



BRUSH Fires Act

Representative Dave Min and Representative Young Kim

Background

Shrublands dominate the landscape of the Western United States, and research has shown that fires in these regions burn more acres and have a greater impact on homes and urban areas compared to fires in traditional forests. Brush fires can spread quickly and overwhelm first responders, often serving as a precursor to larger wildfires that cross landscapes. Despite the human toll and cost to taxpayers from these fires, most wildfire mitigation practices currently focus on addressing the excessive build-up of flammable vegetation in forests. Data on fire risk reduction strategies remains significantly limited for shrublands compared to other ecosystems, according to the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), making it difficult for fire managers to quantify success and identify best practices in high-risk areas.

As emphasized by the non-partisan Wildfire Mitigation and Management Commission, mitigation methods must be tailored to their ecosystem to maximize success and ensure community safety. Shrublands are adapted to fire at infrequent intervals and require unique management methods to reduce fire risk. Too much fire or inappropriate fuel treatments risk converting native shrubs into highly ignitable, non-native weeds and grasses that can significantly heighten the likelihood of a more severe fire in the future.

Summary

The *Building Resiliency and Understanding of Shrublands to Halt (BRUSH) Fires Act* would improve our understanding of wildfire mitigation in shrubland ecosystems and ensure land managers and first responders have the tools necessary to combat extreme brush fires.

This bipartisan legislation would direct USFS, in coordination with relevant federal agencies, to conduct a study on the effectiveness of its wildfire mitigation practices in shrublands—including fuel treatment and modification activities, strategies to prevent the spread of invasive species and mitigate unplanned ignitions, local partnerships on wildfire resilience, and more. Following this study, USFS must submit a report to Congress that summarizes its findings, assesses the agency's alignment with best practices for shrubland management, and evaluates opportunities to coordinate with non-federal entities on fire risk reduction.

This bill is supported by The Nature Conservancy, California Fire Chiefs Association, Endangered Habitats League, California Chaparral Institute, and Irvine Ranch Conservancy.

To cosponsor this legislation or request additional information, please reach out to Ryan Ebrahimi with the Office of Congressman Dave Min (ryan.ebrahimi@mail.house.gov).