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**Committee:** House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Federal Lands  
**Event:** [Fix Our Forests: The Need for Urgent Action One Year After the L.A. Fires](#)  
**Date:** February 3, 2026

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***Executive Summary:***

On February 3, 2026, the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Federal Lands held a hearing titled “Fix Our Forests: The Need for Urgent Action One Year After the L.A. Fires.” Members from both sides of the aisle agreed that poor forest management has complicated wildfire mitigation efforts, and the panel expressed support for reforms outlined in the Fix Our Forests Act ([H.R. 471](#) | [S. 1462](#), FOFA). Discussion predominantly focused on fire mitigation strategies and increased insurance premiums.

***Member Toplines:***

*Full Committee Chair Bruce Westerman (R-AR-04)*<sup>1</sup>: Westerman underscored that catastrophic wildfires are causing widespread economic hardship, noting that the L.A. fires were the costliest wildfire event in world history. He noted that hundreds of thousands of students were displaced from their schools after the fire. He reported that more than 70 percent of displaced residents have not returned to their homes due to high rebuilding costs and insurance loss, citing a drop in 70 percent of policy holders by insurers in the Palisades due to risk. He emphasized the need for proper fire management, highlighting decades of fire suppression issues and a “lack of active management.” He expressed his support for FOFA.

*Full Committee Ranking Member Jared Huffman (D-CA-02)*: Huffman attested to the value of FOFA, but took issue with its proposed rollbacks to environmental laws and expressed hope that the Senate would improve the legislation. He also noted that the fire service federal reorganization has not received an oversight hearing. He pointed out that government agencies have been gutted while massive funding has been redirected to Immigration & Customs Enforcement. He emphasized that funding should be spent on resilience and forest management.

*Subcommittee Chair Tom Tiffany (R-WI-07)*: Tiffany emphasized the massive loss caused by the L.A. fires and reiterated the need for proactive forest management and community protection. He advocated for the Senate’s passage of FOFA.

***Witness Toplines:***

[Steven Crowder, Mayor of Paradise, CA](#): Crowder shared Paradise’s rebuilding plan in the wake of the fire, including the installation of a siren system, annual inspections, and stringent building code adoptions. He expressed his support for FOFA.

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<sup>1</sup> Member opening statements were not available at the time of this memo’s distribution.

[John Clarke Mills, CEO & Co-Founder, Watch Duty](#): Mills shared that Watch Duty was the most downloaded app in the country in January 2025, surpassing ChatGPT and TikTok. He emphasized that emergency managers are being pushed to their limits and alerts are crippled by fragmented bureaucracy and poor infrastructure. He advocated for Watch Duty's work to be incorporated into the Wildfire Intelligence Center to improve alerting.

[Dr. David Calkin, Principal, Calkin Wildfire Consulting](#): Calkin emphasized the danger of long-term fire suppression and reported that the majority of public lands are at extreme risk of wildfires. He expressed his support for the passage of FOFA and its provisions focusing on community preparation and hardening infrastructure, as well as strategic burns.

[Robert Gordon, SVP, Policy, Research & International, American Property Casualty Insurance Association](#): Gordon emphasized the need for building safety and coordinated hazard mitigation and response. He also highlighted his support for Section 106 of the bill, which improves land management, and Section 201, which encourages public private partnerships to reduce hazardous fuel and streamlines the federal wildfire grant application process.

### **Major Takeaways:**

#### Insurance

- Westerman and Rep. **Pete Stauber** (R-MN-08) asked Gordon and Crowder how forest management can lower home insurance and utility costs for consumers. Gordon affirmed that forest management lowers wildfire risk by decreasing fuel load, but noted that it wouldn't "fix inflation." Crowder explained that his town has focused on residential fire safety compliance, such as vegetation management, and expressed concern that high insurance prices are keeping people from returning.
- McClintock highlighted issues with insurance price controls, asserting that insurers would rather leave markets because they cannot charge enough to cover their risk. McClintock asked Gordon why insurers aren't selling in California. Gordon replied that there has been a net negative return in the past decade and costs have escalated, while infrastructure has failed. He emphasized the need for defensible perimeters around homes.
- Rep. **Cliff Bentz** (R-OR-02) asked Gordon about increased insurance premiums. Gordon replied that building inflation, a result of the high cost of labor and materials, has driven up insurance costs.

#### Fire Mitigation & Preparedness

- Huffman and Rep. **Mike Kennedy** (R-UT-03) asked Calkin to discuss fire management tactics. Calkin noted the need for fuel management, such as biomass utilization and proper removal, particularly with logging, and attested to the importance of prescribed burns.
  - Rep. **Tom McClintock** (R-CA-05) and Tiffany also attested to the need for controlled burns and flagged issues with *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) delays.
  - Stauber asked Gordon if NEPA analysis delays for burns poses a risk to homeowners. Gordon responded that California has known its fire risk for years

and failed to take action. He emphasized the need to “do more [...] without delays.”

- Tiffany asked the panel what Congress should prioritize. Crowder emphasized the need for FOIA passage and fuel reduction. Mills advocated for empowering the new chief of the U.S. Wildland Fire Service, Brian Fennessy. Calkin replied that there is no “silver bullet” and emphasized the importance of investment in community preparation, evacuation systems, and home and infrastructure hardening.
- Rep. **Celeste Maloy** (R-UT-01) flagged the FOIA provisions about grazing and asked if insurance companies are willing to buy into the practice. Gordon attested to the value of forest clearing as homes are still built in higher fire risk areas.
- Rep. **Maxine Dexter** (D-OR-03) asked Crowder to discuss the value of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recovery funding. She reported that FEMA is weaker, slower, and less responsive under the current administration, highlighting that the recent recovery funding was mostly allocated to red states, alluding to bias.