

## **National Prescribed Fire Act of 2024**

In recent decades, the West has experienced growing wildfire risks, with longer fire seasons and bigger and hotter fires. These deadly infernos are devastating entire communities and economic vitality in the West. The science is clear that restoring fire to these fire-adapted landscapes in a safe and controlled way is essential to healthy forests and healthy communities. Prescribed fire and cultural burning reduces hazardous fuels buildup and mitigates the threats from wildfire.

The Forest Service's hundreds of millions of acres of forests are at a high risk of dangerous wildfires. Yet, prescribed fire treated only 3.6 million acres annually during the last decade. Federal land managers must be equipped to get ahead of the problem, especially as the wildfire crisis worsens. Unfortunately, because vegetation grows continuously, the Forest Service will never be able to address the current hazardous fuels backlog at its current pace. Prescribed fire and cultural burning present an exceptional and cost effective opportunity to increase wildfire prevention efforts, especially during the cooler, wetter months when fire and smoke impacts to communities can be effectively managed.

Congress must act with urgency and seriously invest in hazardous fuels management by increasing the pace and scale of prescribed fire and cultural burning, creating a technically skilled workforce, and making sure these prescribed burns happen during cooler, wetter months to reduce catastrophic fires and choking smoke in the summer.

### **The National Prescribed Fire Act of 2024:**

- Authorizes \$300 million in total for accounts for the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior to plan, prepare, and conduct prescribed burns on federal, state, and private lands.
- Requires the Forest Service and Department of Interior to increase the number of acres treated with prescribed fire.
- Establishes a \$10 million collaborative program, based on the successful Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program, to implement prescribed burns on county, state and private land at high risk of burning in a wildfire.
- Establishes a workforce development program at the Forest Service and DOI to develop, train, and hire prescribed fire practitioners, and establishes employment programs for Tribes, veterans, women, and those formerly incarcerated.
- Requires state air quality agencies to use current laws and regulations to allow larger prescribed burns, and give states more flexibility in winter months to conduct prescribed burns that reduce catastrophic smoke events in the summer.
- Provides direction for setting clear standards for prescribed fire practitioner liability and studying the merits of a claims fund to aid cross-jurisdictional wildfire prevention efforts.