



MAY 2023

**TASK FORCE
HIGHLIGHTS**

Central Coast Regional Task Force Meeting: The [Task Force's Central Coast Regional Meeting](#) will be held in Santa Cruz on May 11 with field tours scheduled for May 12. The [agenda](#) includes a keynote address by Senator John Laird (CA-17), an analysis of the Central Coast's unique ecosystems and fire management challenges, innovation in collaboration, and a discussion of the complex regulatory requirements inherent with coastal management and planning. Registration is now closed for in-person attendance but a [Zoom option](#) is available for virtual attendance. Tour registration is open until May 10.

Planscape News: [Planscape](#) is a decision support tool to maximize wildfire resilience and ecological benefits. The latest news on Planscape is summarized in the [April Newsletter](#). Coming soon is the *Explore* section of the tool, which allows users to visualize data from the [Regional Resource Kits](#), is being tested as we conduct numerous product demonstrations weekly. Planscape is a collaborative effort by the California Natural Resources Agency and USFS, with support from [Google.org](#), and the Spatial Informatics Group (SIG).

**FEDERAL
HIGHLIGHTS**

USFS Grants Will Increase Equitable Access to Urban Tree Canopy: The U.S. Forest Service is requesting proposals from entities that are working to provide equitable access to trees and green spaces and the benefits they provide. The funding, made possible by the [Inflation Reduction Act](#), is part of a \$1.5 billion investment in the [USFS' Urban and Community Forestry Program](#). Of the total funding, the USFS is allocating nearly \$47 million to the Pacific Southwest Region — \$43.2 million to California. The application period ends June 1.

USFS Issues Old Growth Technical and Reforestation Strategy Reports: USDA Forest Service and the U.S. Department of the Interior have worked together on two reports required under [Executive Order 14072](#) (4/27/2022) that calls for strengthening the nation's forests, communities, and local economies.

- [Mature and Old-Growth Forests: Definition, Identification, and Initial Inventory on Lands Managed by the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management](#) contains the first national inventory of old-growth and mature forests on these lands.
- [Reforestation Goals and Assessments, and a Climate-Informed Plan to Increase Federal Seed and Nursery Capacity](#) in which DOI and USDA outline an agency-specific target to reforest over 2.3 million acres nationwide by 2030. The report also includes an opportunity assessment of voluntary reforestation through federal programs and partnerships.

USFS Awards Over \$9M to Strengthen California Wood Products Economy and Local Jobs. 14 California projects were selected for funding through USFS' new [Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance grant program](#). This program was highly competitive, and [California had many more successful applicants](#) than any other state. This is a testament to the great work that has been happening in the state to support wood utilization in California over the past few years.



STATE HIGHLIGHTS

CAL FIRE Invests Over \$142 Million in Forest Health: On April 24, [CAL FIRE's Forest Health Program](#) awarded [27 grants totaling \\$142.6 million](#) to local and regional partners implementing projects on state, local, tribal, federal, and private lands spanning over 75,000 acres and 24 counties. Fuels reduction and prescribed fire treatments funded under these grants are aimed at reducing excess vegetation and returning forest and oak woodlands to more fire, drought, and pest-resilient conditions. Ten awarded projects focus on post-fire reforestation and regeneration activities over the landscape of 11 catastrophic fires in California over the past 10 years.

CNRA Invests Over \$47 Million in Urban Greening: On April 6, the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) awarded 23 grants totaling \$47.5 million through the [Urban Greening Grant Program](#). The selected projects will create more sustainable communities by using natural and green infrastructure approaches, such as replacing schoolyard asphalt with native trees, plants, pollinator gardens and nature-based outdoor play areas, restoring wetlands or riparian corridors, or constructing new commuter paths to reduce vehicles miles traveled.

California Climate Investments Program Publishes Annual Report: [2023 Annual Report to the Legislature on California Climate Investments](#) Using Cap-and-Trade Auction Proceeds. As of November 2022, [California Climate Investments](#) programs have implemented over \$9.3 billion in addition to \$4.3 billion in expenditures by the High-Speed Rail Project for a total of \$13.6 billion. The investments are delivering major economic, environmental, and public health benefits for Californians, including meaningful benefits to disadvantaged communities and low-income communities and households.

OPR Publishes Progress Report on California's Climate Adaptation Strategy: The Office of Planning and Research issued a [progress report](#) on actions over the past year to build climate resilience across California. Nearly three-quarters of the [Climate Adaptation Strategy](#)'s 350+ metrics across nearly 150 actions are well underway, ongoing, or completed, with the remaining metrics in the early stages of scoping or beginning project work.

CDPH Publishes California Wildfire Smoke and Air Pollution Health Burden Mapping Dashboard. [California Department of Public Health's dashboard](#) shows the health burden (excess emergency room visits) related to air pollution and wildfire smoke. It allows users to visualize the burden in any zip code of interest, as well as how the burden is distributed among races and ages, and proximity to medical facilities, schools, historical wildfires and Air Quality readings. The dashboard is based on data in the publication, [Wildfires and the Changing Landscape of Air Pollution-related Health Burden in California](#). The dashboard was supported in part by a grant from the [CAL FIRE's Forest Health Research Program](#), as part of [California Climate Investments](#).

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

Prescribed Fire Fly-Along: A [YouTube video produced by The Nature Conservancy](#) depicts the application, science and intention behind the application of intentionally-ignited fire.



Notes From the Field, TNC's Efforts in the Sierra Nevada: A [YouTube video produced by The Nature Conservancy](#) cinematically highlights SNC efforts in the Sierra Nevada. The video also follows Sierra Nevada Project Manager Angel Hertslet into the forest as she and the team conduct a controlled burn in French Meadows.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Federal Project Highlight – Forest Health and Fire Resilient Rural Communities in Trinity County: [A project being completed on the Shasta-Trinity National Forest](#) is Phase 3 of a [Joint Chiefs Landscape Partnership](#) aimed at protecting the rural communities and natural resources of Trinity County, a landscape highlighted in the [Wildfire Crisis Strategy to protect communities and improve resilience in America's forests](#). The area, on the southern edge of the Trinity Alps Wilderness was selected for treatment because of its strategic importance in protecting nearby communities from wildfire. The project will also address new threats created by the post-fire landscape from the 2020 and 2021 wildfires.

State Project Highlight – Los Gatos Creek Watershed Collaborative Forest Health Project: Formed in 2020, the [Los Gatos Creek Watershed Collaborative](#) – including San Jose Water, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, Santa Clara Fire Safe Council, and Santa Clara County Parks – is implementing a landscape-scale project to create ecosystem and wildfire resilience while enhancing the safety of communities in southern Silicon Valley. [CAL FIRE's Forest Health program](#) has funded the 2-phased effort, the [first phase \(funded in 2021\)](#) focused on an interconnectable mosaic pattern of treatment areas covering 955 acres on which the risk of catastrophic wildfire threatened sensitive native and endemic species and habitats and Lexington and Elsmar reservoirs which supply drinking water to over 100,000 residents. [CAL FIRE recently awarded a \\$6.34 million grant](#) for the second phase which adds two new community partners and 841 new acres.

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 extend civil liability protections to burn bosses who are not certified by the OSFM. Would give Native American tribes the authority to grant themselves permission to conduct cultural burns, and to do so without a burn plan or proper risk mitigation if they are within "ancestral territory," as defined. Would allow the CNRA Secretary to enter into agreements with tribes in support of tribal sovereignty for cultural burning and create a Cultural Burn Working Group.

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 675 (Limón) Prescribed grazing: local assistance grant program: Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program: Wildfire and Forest Resiliency Task Force: Would require CAL FIRE to prioritize outreach and fire prevention projects that include prescribed grazing while eliminating the sunset date for advance payment authority. Would also require the Range Management Advisory Committee to develop guidance for local/regional prescribed grazing plans. Would also require CAL FIRE to consult with the RMAC to increase prescribed grazing opportunities within the Wildfire Prevention Grants program, while expanding the program to fund prescribed grazing infrastructure.

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

ALERTCalifornia Launches to Provide Essential Tools to Understand and Adapt to Natural Disasters. [UC San Diego Today, May 3, 2023.](#)

NASA teams with Forest Service to tally America's oldest trees. [Lake County News, April 30, 2023.](#)



Many California hospitals are near wildfire danger zones. [The Washington Post, April 30, 2023.](#) (\$)

House bill to improve accountability for wildfire prevention work advances to floor. [NBC News, April 28, 2023.](#)

US inventory: old forests cover area larger than California. [KOMO News, April 23, 2023.](#)

Lawsuit over water pollution could curb use of aerial retardant to fight wildfires. [PBS.org, April 23, 2023.](#)

Talking good fire: A conversation with Drew Nelson. [The Sentinel, April 18, 2023.](#)

U.S. forests face an unclear future with climate change. [UC Santa Barbara, The Current, April 6, 2023.](#)

Fierce fires lessen a forest's appetite for carbon. [Nature, April 5, 2023.](#)

SCIENCE HIGHLIGHTS

Downslope Wind-Driven Fires in the Western United States. [Abatzoglou et al. EGU, Earth's Future, May 2023. Vol 11, Issue 5](#)

Carbon stored in live ponderosa pines in the Sierra Nevada will not return to pre-drought (2012) levels during the 21st century due to bark beetle outbreaks. [Robbins et al. Frontiers in Environmental Science, 2023; 11.](#)

Reduced fire severity offers near-term buffer to climate-driven declines in conifer resilience across the western United States. [Davis et al. Ecology, March 2023, 120\(11\).](#)

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

National Forest Foundation's 2023 Matching Awards Program (MAP): [MAP: Connecting People to Forests](#) focuses primarily on in-person community engagement and completion of appropriate stewardship activities. Program goals are to create lasting change that will allow all communities, especially underserved communities, opportunities to benefit from activities on National Forest System lands or adjacent public lands. Application deadline is June 7.

Wildfire Recovery and Forest Resilience Directed Grants Program: SNC is [accepting concept proposals](#) for projects that support the planning and implementation of forest health projects that promote wildfire recovery and forest resilience. Proposals are due June 16.

LOOKING AHEAD

May 17: L.A. Moran Reforestation Center Open House: CAL FIRE is hosting an [open house](#) at the Reforestation Center in Davis. This event will recognize the 100+ year history of LAMRC while looking ahead to its bright future.

May 19: Webinar – Community Impacts of Prescribed Fire: Findings from WUI communities from listening sessions and a survey of medically vulnerable adults. CAL FIRE's Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP) is hosting a [webinar](#) from Sumi Hoshiko at the CA Department of Public Health and Dr.



Ana Rappold at the US Environmental Protection Agency on a Forest Health Research Program project.

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.

May through June: Cone Camp 2023: [Cone Camp](#) is a series of three 2-day trainings on cone monitoring across the state, organized by CAL FIRE, US Forest Service Region 5 and American Forests.

- Southern Sierra: Mtn. Home Demonstration State Forest, May 31-June 1
- Northern Sierra: Georgetown, June 14-15
- North State: Mt. Shasta, June 28-29 (Waitlisted)

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.

October 25-26: California Wildfire Conference: Coastal Quest, in partnership with Ventura County Wildfire Collaborative, is proud to present the [inaugural California Wildfire Conference](#) at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, Ventura County.

