



MEGAFIRE ACTION

ICYMI: Heatmap News: The Head of Megafire Action Wants Congress to Feel the Heat After Another Summer of Fires

In a recent Heatmap News [interview](#), Matt Weiner, founder and CEO of Megafire Action, underscored the urgency of passing the bipartisan Fix Our Forests Act (FOFA) as the organization launched its first-of-its-kind digital ad campaign calling for swift passage. Following the Los Angeles County wildfires in January, the House passed the bill with bipartisan support, aiming to streamline forest and wildfire management. However, the Senate version has stalled.

Weiner highlighted the bill's potential to address the escalating wildfire crisis, citing the significant health and climate impacts of increasing wildfire smoke. He also discussed the bill's provisions for improved forest management and the creation of a Wildfire Intelligence Center to enhance risk assessment and response. Despite initial opposition from environmental groups, the bill has garnered broader support due to its targeted approach and inclusion of advanced technologies.

In case you missed it...

Heatmap News: [The Head of Megafire Action Wants Congress to Feel the Heat After Another Summer of Fires](#)

By Jeva Lange

After the Los Angeles County wildfires in January, it seemed like the federal government was finally poised to do something about the decades of flawed forestry practices and land management policies that have turned the West into a tinderbox. On January 23, before the L.A. fires were even fully extinguished, the House of Representatives passed the Fix Our Forests Act on a bipartisan 279–141 vote, queuing up a bill that proponents say would speed and simplify forest and wildfire management projects that have gotten bogged down in a regulatory morass.

Then ... not much happened. Though Republican Senators John Curtis of Utah and Tim Sheehy of Montana teamed up with Democrats John Hickenlooper of Colorado and Alex Padilla of California to write their own version of the Fix Our Forests Act for the Senate, the bill stalled after a summer spent focused on the reconciliation bill. Meanwhile, more wildfires made headlines.

Matt Weiner, the founder and CEO of the nonprofit advocacy group Megafire Action, wants to bring some urgency back. This week, the organization launched a six-figure ad campaign in Washington, D.C., aimed at spurring senators to get back to working on wildfire resilience

and forestry reform. Though the bill's approach is divisive — the House version drew initial pushback from more than 100 environmental organizations, including the Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council, and League of Conservation Voters, for opening up large tracts of federal forest to logging, among other concerns — Weiner told me “there's no huge substantive holdup in the Senate that is keeping it from getting to 60 votes.”

I caught up with Weiner this week to learn more about where things stand with the Fix Our Forests Act and talk through some of the bill's more controversial regulatory rollbacks. Our conversation has been edited and condensed for clarity.

Catch our readers up: Why the Fix Our Forests Act, and why now?

We're looking at a generational opportunity to change the way we do land management. This is the most significant change Congress has considered since the Healthy Forest Restoration Act, and maybe even since the original National Forest Act. The smoke impacts of wildfires are killing more people than the flames. Wildfires are the most significant driver of PM 2.5 emissions growth in the country right now. The clean air community has done a fantastic job of reducing industrial emissions of PM 2.5, which has had real public health impacts, but those gains are in danger of vanishing because of the growth of wildfire smoke exposure.

Then there's the climate. If you care about carbon emissions, this is a huge opportunity at a time when a lot of other climate issues seem to be on the backburner. The 2020 fire season in California — a particularly bad year — released enough carbon to undo 20 years of the state's emissions reduction progress. The 2023 Canadian wildfires, if treated as a country, would have been the third-largest emitter in the world that year. And if you start thinking about Alaska and the Boreal burning in the way the West has been burning, it could potentially be game over for the climate. It's important that people understand that this is an existential climate issue and that we have an opportunity to make progress in a bipartisan way.

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