



APRIL 2023

TASK FORCE HIGHLIGHTS

Recap from the March 30 Task Force Meeting: Task Force held its quarterly meeting at the California Natural Resources Agency in Sacramento and live on Zoom. Recordings of the sessions are available on the [Task Force website](#). Some of the highlights include.

- **California's Year in Fire:** A project of the [Climate and Wildfire Institute](#), [UC Berkeley's Center for Law, Energy & the Environment](#) and the [Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation](#), California's Year in Fire is a framework that works to more comprehensively account for annual wildfire impacts on social and ecological systems. This project will help decision makers better understand how wildfire impacts are trending and identify areas where we need additional investment. Next step in this project is to finalize the documentation for public review, with the results eventually housed on a public-facing website, updated annually. [Sign up](#) for updates.
- **Planscape:** A collaborative effort between CA Natural Resources Agency, USFS, UC Berkeley, Spatial Informatics Group and Google.org, Planscape is a decision support tool that empowers regional planners to prioritize resilience treatments across the landscape and inform the funding process. A version of the tool is available for beta testing, with the region-specific scenarios released this summer through fall. More information at wildfiretaskforce.org/planscape.
- **Wildfire & Forest Resilience Treatment Tracking and Mapping:** The Task Force's Monitoring, Reporting and Assessment Work Group is assembling federal, state, local, private data on planned, active, and completed projects statewide, including those on forests, grasslands, shrublands, and covering approximately 60 different activities (type of work completed). The goals include tracking progress toward state/federal acreage targets; facilitating regional planning and monitoring; and assessing benefits/costs beyond "acres treated." The Task Force anticipates having a publicly available treatment tracking map and dashboard by summer 2023.
- **Wood Utilization Work Group:** A new Task Force work group led by the Department of Conservation and the USFS presented a comprehensive set of recommendations to form the basis for a joint wood utilization strategy. The recommended actions are directed at each step in the supply chain: forest and feedstock, harvest and transportation, processing, and markets. The Task Force plans to have a draft strategy available for public review this spring.

Central Coast Regional Task Force Meeting: Registration will open soon for the next [regional meeting of the Task Force, May 11-12, 2023](#), in Santa Cruz and via Zoom. Hosted by the California State Coastal Conservancy, the regional convening will focus on the unique landscapes and land management issues of California's Central Coast. Field tours will be held throughout the area on May 12. Dates and locations for all [2023 Task Force meetings](#) are available on the Task Force website.



FEDERAL HIGHLIGHTS

USFS Invests Nearly \$200M from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to Reduce Wildfire Risk to Communities across State, Private and Tribal Lands: On [March 20, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced](#) \$197M in funding for 100 projects across 22 states and seven tribes as part of the [Community Wildfire Defense Grant program](#). Grants to California counties, cities and tribes totaled over \$97M across 22 projects including: \$10M in Tuolumne County; nearly \$10M in Siskiyou County; \$9.9M in Lake County; \$7.2 M to the City of Ukiah and Mendocino County; \$6.8 in Plumas County; and \$6.4M in Butte County. Originally announced in 2022, the Community Wildfire Defense Grant Program makes \$1 billion available over five years to assist communities impacted by severe disaster, those with high or very high wildfire hazard potential or classified as low income.

Department of Interior (DOI) Invests \$417 Million for Recreation and Restoration Projects in Nevada and California: On March 16, [DOI announced its commitment](#) of more than \$417 million for 47 projects dedicated to recreation improvement, wildlife habitat conservation, hazardous fuels reduction, wildfire prevention, and other purposes throughout Nevada and on the California side of the Lake Tahoe Basin. Funding for the projects was generated through the sale of public lands under the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act. Entities receiving funds include, among others, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service

STATE HIGHLIGHTS

Record Snowfall Brings Flood Warnings: On April 4, CAL FIRE, CA State Parks' Division of Boating and Waterways and the Department of Water Resources issued a [joint safety warning](#) urging the public to take extra precautions and to be aware of cold-water dangers this spring. California's record-breaking snowpacks will have the state's waterways running especially cold, fast, and running higher than normal. The agencies' teams will continue to focus on localized flooding risks, potential for major flooding, water rescues and operational support for at-risk communities.

Updates from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy:

- [\\$27 Million Approved for 18 Watershed Improvement \(WIP\) Grants:](#) SNC approved 5 projects totaling over \$24 million for projects that help with wildfire recovery and forest resilience in the counties of Calaveras, El Dorado, Fresno, Madera, Modoc, Mono, Nevada, Plumas, Shasta, Siskiyou, Tehama, and Tulare. SNC also approved 3 land conservation and recreation projects in Madera, Siskiyou, and Nevada counties. The largest grant, for \$2.1 million went to the Siskiyou Land Trust to acquire 320 acres in the headwaters of the upper Sacramento River.
- [SNC Hosts WIP Summit:](#) SNC recently gathered innovative leaders, scientists, and land managers from California's Sierra-Cascade to discuss their work addressing critical environmental and economic issues affecting the region. Topics covered included scaling forest restoration, the interrelated opportunities of recreation and restoration, and the importance of investing in conservation and indigenous cultures.

CAL FIRE Posts Field-Based Monitoring Protocols: As required under PRC §4137 CAL FIRE posted the first version of a [manual](#) outlining field monitoring



protocols for [California Prescribed Fire Monitoring Program](#) and outcome monitoring of completed [Forest Health](#) grants. The protocols include project and unit selection; data collection instructions for various project types; use of tools and technologies by field personnel; and data storage, handling and analysis procedures.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Federal Project Highlight – Stanislaus Landscape Project: Now in the second year of a 10-year plan, the USFS, Tuolumne County, Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions, and other partners are working to protect the Stanislaus Forest as part of the Wildfire Crisis Strategy. One of 10 landscapes identified in the Forest Service's 2022 initial investments of the [10-year Wildfire Strategy](#), the [Stanislaus Landscape Project](#) involves treating more than 245,000 acres through a suite of actions including mastication, biomass removal, machine, and hand piling for burning, hand thinning, timber harvest, hazard tree removal, prescribed fire and fuel break construction and maintenance, to restore forest resilience at a landscape scale.

State Project Highlight – Prescription Burn at Jackson Demonstration State Forest: [A prescribed burn at Jackson Demonstration State Forest](#) near Fort Bragg was the first step in a long-term restoration project to improve acorn health and harvesting potential in the area. In collaboration with the Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians, this site was identified as having the specific characteristics [research has shown as conducive](#) to a productive acorn collection site.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

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

Fighting Fire With Fire In California: How communities in the West are boldly setting property ablaze to reduce the impact of extreme wildfires. [Smithsonian Magazine, Planet Positive, April/May 2023](#)

California's Snowpack is Now One of the Largest Ever, Bringing Drought Relief, Flooding Concerns. [CA Department of Water Resources, April 3, 2023.](#)

Aerial fire retardant drops are attacked as ineffective and environmentally harmful. [Los Angeles Times, March 29, 2023.](#)



Riparian Forests: How California Farmers Can Protect Waterways. [NRDC, March 22, 2023.](#)

Learn More About the Challenges Facing the Northern Spotted Owl. [Jackson Demonstration State Forest Newsletter, March 17, 2023.](#)

SAF Updates National Position Statement on Invasive Species. [Society of America Foresters, March 16, 2023.](#)

Groups, communities defend Forest Service's use of aerial fire retardant. [Capital Press, March 15, 2023.](#)

Climate is changing too quickly for the Sierra Nevada's 'zombie forests.' [CapRadio, March 13, 2023.](#)

Measuring Success: Monitoring Program Assesses Benefits of Prescribed Burning. [Wildfire, Quarter 1, 2023](#) (pgs. 14-21)

SCIENCE HIGHLIGHTS

Dendroclimatic analysis of Sierra Nevada mixed conifer species between different diameter size classes. [Hirsch et al., March 2023: Forests, 14\(3\):489.](#)

High severity burned area and proportion exceed historic conditions in Sierra Coarse woody debris and carbon stocks in pine forests after 50 years of recovery from harvesting in northeastern California. [Zhang et al., March 2023: Forests, 14\(3\), 623.](#)

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

CAL FIRE Announces Funding for Research that Addresses Wildfire and Forest Health Issues: Up to \$5.5 million is available for research in forest health and wildland fire science through the [Forest Health Research Grant Program](#). Concept proposals are due no later than 3:00 PM on April 27.

LOOKING AHEAD

Central Coast Regional Task Force Meeting: [May 11-12, 2023](#) in Santa Cruz and via Zoom. Field tours will be held on May 12. Dates and locations for all [2023 Task Force meetings](#) are available on the Task Force website.

April 12: California Reforestation Pipeline Cooperative, 2023 Spring Gathering: The [gathering on April 12](#) (9:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m.) in Williams will include updates from forest land management partners responsible for components of California's reforestation pipeline, including seed, nursery, site prep/planting, monitoring, research. The California Reforestation Pipeline Partnership is a strategic collaboration between the USFS-R5, CAL FIRE, and American Forests created to address challenges to post-burn reforestation activities on public and private lands.

April 12: 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.



May 19: Webinar – Prescribed Herbivory for Fuels Reduction: Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo's Fuels Management Training Program is hosting a [webinar](#) focus on grazing planning and permitting in California. The webinar will be held May 19, 9 a.m. to 12: 30 p.m.

May 20: Field Workshop – Fuels Treatments in the Wildland Urban Interface: Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo's Fuels Management Training Program is hosting a [field workshop](#) on May 20 from 9 a.m.- 3:30 p.m. to learn from experts in restoration ecology about how to integrate a whole systems approach to vegetation management and fuels treatments at the Occidental Arts and Ecology Center.

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

