



MARCH 2023

TASK FORCE HIGHLIGHTS

Task Force Releases California's Joint Strategy for Sustainable Outdoor Recreation & Wildfire Resilience: This [Joint Strategy](#), developed by the Task Force [Sustainable & Accessible Recreation Key Working Group](#), provides a roadmap for improved access to sustainable outdoor recreation, with a focus on areas where wildfires are impacting those opportunities throughout California.

March 30 Task Force Meeting: The next meeting of the Task Force will be held in person in Sacramento and virtually via [Zoom](#) on March 30, 2023. Join us for a look back at last year's treatments and fire season, a look forward to what's ahead in 2023 and beyond, and a draft wood utilization strategy. Dates and locations for all [2023 Task Force meetings](#) are available on the Task Force website.

FEDERAL HIGHLIGHTS

USDA Invests More than \$48.6 Million to Manage Risks, Combat Climate Change: USDA will invest more than [\\$48.6 million this year through the Joint Chief's Landscape Restoration Partnership](#) for 14 projects that mitigate wildfire risk, improve water quality, restore forest ecosystems, and ultimately contribute to USDA's efforts to combat climate change. An award of \$3.3 million will fund a phase three project focused on fire resilience in Trinity County. The project will address high-risk cross-boundary threats by strategically treating forests on both private and national forestlands, and address new threats created by 2020 and 2021 wildfires.

NRCS California Plans Expanded Conservation Investments: NRCS California announced a [2023 investment of over \\$20 million](#) for climate-smart agriculture practices and forest resiliency in California, including \$6.8 million for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program; \$5.2 million for the Conservation Stewardship Program; and \$7.6 million for the Conservation Technical Assistance Program. These additional investments flow from the [Inflation Reduction Act](#). The deadline to apply is March 17, 2023. [Visit your local NRCS service center](#) to apply.

Public Comment Sought on Proposal to List California Spotted Owl: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is proposing to list two distinct populations of the California Spotted Owl under the Endangered Species Act: the [Coastal-Southern California population as endangered and the Sierra Nevada population as threatened](#). As part of the proposed listing, USFWS is including a 4(d) rule for the Sierra Nevada DPS that exempts the prohibition of take under the ESA for forest fuels management activities that reduce the risk of large-scale high-severity wildfire. USFWS is seeking public comment on the [proposed rule](#) through April 24.



STATE HIGHLIGHTS

California's Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) Funds Projects to Restore and Protect Habitats: [WCB awarded approximately \\$51.83 million in grants](#) to help restore and protect fish and wildlife habitat throughout California. Many of the 25 projects will improve fish and wildlife habitat while others provide public access to important natural resources. Several projects will also demonstrate the importance of protecting working landscapes that integrate economic, social and environmental stewardship practices.

CAL FIRE Announces \$117 Million Available for Schoolyard Greening Projects: A historic level of funding is available to provide shade and nature for California schools and communities through [CAL FIRE's Green Schoolyard Grants program](#). [CAL FIRE's Urban & Community Forestry Program](#) will accept applications until April 14, 2023.

Students at rural community college can earn a bachelor's and help prevent wildfires: Feather River College, recently won approval to launch a [Bachelor of Science program in ecosystem restoration and applied fire management](#). The program's coursework will be specific to the Sierra Nevada and feature a mix of classroom and field-based learning.

Forest Stewardship and Post-fire Forest Resilience Program 2022

Accomplishments: Launched in 2019 in response to a recommendation by Governor Brown's Forest Management Task Force, the UC ANR Forest Stewardship Education Initiative established the [Forest Stewardship and Post-Fire Resilience Programs](#). These programs involve forest landowners in managing and protecting their forests through the development of a forest management plan. Since 2020, 368 people have completed one of the 19 workshop series offered across the state. Read the [2022 Annual Report](#).

State and Federal Partners Celebrate Arbor Week: CAL FIRE, USFS, California ReLeaf, Edison International, Blue Shield of California, Common Vision, and Oakland community leaders kicked off [California Arbor Week](#) on March 7 for a celebration that lasts through March 14. During California Arbor Week, cities and community groups host tree-planting ceremonies and educate CA youth about the importance of trees to the health of air, water and neighborhoods.

Climate Tech Finance 2022 Annual Report: Climate Tech Finance is a State of California program that specializes in providing government-backed loan guarantees to startups developing climate technologies. [CTF's annual report](#) highlights Pacific Biochar which received a loan guarantee of up to \$5M through the California Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank ([iBank](#)) and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District for the purposes of expanding biochar production capacity in California.

Planscape February 2023 Newsletter: [Planscape](#), a new planning tool that brings together the best available science to maximize landscape resilience, was officially announced at the September Task Force meeting by CA Natural Resources Agency, U.S. Forest Service and Google.org. Since that time, the Planscape Team continues to work with Task Force interagency team to build



a decision support tool to help regional partnerships plan and prioritize projects. Follow progress by [signing up](#) for the [Planscape Newsletter](#).

California Climate Investments February Newsletter: CARB's [CCI Program newsletter](#) includes announcements and updates, opportunities for funding, CCI in action and outreach efforts from agency partners.

LEGISLATION WATCH

AB 287 (Garcia) California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006: Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund Would create new requirements for State agencies that administer grant programs funded by the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, including requiring grant solicitation periods remain open at least 3 months.

AB 297 (Fong) Wildfires: local assistance grant program: advance payments Would extend the sunset date for advance payments of Wildfire Prevention grant awards from 2024 until 2034.

AB 338 (Aguiar-Curry) Public works: definition

Would make fuel reduction work done as part of a fire mitigation project subject to prevailing wages, as stipulated.

AB 388 (Connolly) Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan: implementation strategies: roadmap

Would require the Director of CAL FIRE, in consultation with the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force (Task Force), to establish a roadmap for developing and deploying larger landscape level projects to contribute to the achievement of the goals outlined in the implementation strategy.

AB 692 (Patterson) California Environmental Quality Act: exemption: egress route projects: fire safety

Would create a CEQA exemption for egress route projects undertaken by a public agency in fire-prone subdivisions that have been identified by the BOF as lacking in sufficient egress routes. This exemption would expire on 1/1/2030.

AB 788 (Petrie-Norris) Fire prevention: grant programs: reporting

Would require the Task Force to compile and post annual updates on its website about state and federal grant programs related to fire prevention by 7/1/2024.

SB 310 (Dodd) Prescribed fire: civil liability: cultural burns

Would clarify that "burn boss" as it is used in the Civil Code means the same as "burn boss" as it is defined in the PRC. Would clarify existing law to state that only the governing body of a California Native American Tribe can approve a prescribed burn project.



SB 436 (Dodd) Wildfire safety: The California Wildfire Mitigation Strategic Planning Act

Would create a framework for evaluating wildfire mitigation investments taken by state, federal and private actors and coordinate utility wildfire mitigation efforts across California to increase the overall effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of wildfire related investments.

SB 504 (Dodd) Wildfires: defensible space: grant programs: local governments

Would require CAL FIRE to give priority to a qualified local government entity located within a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) or High FHSZ who is applying for a wildfire prevention grant, that provides Defensible Space Assessment data to CAL FIRE using a required common reporting platform. This bill would also require people who own a building or structure in fire-prone areas to maintain and space fuels around their property.

SB 571 (Allen) Development projects: emergency preparedness

Would require a proponent of a new development within a state responsibility area or local responsibility area that is within a high or very high FHSZ to include an evacuation plan with its application submitted to the local government for the development.

SB 675 (Limón) Prescribed grazing: local assistance grant program: Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program: Wildfire and Forest Resiliency Task Force

Would include grazing as a fire prevention activity and would require the Task Force to include a strategic action plan to expand the use of prescribed grazing near communities.

ACA 2 (Alanis) Public resources: Water and Wildfire Resiliency Act of 2023

Would establish the Water and Wildfire Resiliency Fund (Fund) and require that 3% of California's total annual revenue be transferred to the Fund. 50% of the revenue provided to the Fund would be for forest health and maintenance projects and fuel reduction projects.

PRESS BOX

Society of American Forests Defines Mature and Old Growth Forests. [Forest Policy Updates, February 23, 2023.](#)

CSAA Insurance Group Invests \$25M in California Wildfire Innovation Fund. [Businesswire, February 22, 2023.](#)

Mother Nature Has the Best Climate-Fixing Technology. [The Washington Post, February 20, 2023.](#) (\$)

Frequent wildfires impact low income California communities more than others. [CapRadio, February 17, 2023](#)

Forest Service Chief on Wildfire Resiliency. [C-SPAN, February 13, 2023.](#)

Why are California's trees dying? [The New York Times, February 10, 2023.](#)



SCIENCE HIGHLIGHTS

Low-elevation conifers in California's Sierra Nevada are out of equilibrium with climate. [Hill et al., February 2023: PNAS Nexus, Vol.2, Issue 2.](#)

Mitigating potential sediment delivery from post-fire salvage logging. [Wagenbrenner et al., February 2023: California Forestry Report No. 7.](#)

Fire frequency and vulnerability in California. [Hino & Field, February 2023: PLOS Climate.](#)

Midwinter Dry Spells Amplify Post-Fire Snowpack Decline. [Hatchett, et al., January 2023: Geophysical Research Letters, Vol. 50, Issue 3.](#)

Evaluation of Air Quality and Climate Change Impacts from Specialized Biomass Processing Technologies under the California Vegetation Treatment Program. [Prepared for Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, December 2022.](#)

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Solicitations Open Now: Details on [SNC website.](#)

- **Strategic Conservation:** \$4.6 million for planning and implementation of land conservation through fee title or conservation easement to provide access to public lands and protect threatened lands. Applications are due March 20, 2023.
- **Vibrant Recreation & Tourism:** \$2.5 million to support innovative, collaborative efforts to enhance, promote, and develop sustainable recreation and tourism opportunities and increase access to public lands in the Sierra Nevada Region. Applications are due March 30, 2023.

LOOKING AHEAD

Central Coast Regional Task Force Meeting, May 11-12: Mark your calendar for the next Regional Convening of the Task Force. We'll gather on the Central Coast, May 11-12, 2023. Dates and locations for all [2023 Task Force meetings](#) are available on the Task Force website.

Land Use Planning for Wildfire: CAL FIRE-Office of the State Fire Marshal's [Community Wildfire Preparedness and Mitigation Division](#) and the [Community Wildfire Planning Center](#) are offering [free, all-day, in person trainings](#) open to land use planners, fire chiefs, fire mitigation specialists, building officials, and other government and private professionals engaged in planning, policy, development review and/or approval activities in California.

Webinar: Climate Change Integration Team: The Climate and Integration Team will host a webinar on April 12 (10-11:30 a.m.) focused on observed and projected changes in climate, the [direct and indirect effects of climate change on bark beetles](#) and their hosts in California, and management actions that increase the resilience of forests to bark beetles and climate change. Speakers include Phil Cannon, Chris Fettig, and Susan Frankel.

Webinar: Valuing the benefits of forest restoration on enhancing fire regulation: The Forest Health Research Program will host [Han Guo from UC Merced](#) on March 29 (3-4 p.m.).



Upcoming Webinars from [CalPoly's Fuels Management Training Program](#):

- March 16: Targeted Grazing for Fuel Reduction: Case studies from East Bay Regional Park District.
- March 24: Discussion about ecological stewardship and intentional fire
- April 6: Environmental review pathways to long-term success: Rx fire
- April 13: CalVTP Training: Healdsburg Open Space/Community Fuels Reduction Project

International Mass Timber Conference 2023: The International Mass Timber Conference will be held [March 27-29 in Portland, Oregon](#). Explore cross-laminated timber (CLT), nail-laminated timber, glulam, mass plywood panels, dowel-laminated timber, and laminated veneer lumber, and the opportunities and obstacles in global design, construction, development, manufacturing, and more.

California Forest Pest Council Annual Tour: Save the date for the Pest Council's [Annual Weed Committee Tour](#). June 21-22 in Humboldt County.

