



Overview

While some wildfires cause minimal damages, many result in immediate destruction of property and destabilization of ecosystems that necessitate special efforts to protect human wellbeing and enable environmental recovery. In addition to displacing around [39,000 people](#) from their homes in the United States between 2008-2023, wildfires also resulted in substantial loss of vegetation causing soil erosion, flooding, and introduction of sediments and pollutants into waterways that can [threaten drinking water](#). States can improve their wildfire response processes through post-fire housing relief, environmental damage assessments, and ecosystem rehabilitation.

Policy Options *(******* indicates bipartisan support)*



Housing Relief:

- [Hawaii H.C.R 3 \(enacted 2024\)](#): Calls for counties to establish emergency zoning codes to facilitate temporary housing in wake of the 2023 Maui wildfire.
- [Oregon H.B. 3215 \(enacted 2023\)](#): Authorizes loans, grants, and rental support to repair or replace damaged housing caused by wildfire, support land acquisition for housing in disaster-impacted communities, and establishes a Disaster Housing Recovery Fund.
- ******[Washington H.B. 1899 \(enacted 2024\)](#): Promotes the rebuilding of homes and other community infrastructure impacted by wildfires using more energy-efficient and environmentally friendly methods.



Environmental Damage Assessments:

- [Hawaii S.C.R 222 \(enacted 2024\)](#): Mandates extensive soil testing in Lahaina following the August 2023 wildfire to examine soil contamination and risks to human health, groundwater, ocean ecosystems, and food production.
- [Minnesota H.F. 3377 \(enacted 2024\)](#): Directs the University of Minnesota to evaluate the long-term effects of wildfires on lake water quality, mercury mobilization, and mercury bioaccumulation in fish and to develop predictive tools to protect fishery and lake health.
- [Oregon S.B. 752 \(introduced 2023\)](#): Mandates the Water Resources Department and the Department of Environmental Quality to study the impacts of wildfires on the water quality of streams and tributaries.



Ecosystem Rehabilitation:

- ******[New Mexico H.B. 195 \(enacted 2024\)](#): Authorizes the State Forestry Division to engage in forest management activities including post-fire rehabilitation.
- ******[Colorado S.B. 54 \(enacted 2021\)](#): Appropriates \$4 million for watershed restoration and post-fire recovery efforts.
- [Hawaii H.R. 9 \(enacted 2024\)](#): Urges the DLNR and USFWS to initiate a native plant seeding project to restore the ecological damage caused by wildfires.
- [New Mexico H.B. 1 \(enacted 2024\)](#): Appropriates \$10 million for post-fire management including watershed restoration, slope stabilization, and erosion control.

