

I wrote earlier about [an article I co-authored with Dave Owen on reforming wildfire law](#). In particular, we identified changes to [federal land management](#), [federal air quality law](#), [land-use law](#), and [insurance law](#) to address the interlocking legal and policy challenges wildfire presents. But the scope of our piece necessarily meant limiting the level of detail in our policy suggestions or recommendations. We've tried to address that for a topic where we think detail matters, management of National Forests to reduce fire risk. We've just posted [a short draft article](#) with details on our proposed reforms (the article is forthcoming in Ecology Law Quarterly's online journal Currents). The key points of the proposal:

- Congress would establish external science panels that would synthesize the relevant literature for how to manage fire risks and protect other important environmental resources for ecosystems at high risk of fire. Membership on the panels would be divided between leading external scientific and professional associations with expertise on the topic, state and tribal officials with expertise, and federal officials with expertise. The panels must reach supermajority agreement to finalize any synthesis documents.
- The Forest Service could draw on those synthesis documents (and other relevant information) to develop management principles and guidelines for reducing fire risks within the relevant ecosystem on Forest Service lands. Any such proposals must be consistent with the "best available science," which would include but not be limited to those synthesis documents.
- The Forest Service could amend the relevant forest management plans based on those management principles and guidelines, following NEPA and ESA requirements.
- If those plan amendments are finalized, any site-specific forest management projects consistent with those principles and guidelines would be exempt from NEPA, ESA, and any other laws. The only legal challenges that could be raised would be claims the projects are not consistent with the principles or guidelines.
- The plan amendments would be valid for a specified period of time (we propose ten years). A new synthesis document would be required to propose new amendments for future time periods.

The goal is to facilitate streamlining for forest management in ways that are consistent with the relevant science and prevent extreme policy outcomes. As I discussed in an earlier blog post, we think our proposal improves on current reform bills (in particular, Fix Our Forests) because it provides broader exemptions that can

scale up across time and space, but also provides external guardrails to implementation by agencies.