



National Affairs and Legislation Committee

What We're Watching Chart Legislation Important to the GCA

The 118th Congress

June 10, 2024

The GCA actively tracks legislation and administrative actions that achieve the goals laid out in the GCA Position Papers (Agriculture, Clean Air, Climate Change and Energy, Land Conservation, Native Plants, Oceans, Transportation and Infrastructure, Water, and Waste Management) and are central to GCA's purpose to "restore, improve, and protect the quality of the environment through educational programs and action in the fields of conservation and civic improvement." The 118th United States Congress, which is on track to be the least productive Congress in history, was convened on January 3, 2023, and will continue until January 3, 2025.*

Below is our latest update on the status of bills the GCA has focused on most recently. Please remember that this is a rapidly changing landscape and information may change daily. This list includes the **status of the current priorities and legislation** that the GCA discussed and advocated for at our 41st Annual NAL conference on Capitol Hill on March 12-20, 2024, as well as newly introduced legislation and topics of concern. In addition, links can be found to a host of [letters to policymakers](#) that the NAL Committee has sent forward in the last several months.

WWWC is both a quick reference and a working document used to track relevant, prioritized legislation. It is updated quarterly or as needed. Sources include congress.gov and govtrack.us. The GCA supports independent, academic, peer-reviewed scientific research as the basis for formulating responsible public policy and legislation, as well as appropriate funding to ensure quality results. WWWC was compiled by members of the National Affairs and Legislation Committee and expresses the views of the writers. NAL Vice Chair reports are not Board-approved positions of The Garden Club of America.

**A Congress runs for two years after convening in January. No bills from the previous Congress carry over. With each new Congress, bills may be reintroduced and renumbered, committee hearings will be held, Executive Orders will be issued, and progress may continue.*

CURRENT PRIORITIES AND LEGISLATION

I. Agriculture & Soil Health

BILL / PRIORITY	STATUS / PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION / GCA ENGAGEMENT
<p data-bbox="100 362 388 394">The 2024 Farm Bill</p> <p data-bbox="100 435 342 467">118th Congress</p> <p data-bbox="100 508 239 540">H.R.8467</p> <p data-bbox="100 545 210 578">S. TBD</p>	<p data-bbox="520 362 1942 532">Status: The Farm Bill is arguably the most important and far reaching conservation measure administered by the federal government. Discussion of the House draft of the five-year Farm Bill legislation was to begin in September of 2023, but the budget stand-off pushed action into 2024; on November 15, 2023, Congress passed a continuing resolution, signed by President Biden, extending the Farm Bill through December of 2024. .</p> <p data-bbox="520 537 1911 748">On May 21, 2024, Representative Glenn Thompson (R-PA) introduced H.R. 8467, The Farm Food and National Security Act of 2024, the House’s framework for the next 5 year Farm Bill. The bill, approved by the House Agriculture Committee on May 24, 2024, largely along partisan lines, would transfer unspent funds from the Inflation Reduction Act (“IRA”) to fund agricultural programs, remove the IRA’s climate change mitigation spending requirements, and cut funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Program (SNAP), historically over 80 percent of the Farm Bill’s budget.</p> <p data-bbox="520 753 1942 891">On May 17, 2024, Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.) introduced a competing Senate framework for the 2024 Farm Bill Reauthorization, called the "Rural Prosperity and Food Security Act (RPFSA). RPFSA maintains and makes permanent climate funding provisions of the IRA and maintains full funding for SNAP programs. The bill does not yet have a number.</p> <p data-bbox="520 927 1963 1292">Purpose / Description: Every five years, the Farm Bill expires and is updated with a unique title. The current Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 was enacted in December 2018 and was set to expire in September of 2023. The extensive legislative process sets national policy in agriculture, nutrition, conservation, and forestry. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the baseline for Farm Bill programs for the next five years is \$648 billion. Of particular interest to the GCA is the Conservation “Title” (one of twelve chapters) and others that address healthy soil and the impacts of climate change. A strong, well-funded conservation “Title” provides the technical and financial resources for farmers to improve their property’s soil health, water quality, and wildlife habitat. Both Farm Bill and IRA funding are critical for agricultural communities. We ask legislators to guard against siphoning off funding for non-conservation priorities, and to protect IRA funds for conservation and climate goals.</p> <p data-bbox="520 1328 1942 1474">GCA Engagement: The GCA wrote a Letter to Appropriations Subcommittee Members on May 23, 2023 in support of ongoing funding for conservation programs authorized by past Farm Bills. On May 24, 2023, a Letter to Agriculture Committee Chairs Stabenow & Thompson, and Ranking Members Boozman & Scott was sent in support of a well-funded Conservation Title in the 2023 Farm Bill.</p>

II. Healthy Ecosystems

Addressing Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss and Habitat Protection

Recovering America's Wildlife Act ("RAWA")

118th Congress

[S.1149](#)

Status: The Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) was reintroduced in the Senate on March 30, 2023, by Martin Heinrich (D-NM) and Tom Tillis (R-NC). The bill has been referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works. Led by Representative Dingell (D-MI) and Senator Heinrich (D-NM) in the last session of Congress, the bill received broad bipartisan support, attracting 194 co-sponsors in the House and 47 in the Senate, but was not included in the 2023 Omnibus Spending bill due to debate about funding sources. *The GCA does not anticipate movement on this legislation through the end of the 118th Congress.*

Purpose / Description: RAWA would provide \$1.3 billion annually to support wildlife conservation work in our states, territories, and on tribal lands, and prioritizes innovative recovery efforts for endangered or threatened species. The alternative bill sponsored by Rep. Westerman would authorize just \$200 - \$500 million per year and be structured like the Farm Bill, with reauthorization every 5 years.

RAWA is of particular interest to GCA because the funds can be used for on-the-ground conservation efforts such as protecting and restoring habitats, fighting invasive plant species and diseases and reintroducing native species. America is blessed with a plethora of diverse species of plants and animals, but **over one third** of them are threatened with extinction. "RAWA" protects both our wildlife and the healthy ecosystems that support them, ensuring the continuance of life-sustaining biodiversity.

- **Note:** On February 28, 2024, House Natural Resources Chair Bruce Westerman (R-AK) introduced the American Wildlife Habitat Conservation Act, ([H.R.7408](#)) as an alternative to RAWA. It would fund wildlife conservation projects at the state and tribal levels but would repeal critical funding and programs managed by NOAA and the Bureau of Reclamation under the Inflation Reduction Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. It would also limit U.S. Fish & Wildlife's discretion to regulate threatened species under the Endangered Species Act, possibly lowering critical protections. Finally, it would replace RAWA's permanent funding with a 5 year sunset.

GCA Action / Background: GCA submitted [Calls to Action](#) In 2022 on August 1, September 8, and December 1, 2022, and a [letter to leaders of Congress](#) was sent on November 30, 2022. The GCA has been advocating for this bill since its introduction in 2017.

National Native Plant Month

118th Congress

[S.Res.603](#)

[H.Res.1098](#)

GCA's National Native Plant Month Initiative ("NNPMI")

Status: Senate Resolution 603 to designate April 2024 as National Native Plant Month was agreed to by Unanimous Consent in the Senate on March 20, 2024. It was sponsored by Senators Mazie Hirono (D-HI) and Mike Braun (R-IN). House Resolution 1098 was introduced by Joe Neguse (D-CO-2) on March 20, 2024, with 3 co-sponsors and bi-partisan support.

Purpose / Description:

- **S. Res.603 / H. Res 1098:** Designation of April 2024 as "National Native Plant Month" highlighted the benefits of native plants to the environment and economy of the U.S. .
- **GCA's NPMI:** For the second year, the GCA sponsored its [Native Plant Month Initiative \("NPMI"\)](#), a nationwide, cross-committee collaboration promoting native plants in all fifty states. Using a proclamation signed by their Governors, GCA members across the country worked to formally establish a Native Plant Month within their state. [48 states](#) plus Washington, D.C. now have a native plant month or week. More information is available on the [NAL](#), [Conservation](#), and [Horticulture](#) Committee landing pages.

GCA Engagement: In April 2023, the GCA signed onto a [letter](#) to the Bureau of Land Management in support of the protection of our Nation's native seeds. The efforts to pass 2023's Native Plant Month legislation was led at the federal level by GCA club member Nancy Linz after she and GCA club member Hope Taft successfully advocated for the passage of a law in Ohio designating April as Ohio Native Plant Month in 2019.

Expressing the Need for a National Biodiversity Strategy

118th Congress

[H.Res.195](#)

[S.Res.494](#)

Status: House Resolution 195 was introduced in the House by Joe Neguse (D-CO) on March 3, 2023, with 55 Democrat co-sponsors, and referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources. Senate Resolution 494 was introduced in the Senate on December 12, 2023 by Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) with 6 Democrat co-sponsors and referred to the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works.

Purpose / Description: The Resolution calls for "the federal government to establish a national biodiversity strategy, which must include a goal of conserving at least 30 percent of US lands and waters to protect biodiversity and address climate change by 2030, and other goals necessary to reduce the threats to biodiversity."

**National
Interagency Seed
and Restoration
Center**

118th Congress

**S.4462
H.R.8640**

Status: On June 6, 2024, S. 4462 was introduced in the Senate by Mazie Hirono (D-HI), and referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works. H.R. 8640 was introduced in the House by Mike Quigley (D-IL), and referred to the Committees on Natural Resources and Agriculture. These bills provide for the Establishment of a National Interagency Seed and Restoration Center.

Purpose / Description: The purpose of the Center is to provide leadership and oversight in facilitating national coordination of all aspects of native plant materials research, development and distribution, and in conducting ecological restoration, revegetation and rehabilitation projects across the United States. An abundant national supply of native plant seeds and native plant material is key to restoring, preserving, and expanding native plant habitats and ecological restoration. The bill would provide \$100,000,000 for the fiscal years 2024-2029.

GCA Engagement: At the request of Senator Hirono’s staff in early 2024, the GCA provided input on the bill. In early June, 2024, GCA President Marilyn Donahue provided a statement in support of the legislation for the congressional press release issued June 7, 2024. See statement [here](#)

**A Bill to Require the
Director of the BLM
to withdraw a Rule
of the BLM relating
to Conservation and
Landscape Health /**

**Western Economic
Security Today
(WEST) Act**

118th Congress

**S.1435
H.R.3397**

Status: The bill was introduced in the Senate by John Barasso (R-WY) and 12 Republican co-sponsors on May 3, 2023 and referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. The WEST Act (H.R. 3397) was introduced in the House by John Curtis (R-UT) with 20 Republican co-sponsors on May 17, 2023. It passed the House on April 30, 2024, and was referred to the Senate on May 1, 2024.

Purpose / Description: The bills require the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to withdraw a rule ([Conservation and Landscape Health Rule](#)) issued by the Biden administration on April 18th 2024 relating to conservation and landscape health of 245 million acres of land - about 1/10th of the nation’s land - overseen by the BLM. The proposed bills also prohibit the BLM from finalizing, implementing, or enforcing the proposed rule or any substantially similar rule. See GCA’s letter in support of the proposal with recommendations to strengthen it [here](#).

The Biden Administration rule elevates the role of conservation as a decision factor in land use, which has historically been characterized by uses including cattle ranching, drilling and recreation. These activities, with added new pressures of climate related droughts and fires, have increasingly resulted in environmental damage. The new rule directs the BLM to “protect intact landscapes, restore degraded habitat, and make informed management decisions based on science and data.”

Building Native Habitats at Federal Facilities Act

118th Congress

[S.3510](#)
[H.R.6832](#)

Status: The Building Native Habitats at Federal Facilities Act was introduced in the Senate on December 13, 2023, by Martin Heinrich (D-NM). It was co-sponsored by Mike Braun (R-IN) and referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works. A companion bill, HR 6832, was introduced in the House on December 14, 2023, by Mikie Sherrill (D-NJ) and 6 bi-partisan co-sponsors. It was referred to the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability.

Purpose / Description: The bill would require the priority and consideration of using native plants in Federal projects.

FOREST Act

118th Congress

[S.3371](#)
[H.R.6515](#)

Status: The Fostering Overseas Rule of Law and Environmentally Sound Trade Act of 2023 (FOREST Act) was introduced in the Senate on November 30, 2023, by Brian Schatz (D-HI) and Mike Braun (R-IN), and referred to the Committee on Finance. In the House, Earl Blumenauer (D-OR.) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA.) introduced companion legislation with a bi-partisan group of 6 co-sponsors. It was referred to the following committees: Ways and Means, Foreign Affairs, Financial Services, Oversight and Accountability, and Judiciary.

Purpose / Description: The Act would restrict access to U.S. markets for products tied to deforestation, such as palm oil harvested from illegally deforested land. The legislation would make illegal deforestation a financial crime, permitting prosecution. Products covered under the Act would include palm oil, soybeans, pulp, cocoa, and cattle. Palm oil is the key target of the legislation given its large role in deforestation. Nations identified as being at high risk for deforestation would be required to provide documentation of supply chains.

Save Our Sequoias Act

118th Congress

[H.R. 2989](#)

Status: On Arbor Day, April 28, 2023, Representative Scott Peters (D-CA-50), former Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy (R-CA), Natural Resources Committee Chairman Bruce Westerman (R-AR), and a bipartisan group of 56 co-sponsors reintroduced the Save Our Sequoias (SOS) Act. On June 2, 2023, the bill was referred to the Subcommittee on Forestry by the Committee on Agriculture. No companion bill has been introduced in the Senate. *The GCA does not anticipate movement on this legislation through the end of the 118th Congress.*

Purpose / Description: The Act will give land managers a variety of tools to save the iconic Giant Sequoias of California, regenerate sequoia groves destroyed by wildfires, and reduce the severity of wildfires that contribute to climate change. Provisions include: 1) improving interagency coordination and codifying the Giant Sequoias Lands Coalition, which includes input from state and local government and tribal leaders; 2) requiring the completion of a Giant Sequoia Health and Resilience Assessment, and; 3) expediting forest restoration projects by streamlining emergency procedures. This strategy is currently a subject of dispute among conservation organizations, with concerns that the large re-planting equipment will damage habitat, and some scientists asserting

	<p>that the sequoias are already demonstrating robust self-seeding. Four conservation groups are suing the National Park Service to stop what they view as damaging, unnecessary and unauthorized intervention.</p> <p>The bill also authorizes the National Park Foundation and National Forest Foundation to accept private donations to facilitate Giant Sequoia restoration and resilience.</p>
<p>Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act</p> <p>118th Congress S.1531</p>	<p>Status: The Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act was reintroduced in the Senate in the 118th Congress by Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) on May 23, 2023, with 11 Democratic Co-sponsors. It was read twice and referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. It has not been reintroduced in the House. <i>The GCA does not anticipate movement on this legislation through the end of the 118th Congress.</i></p> <p>Purpose / Description: The bill designates specified National Forest System lands, National Park System lands, and public lands in Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming as wilderness and as components or additions to existing components of the National Wilderness Preservation System. Provisions include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) designating specified federal lands as biological connecting corridors and as special corridor management areas; 2) accepting the donation of valid existing permits or leases authorizing grazing on specified public lands or National Forest System lands, and; 3) designating segments of specified rivers and creeks in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming as components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System 4 and; designating specific areas as wildland recovery areas. USDA shall develop a wildland recovery plan for each recovery area.
<p>America's Revegetation and Carbon Sequestration Act</p> <p>118th Congress S.2991</p>	<p>Status: America's Revegetation and Carbon Sequestration Act was Introduced on September 28, 2023, in the Senate by Joe Manchin (D-WV), with 2 Republicans and 1 Independent co-sponsor. It was referred on October 25, 2023, to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Sub-committee on Public Lands, Forests and Mining.</p> <p>Purpose / Description: the goal of the proposed legislation is to restore ecosystems, and to increase carbon storage and sequestration through strategies including revegetation, tree planting, fire risk reduction and better forest use and technology. The Act requires that 2 years after enactment the Secretaries revise regulations to require assessment of resilience and adaptation factors in developing strategies for revegetation (including reforestation and rangeland planting.)</p>

No Time to Waste Act

118th Congress

[S.2889](#)
[H.R.5657](#)

Status: The New Opportunities for Technological Innovation, Mitigation, and Education To Overcome Waste Act - the “No Time to Waste Act” was introduced in the Senate by Christopher Coons (D-DE) on September 21, 2023. The bill was referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry. The bill was introduced in the House by Chellie Pingree (D-ME) and referred on January 11, 2024, to the Subcommittee on Nutrition, Foreign Agriculture, and Horticulture.

Purpose / Description: The bill would authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to carry out activities to reduce food loss and waste. It would create an Office of Food Loss and Waste in the Department of Agriculture, to: research methods to quantify on-farm food loss and supply chain food loss; research new technologies to reduce food loss and food waste and; quantify the impact of food waste reduction policies on greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

The Food Date Labeling Act

118th Congress

[S.1484](#)
[H.R.3159](#)

Status: U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) and Representatives Chellie Pingree (D-ME) and Dan Newhouse (R-WA) reintroduced the bipartisan, bicameral Food Date Labeling Act on May 18th, 2023. The bill is designed to end consumer confusion around food date labeling and ensure Americans do not throw out usable food. The bill was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions in the Senate, and Livestock, Dairy and Poultry in the House.

Purpose / Description: The bill establishes requirements for the format of quality, date and discard date labels on food packaging. It requires the quality date (the date after which the item’s quality may deteriorate) to include the phrase *BEST If Used By*, and the discard date on a food label (the date after which the item should not be consumed), must include the phrase *USE By*.

**II. Healthy Ecosystems
Protecting and Restoring Marine Habitats
and Terrestrial Waters**

Save our Seas 2.0 Amendments Act

118th Congress

[S. 318](#)
[H.R. 886](#)

Status: The Save Our Seas 2.0 Amendments Act was reintroduced in the Senate by Dan Sullivan (R-AK) on February 9, 2023 along with 3 co-sponsors – Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Robert Menendez (D-NJ), and Gary Peters (D-MI). It passed in the Senate with an Amendment on Unanimous Consent on December 13, 2023. Representative Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR) reintroduced H.R. 886 in the House on February 9, 2023, with 1 Independent and 7 Democrat co-sponsors. H.R. 886 passed the House on March 11, 2024.

Purpose / Description: The Act revises administrative provisions of the Marine Debris Program and

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Marine Debris Foundation - Both NOAA agencies - to enhance the ability of U.S. domestic and international programs to address marine debris. It supports best practices for conducting outreach to tribal governments, authorizes NOAA to approve Foundation directors, provides for locating offices in coastal areas and allows up to 12 percent of expenditures for administration costs. On August 9, 2023, the CBO estimated that implementing the bill would cost \$40 million from 2023 to 2028 but that the costs of the legislation fall within budget function 300 (Natural Resources and Environment) and will not affect direct spending, revenues, or spending subject to appropriation.

The Marine Debris Act, reauthorized regularly since 2006, authorized NOAA to “identify, determine sources of, assess, prevent, reduce, and remove marine debris and address the adverse impacts of marine debris on the economy of the United States, marine environment, and navigation safety.” The Save Our Seas Act amended the Marine Debris Act to promote international action and direct NOAA to work with other US agencies to achieve these aims. Save Our Seas Act 2.0 of 2020 provides further support with 3 titles addressing international cooperation, domestic programs, and domestic infrastructure. It created a Genius Prize, the Marine Debris Foundation, and mandated further research on marine debris. The Proposed Save Our Seas 2.0 Amendments Act increases administrative support and direction.

RISEE Act of 2023

118th Congress

[H.R.913](#)

[S.373](#)

Status: The RISEE (Reinvesting In Shoreline Economies and Ecosystems) Act was reintroduced in the House on February 9, 2023, by Lizzie Fletcher (D-TX) with 24 Democrat and Republican co-sponsors. It was referred to the Subcommittee on Mineral and Energy Resources on February 21, 2023. It was also reintroduced in the Senate on February 9, 2023, by Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) with 23 Democratic and Republican co-sponsors, and referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. It was first introduced in 2022 by Senators Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) and Bill Cassidy (R-LA).

Purpose / Description: The Act establishes several dedicated streams of funding for coastal infrastructure and resiliency to protect our coasts. The bill dedicates a percentage of funding from offshore wind leases, and revenue generated from offshore oil and gas leases, benefiting coastal and Great Lake States. In addition, inland states which benefit from LWCF (Land and Water Conservation Fund) state-side funding may also see increased benefit if the \$125 million cap on GOMESA (Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act) funding is removed.

Coastal Habitat Conservation Act

118th Congress

[S.1381](#)

Status: The Coastal Habitat Conservation Act was introduced in the Senate on April 27, 2023 by Benjamin Cardin (D-MD) and Lindsay Graham (R-SC), and was introduced in the House by Jared Huffman (D-CA) and co-sponsored by Delegate James Moylan (R-Guam) and Commissioner Jenniffer Gonzalez-Colon (R-PR). On December 11, 2023, the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works recommended passage, and On February 17th the House Committee on Natural Resources ordered the bill to be reported by Unanimous Consent, with amendments, to the House.

<p>H.R.2950</p>	<p>Purpose / Description: This bill provides authority for the Coastal Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). The FWS provides technical and financial assistance to partners for habitat restoration, protection, and enhancement in priority coastal areas, with the goal of supporting threatened or endangered species of birds, fish, and marine mammals.</p>
<p>Clean Water Act of 2023</p> <p>H.R.59</p>	<p>Status: The Clean Water Act of 2023 was introduced in the House on October 18, 2023, by Rick Larsen (D-WA). It has 130 Democrat co-sponsors and has been referred to the House Subcommittee on Water Resources and the Environment. <i>The GCA does not anticipate movement on this legislation through the end of the 118th Congress.</i></p> <p>Purpose / Description: The bill would amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 2023, defining the Nation’s protected water resources that are subject to the Clean Water Act of 1972. It would re-define the “Waters of the US” to include those adjacent to but lacking a “continuous surface connection” to “Waters of the US”. This bill is a response to the Supreme Court’s <i>Sackett</i> Decision on May 25th of 2023, which ruled that watersheds such as wetlands that were connected but not immediately adjacent to “Waters of the US” were not protected under the Clean Water Act. This left some 90 million acres of wetlands in the US unprotected from development.</p>
<p>The Extinction Prevention Act of 2023</p> <p>118th Congress</p> <p>S.1708</p> <p>H.R.3494</p>	<p>Status: The Extinction Prevention Act was introduced in the Senate on May 18, 2023 by Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), with co-sponsors Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and Martin Heinrich (D-NM), and referred to the Committee on the Environment and Public Works. It was introduced in the House on May 18, 2023 by Raul Grijalva (D-AZ) with 17 co-sponsors and referred to the Committee on Natural Resources. <i>The GCA does not anticipate movement on this legislation through the end of the 118th Congress.</i></p> <p>Purpose / Description: Structured as four distinct titles, the Act would require the Department of the Interior to provide financial assistance, through creation of dedicated funds, to conserve: endangered butterflies in North America; plant species in Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands; freshwater mussels in the US and bony fish in US desert ecosystems.</p>

III. Combating Plastic, Pollution and Chemical Toxins

<p>The Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act of 2023</p> <p>118th Congress</p> <p>S.3127 H.R.6053</p>	<p>Status: The 2021 Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act was reintroduced into the 118th Congress on October 25th as The Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act of 2023. The bill was introduced in the Senate by Jeff Merkley (D-OR) with 11 Democrat co-sponsors and in the House by Jared Huffman (D-CA) with 56 Democrat co-sponsors. In the Senate the bill has been referred to the Subcommittee on Environment and Public Works and the House Subcommittee on Water Resources and the Environment. In the House, it was referred in January, 2024 to the Subcommittee on Conservation, Research, and Biotechnology. <i>The GCA does not anticipate movement on this legislation through the end of the 118th Congress.</i></p> <p>Purpose / Description: While a summary of the bill hasn't yet been published, the stated purpose of the Senate bill is "to amend the Solid Waste Disposal Act to reduce the production and use of certain single-use plastic products and packaging, to improve the responsibility of producers in the design, collection, reuse, recycling, and disposal of consumer products and packaging, to prevent pollution from consumer products and packaging from entering into animal and human food chains and waterways, and for other purposes." The 2023 version of the proposed bill has more stringent requirements than the 2021 bill for companies to reduce their plastic production, has stricter regulations on toxic chemicals used in manufacturing plastics, and has stronger protections for communities adjacent to petrochemical production facilities.</p>
<p>REDUCE Act</p> <p>118th Congress</p> <p>S.2844 H.R.5564</p>	<p>Status: The REDUCE Act of 2023 (Rewarding Efforts to Decrease Unrecycled Contaminants in Ecosystems Act) was introduced in the Senate on September 19, 2023 by Sheldon Whitehouse (D-NY) and 4 Democrat co-sponsors. It was referred to the Committee on Finance. It was introduced in the House by Lloyd Doggett (D-TX) and 31 Democrat co-sponsors, and referred to the Sub-Committee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation.</p> <p>Purpose / Description: The Act would amend the IRS Code of 1986 to create an excise tax on virgin plastic resins for consumption, use or warehousing. It would create a per-pound fee on the sale of virgin plastic resins made to produce single use plastics. The purpose is to create incentives to recycle plastic and reduce plastic waste that is disrupting ecosystems and threatening public health.</p>

PFAS Action Act

(PFAS: Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances)

118th Congress

[H.R.6805](#)

[H.R.6808](#)

Status: The PFAS Action Act was introduced in the House on December 14, 2023 by Debbie Dingell (D-MI), and is co-sponsored by Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) and 26 other bi-partisan members. On January 11, 2024 it was referred to the Subcommittee on Water Resources.

Purpose / Description: Scientific research suggests that exposure to **PFAS** leads to adverse health outcomes. These chemical compounds are ubiquitous and can be found in non-stick coatings, firefighting foam and stain-resistant carpeting, among other sources. This legislation would establish a national drinking water standard, require the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency to designate PFAS as hazardous air pollutants under the Clean Air Act, and as hazardous substances under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980. It would also require the EPA to ban unsafe incineration, limit the discharge of PFAS, and provide \$200 million annually for clean-up efforts. A final version is expected that would allocate clean-up costs to industry emitters.

- A related bill, The PFAS Risk Communication Strategy Act (H.R. 6808), was introduced by Debbie Fletcher (D-TX) in January 2024, which would require the EPA to develop a risk-communication strategy for the public, and referred to the Committee on Water Resources and the Environment.

GCA Engagement: The GCA went on record in support of stronger regulations of PFAS with a public comment on April 24, 2023. Read our letter to the EPA [here](#).

Clean Water Standards for PFAS Act of 2024

118th Congress

[H.R.8076](#)

[S.4173](#)

Status: The Clean Water Standards for PFAS Act of 2024 was introduced in the House by Chris Pappas (D-NH) on April 18, 2024, co-sponsored by Chellie Pingree (D-ME), it was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. The bill has bi-partisan sponsorship. The identical bill was introduced in the Senate by Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY). *The GCA does not anticipate movement on this legislation through the end of the 118th Congress.*

Purpose/Description: The aim of the legislation is to establish effluent limitations, timelines for implementation and standards and water quality criteria for PFAS under the Federal Water Pollution Control Act.

GCA Engagement: The GCA went on record in support of stronger regulations of PFAS with a public comment on April 24, 2023. Read our letter to the EPA [here](#).

Forever Chemical Regulation and Accountability Act of 2024

118th Congress
[S.4187](#)
[H.R.8074](#)

Status: The Forever Chemical Regulation and Accountability Act of 2024 was introduced in the Senate by Richard Durbin (D-IL) on April 14th, 2024 (no co-sponsors), and referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works. It was introduced in the House by Betty McCollum (D-MN) on April 14, 2024, and co-sponsored by Chellie Pingree (D-ME). The bill was referred to the Committees on Energy and Commerce; Oversight and Accountability; Science, Space, and Technology; Transportation and Infrastructure; Armed Services. *The GCA does not anticipate movement on this legislation through the end of the 118th Congress.*

Purpose / Description: The bill mandates that within 60 days the heads of Federal Agencies with experience in PFAS will review and assess the scientific evidence with respect to which PFAS substances should be designated as essential uses, and; develop recommendations for mitigation strategies, R&D necessary to transition the United States from the use of PFAS, and; ensure R&D to create safe alternatives to minimize health, safety and environmental risks and; provide guidance on removal, and; other related purposes.

IV. LEGAL AND REGULATORY UPDATES

Power Sector Regulations including Power Plant Rule for Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Litigation

On April 25, 2024, EPA announced a group of final rules to reduce pollution from fossil fuel-fired power plants in order to protect all communities from pollution and improve public health without disrupting the delivery of reliable electricity. These rules, finalized under separate authorities including the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, and Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, will significantly reduce climate, air, water, and land pollution from the power sector include:

- [Greenhouse gas \(GHG\) standards for power plants under Clean Air Act section 111](#) covering existing coal-fired power plants and new gas-fired plants. See GCA's public comment in support of this rule [here](#). **On May 9, 2024, EPA published the rule in the Federal Register and on the same day, states and industry filed petitions challenging the rule in the D.C. Circuit.**
- [Updated Mercury and Air Toxics Standards \(MATS\)](#) for coal-fired plants;
- [Effluent limitations for wastewater](#) from coal-fired plants, and;
- [Requirements for management of legacy coal ash sites](#) at closed coal-fired plants.

<p>Methane Emissions Reduction Rulemaking and Litigation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On December 2, 2023, EPA issued final new source performance standards and emissions guidelines for new and existing oil and gas facilities. Twenty-five states, the Arizona legislature, and industry groups have challenged the rule, and litigation is now before the D.C. Circuit. On May 6, 2024, EPA published a letter granting reconsideration on two issues. • On January 12, 2024, EPA announced a proposed regulations to implement the Inflation Reduction Act's Waste Emission Charge. Public comments are under review. • On May 14, 2024, EPA published its final rule amending Subpart W of the Greenhouse Gas Reporting Rule, as required by the IRA, to incorporate empirical data.
<p>National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Rulemaking</p>	<p>On May 1, 2024, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) finalized its Phase II rule implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The rule addresses June 3, 2023, amendments to NEPA, and requires consideration of environmental justice concerns, Indigenous Knowledge, and climate change impacts, among others. The rule modernizes and accelerates environmental reviews under NEPA to accelerate permitting for clean energy projects, allow community input earlier in the process and advance environmental justice.</p>
<p>Tailpipe Emissions Rulemaking and Litigation</p>	<p>EPA finalized the multipollutant tailpipe emissions rule for Model Year 2027-2032 vehicles that sets increasingly stringent pollution standards for light- and medium-duty vehicles. Litigation brought by Kentucky and other states challenging this rule is ongoing. Also, the DC Circuit recently upheld EPA's reinstatement of California's Clean Air Act waiver for its Advanced Clean Cars program in <i>Ohio v. EPA</i>. Further decisions related to clean car rules are expected.</p>
<p>Oil and Gas Development in Alaska National Petroleum Reserve</p>	<p>The Biden administration reversed the Trump administration's decision to open much of the NPR-A to oil and gas development and added new protections in a final rule issued April 19, 2024. The Department of the Interior released a final decision approving the Willow Project on March 13, 2023. Interior's final decision allows ConocoPhillips to develop three of the five proposed drill sites and associated infrastructure. Tribal and environmental groups sued, and litigation is pending before the Ninth Circuit.</p>
<p>Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo Relentless, Inc. v. Department of Commerce</p>	<p>Supreme Court decisions on whether, under the Chevron doctrine, judges should defer to agencies' interpretation of gaps and ambiguities in laws they implement are expected in mid-2024. On January 17, 2024, the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments in <i>Loper</i> and <i>Relentless</i> challenging courts' deference to federal agencies under the Chevron doctrine, that helps federal agencies defend their rules on public health, food safety, and climate change.</p>
<p>SEC Climate-related Risk Disclosure Rule</p>	<p>The SEC released its final climate-related risk disclosure rule in March 2024. It will require companies to disclose information about financial and business risks posed by climate change. Litigation challenging the rule is underway, and the SEC issued an administrative stay of the final rules pending judicial review of the consolidated Eighth Circuit petitions.</p>

RECENTLY COMPLETED LEGISLATION

<p>Blue Globe Act</p> <p>118th Congress</p> <p>S. 140 H.R. 3748</p>	<p>Status: The Blue Globe Act, with several other ocean provisions, was included in the FY 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) signed into law by President Biden on December 23, 2022. The bi-partisan S.140 was led by Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH). H.R. 3748 was introduced by Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR).</p> <p>Purpose / Description: Sheldon Whitehouse announced that “The defense bill will accelerate maritime technology innovation, improve ocean and coastal mapping, protect marine mammals, and harden our defenses against pirate fishing, among other important provisions.” Increased domestic and international coordination will enhance data collection, management, and monitoring of the Great Lakes, oceans, bays, estuaries, and coasts.</p>
<p>The Growing Climate Solutions Act</p> <p>117th Congress</p> <p>S.1251 H.R. 2820</p>	<p>Status: The Growing Climate Solutions Act, a bill to enable farmers to develop, measure, and verify greenhouse gas reductions, was included in the massive spending bill for fiscal year 2023, known on Capitol Hill as an omnibus bill. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 was passed by the House on December 23, 2022, and signed into law by President Biden on December 29, 2022.</p> <p>After introduction by Sen. Mike Braun (R-IN) and Rep. Abigail Spanberger (D-VA) on April 20, 2021, the Act, which encourages and incentivizes sustainable, climate-friendly farming and forestry practices, met with considerable success in the Senate. With 54 bipartisan co-sponsors, the bill passed the Senate on June 24, 2021 without amendment by a Yea-Nay vote of 92-8. After negotiations with the House, the final version created a registry of third-party vendors that farmers can consult to help measure the carbon benefits of various farm practices, with the idea of supporting voluntary carbon markets. The bill takes a major step forward by quantifying the carbon sequestration power of soil and providing farmers with another way to monetize their acreage.</p>
<p>Inflation Reduction Act (formerly Build Back Better Act)</p> <p>117th Congress</p>	<p>Status: The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) was signed into law on August, 16, 2022 as Public Law No: 117-169. The bill lowers prescription drug costs, health care costs, energy costs, and is the largest investment in U.S. history to fight climate change. \$370 billion will provide clean energy and climate solutions in the electricity sector, transportation, buildings and appliances, sustainable agriculture and forestry, clean manufacturing, and industrial decarbonization.</p>

[H.R. 5376](#)

Purpose / Description: The Inflation Reduction Act includes major investments in clean energy, together with strengthened protections under a modernized [Clean Air Act](#). The new provisions support the EPA and their responsibility to address the climate crisis by:

- Ensuring reductions in greenhouse gas emissions
- Providing funds for grants and technical help benefiting low-income and disadvantaged communities
- Reinforcing clean- and zero-emitting vehicle programs
- Accelerating methane emission reductions.

For the first time ever under federal law, the Inflation Reduction Act imposes a fee on climate pollution – highlighting the critical importance of methane emission reduction from oil and gas production. The investments also encourage both consumers and businesses to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through tax credits for energy efficient homes, electric vehicles, industrial manufacturing, wind turbines, solar panels, and climate friendly farming practices. Included is about \$20 billion for “nature-based” climate solutions for agricultural conservation and \$5 billion for forest management, planning, and restoration activities for federal and non-federal forests. The National Park Service will receive nearly \$1 billion in benefits to improve climate resilience across the park system.

Native Plant Species Pilot Program Act of 2021

117th Congress

[H.R. 1548](#)
[S. 557](#)

Status: GCA was a major proponent behind introduction of the Native Plant Species Pilot Program Act, which was included in the [Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023](#) and signed into law by President Biden on December 29, 2022. The Act was introduced on January 9, 2020, by Senators Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and Susan Collins (R-ME) in the Senate and by Representatives Matt Cartwright (D-PA) and Elise Stefanik (R-NY) in the House and reintroduced on March 3, 2021.

Purpose / Description: This bill set up a five-year pilot program in America’s National Parks to preserve biodiversity. It encouraged the use of native plant material and its effectiveness in preventing the spread of invasive, non-native species. Native plants protect against erosion, provide food, and shelter for local wildlife and require fewer pesticides and fertilizers. The bill authorizes the Department of the Interior to conduct a study to determine the cost-effectiveness of using native plants.

GCA Engagement: NAL Committee Chair Karen Gilhuly testified before the House Natural Resources Committee’s Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands on June 14, 2022 on behalf of HR 1548 and in defense of native plants. You can watch the hearing and Karen’s testimony [here](#). GCA President Debbie Oliver in a press release commended Senators Collins and Cantwell for their “unwavering commitment to native plants” and credited the legislation with protecting biodiversity and the health of our planet.

<p>Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act</p> <p>117th Congress</p> <p>H.R. 3684</p>	<p>Status: Commonly known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure bill, H.R. 3684 passed on November 5, 2021, with a 228-206 vote and was signed into Public Law No: 117-58 by President Biden on November 15, 2021.</p> <p>Purpose / Description: The bill included important climate investments, including \$7 billion for EV charging stations; billions more for electric buses; \$10 billion for transmission and grid upgrades; and over \$4 billion to cap and remediate orphan wells. The GCA was pleased to see that the bill also included native plants, prioritizing their planting in transportation corridors as well as funding for the planning, design, and reconstruction of urban parks and open spaces. The bill incorporated the REPLANT Act (S. 866, H.R. 2049) significantly investing in reforestation and forest resilience.</p>
<p>Great American Outdoors Act</p> <p>117th Congress</p> <p>H.R.1957</p>	<p>Status: The Great American Outdoors Act was signed into law on August 4, 2020. The funding for this legislation was put in place via the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (H.R.133) which was signed into law on December 27, 2020. In 2021, 192 members of Congress signed a letter for the LWCF to receive full funding in light of the continued challenge of securing \$900 million in guaranteed appropriations.</p> <p>The Great American Outdoors Act combines the Restore our Parks and Public Lands bills and Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Permanent Funding Act. The Act:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides permanent, mandatory funding at the fully authorized annual amount of \$900 million for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. • Makes \$1.9 billion available annually, for five years (\$9.5 billion total) for maintenance projects with 70% allocated for National Park Service projects, 10% for the U.S. Forest Service, 10% for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 5% for Bureau of Land Management, and 5% for Bureau of Indian Education. • Derives funding from a percentage of energy development revenues payable to the United States from oil, gas, coal, or alternative or renewable energy development on Federal lands. • Creates critical new jobs in our Nation’s parks and public lands. <p>GCA Engagement: The GCA has advocated for these issues for many years. In 2020, it sent out several Calls to Action to our members and signed on to a letter of support along with 850 other organizations. This is a landmark bill, an enormous win for conservation and it speaks to the value of consistent, effective, and tireless advocacy.</p>

“America the Beautiful”
(or “30X30”)

116th Congress
[S.Res. 372](#)

116th Congress
[Exec. Order 14008](#)

Status: Senate Resolution 372 was introduced in the 116th Congress by 10 Senators, “expressing the sense of the Senate that the Federal Government should establish a national goal of conserving at least 30 percent of the land and 30 percent of the oceans of the United States by 2030.” President Biden moved this idea forward via Executive Order 14008, signed on January 27, 2021 “committing to the goal of conserving at least 30 percent of our lands and oceans by 2030 and launching a process for stakeholder engagement from agricultural and forest landowners, fishermen, Tribes, States, Territories, local officials, and others to identify strategies that will result in broad participation.”

Purpose / Description: The goal of conserving at least 30 percent of our land and waters by 2030 has been absorbed into the Administration’s **America the Beautiful** plan and is being referred to as the “America the Beautiful” initiative. Conserving the lands and waters upon which we all depend protects the biodiversity necessary for life on earth. The concept of “30x30” was reinforced at the COP 15 biodiversity conference in December 2022. 190 nations signed an agreement to work toward the goal of protecting 30% of our lands and water by 2030, all around the world.

GCA Engagement: On May 25, 2023, the GCA submitted a [comment to the Federal Register](#) in support of a recently proposed ruling by the Bureau of Land Management promoting the use of conservation as a measurement in determining the value of our public lands. On July 3, 2023, the GCA signed on to an additional comment that the proposed rule should incorporate the use of native seed in BLM restoration projects.