



Independent Women Applauds House For Passing The Fix Our Forests Act

January 24, 2025

Dear Members of Congress,

On behalf of Independent Women's Voice, I strongly applaud the House of Representatives for passing the bipartisan **Fix Our Forests Act** (H. R. 471) sponsored by Rep. Bruce Westerman (R-AR) and Rep. Scott Peters (D-CA). Independent Women's Voice fights for women and their loved ones by effectively expanding support for policy solutions that aren't just well-intended, but actually enhance people's freedom, opportunities, and well-being.

In the wake of the devastating wildfires in Southern California, our nation must prioritize proactive science-based management to mitigate high-intensity wildfires while promoting forest resiliency.

Due to red tape and bureaucratic bloat, it takes years of environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to approve forest management projects. This is unacceptable. Currently, **117 million acres** of **238 million** public forestland acres—namely, U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands—are poorly managed, overgrown, and fire-prone. This bill, if passed, would expedite environmental reviews under NEPA.

Moreover, frivolous lawsuits by radical groups in the name of protecting the environment—or returning nature to **“pristine wilderness”**—make forestlands susceptible to catastrophic wildfires. Lawsuits that stall proactive forest management **threaten** “forest biodiversity, watersheds, and wildlife populations.” This proposed legislation will limit judges from interfering with fireshed management projects unless they pose an actual risk to the environment.

Expediting environmental review and preventing frivolous lawsuits will ensure areas deemed emergency firesheds are adequately managed through practices like mechanical thinning, prescribed burning, timber harvest, and grazing. **Practices like mechanical thinning** allow trees to withstand wildland fires and help reduce tree mortality. Failure to employ this practice, among others, **invites** infestation and disease from invasive species like the bark beetles.

For all these reasons, we urge the Senate to work toward the swift passage of this bill. IWV thanks Representatives Westerman and Peters for their leadership on this issue.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gabriella Hoffman". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly legible.

Gabriella Hoffman
Director, Center for Energy and Conservation
Independent Women's Voice