

## **H.R. 2647, The Resilient Federal Forests Act of 2015**

H.R. 2647, The Resilient Federal Forests Act of 2015, introduced by Rep. Bruce Westerman (AR-4), is a bipartisan bill that will address the growing economic and environmental threats of catastrophic wildfire. If enacted, the bill could be implemented immediately by the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to dramatically improve the health and resiliency of our federal forests and rangelands. It simplifies environmental process requirements, reduces project planning times and reduces the cost of implementing forest management projects while still ensuring robust protection of the environment.

### ***Permanently Solves the Wildfire ‘Borrowing’ Problem-***

In bad fire years, when the Forest Service/BLM exhausts all firefighting funding, they must ‘borrow’ from other non-fire accounts to pay for wildfire suppression. Ironically, many of these accounts fund activities (such as thinning) to prevent wildfires. H.R. 2647 ends this problem by allowing FEMA to transfer limited funds to the Forest Service/BLM when all other suppression funding has been exhausted. This creates no new mandatory programs and is still subject to appropriations and the Budget Control Act.

### ***Prevents Wildfires and Allows for Quick Reforestation-***

Utilizes tools that the Forest Service and BLM can implement immediately to reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire, insect and disease infestation, damage to municipal watersheds, and quickly harvest wildfire-killed trees to pay for reforestation.

### ***Encourages Quick Reforestation after Large Wildfires or Other Natural Disasters-***

Allows expedited environmental review for removal of dead trees to pay for reforestation after large wildfires. Requires that 75% of the area impacted be reforested within five years. Currently, the Forest Service reforests less than three percent of areas burned after wildfires.

### ***Incentivizes & Rewards Collaboration-***

Allows expedited environmental review for collaborative projects up to 15,000 acres in size; Protects collaborative projects from unnecessary delay by requiring bonding for would-be litigants.

### ***Speeds Habitat Improvement-***

Encourages and speeds wildlife habitat improvement for wild turkey, ruffed grouse, elk, deer and other “early seral” forest-dependent species.

### ***Maximizes Existing Funding Sources-***

Provides new methods of funding Forest Service projects such as ‘revolving funds’ for projects on national forests funded by states. (Montana, New Mexico and Oregon have made efforts to fund national forest projects to prevent catastrophic wildfire).

### ***Creates a Larger Role for Tribes to Participate in Forest Health Projects -***

Expands authorities for tribes to manage adjacent national forests to reduce the risk of wildfire and insects & disease.

### ***Modernizes the Secure Rural Schools & Community Self-Determination Act (SRS)-***

While funding for the SRS has been extended several times, many other parts of the law have expired. This language reauthorizes the Resource Advisory Committees (RACs) and makes several minor, but much-needed updates to the law as well as returns County share of forest receipts for long term stewardship projects.

*For more information, contact the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Federal Lands at (202) 226-7736.*