

STATEMENT OF
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE
BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL LANDS

REGARDING:

H.R. 3924 – “Wildfire Risk Evaluation Act”
H.R. 5419 – “Enhancing Administrative Reviews for Broadband Deployment Act”

December 11, 2025

Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) on two bills pertaining to the USDA Forest Service. We defer to the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) for its views on those elements of the bills that would affect federal lands under its jurisdiction.

H.R. 3924, “Wildfire Risk Evaluation Act”

H.R. 3924 would require the Secretaries of Agriculture, the Interior, and Homeland Security to jointly produce a quadrennial fire review to provide a comprehensive understanding of the wildfire environment in the United States. The review would build on the foundations of the “National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy” and the 2023 “On Fire” Commission report. The review would be submitted to Congress every four years for 20 years after enactment and would focus on how infrastructure and environmental factors influence wildfire risk, prevention, response, recovery, and public health. The review must include progress towards national wildfire goals and implementation of recommendations from the “On Fire” Commission report.

The Administration is taking bold actions to transform the wildfire response system to meet today’s wildfire crisis. Recently, USDA and DOI announced coordinated action to implement President Trump’s Executive Order 14308, *Empowering Commonsense Wildfire Prevention and Response*, to more closely align operations between the two Departments. USDA and DOI are diligently working toward a unification of Federal wildfire response and activities into a unified U.S. Wildland Fire Service within DOI, where practical and consistent with applicable law, and look forward to working with Congress to quickly implement this unification in support of a more efficient national wildfire response. In that context, the Forest Service would welcome the opportunity to contribute to a comprehensive review of the Nation’s wildland fire situation. The quadrennial reports provide an opportunity to assess the current state of wildland fire preparedness and response in our country as well as a window into the challenges we may face in

the years to come. The last quadrennial review was completed in 2014 and the scenarios forecasted in that report have in many ways since been realized in our nation's wildland fire environment.

USDA supports the intent of this bill to foster a comprehensive interagency approach to the national wildland fire crisis through contributions to a joint quadrennial fire review.

H.R. 5419 “Enhancing Administrative Reviews for Broadband Deployment Act”

H.R. 5419 directs the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to study how requests for communications use authorizations are reviewed on public lands and National Forest System lands. The bill directs the Secretaries to identify programmatic and administrative barriers to timely review and would initiate a study of Forest Service permitting for communication uses to determine if greater efficiencies may be gained through changes to policies and procedures as well as how personnel are trained and staffed. The study, which must be submitted to Congress within one year, must describe the agency's findings and create a new organizational staffing plan to ensure timely review of communications use applications.

Over the past five years, the Forest Service has authorized an average of 89 communications uses per year, with an average processing time of 199 days each. That average represents a significant decrease in communications use permitting times. Efficiencies have been gained through the updating of evaluation procedures for siting and modifying communication facilities. This includes incorporation of requirements under the MOBILE NOW Act, which requires the Forest Service to grant or deny applications for communications facilities within 270 days of receipt, into agency regulations. Specific streamlining measures include standardized application and authorization forms, expedited procedures for requests to co-locate a communications use in or on existing infrastructure, implementation of a mandatory 30-year term for any communications use authorization, and development of new procedures for tracking applications.

USDA supports the goals of H. R. 5419 and would like to work with the Committee and bill sponsor on ways to achieve its intent to minimize permitting delays.