

S 1691

National Forest Ecosystem Improvement Act of 2015

Congress: 114 (2015–2017, Ended)

Chamber: Senate

Policy Area: Public Lands and Natural Resources

Introduced: Jun 25, 2015

Current Status: Committee on Energy and Natural Resources Senate Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining.

Latest Action: Committee on Energy and Natural Resources Senate Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining.

Hearings held. With printed Hearing: S.Hrg. 114-400. (Jul 16, 2015)

Official Text: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/1691>

Sponsor

Name: Sen. Barrasso, John [R-WY]

Party: Republican • **State:** WY • **Chamber:** Senate

Cosponsors (2 total)

Cosponsor	Party / State	Role	Date Joined
Sen. Flake, Jeff [R-AZ]	R · AZ		Jul 7, 2015
Sen. Hatch, Orrin G. [R-UT]	R · UT		Jul 15, 2015

Committee Activity

Committee	Chamber	Activity	Date
Energy and Natural Resources Committee	Senate	Hearings By (subcommittee)	Jul 16, 2015

Subjects & Policy Tags

Policy Area:

Public Lands and Natural Resources

Related Bills

No related bills are listed.

National Forest Ecosystem Improvement Act of 2015

This bill directs the Department of Agriculture (USDA), acting through the Forest Service, to identify, prioritize, and carry out ecosystem restoration projects on National Forest System land in accordance with applicable land and resource management plans, if any, to accomplish one or more of the following objectives:

- restore terrestrial habitat;
- sustain water quality, water flows, or watershed health and function;
- create, improve, or increase early seral habitat;
- carry out a needed timber stand improvement;
- reduce the risk or extent of insect or disease infestation;
- reduce wildland fire severity potential;
- implement a community wildfire protection plan; or
- establish, recover, or maintain ecosystem resiliency.

USDA may not carry out an ecosystem restoration project on any area of System land in the National Wilderness Preservation System or on which removal of vegetation is prohibited by law.

USDA must accomplish restoration treatments throughout the National Forest System on 1 million acres using certain mechanical treatment methods and on another 1 million acres using prescribed fire.

USDA shall prepare an environmental assessment in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) for each ecosystem restoration project that accomplishes one or more objectives of this Act.

USDA shall study, develop, and describe in each ecosystem restoration project both the proposed action and a no-action alternative.

USDA shall establish within the Forest Service an arbitration program as an alternative dispute resolution process in lieu of judicial review for specified types of ecosystem restoration projects.

The judicial review of an action challenging an ecosystem restoration project under this Act shall be subject to specified plaintiff bonding requirements.

A categorical exclusion is made available to USDA for certain forest management activities in order to: (1) expedite specified critical response actions, (2) expedite salvage operations in response to catastrophic events, and (3) meet forest plan goals for early successional forests.

(A "categorical exclusion" under NEPA is a category of actions which do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment and which have been found to have no such effect in procedures adopted by a federal agency in implementing environmental regulations and for which, therefore, neither an Environmental Assessment nor an Environmental Impact Statement is required.)

For each forest management activity covered by a categorical exclusion granted by this title, USDA shall satisfy the interagency consultation obligations under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 by achieving compliance with certain alternative consultation procedures established by federal regulation.

Actions Timeline

- **Jul 16, 2015:** Committee on Energy and Natural Resources Senate Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining. Hearings held. With printed Hearing: S.Hrg. 114-400.
- **Jun 25, 2015:** Introduced in Senate
- **Jun 25, 2015:** Read twice and referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.