



# WILDLAND FIRE

## MITIGATION & MANAGEMENT

COMMISSION ACT OF 2021

The American West is facing unprecedented wildland fire activity after decades of poor forest management, increased fuel load, and a hotter and drier climate. Last year, nearly 60,000<sup>1</sup> fires burned across ten million acres, more than 53,000<sup>2</sup> of which were human-caused fires, according to the National Interagency Fire Council. So far this year:

- Utah: Nearly 600 fires have burned nearly 60,000 acres of land. About 70% percent of these fires were human-caused.<sup>3</sup>
- Arizona: More than 1,000 fires have burned nearly 480,000 acres of land.<sup>4</sup>

For over 100 years, the federal government has partnered with states to suppress wildfires. It has been more than a decade, however, since congress required federal agencies to step back and evaluate whether its strategy to fight fires is working.

Current federal wildland fire policy is a patchwork of legislation and agency guidance across departments and jurisdictions, further complicated by mixed landownership. This bill would require a review of the nation's wildland firefighting strategy, accompanied by specific policy recommendations, by a commission made up of the nation's top experts, including state and local stakeholders.

The Wildland Fire Mitigation & Management Commission Act of 2021 would convene experts with diverse backgrounds to recommend the best policies to manage lands before and after wildland fires, mitigate catastrophic damage during a fire, and minimize loss of human life and property.

## WHAT THE BILL DOES

The Wildland Fire Mitigation & Management Commission Act of 2021 establishes a commission of federal and non-federal stakeholders—including city and county level representation—to study and recommend fire prevention, mitigation, management, and rehabilitation policies for forests and grasslands. The Commission is:

- Jointly managed by the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture and the Administrator of FEMA.
- Comprised of 30 members: 3 federal co-chairs, 9 federal members, and 18 non-federal members.
- Preference for non-federal stakeholders is given to those from a state that has had at least one FEMA Fire Management Assistance declaration or major disaster declaration for a fire in at least four of the last five years.
- Tasked with recommending policies to improve forest management tactics, federal spending and budgeting for wildland fires, and long-term management and land maintenance strategies.
- Tasked with reporting to Congress policy recommendations on short- and long-term wildland fire prevention, mitigation, suppression, management, and rehabilitation to avert future wildland fires from becoming catastrophic disasters. Two required reports are:
  1. Recommendations to Mitigate and Manage Wildland Fires
  2. Aerial Wildland Firefighting Equipment Strategy and Inventory Assessment

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nifc.gov/fire-information/statistics/wildfires>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.nifc.gov/sites/default/files/document-media/Lightning-Human-Caused\\_2.pdf](https://www.nifc.gov/sites/default/files/document-media/Lightning-Human-Caused_2.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://utahfireinfo.gov/active-wildfires/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.12news.com/article/news/local/wildfire/arizona-wildfire-acres-next-four-most-burned-states-combined-national-interagency-fire-center/75-e78flc40-af4d-43f8-a084-5b86532489aa>