



MICHAEL BENNET
U.S. SENATOR *for* COLORADO

The Protect the West Act

In the West, our forests, grasslands, and watersheds are as important to our economy as the Lincoln Tunnel is to New York or I-95 is to the East Coast. But they are under threat -- from climate change, but also consistent underinvestment from the federal government. We are facing a 1,200 year megadrought and wildfire season that never seems to end, threatening our forests, grasslands, watersheds, and Western way of life.

Chronic underinvestment has proven costly. We currently spend thirty times more to recover from severe wildfires after they burn than we do to prevent wildfires in the first place. To reduce the risk of wildfire and protect the West, we must break from the status quo and make a major investment in the restoration of our forests, grasslands, and watersheds that matches the scale of the challenge.

The Protect the West Act would:

- Establish an Outdoor Restoration & Watershed Fund to increase support for local efforts to restore forests and watersheds, reduce wildfire risk, clean up public lands, enhance wildlife habitat, remove invasive species, and expand outdoor access. The bill establishes an advisory council of local, industry, conservation, Tribal, and national experts to advise funding priorities, coordinate with existing regional efforts, and provide oversight.
- Empower local leaders by making \$20 billion directly available to state and local governments, Tribes, special districts, and nonprofits to support restoration, drought resilience, and fire mitigation projects. These funds would empower local leaders to bring diverse voices to the table to develop solutions.
- Partner with states and Tribes to invest \$40 billion to tackle the backlog of restoration, fire mitigation, and resilience projects across public, private, and Tribal lands.
- Create or sustain over two million good-paying jobs, primarily in rural areas, to support existing industries like forest-product, agriculture, and outdoor recreation.
- Save landowners and local governments money by investing in wildfire prevention and natural hazard mitigation on the front end, which is thirty times more cost-effective than recovering forests and watersheds after natural disasters have struck.