

Protect the West Act: \$60B to reduce wildfire risk proposed

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U.S. Senators Ron Wyden, D-Ore., Michael Bennet, D- Colo., and John Hickenlooper, D-Colo., have introduced the Protect the West Act to make a \$60 billion investment in the nation’s forests to reduce wildfire risk, restore watersheds and protect communities.

“Major investment is urgently needed to protect Western forests and watersheds from increasingly dangerous wildfires and droughts,” said Wyden. “The Protect the West Act will ensure Congress funds much needed fire mitigation and restoration efforts — so communities stay safe and so that future generations can continue to enjoy Oregon’s beautiful natural treasures.”

The Protect the West Act would:

Establish an Outdoor Restoration & Watershed Fund to increase support for local efforts to restore forests and watersheds, reduce wildfire risk, clean up public lands, enhance wildlife habitat, remove invasive species, and expand outdoor access. The bill establishes an advisory council of local, industry, conservation,

Tribal, and national experts to advise funding priorities, coordinate with existing regional efforts, and provide oversight.

Empower local leaders by making \$20 billion directly available to state and local governments, Tribes, special districts, and nonprofits to support restoration, drought resilience, and fire mitigation projects. These funds would empower local leaders to bring diverse voices to the table to develop solutions.

Partner with states and Tribes to invest \$40 billion to tackle the backlog of restoration, fire mitigation, and resilience projects across public, private, and Tribal lands.

Create or sustain over two million good-paying jobs, primarily in rural areas, to support existing industries like forest-product, agriculture, and outdoor recreation.

Save landowners and local governments money by investing in wildfire prevention and natural hazard mitigation on the front end, which is thirty times more cost-effective than recovering forests and watersheds after natural disasters have struck.

The bill is supported by The National Wildlife Federation, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, National Association of State Foresters, The Freshwater Trust, American Forests, National Wild Turkey Federation, National Audubon Society, Family Farm Alliance, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, Western Landowners Alliance, Western Resource Advocates, Trout Unlimited, and Conservation Legacy.