I wrote previously about the Fix Our Forests bill which has been passed by the House and is currently being considered by the Senate. I noted some concerns I had about its overuse of emergency authorities, its expansion of categorical exclusions, and some changes to litigation, as well as some positive features of the bill.

A new version of Fix Our Forests has been introduced in the Senate by a bipartisan group of Senators. This version keeps a lot that was good about the prior bill – increased funding, coordination, and research to understand fire risks and expand implementation of fire risk reduction projects. It keeps the "fireshed" concept for managing fire risks on federal lands and prioritizing risk reduction projects in areas that face the greatest risk – structuring management around how fire moves across the landscape makes a lot of sense. It maintains the ability of agencies to use emergency authorities to speed compliance for projects to reduce fire risks in firesheds, but unlike the prior bill, it requires agencies to make formal findings of emergencies, and requires compliance with existing law when they use emergency authorities. This is an improvement, though the increased use of emergency authorities by agencies is a problem that I've raised earlier. The litigation changes are mostly straightforward, including a short statute of limitations for lawsuits (but not one that is substantially different than under the California Environmental Quality Act, for instance). Overall, this is a bill that's a good first start, though as I've also written elsewhere, there is far more we need to do to speed effective management of fire risks in our forests.