

House Natural Resources Committee

Pending Legislation

May 21, 2026

Highlights:

Lawmakers debated whether repealing the roadless rule and streamlining NEPA processes would improve wildfire response and forest management or weaken environmental protections, public input, and ecosystem resilience. Tribal stakeholders strongly opposed changes to the roadless rule, emphasizing impacts on ancestral lands, treaty rights, and the need for meaningful consultation in federal land management decisions.

Key Points:

- **H.R. 7695 (Rep. Hageman)**, - Repeals the 2001 Roadless Rule and lifts restrictions on road construction across millions of acres of national forest land.
 - Supporters: Argue the rule limits access needed for thinning and wildfire response, contributes to fuel buildup, delays management due to regulatory processes, and harms rural timber economies.
 - Opponents: Argue the rule protects intact ecosystems, watersheds, and habitat; note that fires are often human-caused and more likely near roads; emphasize public support and environmental benefits.
 - Tribal perspectives: Strong opposition centered on impacts to ancestral lands, treaty-protected resources, and cultural sites. Tribes raised concerns about inadequate consultation timelines and emphasized the federal trust responsibility and need for meaningful government-to-government engagement.
- **H.R. 8682 (Rep. Downing)**, “Accelerating Forest Management Act”
 - Expands use of NEPA categorical exclusions for timber salvage projects to speed removal of dead and dying trees.
 - Supporters: Argue current processes are too slow, leading to increased wildfire risk, lost timber value, and higher costs; emphasize improved state–federal coordination.
 - Concerns: Potential to weaken environmental safeguards, reduce transparency, and limit public and scientific input.
 - Tribal consideration: Lawmakers stressed the need for formal tribal consultation to ensure traditional knowledge and land-use priorities are included.
- **H.R. 8688 (Rep. Hurd)**, “Forest Health and Wildlife Risk Reduction Act”

- Establishes a categorical exclusion for forest thinning projects (under 5,000 acres) to reduce wildfire risk.
- Supporters: Emphasize proactive fuel reduction, protection of water supplies, and reduced impacts on communities and infrastructure.
- Concerns: Similar to H.R. 8682—questions about reduced environmental review and public engagement, and whether streamlined processes maintain adequate oversight.