

Seedlings for Sustainable Habitat Restoration Act of 2023



Background

American forests provide crucial ecosystem services such as air and water purification, flood protection, wildlife habitat, climate regulation, recreation, and many others. Unfortunately, our forests are increasingly threatened by drought, wildfire, invasive species, and outbreaks of insects and disease. Wildfires have been particularly destructive: From 2001 to 2021, the US lost 11.1 million hectares of tree cover from wildfires and 33.1 million hectares from all other drivers of loss. Tree planting programs administered by the US Forest Service and other agencies are critical to remediating these devastating losses and are dependent on a reliable supply of native seedlings. While the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law of 2021 provides funding for tree planting programs, it does not address the need for expanded nursery capacity. Without capital funds to increase the tree nursery capacity, seedling supplies will not keep pace with critical reforestation efforts underway across the nation's threatened habitats.

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This bill will clarify that funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is available to support the development of seedling nurseries at state forestry agencies, local private or non-profit entities, and institutions of higher education. This funding will allow for the rapid expansion of critical nurseries around the nation and provide the native seedlings that are urgently needed to support reforestation and habitat restoration programs at the US Forest Service and other federal, state, and local agencies.

For more information, please contact Julien Caubel at Julien_Caubel@lujan.senate.gov.