

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 8731

To fill vacancies for Forest Service recreation management and planning staff in National Forests, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 5, 2020

Mr. PANETTA (for himself, Mr. CARBAJAL, and Mr. THOMPSON of California) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture

A BILL

To fill vacancies for Forest Service recreation management and planning staff in National Forests, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Save Our Forests Act
5 of 2020”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Between 2015 and 2019, on average, 88
2 percent of wildfires in the United States have been
3 human-caused.

4 (2) Human-caused fires tend to occur in or
5 near the wildland-urban interface (as defined in sec-
6 tion 101 of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of
7 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6511)), where there is a greater
8 risk to people and communities and a higher cost to
9 suppress fires.

10 (3) The wildland-urban interface is the fastest-
11 growing land use type in the United States, posing
12 challenges for fire management and suppression.

13 (4) Over the last 10 years, an average of
14 64,100 wildfires and an average of 6.8 million acres
15 burned annually. In 2019, 50,477 wildfires burned
16 and 4,700,000 acres burned nationwide. Approxi-
17 mately 65 percent of these acres burned on Federal
18 land, of which close to 20 percent or 600,000 acres
19 were National Forest System lands.

20 (5) The Forest Service suffers from chronic
21 staffing shortages, with several National Forests
22 struggling to maintain their acreage with insufficient
23 recreation management and planning staff.

1 **SEC. 3. FILLING FOREST SERVICE RECREATION MANAGE-**
2 **MENT STAFF VACANCIES.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Agriculture, act-
4 ing through the Chief of the Forest Service, shall fill va-
5 cancies in National Forests for Forest Service recreation
6 management and planning staff, including recreation tech-
7 nicians, recreation officers, and natural resource man-
8 agers.

9 (b) PRIORITY.—In seeking to fill vacancies under
10 subsection (a), the Secretary shall prioritize filling vacan-
11 cies in National Forests that—

12 (1) are at high or very high risk of catastrophic
13 wildfires;

14 (2) are located in or near the wildland-urban
15 interface; and

16 (3) have experienced an increase in visitation
17 over the past decade.

18 (c) TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION AS A FOREST
19 PROTECTION OFFICER.—The Secretary may provide the
20 opportunity for any individual who fills a vacancy pursu-
21 ant to subsection (a) to receive training and certification
22 as a Forest Protection Officer.

23 (d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

24 (1) IN GENERAL.—In addition to other funds
25 that may be available to the Forest Service for the
26 purposes specified in this section, there is authorized

1 to be appropriated to carry out this section such
2 sums as may be necessary for fiscal year 2021 and
3 each fiscal year thereafter.

4 (2) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—Of the
5 amounts available under paragraph (1) for each fis-
6 cal year, not more than 3 percent may be used for
7 administrative expenses incurred in carrying out this
8 section.

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