

# THE ENERGY, CLIMATE, & CONSERVATION TASK FORCE

Member Lead: Rep. Garret Graves (R-LA)

## BUILD RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

*“Developing resilient communities before an incident occurs reduces loss of life and economic disruption.” – Brock Long, Former FEMA Administrator*

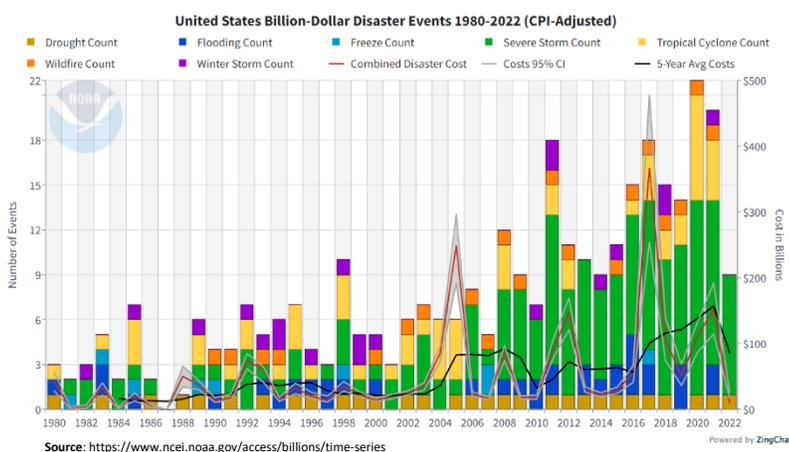
Prioritizing resiliency in our communities is essential to ensuring Americans are as prepared as possible to respond to and quickly recover from man-made and natural disasters. More than just our buildings, resiliency encompasses everything from providing water in the West to protecting our coastline to delivering electricity to our homes and businesses. Wise investments in resiliency also save taxpayer funds, with estimates of up to \$11 saved on post-disaster recovery for every dollar spent on pre-disaster mitigation. Mitigation is critical, given that disaster costs have increased significantly over the years.<sup>1</sup>

Under the last Republican majority, Congressional Republicans included critical resiliency provisions in major legislation, such as the Disaster Recovery Reform Act and the Water Resources Development Act. We must continue pursuing fiscally responsible efforts to protect our local communities in a way that saves lives and money for hard working Americans while ensuring access to basic modern needs – such as electricity.

### TOPLINE FACTS:

#### Coastal Resilience

- In 2021, the U.S. had 20 weather disasters with economic costs that totaled over \$152 billion and led to 724 deaths.<sup>2</sup> One-quarter of those disasters accounted for more than 70% of disaster costs – and over half of those costs were due to hurricanes.<sup>3</sup>
- Since 1980, the U.S. has had 332 weather events with damages/costs reaching or exceeding \$1 billion (including CPI adjustment to 2022) – the total cost of these 332 events exceeds \$2.275 trillion<sup>4</sup> with hurricanes causing the most damage – over \$1.1 trillion total.<sup>5</sup>
- Flood-related disasters have cost the United States more than \$900 billion in damage and economic losses since 2000 and have affected every state.<sup>6</sup>
- The Army Corps of Engineers has an estimated \$109 billion backlog of congressionally authorized projects to strengthen America’s waterway networks and protect against storm and flood damages.<sup>7</sup>
- Various studies have demonstrated that every \$1 invested in pre-disaster mitigation results in anywhere from \$4 to \$11 in avoided losses and potential disaster recovery costs.<sup>8</sup>
- Implementing mitigation programs could save American taxpayers about \$3.4 billion every year and could prevent hundreds of deaths and thousands of injuries.<sup>9</sup>



#### Wildfire Resilience

- In 2020, the wildfires in California emitted roughly 112 million metric tons of carbon dioxide, which is equivalent to the emissions of 24.2 million passenger cars driving in a single year.<sup>10</sup>
- 70% of the nationwide acreage burned by wildfires in 2020 was on federal lands.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://coast.noaa.gov/states/fast-facts/hazard-mitigation-value.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/billions/summary-stats/US/2021>

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> <https://coast.noaa.gov/data/nationalfacts/pdf/hand-out-coastal-fast-facts.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/fact-sheets/2021/07/30/how-pew-helps-build-flood-resilient-states#:~:text=Pew%20supports%20state%20governments%20from,solutions%20to%20reduce%20flood%20impacts%2C>

<sup>7</sup> <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11945>

<sup>8</sup> [http://2021.nibs.org/files/pdfs/ms\\_v4\\_overview.pdf](http://2021.nibs.org/files/pdfs/ms_v4_overview.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <https://coast.noaa.gov/states/fast-facts/hazard-mitigation-value.html>

<sup>10</sup> <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/environment-and-energy/californias-2020-wildfire-emissions-akin-to-24-million-cars>

<sup>11</sup> <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10244/54#:~:text=In%202020%2C%2070%25%20of%20the,for%2076%25%20of%20total%20fires.>

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- Over one billion acres across the country are at risk of wildland fire, including 63 million acres at high or very high risk managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS).<sup>12</sup> 71% of BLM lands and 89% of Forest Service lands have the potential for wildfires to ignite and spread to communities.<sup>13</sup>
- Wildfires are a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions that wreak havoc on the atmosphere. In the western U.S., wildfires released a record 130 million tons of carbon in 2021 alone.<sup>14</sup> Wildfire smoke in the Pacific Northwest is causing atmospheric carbon monoxide levels to spike.
- Many U.S. forests are overloaded with dangerous dry fuels that have been allowed to accumulate through a lack of thinning, prescribed burns, and mechanical treatments.<sup>15</sup>
- Not only do wildfires threaten homes and increase emissions, but they also now threaten one of America's most iconic trees – the Giant Sequoias. Found only in California, 20% of the Giant Sequoias have been wiped out by catastrophic wildfires in the last three years.<sup>16</sup>
- Restricted by overregulation, federal land managers have been unable to increase the pace and scale of treatments necessary to restore Giant Sequoia resiliency to wildfires. At its current pace, it would take the U.S. Forest Service approximately 52 years to treat just their 19 most at-risk Giant Sequoia groves.<sup>17</sup>
- Many of these carbon-emitting wildfires could have been less severe had federal land management agencies implemented more proactive forest management activities, including mechanical thinning and prescribed burning.
- A combination of onerous regulations, burdensome consultation requirements, bureaucratic red tape and delays, and frivolous litigation have made our forests overgrown, diseased, and fire-prone powder kegs.
- Without action to implement more proactive forest management activities, more USFS lands will burn, threatening communities and turning our carbon sinks into a net source of carbon emissions.

## Western Water Resilience

- Over 65% of the fresh water supply in western states comes from forested watersheds.<sup>18</sup> Nationwide, 80% of the freshwater resources in the U.S. originate on forested land, and more than 3,400 public drinking water systems are located in watersheds containing national forest lands.<sup>19</sup>
- The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) latest seasonal drought outlook projects that drought is very likely to persist in much of the West with below-average precipitation in some areas.<sup>20</sup>
- In California's Central Valley, many farmers will not receive water allocations for the 2022 season.<sup>21</sup>
- Last year, those same farmers saw their water allocations paused due to the worsening drought conditions.<sup>22</sup>
- Since last summer, drought conditions have persisted throughout the West. Many communities have experienced wells running dry<sup>23</sup> or facing new municipal water restrictions.<sup>24</sup> These ongoing drought conditions not only increase the likelihood of wildfires, but they also put our domestic agricultural production in jeopardy.<sup>25</sup>
- But despite these conditions, federal regulations have made it increasingly difficult to build the water infrastructure needed to provide for these communities. For example, no new major federal water storage infrastructure has been built in California since 1979.<sup>26 27</sup>
- Water storage is designed to capture water in wet years that would be used in the dry years. The western United States is built upon this premise and urban and rural development has generally followed this availability of water. There are still opportunities to capture more water in certain basins throughout the West. The Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act was designed to facilitate that investment through funding and streamlining.
- For example, raising the Shasta Lake reservoir would increase water storage capacity in the reservoir by 634,000-acre feet – enough water to support more than 6 million Californians annually.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.energy.senate.gov/services/files/AAF7DF40-2A47-4951-ADA4-4B124AD3894F>.

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs\\_series/rmrs/gtr/rmrs\\_gtr425.pdf](https://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs_series/rmrs/gtr/rmrs_gtr425.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <https://republicans-naturalresources.house.gov/newsroom/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=410971>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.theunion.com/opinion/columns/robert-g-ingram-forest-fuel-management-the-ugly-truth/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/wildfires-kill-unprecedented-numbers-of-large-sequoia-trees.htm>

<sup>17</sup> [https://republicans-naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/save\\_our\\_sequoias\\_act\\_-\\_one\\_page.pdf](https://republicans-naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/save_our_sequoias_act_-_one_page.pdf) (Data provided by the U.S. Forest Service)

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/sciencematters/wildfires-how-do-they-affect-our-water-supplies>

<sup>19</sup> <https://ca.water.usgs.gov/wildfires/wildfires-water-quality.html>

<sup>20</sup> [https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/expert\\_assessment/sdo\\_summary.php](https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/expert_assessment/sdo_summary.php)

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.usbr.gov/newsroom/#/news-release/4157>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.usbr.gov/newsroom/#/news-release/3796>

<sup>23</sup> [https://www.kdrv.com/news/local/historic-drought-leaves-klamath-basin-domestic-wells-high-and-dry/article\\_bbfd9b05-fc40-5b16-9cbf-a477f42ac993.html](https://www.kdrv.com/news/local/historic-drought-leaves-klamath-basin-domestic-wells-high-and-dry/article_bbfd9b05-fc40-5b16-9cbf-a477f42ac993.html)

<sup>24</sup> <https://calmatters.org/environment/2022/04/southern-california- conserve-water/>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.drought.gov/sectors/agriculture>

<sup>26</sup> <https://fruitgrowersnews.com/news/biden-pursues-reversal-of-rules-for-california-water-projects/>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.usnews.com/news/business/articles/2021-08-31/california-moves-slowly-on-water-projects-amid-drought>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.usbr.gov/newsroom/newsroomold/newsrelease/detail.cfm?RecordID=73146>

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- Water supply reductions mean fewer U.S. grown fresh fruits and vegetables for consumers, farm-related job losses, and billions in lost economic activity.
- Oregon's Klamath Project's main water delivery system was closed for the entire 2021 irrigation season and the estimated lack of irrigation water led to a loss of \$100 million in economic activity, a 40 to 60 percent decline in on-farm income, a 10 percent decline in land value, and 700 regional jobs lost.<sup>29</sup>
- In addition, the Klamath Water Users Association estimated that more than 300 homes lost water for drinking, cooking, and sanitation purposes.<sup>30</sup>

## *Grid Reliability and Resilience*

- Aging infrastructure,<sup>31</sup> physical and cybersecurity risks,<sup>32</sup> and changes in the sources of power generation have made the electricity grid less reliable.<sup>33</sup>
- In 2021, about 61% of electricity generation was from fossil fuels – natural gas (38.3%), coal (21.8%), petroleum (0.5%), and other gases (0.3%).<sup>34</sup>
- EIA expects that renewable energy will provide 22% of U.S. electric power sector generation in 2022 and 24% in 2023, compared with 20% in 2021.<sup>35</sup> In contrast, nuclear power, which provides reliable, emissions free, baseload electricity has declined, with 12 nuclear plants closing since 2012.<sup>36</sup>
- As there are more calls to increase weather-dependent wind and solar power, it is imperative that electricity policy is guided by reliability and affordability.

## **CASE STUDY: POWERING OUR HOMES AND BUSINESSES**

- Policies that drive the overuse of intermittent resources like wind and solar at the expense of reliable baseload energy can increase costs, reduce reliability, and add unnecessary risks.
- It isn't just following natural disasters that Americans are confronted with a lack of power to keep the lights on at home or to run their businesses. Rolling blackouts have become the norm in some parts of the country,<sup>37</sup> and the North American Electric Reliability Corporation cautioned that large areas of the U.S. could experience blackouts this summer.<sup>38</sup>
- In Texas, without the infrastructure that was needed to maintain the grid during the extreme cold of the weather storm of February 2021, pipeline infrastructure and wind turbines froze and a reactor at one of the state's nuclear plants went dark.<sup>39</sup> This led to widespread power outages that caused billions of dollars in damages and contributed to hundreds of deaths.<sup>40</sup>
- Shutting down reliable power supplies needlessly sacrifices the resiliency of the grid in times of emergency. This can be seen first-hand in states like California where endless advocating against emissions free nuclear power and cleaner, American natural gas left the state scrambling for emergency power in the hot summer months.<sup>41</sup>
- The lack of infrastructure – from pipelines and transmission – also continues to weaken the reliability of the U.S. electric grid.
- By pushing goals without a strategy and choosing foreign energy cartels over our own resources here at home, the Biden administration has failed to deliver affordable, secure, and resilient energy.

As regulators make decisions about energy assets and dispatching energy, they must prioritize reliability and affordability in order to harden our electric grid and make it more resilient.

<sup>29</sup> <https://kwua.org/klamath-water-users-association-worst-day-in-the-history-of-the-klamath-project/>

<sup>30</sup> [https://republicans-naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/footnote\\_33.pdf](https://republicans-naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/footnote_33.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.energy.gov/articles/reimagining-and-rebuilding-americas-energy-grid>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.utilitydive.com/news/sophisticated-hackers-could-crash-the-us-power-grid-but-money-not-sabotag/603764/>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/local/climate-in-crisis/california-fossil-fuel-plants/2933875/>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.eia.gov/tools/faqs/faq.php?id=427&t=3>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.eia.gov/outlooks/steo/report/electricity.php>

<sup>36</sup> <https://csrcreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46820/3#:~:text=Twelve%20U.S.%20nuclear%20power%20reactors,3%20on%20April%2030%2C%202021>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/california-warned-brace-another-summer-energy-blackouts-n1268879>

<sup>38</sup> [https://www.nerc.com/pa/RAPA/ra/Reliability%20Assessments%20DL/NERC\\_SRA\\_2022.pdf](https://www.nerc.com/pa/RAPA/ra/Reliability%20Assessments%20DL/NERC_SRA_2022.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> <https://csrcreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IN/IN11608>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.texastribune.org/2022/01/02/texas-winter-storm-final-death-toll-246/>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-08-19/california-to-build-temporary-gas-plants-to-avoid-blackouts#xj4y7vzkg>

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## Examples of Republican Solutions:

[H.R. 2809](#), (Rep. David Rouzer), “*Natural Disaster Recovery Program Act of 2021*”  
[Full Congress.gov summary](#)

This legislation consolidates disaster assistance for unmet needs at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), including necessary expenses for activities related to resiliency, long-term recovery, restoration of infrastructure and mitigation, and economic revitalization to reduce duplication across federal programs.

[H.R. 5324](#), (Rep. Stephanie Bice), “*NOAA Weather Radio Modernization Act*”  
[Full Congress.gov summary](#)

This legislation provides support for existing NOAA Weather Radio broadcast and transmitter infrastructure. Establishes a modernization initiative to upgrade and expand the NOAA Weather Radio across the country.

[H.R.5641](#), (Rep. Sam Graves), “*Small Project Efficient and Effective Disaster (SPEED) Recovery Act*”  
[Full Congress.gov summary](#)

This legislation increases the threshold for eligibility for assistance for what qualifies as a “small project” under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, thereby allowing more recovery projects to proceed under simplified procedures and more flexibility to build in mitigation.

[H.R. 5774](#), (Rep. Garret Graves), “*Expediting Disaster Recovery Act*”  
[Full Congress.gov summary](#)

This legislation would make responding to unmet needs after a disaster more predictable for states and more efficient for disaster survivors. Within 30 days of a disaster declaration, 10 percent of the estimated aggregate amounts of grant assistance under Sections 406 (repair, restoration, and replacement of damaged facilities) and 408 (Individual Assistance) of the Stafford Act for the major disasters would automatically become available from the Disaster Relief Fund (DRF) to address unmet needs. These funds could then be used for home repair and rebuilding and emergency assistance for disaster-impacted businesses.

[H.R. 1050](#), (Rep. Neal Dunn), “*Connecting Communities Post Disasters Act of 2021*”  
[Full Congress.gov summary](#)

This bill exempts projects that replace or make improvements to communications facilities following a presidentially declared major disaster or emergency from certain environmental or historic preservation review requirements.

[H.R. 8168](#), (Rep. Kevin McCarthy), “*Save Our Sequoias Act*”  
[Full Congress.gov summary](#)

This legislation will expedite critical forest management projects to prevent catastrophic wildfires and save our Giant Sequoias.

[H.R. 4614](#), (Rep. Bruce Westerman), “*Resilient Federal Forests Act*”  
[Full Congress.gov summary](#)

This legislation is a comprehensive forest management bill that restores forest health, increases resiliency to wildfire, and supports the economic revitalization of rural communities.

[H.R. 2585](#), (Rep. Dusty Johnson), “*Forestry Improvements to Restore the Environment (FIRE) Act of 2021*”  
[Full Congress.gov summary](#)

This legislation will ensure the Forest Service is proactively reviewing lands recently impacted by a wildfire and salvaging carbon emitting trees.

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[H.R. 5010](#), (Rep. Mike Garcia), “Fire Information and Reaction Enhancement (*FIRE*) Act”

[Full Congress.gov summary](#)

This legislation directs NOAA, in collaboration with the U.S. weather industry and academic entities, to establish a program within NOAA to improve wildfire forecasting and detection. Also creates one or more weather research testbeds to develop improved detection of and forecast capabilities for wildfire events and their impacts.

[H.R. 2612](#), (Rep. Doug LaMalfa), “Restoring Environments, Soils, Trees, and Operations to develop the Rural Economy (*RESTORE*) Act of 2021”

[Full Congress.gov summary](#)

This legislation provides new tools for the U.S. Forest Service to work with states on landscape-scale management projects to prioritize reduction of wildfire risk.

[H.R. 737](#), (Rep. David Valadao), “Responsible, No-Cost Extension of Western Water Infrastructure Improvements (*RENEW WIIN*) Act”

[Full Congress.gov summary](#)

This legislation is an extension of the storage and operations provisions of the WIIN Act and authorization of funds for critical water storage projects. The WIIN Act was critical in ensuring families in rural communities and farms in the Central Valley have access to clean, reliable water.

[H.R. 8397](#), (Rep. Stephanie Bice), “National Mesonet Authorization Act”

[Full Congress.gov summary](#)

This bill codifies and expands the National Mesonet Program within the National Weather Service by authorizing state, local, and private sector partnerships for real-time collection and dissemination of non-federal surface, boundary layer, and tropospheric atmospheric weather observations in the US. These observations substantially augment the nation’s monitoring infrastructure and significantly improve weather prediction, severe weather warnings, and emergency response for all regions of the country.

*American resources, American innovation, and American competitiveness to increase energy and economic security, lower global emissions, and reduce dependence on China and Russia.*

8/09/2022