

POLICY ISSUE BRIEF



FOREST RESOURCES ASSOCIATION

WHY FRA SUPPORTS H-2B REFORM



BACKGROUND

The forestry sector depends on seasonal H-2B visa workers when there aren't enough U.S. workers for short-term, remote jobs. The annual H-2B visa cap of 66,000 is insufficient, with demand exceeding the cap by two to three times. Each H-2B worker supports 4.6 American jobs and strengthens rural, forest-dependent communities.

- A 2020 GAO report found counties with H-2B employers had lower unemployment and higher wages.
- Businesses must first advertise jobs to U.S. workers, yet in FY 2020, only 2% of forestry positions were filled by Americans.
- H-2B workers plant 85% of U.S. trees—about 1.5 billion annually on 2.2 million acres.
- More workers are needed to replant forests affected by wildfires and hurricanes, with a 3–5 year backlog and 7 million USDA Forest Service acres awaiting replanting.
- 60% of forestry employers expect labor needs to grow within three years, yet 73% say visa shortages will impact reforestation efforts.
- The share of businesses denied all requested H-2B visas doubled from 16% in FY 2019 to 32% in FY 2020.

REQUESTS



Exempt forestry workers from the H-2B cap to address the reforestation backlog.



Support an H-2B Returning Worker Exemption or other cap relief in FY 2025 DHS appropriations or spending bills.



Establish permanent H-2B cap relief.

WHY MORE H-2B VISAS ARE NEEDED

- There is currently a 3–5-year backlog in tree planting due to rising demand from wildfire recovery efforts and ongoing labor shortages.
- Timely access to H-2B visas is essential for hiring seasonal workers.
- Seasonal workers plant 85% of U.S. trees each year.
- Only 2% of H-2B forestry jobs are filled by U.S. workers.
- Congress must provide permanent and meaningful H-2B cap relief in FY 2025 spending bills or other relevant legislation.

ABOUT FRA

The Forest Resources Association (FRA) is the only national organization representing all sectors of the wood supply chain. It advocates for its members on federal policy, supply chain relations, and forest operations. FRA members are represented in 49 states and 384 congressional districts.

For more information, please contact:

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