



H. R. 3924 Hearing  
December 11th, 2025

Wildfire Risk Evaluation Act  
Testimony in Support  
The House Natural Resources Committee  
Subcommittee on Federal Lands

To: Subcommittee Chair Tom Tiffany and Subcommittee Members

**Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Subcommittee: thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of H.R. 3924, the Wildfire Risk Evaluation Act.**

I serve in a rural mountain community in Grand County, Colorado, where local fire and emergency services promote and engage in wildfire planning, mitigation, and responses and operate at the intersection of federal lands, fast-growing development, and increasing wildfire risk. In our county—and across the West—wildfire is no longer a seasonal event. It is a year-round, multi-jurisdictional challenge that tests the capacity of federal agencies, states, counties, tribes, and local responders simultaneously.

H.R. 3924 takes a practical and conservative step: it requires the federal agencies to measure what is changing, forecast what is coming, and inform Congress on how national strategies are performing. The bill's core requirement—a quadrennial fire review—brings collaboration towards preparedness in agencies with similar but different missions.

### **Why It Matters**

H.R. 3924 comes from recommendations from the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission's "ON FIRE" report and supports the National Cohesive Strategy by directing the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of the Interior, and the Secretary of Homeland Security to carry out an initial analysis and then a quadrennial review thereafter of wildland fire risks in the United States. This review includes a quantitative analysis of how the built environment (homes, subdivisions, infrastructure in the wildland-urban interface) and natural environment have changed since the last review—and how those changes affect mitigation, incident response, and recovery. The bill further requires an evaluation of progress implementing recommendations and projected future scenarios to guide realignment of programs, strategies, capabilities, and workforce.



This is exactly the kind of disciplined, data-driven governance that Congress and the public should expect, especially when wildfire response and recovery costs, infrastructure impacts, and risk to life are increasing.

### **Why the Review is Essential**

From the local perspective, wildfire is not “owned” by one federal, state, or local agency or department. It is a system problem. Federal land management agencies serve the public through multiple-use stewardship and resource protection. But they are not organized—nor resourced first and foremost—as public safety agencies. DHS/FEMA and the U.S. Fire Administration are, yet they lack direct authorities and incentives to mitigate risk at landscape scale. H.R. 3924 helps close that coordination gap.

H.R. 3924 correctly recognizes that wildfire is a homeland security issue as well as a land management issue. DHS involvement in a shared review process is not mission creep; it reflects reality on the ground where smoke impacts, evacuations, infrastructure disruption, and disaster recovery requirements extend far beyond a single land management agency.

### **Why Now**

This bill is timely because wildfire risk is intensifying and spreading geographically, while modern remote sensing, fuels datasets, and fire and smoke modeling now allow better forecasting and prioritization—if agencies consistently incorporate those advances. Recent disasters reinforce that extreme wildfire is not confined to one fuel type or one region: the Marshall Fire showed wind-driven suburban loss in Colorado; Smokehouse Creek showed scale and disruption in Texas; and the Maui fires showed how quickly wind, fuels, and the built environment can produce catastrophic outcomes.

Currently there are new tools rolling out. In recent years we’ve seen wildfire decision-making being transformed by improvements in the speed and quality of information and modeling. Land managers, federal, state and local responders and incident management teams increasingly rely on satellite and aerial detection that shortens time from ignition to awareness, better fuels and vegetation mapping that informs risk reduction and operational planning, and more accessible modeling tools that can forecast potential fire spread, intensity, and impacts under changing conditions.

These capabilities are currently unevenly integrated across jurisdictions and are only beginning and technology is better positioned than ever to assist with H.R. 3924’s quadrennial fire review and these new tools are ready for federal, state, and local agencies to use for interagency collaboration around stand densities, fuel moistures, harvest rates, potential fire spread rates, and populations affected, allowing agencies to routinely assess and forecast the wildfire environment and incorporate improved data streams and models into their planning.



## **Grand County, Colorado as a Case Study:**

Our own experience in Grand County illustrates why the bill's emphasis on quantifying changes in the built, natural and fire environment is so important.

### **1) Rapid growth in the wildland-urban interface changes the risk profile.**

Traditionally ranching, mining, and logging community, Grand County has also long been a recreational escape for many people on the Front Range of Colorado, as well as many visitors from across the nation. In recent decades, we have experienced significant growth as visitors have become property owners and rallied around ski areas, national forests and range lands, national recreation areas and a national park. These new property owners are often investors in second homes and investment properties—expanding the WUI footprint and increasing evacuation complexity, infrastructure exposure, and suppression difficulty. A quadrennial review that measures these built-environment trends will help the agencies involved as well as Congress see where risk is moving, not just where it used to be.

### **2) The pine beetle epidemic changed fuels and fire behavior.**

Across Colorado's high country, beetle-impacted lodgepole pine has altered forest conditions and created long-duration, high-severity fuel complexes. Grand County's own beetle epidemic began in the early 2000s, and what was once believed to be a three-to-four-year heightened fire condition led to much bigger and faster fires twenty years later. Heavy dead fuels litter the forest floor, and new, flashier fuels intermix and reach for sunlight. When wind and drought align, these landscapes can support extreme fire runs.

There were six federal land management units affected by beetle in Grand County as well as private property assisted by the state forest office, each with a different management strategy, as well as competing needs for their funding in other parts of their units.

### **3) East Troublesome Fire (2020) showed how fast conditions can exceed assumptions.**

The East Troublesome Fire started in Grand County on October 14, 2020, and within days made a historic 120,000 acre run through dead and regenerating forests, rangelands and communities and into Rocky Mountain National Park, over the Continental Divide, and into the Front Range of Colorado,



Our experience demonstrates why collective planning matters. Even without debating any single causal factor, the lesson for Congress is clear: the system must plan for high-consequence, rapid escalation events anywhere that wildlands intermix or intersect the built environment, and must align, planning, data collection, mitigation, response, and recovery accordingly if we are to protect our natural resources and our communities.

H.R. 3924's required review and 20-year scenario planning is designed for exactly this: identifying where risk is compounding (growth + fuels + climate stressors + suppression challenges) and requiring agencies to work together and report back how they are planning for the increase risk and what they are doing to decrease the risk.

## **Good Governance**

Supporting H.R. 3924 aligns with core principles in the public's best interest:

- Recurs on a predictable cycle so Congress and agencies can work from consistent, comparable baselines and operational alignment.
- Helps reduce reaction spending by improving targeting and timing of mitigation investments.
- Reinforces a whole-of-government, whole-community posture that fits the reality of WUI wildfire.

## **Coordination for Congress and Communities**

The subcommittee's oversight role is stronger when Congress receives consistent, comparable information over time. H.R. 3924's recurring review and reports can help Congress:

- Track whether the Cohesive Strategy goals—resilient landscapes, fire-adapted communities, safe and effective response—are being achieved.
- Track progress implementing the bipartisan, expert-driven recommendations in the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission's "ON FIRE" report.
- Identify workforce and capability gaps early enough to address them through authorizations, appropriations alignment, interagency reforms—rather than learning the same lessons after each disaster.



## Conclusion

I support H.R. 3924 as introduced. To maximize its usefulness to Congress and communities, I encourage the implementing agencies to ensure the quadrennial fire review:

1. **Uses common metrics across agencies** so results are comparable over time and across regions (fuels treated, WUI exposure, response time/resource availability, post-fire watershed risk, etc.).
2. **Connects “findings” to “actions”** by explicitly listing administrative changes made since the last review and whether they worked and were effective, as the bill already contemplates.
3. **Includes local and state operational perspectives**—especially from rural and communities—because these are often the first and last responders in WUI events.

Grand County’s experience is not unique; it is increasingly typical of the American West and many other fire-prone regions. The federal government must plan, measure, and report in a way that matches the scale and pace of the wildfire problem.

H.R. 3924 is a disciplined, whole-of-government approach that promotes accountability, strengthens interagency alignment, and improves Congress’s ability to oversee wildfire policy with facts rather than anecdotes. I urge the Subcommittee to advance H.R. 3924 and help ensure that our nation’s wildfire strategy is measurable, coordinated, and effective for the decades ahead.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad White", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Brad White  
Fire Chief- Grand Fire Protection District  
Chair – Grand County Wildfire Council  
President- Colorado State Fire Chiefs’ Association