

Utah Wildfire Research Institute Act of 2023

The Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act of 2004 established a trio of institutes in Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico that research and collaborate with partners to improve forest management and wildfire prevention efforts. The institutes, collectively known as the Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI), leverage the best academic and scientific resources available to work in tandem with state, local, and federal stakeholders. Each institute develops a yearly plan to ensure it is effectively promoting adaptive forest management programs and implementing restorative fuel reduction treatments in partnership with local entities.

As a Four Corners state, Utah is perfectly positioned to host a SWERI. There is a long history of successful, innovative resource management and planning programs in Utah that add value to wildfire prevention and restoration efforts across the West. To expand the reach of existing efforts, Senator Lee has introduced legislation to include Utah as a designated state for a Southwest Ecological Restoration Institute. This designation unlocks potential for additional collaboration, research, and on-the-ground efforts to enhance forest management and wildfire prevention efforts across the state.

Bill Specifics

- Amends the Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act of 2004 to include Utah as a fourth location for the Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes (SWERI) alongside Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado
- Creates an institute at a public university in Utah to research and collaborate with partners on projects promoting healthy forests, wildfire prevention, and resilient water supplies
- Directs the Chief of the Forest Service and the Secretary of the Interior to designate a university in Utah to host the institute
- The Utah-based institute will receive a share of the \$15 million per year appropriated for the program under the Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act