



JUNE 2023

TASK FORCE HIGHLIGHTS

Central Coast Regional Task Force Meeting: Over 300 people came together in Santa Cruz (and another 200 joined virtually) for the [Central Coast regional meeting of the California Wildfire & Forest Resilience Task Force](#). Hosted by the California State Coastal Conservancy and San Mateo Resource Conservation District, the [agenda](#) focused on the unique landscapes and land management issues of California's Central Coast.

- **Director's Report:** Director Wright provided an update on the status of the 99 key actions outlined in the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan, outlined the Task Force's multi-pronged "Roadmap to Resilience," and [highlighted Task Force partners' achievements on the Central Coast](#).
- **The Central Coast Mosaic:** A panel of experts discussed the [Central Coast's unique ecosystems](#), safeguarding communities in the WUI, and indigenous land use practices of tribal communities in the region. The Task Force Interagency Science Team then introduced the new data and tools available for the Central Coast in the [Task Force's Regional Resource Kits](#).
- **From Local Collaboration to Regional Action:** [Two panels](#) of regional leaders discussed 1) the value of collaborative efforts for delivering on Central Coast resource priorities and, 2) how project implementors are navigating complex regulatory requirements.
- **Moving Towards a Regional Investment Strategy:** A panel of Task Force partners discussed the challenges and opportunities for [state-wide funding programs to align programmatically to support locally identified regional priorities](#).
- **Keynote address by Senator John Laird:** [Senator Laird \(CA-17\) is a champion of natural resources](#) and authored SB 456 which codified the CA Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force. Among his accomplishments, Laird served as Secretary of the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) (2011-2019) and two-terms as mayor of Santa Cruz. In his keynote, Senator Laird reflected on the Central Coast as "ground-zero" in recent times for the effects of climate change.
- **Press coverage:** The Task Force meeting and the tours were covered by members of the local press:
 - Good Times, Santa Cruz: [California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force Holds Forum on Wildfire Management and More](#)
 - The Pajaronian: [Fire, natural resources officials: prepare for a heavy fire season](#)

Regional Resource Kit now available for Central Coast: [Regional Resource Kits](#) are sets of tools and data created to accelerate the work by regional partners and collaboratives to reduce wildfire hazard and improve the conditions of forested and shrub landscapes. As of May 2023, this suite of tools is available for Central Coast, Southern California and Sierra Nevada. The release of the North Coast Resource Kit will coincide with the October 2023 Regional Task Force meeting.



FEDERAL HIGHLIGHTS

USDA Forest Service (USFS) Invests Additional \$33 Million in Deferred Maintenance Projects in CA: On May 16, [U.S. Forest Service announced](#) \$33 million in funding from the [Great American Outdoors Act of 2021](#) to help support 23 select projects across 12 forests and/or management units in California.

USFS Releases New Forest Plans for Sequoia and Sierra National Forests: Through a [Notice of Plan Approval in the Federal Register](#), on May 26 the USFS released a final environmental impact statement and final decisions for the [Sequoia and the Sierra national forests revised land management plans](#). The revised plans are strategic guidance documents that will be used to address the challenges of managing complex ecosystems for all forest users over the next 20 years. Each plan was developed with extensive stakeholder involvement and scientific consultation. See the [press releases from USFS](#).

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Presents Yuba Watershed Institute with Prestigious Conservation Leadership Partner Award. The [BLM recognized the Yuba Watershed Institute](#) for collaborating with the agency and area residents to plan and implement ecologically based forest management treatments, including hazardous fuels reduction and prescribed fire, on more than 3,200 acres of public lands in Nevada County.

STATE HIGHLIGHTS

State Agencies Fund Wildfire Resilience, Habitat Restoration and Conservation Projects. On June 1, the State Coastal Conservancy and Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) approved over \$100 Million to fund crucial projects.

- **State Coastal Conservancy Approves \$78 Million for Climate Resilience, Public Access, Habitat Restoration and Wildfire Resilience:** [34 projects](#) to protect and restore coastal lands, increase coastal resilience to climate change, improve public access to the coast, and reduce the impact of wildfire on coastal lands.
- **SNC Approves \$22.5 Million to Build Resilience, Boost Recreation, and Conserve Land:** [24 projects](#) that will benefit wildfire recovery and forest resilience, expand recreation opportunities, and conserve strategic land throughout California's Sierra-Cascade region.

CNRA Publishes Annual Report on 30x30 Initiative. [30x30](#) is California's landmark commitment to conserve 30 percent of the state's lands and coastal waters by 2030. On May 18, CNRA [published its annual report](#) showing that California added approximately 631,000 acres of conserved land since April 2022, bringing the statewide total to 24.4 percent of lands and 16.2 percent of coastal waters protected. The report details investments of \$116 million in 83 different conservation projects.

CNRA Releases Outdoors for All Initiative Draft Strategy. On May 18, CNRA released [a draft strategy](#) for its [Outdoors for All initiative](#), which aims to ensure that all Californians have access to the outdoors, regardless of their background or location. This strategy maps out how government, public and private partners can collectively build a movement to achieve equitable outdoor access. CNRA is encouraging [public feedback](#) on the draft strategy; feedback must be received by 5 p.m. on July 10.



Updates from the Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety: On May 23, the Wildfire Safety Advisory Board (WSAB) released, "[Draft Recommendations to the Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety on Additional Wildfire Mitigation Plan Requirements and Performance Metrics, and Safety Culture Assessment.](#)" The WSAB provides advice and recommendations to Energy Safety on the investor-owned utilities' Wildfire Mitigation Plans (WMP), plan requirements, and other wildfire safety matters. Energy Safety's evaluation of the WSAB recommendations is under way.

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

Private Forest Landowners Assistance Workshop Recordings. The California Association of Resource Conservation Districts, in coordination with the Task Force's Private Landowner Work Group has compiled a [set of videos describing](#) key assistance programs available to non-industrial private forest landowners in California. These assistance programs include forestry and fire related technical and financial assistance programs, and educational programs. The videos will be updated every 6 months.

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 Department of Conservation to establish guidelines funding the implementation and regional investment strategies for creating fire adapted communities and landscapes by January 1, 2025. Would authorize all conservancies and departments within CNRA to directly award regional block grants in order to help achieve the goals and key actions identified in the regional priority strategies.

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 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 vegetation in a condition so that a wildfire would be unlikely to ignite the structure.

SB 675 (Limón) Prescribed Grazing: local assistance grant program: Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program: Wildfire and Forest Resilience 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 Task Force to consult Range Management Advisory Committee to develop a strategic action plan by June 30, 2025, for expanding local/regional prescribed grazing plans to support the state's efforts to increase wildfire and forest resilience activities. 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

How California's record snowpack plays a part in wildfire season. [CapRadio, May 30, 2023.](#)

State Farm stops new home insurance sales in California as wildfire risks grow. [Reuters, May 30, 2023.](#)

Judge says Forest Service can continue dropping wildfire retardant. How it affects California. [Sacramento Bee, May 27, 2023.](#) (\$)

Scientists say carbon emissions are responsible for nearly 40% of the West's scorched forest area. [Los Angeles Times, May 17, 2023.](#) (\$)

Ventura, Santa Barbara and LA Among California Counties at Greatest Wildfire Risk This Fall. [The San Francisco Standard, May 19, 2023.](#)

This tribe was barred from cultural burning for decades — then a fire hit their community. [The Press Democrat, May 14, 2023.](#)

SCIENCE HIGHLIGHTS

Partnering in research about land management with tribal nations— insights from the Pacific West. [Steen-Adams et al., Gen. Tech. Rep. PSW-GTR-275.](#)



[Albany, CA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station.](#)

Solastalgia to Soliphilia: Cultural Fire, Climate Change, and Indigenous Healing. [Adams and Goode, Ecopsychology. 2022.0085.](#)

Wildfire facilitates upslope advance in a shade-intolerant but not a shade-tolerant conifer. [Brodie et al., Ecological Applications, 2888.](#)

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

June – August: Forest Business Alliance Workshops. Workshops on business plan development, sawmills, proposal writing and budgeting and forest management. [All workshops are online](#), free, and from 12-1 pm except for the 1-day, \$80 Sawmill Workshop. Funding for this project is provided by CAL FIRE's Business and Workforce Development Grants.

June 6: Building Resilient Landscapes: Post-Fire Restoration on the Mendocino National Forest. The USFS, in partnership with Firescape Mendocino and the USDA California Climate Hub, is hosting a [workshop](#) to develop a shared vision for the Mendocino National Forest post-fire restoration strategy. 9 am – 2 pm at Granzella's Banquet Hall, Williams.

Webinar Recording: Shaded Fuel Break: Lessons Learned Post Wildfire in the San Vicente Redwoods: CalPoly's Swanton Pacific Ranch hosted a [webinar](#) to highlight how four land trusts implement land conservation and fire resilience on conservation areas located adjacent to high-fire risk communities in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

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

July 17-18: Sierra to California All-Lands Enhancement (SCALE) Meeting: Sacramento State Harper Alumni Center. [Meeting topics](#) will include post-fire restoration best practices, building wood utilization infrastructure and capacity, securing long-term feedstock, the Community Economic Resilience Fund, going to scale with landscape restoration efforts, and building the next generation of durable landscape collaboratives.

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.

October 25-28: Society of American Foresters' National Convention: SAF2023 will bring together novel science and on-the-ground management techniques, while focusing on how to better communicate about the forestry profession to the public and build a community that can tackle impacts from a changing climate. [SAF Convention events](#) will be held at the SAFE Credit Union Convention Center, Sacramento.

November 2: Natural Areas Virtual Conference: [The Power of Long-Term Ecological Research](#) (LTER): Informing Natural Areas Management. [Natural Areas Association \(NAA\)](#), in partnership with, the [National Science Foundation \(NSF\) LTER Program](#) will highlight the important research being done within the LTER network that informs the practices of our land management audience from around North America. 11 am – 4:30 pm, Virtual.

