



Committee: House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Federal Lands
Event: [Fix Our Forests: Advancing Innovative Technologies to Improve Forest Management & Prevent Wildfires](#)
Date: July 26, 2025
Time: 10:00 AM
Place: 1324 Longworth House Office Building

Member Toplines:

Subcommittee Chair Tom Tiffany (R-WI-07): Tiffany emphasized the importance of addressing the wildfire crisis. He noted that the Fix Our Forests Act ([H.R. 471](#)) has the potential to “unlock technological innovation, cut red tape,” and incorporate the private sector into mitigation strategy as wildfire season continues. He called for stronger public-private partnerships, proactive force management, and faster response through modern technology.

*Subcommittee Ranking Member Joe Neguse (D-NY-14)*¹: Neguse underscored that extreme heat waves are accelerating fire risk across the country. He commended the bipartisan support for new wildfire detection technology, but noted that sufficient staffing and funding are critical to using it.

Witness Toplines:

[Karen Howard, Director of Science and Technology Assessment, Government Accountability Office:](#) Howard attested to the value of innovative technology in wildfire mitigation, detection, and response, noting applications of satellites, aircraft, drones, and artificial intelligence (AI).

[Allison Wolff, Chief Executive Officer, Vibrant Planet:](#) Wolff explained that Vibrant Planet has built a wildfire risk mitigation platform, tracking recent fire movement and using post fire analysis to shape future mitigation plans. She reported that an investment of \$9 million in risk mitigation along the wild urban interface between the forest and the city of Altadena could have prevented the resulting \$40 billion loss. She noted that her platform collaborates with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Indian Affairs, CalFire communities, and utilities like PG&E, and could save taxpayers up to \$240 million annually in planning efficiencies alone.

[Sean Triplett, Data Integration and Operations Lead, Earth Fire Alliance:](#) Triplett attested to the value of the Fix Our Forests Act, citing its support for the modernization of wildfire technology. He noted that the federal government lacks a nationwide wildfire detection and analysis system. He then provided background on his company’s fire satellite constellation, which has been a successful product of public-private partnerships, and called for further interagency collaboration.

[Tyson Bertone-Riggs, Founder and Managing Director, Alliance for Wildfire Resilience:](#) Bertone-Riggs called for the establishment of a centralized Fire Environment Center, as well as

¹ Neither opening statement was available online at the time of this memo’s distribution.

improved contracting & procurement for new technology integration, research coordination, and better funding and staffing.

[Dan Munsey, Fire Chief, San Bernardino County Fire Protection District](#): Munsey asserted that the country has a wild land *management* crisis, rather than a wildland fire crisis. He underscored the importance of adopting new technology, noting that current firefighting lacks coordination due to connectivity and interagency operability challenges. He encouraged the implementation of AI in fire analysis and mitigation.

Major Takeaways:

- Full Committee Chair **Bruce Westerman** (R-AR-04) asked what wildland firefighters need. Munsey emphasized the need for an early detection system with satellites, terrestrial camera systems, sensors, improved communication devices, and the incorporation of robots into immediate fire response.
- Westerman had Wolff expand on how the Fire Shed Center would generate savings. Wolff replied that the federal government has spent about \$5.8 million with her company, leading to an estimated \$300 million return. She advocated for the use of technology as interagency “connective tissue.”
 - Wolff later elaborated on mitigation efforts, highlighting the importance of investing in defensible space around homes and vegetation thinning.
- Neguse flagged that the fiscal year 2026 budget proposes a \$646 million cut to Federal Emergency Management’s (FEMA) grant programs, which therefore affects the firefighter grant program.
- Rep. **Emily Randall** (D-WA-06) asked if there was sufficient staffing. Bertone-Riggs underscored that staffing and funding are critical to implementing new technology and executing both mitigation and post fire recovery activity.
 - Rep. **Cliff Bentz** (R-OR-02) noted that the USFS added 20 percent more permanent employees in the last two years and is actively hiring, therefore concluding that the agency is not being gutted. He reported that he asked his district office if they needed more help, and they answered no.
- Bentz asked Wolff if her technology performs risk identification and reduction. Wolff described how her company’s technology functions, and noted that they work with innovative insurers to facilitate normal community insurance prices.
- Reps. **Melanie Stansbury** (D-NM-01) and **Troy Downing** (R-MT-02) had the panelists discuss the value of innovative technology and information sharing. Wolff spoke about LiDAR mapping and highlighted the value of the USFS Community Wildfire Defense Grant Program and the FEMA Hazard Mitigation grants.
- Rep. **Mike Kennedy** (R-UT-03) asked how public-private partnerships can be better leveraged. Wolff advocated for increased research and development and collaboration with the natural resource agencies. She expressed that agencies need a nudge from Congress to partner with private industry on advanced machine learning and AI.
- Kennedy highlighted his bill, the Utah Wildfire Research Institute Act of 2025 ([H.R. 1045](#)), which would create a federal wildfire research institute at Utah State University.