



**IFRP Webinar: Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill**  
What Does it Mean for Forest Collaboratives?

Monday Jan, 31st, 2022  
1pm MST. – 2:30pm MST

Webinar Recording: <http://idahoforestpartners.org/virtual-sessions>

Below are questions that were asked during the webinar but not answered in real time:

1. **The elephant in the fuels management room is the Clean Air act and the EPA. Do you think we can get the necessary acres treated under current smoke management rules?**

R: As the Clean Air Act and the responsibility for implementation of the air quality standards rests with the states, increasing prescribed fire and the subsequent smoke will be a state-by-state challenge under the current standards. Note that air quality standards are routinely revised based on the latest science and health research. Some states will be amenable with this increase of prescribed fire while others will be more unwilling to allow the larger acreage prescribed fires that will be needed as the number of days available to conduct such activities is only decreasing. Part of the state response will be dictated by the concern about smoke expressed by the public. It will be critical to provide information to the states and public on projected location of smoke impacts (fine particulate concentration and reduction of visibility), severity of smoke impacts and duration of smoke impacts. A critical factor will be how “smoke-ready” the communities are prior to the ignition of the prescribed fires, especially those at higher risk of smoke impacts which are also typically underserved individuals and communities.

2. **How will social equity and population vulnerability be deployed in practice as part of the forthcoming funding? Additionally, can you speak to the roofing requirement that is tied to the Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG)?**

R: The Forest Service is currently developing program guidance for the CWDG Program that complies with the provisions of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) to give priority to communities that have a high or very high wildfire hazard potential; are considered a low-income community; or have been impacted by a severe disaster. Additional consideration in the form of cost-share waivers will be provided to communities that meet the requirement to be considered underserved.

Section 40803 of the IIJA requires that a grant of funding under that section shall not be awarded to a community that has not adopted an ordinance or standards for the construction of new roofs on buildings that meet certain fire and building codes and standards. The Forest Service is currently working to determine the most appropriate method in which to incorporate this requirement into the program guidance to both encourage communities to participate, and to reduce the burden of compliance.

3. **How will National Prescribed Fire Act interface with the Infrastructure Funding?**

R: There are several aspects of the proposed National Prescribed Fire Act (NPFA) that could relate to provision in the IIJA, these include:

- The IIJA established specific funding levels for both the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior (DOI) in the amount of \$250,000,000 each to be used between FY22-FY26 to plan, prepare, and conduct prescribed fire; there is similar language in the NPFA suggesting that similar or even additional funding might be sought to further increase the use of prescribed fire; the NPFA also and seeks to be able to expend these funds in a manner that supports prescribed fire use on state and private lands in addition to federal lands.
- The IIJA provides funds and incentives to improve workforce development programs at the Forest Service and DOI to develop, train, and hire hazardous fuels and prescribed fire practitioners; the NPFA proposes to augment the training and development specifically for prescribed fire as well as promoting employment programs for Tribes, veterans, women, and those formerly incarcerated to participate in prescribed fire activities.
- The IIJA describes prescribed fire as one of those activities appropriate for Categorical Exclusion from NEPA which aligns with the goal in NPFA to increase the pace and scale of prescribed fire.

Other aspects of the NPRA not specifically addressed in the IIJA include:

- The NPFA would propose to establish an incentive program to provide funding to state, county, and federal agencies for any large-scale controlled burn.
  - The NPFA would also seek to require state air quality agencies to use current laws and regulations to allow larger controlled burns, and give states more flexibility in winter months to conduct controlled burns that reduce catastrophic smoke events in the summer.
4. **Bill with the suggested growth in the HF USFS budget. Why hasn't that increase also translated in community assistance program growth where some would argue is the larger portion of risk that needs to be addressed.**

There is existing statutory authority that allows the Forest Service to expend up to \$20 million of HF annually to complete cross-boundary wildfire risk reduction projects. Communities are able to participate in this program, and benefit from it through fuels reduction activities and development of community wildfire protection plans. At the current time, there has been no decisions made by the Agency as to whether additional HF funding made available by the IIJA will be used for cross-boundary projects that would provide more direct assistance to communities. The focus for community assistance is currently with the CWDG Program.

5. **Can you speak more to opportunities on adjacent private forest lands through NRCS or other channels?**

The IIJA codified the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership (JCLRP) program making the program a congressional focused allocation. Additionally, Congress allotted \$90 million per year from the IIJA for the next two years for the JCLRP program. This will allow additional projects to be selected for funding including more opportunities for private forest lands to receive funding from NRCS for treatments.