



Wildfire Emissions Prevention Act of 2026 (S. 5045)

Date Introduced:

S. 5045 - 07/21/2026

What:

The bipartisan Wildfire Emissions Prevention Act (WEPA) of 2026 amends the Clean Air Act (CAA) to remove regulatory barriers that deter states and land managers from using prescribed burns and other proactive forest management tools to prevent wildfires. This bill will:

- Make it easier for states and communities to use prescribed burns to prevent wildfires by recognizing these practices as equivalent to exceptional events under the CAA;
- Provide certainty that states will not be penalized under CAA nonattainment designations for taking proactive wildfire mitigation steps, including controlled burns;
- Ensure U.S. areas are not designated as nonattainment (failing to meet air quality standards) if pollution originates from outside the U.S. For example, smoke from Canadian wildfires cannot trigger nonattainment status for American communities; and
- Promote more efficient use of state air quality resources by streamlining the regulatory process for prescribed fire, which currently takes up to four years of environmental review, even for small projects.

Why it Matters:

The U.S. is home to 800 million acres of forest land. Healthy forests are natural carbon sinks, but catastrophic wildfires can flip forests from carbon sinks to carbon sources, releasing significant emissions.

Despite prescribed burns being a proven, cost-effective tool for reducing hazardous fuels and preventing catastrophic wildfires, existing CAA penalties deter states and land managers from using them. By removing this regulatory catch-22, in which taking preventive action risks Environmental Protection Agency penalties, WEPA encourages the active forest management needed to keep American forests healthy, communities safe and wildfire emissions in check.

What's Next:

The bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works and awaits consideration.

Sponsors:

Sen. John Curtis (R-UT)

Co-Sponsors:

Sens. Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Alex Padilla (D-CA), John Boozman (R-AR), Mark Kelly (D-AZ)

Support:

Alliance for Wildfire Resilience, American Conservation Coalition Action, American Forest and Paper Association, American Forests, American Wood Council, Association of Air Pollution Control Agencies, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Bipartisan Policy Center Action Breakthrough Institute, C3 Solutions, Citizens for Responsible Energy Solutions, ClearPath Action, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, ConservAmerica, Ducks Unlimited, Federation of American Scientists, Forest Landowners Association, Hardwood Federation, Intrinsic Exchange Group, Megafire Action, National Alliance of Forest Owners, National Association of State Foresters, National Deer Association, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, National Wild Turkey Federation, National Wildlife Federation, National Wooden Pallet & Container Association, Pheasants Forever, Property and Environment Research Center, Quail Forever, Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition, Society of American Foresters, Southeastern Air Pollution Control Agencies, Southeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association, Tall Timbers, The Stewardship Project

Congress.gov Link:

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