]
- **Ms. Larissa Yocom**, Director, Utah Forest Restoration Institute, Logan, UT [*H.R. 1045*]
- **Mr. Greg Andreas**, General Manager, Ponderosa, O'Neals, CA [*H.R. 1655*]
- **Mr. Bill Tripp**, Director of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy, Karuk Tribe Department of Natural Resources, Orleans, CA [*H.R. 3444*] [*Minority Witness*]

## III. BACKGROUND

### [H.R. 1045 \(Rep. Kennedy\), “Utah Wildfire Research Institute Act of 2025”](#)

The “Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act of 2004” authorized the creation of wildfire research centers in Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico “to promote the use of adaptive ecosystem management to reduce the risk of wildfires, and restore the health of forest and woodland ecosystems, in the interior West.”<sup>3</sup> These centers, collectively known as the Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI), now operate at Colorado State University, New Mexico Highlands University, and Northern Arizona University.<sup>4</sup> Today, these centers conduct cutting-edge research on wildfires and forest management<sup>5</sup> and collaborate with land managers to ensure the implementation of science-based forest management decisions. As part of this work, SWERI must produce annual, peer-reviewed, scientific reports and develop work plans with the Secretary of Agriculture to ensure accountability.

Despite a long track record of being at the forefront of responsible resource management and forestry research, Utah is currently the only Four Corners State without a SWERI center. To address this disparity, H.R. 1045 would amend the “Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act of 2004” to create one additional SWERI center in the State of Utah.<sup>6</sup> This legislation would provide Utah with additional resources to conduct research and collaborate on wildfire mitigation, forest management, and watershed restoration projects. Further, this legislation allows the State of Utah to leverage academic resources to collaborate with federal, state, and local stakeholders; develop adaptive forest management techniques; and implement fuel reduction strategies.<sup>7</sup> A similar version of this legislation passed the Senate unanimously in

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<sup>3</sup> 16 U.S.C. § 6704.

<sup>4</sup> SWERI, “Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI),” <https://sweri.org/>.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, and a companion bill has been introduced this Congress by Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chairman Mike Lee (R-UT).<sup>8</sup>

### H.R. 1655 (Rep. Bentz), “Wildfire Communications Resiliency Act”

**Table 1: Historical wildfire statistics for the US.**

Year	Number of Fires	Acres Burned (Millions)	Transceivers within Wildfire Perimeters	Transceivers per Millions of Acres Burned
2018	58,083	8.767	3,099	353
2017	71,499	10.026	2,726	272
2016	67,743	5.509	987	179
2015	68,151	10.125	565	56
2014	63,312	3.595	453	126
2013	47,579	4.319	517	120
2012	67,774	9.326	553	59
2011	74,126	8.711	1,422	163
2010	71,971	3.422	181	53
2009	78,792	5.921	664	112
2008	78,979	5.292	2,068	391
2007	85,705	9.328	4,978	534
2006	96,385	9.873	1,025	104
2005	66,753	8.689	956	110
2004	65,461	8.097	528	65
2003	63,629	3.960	4,421	1,116
2002	73,457	7.184	894	124
2001	84,079	3.570	466	130
2000	92,250	7.393	811	110

Statistical data for wildfire threats to cell transceivers across the United States. **Source:** Anderson et al., 2020.

Increasingly dangerous and severe wildfires are a growing threat to critical infrastructure, including communications facilities. According to recent studies, “hundreds to thousands of cell transceivers are within wildfire perimeters each year,” causing blackouts, loss of connectivity, and damage or destruction of communications infrastructure.<sup>9</sup> This issue impacts millions of people annually, as researchers have found that there are more than 57,500 cell transceivers in high-fire risk areas that serve populations over 1.5 million people.<sup>10</sup> Most recently, the Eaton Fire in Los Angeles threatened the antenna farm and broadcasting transmitters at Mount Wilson, causing temporary limits to “the broadcasting capabilities of Los Angeles’ major TV and radio stations.”<sup>11</sup>

If a communications facility is damaged or destroyed during a wildfire on federal lands, developers must go through a lengthy and burdensome permitting process to rebuild this infrastructure. This process is not only duplicative, since environmental and historic preservation reviews would already have been conducted during the facility’s initial permitting process, but it also significantly delays the ability to bring critical wireless and communications capabilities back online post-fire. To address this problem, H.R. 1655 would remove the need to complete duplicative National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) reviews for certain communications facilities already permitted that need to be rebuilt

<sup>8</sup> S. 457, 119<sup>th</sup> Congress, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/senate-bill/457>.

<sup>9</sup> Anderson, et al., “Five Alarms: Assessing the Vulnerability of US Cellular Communication Infrastructure to Wildfires,” 2020, [https://pages.cs.wisc.edu/~pb/wildfires\\_final.pdf](https://pages.cs.wisc.edu/~pb/wildfires_final.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> Schneider, Michael, “Fire Threatens Mt. Wilson Broadcast Transmitters as L.A. TV and Radio Stations on Alert; Observatory Evacuated,” Variety, January 9, 2025, <https://variety.com/2025/tv/news/mt-wilson-broadcast-antennas-fire-tv-radio-stations-observatory-1236271080/>.

or repaired due to wildfire damage.<sup>12</sup> The bill applies only to areas where the President, the governor of a state, or a Tribal chief executive have declared a major disaster or emergency. Projects must occur within five years of the declaration, occur entirely within the impacted area, and focus on replacing damaged facilities or upgrading infrastructure to reduce future risk.

The bill addresses a critical gap in post-disaster recovery efforts: the timely restoration of essential communications systems. Lengthy and duplicative environmental and historic preservation reviews often delay construction projects that are critical to restoring services and public safety. H.R. 1655 offers a narrow, targeted solution designed to expedite recovery without broadly waiving the need to complete environmental or cultural resources reviews on the initial construction of a communications facility. Through this tailored approach, this legislation helps ensure rapid response capacity and resilient infrastructure in wildfire-prone regions.



The Airport Fire in California threatening communications facilities.  
**Source:** Alert California/UCSD, 2024.

**H.R. 3187 (Rep. Hill), To require the Secretary of Agriculture to convey a parcel of property of the Forest Service to Perry County, Arkansas, and for other purposes.**



The vacant USFS building in Perryville, Arkansas, that would be transferred to Perry County under H.R. 3187. **Source:** THV11, 2025.

This legislation removes a burden from the American taxpayer by disposing of a vacant federal building, consistent with President Trump’s Executive Order on “Restoring Common Sense to Federal Office Space Management.”<sup>13</sup>

Perry County, Arkansas, is a rural area northwest of Little Rock with roughly 10,000 residents.<sup>14</sup> The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) manages

<sup>12</sup> See 42 U.S.C. § 4332(2)(C); 54 U.S.C. § 300320.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> United States Census Bureau. Perry County, Arkansas. [data.census.gov, https://data.census.gov/profile/Perry\\_County,\\_Arkansas?g=050XX00US05105](https://data.census.gov/profile/Perry_County,_Arkansas?g=050XX00US05105).



approximately 119,171 acres of forested land and administrative buildings in Perry County.<sup>15</sup> One such building, located on approximately 0.81 acres of land in Perryville, Arkansas, is currently vacant, and USFS has no future plans for its use. Perry County has long sought to acquire this property to meet growing needs in education, conservation, and youth services, but has been unsuccessful in doing so for more than a decade.<sup>16</sup>

H.R. 3187 directs the Secretary of Agriculture to convey this building and its surrounding land to Perry County. Perry County intends to renovate and repurpose the site to support the University of Arkansas Extension Program, the Perry County Conservation District, and youth development programs such as 4-H.<sup>17</sup> This is a smart use of public resources that would serve a compelling public purpose, particularly in a rural county with limited financial resources. Creating a permanent space for the University of Arkansas Extension Program and 4-H Youth Development Program would enhance their coordination and allow them to expand outreach to more Perry County youth. H.R. 3187 provides a cost-effective solution that leverages existing infrastructure for community use and empowers local efforts to support economic development, natural resource stewardship, and youth engagement.

#### **H.R. 3444 (Rep. Huffman), “Tribal Self-Determination and Co-Management in Forestry Act of 2025”**

H.R. 3444 seeks to enhance the role of Tribal governments in the management of federal lands by formally authorizing new and existing co-management plans between Tribes and federal land management agencies. Section 2 of the bill directs the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), National Park Service (NPS), and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to develop a “Tribal Co-Management Plan” in consultation with the Department of the Interior’s (DOI) Tribal Advisory Committee. These plans would cover forest and grassland planning and management activities, research and development, restoration activities, and recreational services on federal lands. Section 3 directs DOI to ensure that employees involved in the formulation of these plans undergo training on working with Tribes on the development and execution of such plans. Finally, Section 4 directs USFS to enter into at least five agreements over a four-year period to carry out forest management, research, recreation, or restoration activities. This section stipulates that USFS cannot delegate any nondelegable functions to Tribes and lays out a process for Tribes to request to enter into agreements with USFS. Finally, this section authorizes \$50 million in appropriations for five years.

The Federal Lands Subcommittee recently held a legislative hearing on a discussion draft of Tribal forestry legislation led by Indian and Insular Affairs Subcommittee Chairman Jeff Hurd (R-CO-03) entitled the “Fostering Opportunities to Restore Ecosystems through Sound Tribal Stewardship (FORESTS) Act.” Information about that legislation can be found [here](#).

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<sup>15</sup> Hill, J. French, “USFS Land Conveyance to Perry County, Arkansas: H.R. 3187 One-Pager.” 5 May 2025, [https://hill.house.gov/uploadedfiles/h.r.\\_3187\\_one-pager.pdf](https://hill.house.gov/uploadedfiles/h.r._3187_one-pager.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> THV11, “Hill working to get old Forest Service building conveyed to Perry Co.,” May 9, 2025, <https://www.kvom.com/news-sports-headlines/hill-working-to-get-old-forest-service-building-conveyed-to-perry-co>.

<sup>17</sup> Hill, French, “Rep. Hill Introduces Bill to Transfer U.S. Forest Service Building to Perry County,” U.S. House of Representatives, May 14, 2024, <https://hill.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=9456>.

Both the FORESTS Act and H.R. 3444 illustrate that there is room for bipartisan agreement on some crucial forest management issues. As USFS testified in the legislative hearing on the FORESTS Act, encouraging more Tribal co-stewardship of overgrown, fire-prone federal lands is also consistent with President Trump’s Executive Order on “Immediate Expansion of Timber Production.”<sup>18</sup>

Outstanding questions remain regarding H.R. 3444. For example, Sections 2 and 3 of the legislation exclude USFS, a critical agency for co-stewardship in forestry, and are ambiguous about how Tribal Co-Management Plans and associated training will interact with existing land use or resource management plans. Further, it is unclear what portion of these plans actually delegates co-management authority to Tribes. There are also questions about how Section 4 interacts with existing authorities, primarily the Tribal Forest Protection Act of 2004 and Good Neighbor Authority.<sup>19</sup> Further, the un-offset authorization of appropriations does not comply with Republican floor protocols.

#### **IV. MAJOR PROVISIONS & SECTION-BY-SECTION**

##### **H.R. 1045 (Rep. Kennedy), “Utah Wildfire Research Institute Act of 2025”**

###### **Section 2. Additional Institute.**

- Amends the “Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act of 2004” to add Utah as a fourth location for a SWERI center, joining Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado.

##### **H.R. 1655 (Rep. Bentz), “Wildfire Communications Resiliency Act”**

###### **Section 2. Application of NEPA and NHPA to Covered Communications Projects.**

- Exempts certain covered communications projects from NEPA and NHPA reviews.<sup>20</sup> In order to qualify, a covered communications project must be:
  - Carried out entirely in an area where the President, a Governor, or Indian Tribe has declared a major disaster or emergency related to wildfire;
  - Carried out within five years of such declaration; and
  - Designed to replace or make improvements to a communications facility necessary to recover from, mitigate, or prevent a wildfire.

##### **H.R. 3187 (Rep. Hill), To require the Secretary of Agriculture to convey a parcel of property of the Forest Service to Perry County, Arkansas, and for other purposes.**

###### **Section 1. Conveyance of Specified Forest Service Property to Perry County, Arkansas.**

- Requires the Secretary of Agriculture to convey approximately 0.81 acres of USFS land to Perry County, Arkansas within 180 days of the bill’s enactment if the county submits a written request for the conveyance.

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<sup>18</sup> *Id.*

<sup>19</sup> P.L. 108-278. 16 U.S.C. § 2113a.

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

- Specifies that the conveyance will be made subject to valid and existing rights, without consideration, and that the exact property to be conveyed will be determined based on the results of a mutually satisfactory survey.
- Requires Perry County to pay all costs associated with the conveyance.
- Specifies that the Secretary of Agriculture shall not have to provide a covenant or warranty for the property under the “Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) of 1980.”<sup>21</sup>

**H.R. 3444 (Rep. Huffman), “Tribal Self-Determination and Co-Management in Forestry Act of 2025”**

**Section 2. Tribal Co-Management Plans of the Department of the Interior.**

- Requires BLM, NPS, FWS, and BIA to develop a “Tribal Co-Management Plan” within one year of the bill’s enactment, or, if a substantially similar plan already exists, to adopt and update it within 120 days of the bill’s enactment. These plans must be developed in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary’s Tribal Advisory Committee (chartered on November 11, 2021).
- Specifies that the plans must identify any activity, service, or function to be carried out on federally administered lands that the Secretary of the Interior determines need such action; are consistent with existing land management plans; have historical, cultural, or geographical significance to an Indian Tribe; and comply with applicable environmental laws and regulations. Actions also included in this identification are forest and grassland planning and management, research and development, restoration, and recreational service activities.

**Section 3. Tribal Co-Management Training.**

- Requires all DOI employees involved in developing and carrying out a Tribal Co-Management Plan to complete a training on Indigenous knowledge, the Tribal history of the areas in which they work, as well as the federal government’s trust responsibility to Indian Tribes.
- Allows the Secretary of the Interior to consult with Indian Tribes.

**Section 4. Authority to Enter into Agreements with Indian Tribes and Tribal Organizations to Carry Out Certain Forest Service Activities.**

- Requires the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service, to enter, within four years, into at least five co-management agreements with Indian Tribes or Tribal organizations under this bill or existing authorities (such as the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Program or the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018).<sup>22</sup> Such agreements can cover forest and grassland planning and management, research and development, restoration, and recreational service activities, as well as activities of the Heritage Program.
- Specifies that co-management agreements must be carried out on National Forest System (NFS) lands, consistent with the applicable forest plan and applicable laws, and relevant to an applicable Indian Tribe. Co-management agreements cannot include activities that

<sup>21</sup> 42 U.S.C. § 9620(h)(3)(A).

<sup>22</sup> 25 U.S.C. § 5304 et seq. 25 U.S.C. § 3115b.

are nondelegable, conflict with existing stewardship contracts, or require Tribal reliance on a state government for necessary resources.

- Stipulates that Tribes must submit a formal proposal to request an agreement, including a description of proposed activities and identification of the relevant NFS lands.
- Sets up considerations for the Secretary of Agriculture to evaluate proposals from Tribes and requirements for denying Tribal requests. In particular, the Secretary of Agriculture is permitted to evaluate proposals on a best-value basis and give special consideration to factors such as historical Tribal ties to the land, landscape characteristics, prior collaboration with USFS, access needs, as well as Indigenous knowledge and skills.
- Sets terms and conditions for payments to Tribes under co-management agreements and sets parameters to reduce paperwork requirements on Tribes that receive payments.
- Requires the Secretary of Agriculture to review agreements every five years, offering modifications or termination if appropriate, and allows for earlier review at the request of Tribes following a natural disaster.
- Requires the publication of a non-exhaustive list of activities in the Federal Register that are eligible for co-management agreements every three years.
- Requires a report to Congress every three years of the accomplishments made using this authority.
- Requires the Secretary of Agriculture to consult with Indian Tribes on Indigenous knowledge and data sovereignty.
- Allows Tribes to be considered USFS employees under the Federal Tort Claims Act.<sup>23</sup>
- Exempts activities under this section from the requirements of the Federal Acquisition Regulation.
- Specifies that nothing in this section affects the current or future rights of any Indian Tribe or their authority to enter into agreements, provides for the exclusive use of NFS lands, or limits the Secretary of Agriculture from entering into other agreements.
- Authorizes \$50 million in funding from fiscal year (FY) 2026 through FY 2030 to carry out this section.

## **V. COST**

A formal cost estimate from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) is not yet available for any of the bills.

## **VI. ADMINISTRATION POSITION**

The Trump administration's position is unknown at this time.

## **VII. EFFECT ON CURRENT LAW (RAMSEYER)**

### **[H.R. 1045](#)**

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<sup>23</sup> 28 U.S.C. §§ 2671-2680.