

Regional Report for the Southern Group of State Foresters' Annual Meeting June 2025

Photo: Patricia Payne



Organizational Announcements

2025 CWSF/WFLC Spring Meeting Recap

The Council of Western State Foresters (CWSF) and Western Forestry Leadership Coalition (WFLC) held their Spring Meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, from May 13-15, 2025. The meeting featured keynote remarks from USDA leadership, a field tour hosted by the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands, and discussions focused on policy, partnerships, and shared priorities across the region.

Communications Intern

CWSF recently interviewed candidates for a communications internship. The application window closed on April 18, and the selected candidate will begin in June. This internship is made possible with support from the National Association of State Foresters (NASF) Foundation.

Western State Foresters Reaffirm the Importance of Partnership Under New USDA Forest Service Leadership

On March 18, CWSF issued a press release to welcome the new USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) leadership, reaffirm its commitment to working alongside partners, and share support for the key forestry priorities announced by NASF.

Save the Date: Ponderosa Pine Utilization Summit

The Ponderosa Pine Utilization Summit will take place November 18-20, 2025, in Flagstaff, Arizona. This important gathering will convene industry, government, research, academia, economic development, and non-governmental organizations to explore innovative solutions and strategies for the long-term sustainable use and marketability of Ponderosa Pine. Additional details will be shared in the coming months.



Policy Updates

Director of Policy Neil Simpson continues to work closely with NASF, the Northeast-Midwest State Foresters Alliance, and the Southern Group of State Foresters to monitor ongoing developments with Forest Service restructuring, fiscal year (FY) 2026 appropriations, the Fix Our Forests Act, and the many other bills that could impact wildfire and forestry.

Member Transitions

■ Alaska

Jeremy Douse was named State Forester and Director of the Division of Forestry & Fire Protection.

■ Idaho

Julia Lauch has been named State Forester and Division Administrator for Forestry and Fire with the Idaho Department of Lands.

■ Oregon

Cal Mukumoto submitted his resignation effective January 23, 2025. Kate Skinner has been named Acting State Forester.

■ Palau

Kiyara-Mae Eluil Swanson has been appointed as the Palau State Forester.

■ USDA Forest Service Intermountain Region

Ben Newburn will serve as Acting Regional Forester effective April 28, 2025. Newburn will temporarily succeed Regional Forester Mary Farnsworth.

■ USDA Forest Service Northern Region

Kristin Bail will serve as Acting Regional Forester effective March 31, 2025. Bail will temporarily succeed Regional Forester Leanne Marten.

■ USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region

Jason Kuiken will serve as Acting Regional Forester effective March 31, 2025. Kuiken will temporarily succeed Regional Forester Jennifer Eberlien.



Policy Updates Continued

- In April, Executive Director Danielle Okst, Neil, and nine Western State Foresters traveled to Washington, D.C., to attend the NASF Executive Committee meeting and participate in the NASF fly-in. Western State Foresters joined their counterparts from across the country to stress the importance of active forest management and the role Forest Service State, Private, and Tribal Forestry Programs play in protecting communities from wildfire, increasing forest health, and bolstering America's economy. Collectively, State Foresters took part in over 100 meetings with members of their Congressional Delegation, USDA leadership, and Forest Service Leadership.
- Neil has taken on the role of NASF Fire Policy Lead. In this role, he continues to work hand-in-hand with the policy team and is now more closely coordinating with the NASF Wildland Fire Committee and external partners.
- CWSF staff continue to work with several partner organizations and coalitions. A few examples include Neil's coordination with the Western Governors' Association, Alliance for Wildfire Resilience, and The Nature Conservancy's Western Dry Forests & Fire Program.



Grant Updates

- **CWDG** - Round 3 closed for applications on March 14, 2025. The verification, adjudication, and scoring process is currently in progress. For more information, visit www.westernforesters.org/community-wildfire-defense-grant.

ROUND 3 STATISTICS:

Total Applications Submitted: 573
 Total Amount (Match + Federal): \$1,686,646,661
 Match Amount: \$84,743,584
 Federal Amount: \$1,601,903,077

ROUND 3 REGIONAL BREAKDOWN:

South: 123 applications
 Tribes: 46 applications
 NEMW: 35 applications
 West: 369 applications

- **WUI** - The FY 2025 WUI grant application period is closed to applicants. This grant program has been scored, and the recommendation list has been sent to the Washington Office for final approval. For more information, visit www.westernforesters.org/wui-grants.



Upcoming Member and Committee Meetings



- CWSF Good Neighbor Authority Committee | June 10-12, 2025, Salem, OR
- WFLC Pacific Islands Forestry Committee | September 19-20, 2025, Waimea, HI
- CWSF Forest Health Committee | September 30 - October 2, 2025
- CWSF Western State Fire Managers Committee and Western State Fire Business Managers Subcommittee | October 7-9, 2025
- CWSF Forest Stewardship/Landowner Assistance Committee | October 14-16, 2025
- Ponderosa Pine Utilization Summit | November 18-20, 2025, Flagstaff, AZ
- CWSF Forest Products Committee | November 21, 2025, Flagstaff, AZ
- **2025 CWSF/WFLC Fall Meeting** | December 10-12, 2025, Washington, D.C.

See full calendar of events at www.westernforesters.org/events and www.thewflc.org/events.



Committee Highlights

CWSF Forest Health Committee

- Continues bi-monthly committee meetings to share information, lessons learned, and best practices related to state and federal forest health programs.
- Coordinates with Forest Service regional and Washington Office members on topics, including Forest Health Protection (FHP) Program reporting, envisioning the future of FHP, and more, to maintain and strengthen the long-standing partnership.

CWSF Good Neighbor Authority Committee

- Developed a western synthesis of GNA activities and accomplishments across 13 state forestry agencies from the time each state began implementing GNA through the end of state FY 2024. View the synthesis at www.westernforesters.org/2024GNASynthesis and the StoryMap at <https://arcg.is/WGOi>.
- Coordinating with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to share recommendations focused on improving the GNA partnership between western state forestry agencies and BLM.
- Coordinating with NASF to collect feedback and recommended changes in response to the Forest Service's early-adopter Explore Act GNA items.

CWSF Forest Stewardship/Landowner Assistance Committee

- Continues bi-monthly committee meetings to share information related to stewardship program structure, opportunities, and overcoming challenges.
- Maintains and strengthens relationships with Forest Service Stewardship staff at regional offices and the Washington Office.
- Engages with James Wright and NRCS staff to strengthen the State Forestry - NRCS connection and share success stories and lessons learned.

CWSF Forest Products Committee

- The Ponderosa Pine Summit Planning Committee met weekly throughout January, February, and March to prepare a Request for Proposals (RFP) soliciting private contractors to plan and facilitate a Ponderosa Pine Utilization Summit to be held on November 18 - 20 in Flagstaff, AZ. The RFP closed in April, and the Summit Planning Committee anticipates finalizing the project contract in May/June.
- The purpose of the Summit is to convene a group of industry, government, and non-governmental organizations to identify industry needs, foster innovation, and identify potential resources and support.

CWSF Western State Fire Managers Committee

- Held an in-person annual meeting in conjunction with Chiefs, Managers, & Supervisors in January, and will host an annual meeting in conjunction with the Western States Business Managers in October 2025.

WFLC Pacific Island Forestry Committee

- Convened for quarterly meetings in January and April to review and continue progress on work plan items, share state/island updates, and discuss current opportunities and challenges.
- Planning to host the PIFC Executive Committee meeting immediately following the NASF Annual Meeting in Waimea, HI.

WFLC Western Urban and Community Forestry Committee

- Meeting on a more regular basis to discuss and share information related to UCF programming and budgets.
- Coordinating amongst states and with partners such as the Arbor Day Foundation and Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition to coordinate advocacy efforts through the appropriate channels.