

# Promoting Effective Forest Management Act of 2023

## Section-By-Section Summary

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### TITLE I – ACCOMPLISHMENTS OVER RHETORIC

#### **Section 101. Thinning Targets.**

Section 101 directs the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to set annual acreage targets for mechanical thinning projects on National Forests and public lands. Under the bill, agencies are to double their acreage targets by 2026 and quadruple them by 2028.

#### **Section 102. Annual Reports.**

Section 102 directs the Forest Service and BLM to report certain acreage accomplishments, including whether the mechanical thinning targets in Section 101 have been met. If the targets are not met, the agencies must report any limitations or challenges, including litigation or permitting delays that hindered their progress.

#### **Section 103. Transparency in Fire Mitigation Reporting.**

Section 103 increases transparency in fire mitigation reporting by directing the Forest Service and BLM to exclude acres that still require additional treatments from inclusion in output measures in certain reports and budget request documents.

#### **Section 104. Regional Forest Carbon Accounting.**

Section 104 directs the Forest Service to, using data from the forest inventory and analysis program, determine whether National Forest System lands are carbon sources or carbon sinks, and to publish that information online.

#### **Section 105. Targets for Wildlife Habitat Improvement.**

Section 105 directs the Forest Service and BLM to meet wildlife habitat improvement goals and targets relative to existing management plans.

### TITLE II – FOREST MANAGEMENT

#### **Section 201. Land and Resource Management Plans.**

Section 201 directs the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to report on whether shortening the length and development timelines of Forest Service land and resource management plans would help the agency address its backlog of out-of-date plans.

#### **Section 202. Management of Old Growth and Mature Forests.**

Section 202 directs the Forest Service and BLM to adhere to the current definitions of “old growth forest,” and requires that any updates or revisions can only be made after a recommendation by a scientific committee, followed by a rulemaking process under the Administrative Procedure Act. Further, this section clarifies that “mature forests” are separate from old growth forests, and that mature forests are to be managed according to current law. This section also clarifies that executive branch actions shall not modify, amend, or otherwise change the duties of the Forest Service or BLM under current law.

**Section 203. Assessment of Processed-based Restoration Techniques.**

Section 203 directs the Forest Service and the United States Geological Survey (USGS) to establish a pilot program to conduct research on and evaluate wetland and riparian restoration techniques, including utilizing biologically-driven restoration.

**Section 204. Intervenor Status.**

Section 204 allows counties and local governments to intervene in lawsuits intended to stop wildfire prevention projects on nearby National Forests.

**Section 205. Utilizing Grazing for Wildfire Prevention.**

Section 205 directs the Forest Service and BLM to develop a strategy to increase grazing as a wildfire mitigation tool. This includes the use of targeted grazing, increasing issuances of temporary grazing permits, and completing environmental reviews for vacant grazing allotments that could be used for grazing when drought and fires impact occupied allotments.

TITLE III—WORKFORCE

**Section 301. Logging workforce.**

Section 301 directs the Forest Service to work with States to develop a universal, tiered program to train people to enter the logging workforce, and to examine ways to facilitate apprenticeship training opportunities. This section also allows existing funding to be use for low-interest loans to modernize logging machinery.

**Section 302. Break-in-service consideration for firefighter retirements.**

Section 302 ensures that wildland firefighters can retain employment and retirement benefits for breaks-in-service that are 9 months or less.

**Section 303. Firefighter rental housing.**

Section 303 places a cap on rent for wildland firefighters when they are forced to pay for agency-provided housing.

TITLE IV—CULTURAL CHANGE IN AGENCIES

**Section 401. Mandatory use of existing authorities.**

Section 401 requires National Forests and BLM units to use at least one existing streamlined authority for environmental review on a forest management project within the next three years.

**Section 402. Curtailing employee relocations.**

Section 402 directs the Forest Service to curtail employee relocations and to develop a program that provides incentives for employees to grow in place. Further, this section places a cap on employee relocation expenses, and directs the Secretary to solicit employee applications in a manner that does not limit eligibility to current Forest Service employees.

**Section 403. Repeal of FLAME reports.**

To help alleviate unnecessary paperwork burdens, section 403 repeals a report within the FLAME Act of 2009.