



2023

POLICY PRIORITIES

118TH CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Primary Role: FRA will take an active role in advancing these issue areas. FRA will collaborate with our allies to implement, support, or oppose legislation, policy, or rulemaking that impacts FRA members.

Transportation

Transportation is a key vector in the movement of raw forest products from the woods to the mill. Every year more than 15 million truckloads transport logs, pulpwood, biomass, and chips from the point of harvest to a mill or storage area. FRA will actively work to improve the safety and efficiency of transporting raw forest products and improve the availability of drivers.

Actions Include:

- Work with allied associations to address the driver shortage through policy or regulatory actions.
- Continue to educate members of Congress on the safety and efficiency benefits of allowing log trucks access to the interstate at legal state limits.
- Monitor and comment on rulemaking that may impact the wood supply chain.



Carbon Neutrality of Biomass

The carbon neutrality of forest-based biomass is grounded in the fact that carbon emissions from forest-based biomass combustion are fully offset by working forest lands that capture and store carbon. Currently, there is regulatory uncertainty around the carbon neutrality of forest-based biomass. FRA will work with allies on this issue to achieve recognition that forest-based biomass is recognized as carbon neutral.

Actions Include:

- Include language in the final spending bill that directs federal agencies to recognize the carbon-neutrality of forest-based biomass.
- Monitor and comment on rulemaking that provides permanence for forest-based biomass recognition.
- Work to include an inclusive definition of forest-based biomass in renewable energy legislation.





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Guest Worker Visas

Non-immigrant labor is critical to accomplishing forestry work on private and public lands. H-2B workers are responsible for planting nearly 85 percent of the trees every year. Access to non-immigrant labor must be made available to perform forestry work to address the multi-year backlog of tree planting on public and private forestlands. FRA will actively work to improve access to non-immigrant labor that performs forestry work.

Actions Include:

- Be proactive and advocate for the enactment of legislative language that would provide the Departments of Labor and Homeland Security authorization to release supplemental H-2B visas.
- Work with our allies to introduce legislation that provides meaningful H-2B cap relief.
- Monitor broad immigration legislation and seek opportunities for H-2B forestry workers.
- Continue to inform members of Congress about the importance of non-immigrant labor to restore forestlands, fire suppression, and improve forest health.



Endangered Species Act

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) provides protection for those species that are threatened or endangered. The listing of a species has the potential to significantly impact forest operations. FRA will continue to monitor and provide comments on proposed species listings and work with our allies to ensure the most recent research is used in the determination of a species' ESA status.

Actions Include:

- Continue to monitor and provide comments on the implementation of proposed bat listings as endangered and ensure reasonable conservation measures are implemented.
- Support legislation that provides flexibility to the ESA.
- Work with FRA regions to encourage states without bat Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) to develop an HCP using the Lake States Region process as a model.





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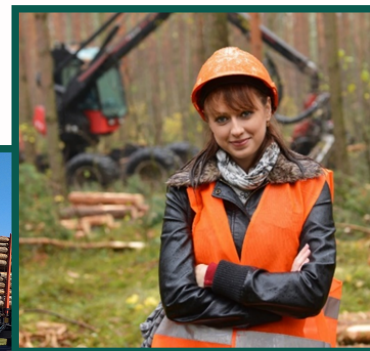
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Independent Contractor Status

Independent contractors are essential to the wood supply chain. Independent contractors provide for a diverse logging trucking workforce who make their own business decisions and operate under contracts or agreements to provide fiber to mills. FRA will continue to support efforts to defend independent contractor status and policies that improve access to credit for these businesses.

Actions Include:

- Monitor proposed rule on determining independent contractor status. The final rule is anticipated in early summer.
- Oppose harmful policies that reduce competition and increase tax burdens on small businesses.



Forest Products Industry Workforce

The sustainability and competitive viability of the forest products industry relies on an intact, healthy wood supply chain, which includes skilled labor. Labor shortages are limiting modernization and investments in rural communities. Targeted workforce education and training programs have been effective recruitment tools in computer programming, utility vegetation management, and automotive industries. Regional forest industry training hubs would allow participants to stay in or near their communities, which reduces the cost to participate, and affords program developers increased flexibility in adapting training curriculum to meet regional needs through ties to local forest product employers.

Actions Include:

- Support legislation to establish regional workforce training programs for individuals interested in a career in the forest products industry.
- Inform members of Congress on the workforce challenges of the forest products industry and propose proactive actions to address labor shortages.



2023 Farm Bill

The 2023 Farm Bill provides funding for various programs, including forestry, biomass energy, conservation, forest product inventory and research, and rural development. The current Farm Bill will expire on September 30, 2023. FRA will work with members of Congress to include priorities of the forest in the Farm Bill Coalitions in the 2023 Farm Bill.



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Secondary Role: FRA will monitor and collaborate with others on the following issues that impact our members.



Use of Wood Products in Tall Buildings

Improved technologies in the development of cross-laminated timbers have the potential to provide expanded markets for the solid wood product sector. FRA will provide support and monitor policies and regulations that provide a pathway for market growth in this area.



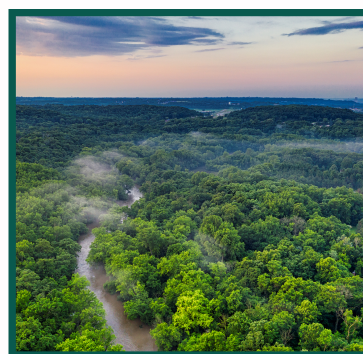
Climate Change Legislation

FRA will monitor climate change legislation and outline potential impacts on the wood supply chain. The FRA Public Policy and Advocacy Committee will review and make necessary corrections to positions on climate change policies.



Trade Policy

U.S. trade policy has the potential to both benefit and harm the forest products sector. FRA will work with our allies and monitor and report on trade policies that may impact the forest products industry. FRA will also review and provide comment on trade policy to assist Congressional leaders in making informed decisions on how policies may benefit or harm FRA members.



Federal Lands

The U.S. Forest Service is an important fiber supply source for the forest products industry in most regions of the United States. FRA will work with allied associations to ensure the Forest Service receives adequate funding to maintain and grow timber management on federal lands. FRA will support or oppose legislation that may impact our members and work with the Forest Service to ensure a reasonable process for old growth designation.

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Tax Reform

FRA will work with our champions on Capitol Hill and association allies to preserve favorable business tax treatment delivered under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) in 2017. Many of those provisions are beginning to phase down. Most notably, full expensing of business equipment—otherwise known as 100 percent bonus depreciation—was reduced by 20 percent at the beginning of this year and is scheduled to ratchet down a further 20 percent each year going forward until fully phased out in 2027. Full expensing, which allows businesses to write off the full purchase price of machinery and equipment in the year in which it was purchased, is a critical tax benefit for small and medium-sized businesses. FRA will be working to restore the 100 percent bonus depreciation provision under TCJA and apply it retroactively to equipment purchased after January 1, 2023.