



## JULY 2023

### TASK FORCE UPDATES

#### Upcoming Task Force Meetings:

**August 29, Sacramento:** The next Task Force meeting is August 29 (rescheduled from July 27). The meeting will be held in the California Natural Resources Agency's Auditorium (715 P Street, Sacramento 95814) and virtually via Zoom from 1 to 4 p.m. The agenda will focus on the Regional Resource Kits including a demonstration of the Interagency Tracking System. A panel of regional leaders will weigh in on the Task Force's Regional Frameworks.

**October 5-6, Redding:** The Northern California Regional Meeting will be hosted by Shasta College in Redding. Details and registration coming soon.

**December 15, Sacramento:** The final meeting of 2023 will be held from 9:30-12:00 p.m., location TBD. The agenda will focus on the Action Plan's Goal 2, "Strengthen the Protection of Communities."

Meeting information can be found on the [Task Force Meetings](#) page.

#### Task Force Advisory Panel Seeks Input on Northern California Regional Profile:

In advance of the October 5 Regional Meeting, the [Science Advisory Panel](#) is developing the Northern California Regional Profile, a publicly available resource that will summarize the socio-ecological context of the region's resilience to wildfire. The Panel is requesting those who live, work, or own property in Northern California to [participate in a survey](#) to understand regional perspectives on improving ecosystem health and community resilience to wildfire. The survey is open until Tuesday, August 1, 2023.

### STATE HIGHLIGHTS

**State Budget:** Governor Newsom recently signed a [budget bill](#) that provides more than \$690 million over the year to accelerate forest health and wildfire resilience projects throughout the state. With these new investments, the Newsom Administration has committed more than \$2.8 billion to the programs and priorities in the [CA Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan](#) including:

- \$237 million for forest health and fire prevention grants
- \$135 million to state conservancies for forest health projects
- \$65 million for stewardship of state-owned lands
- \$50 million for post-fire reforestation
- \$35 million for prescribed fire and hand crews
- \$20 million for the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program
- \$20 million for conserving working forests
- \$15 million for forest and fire workforce training at community colleges

**New Fund Provides Support and Protection for Prescribed Fire and Cultural Burning:** CAL FIRE rolled out a [first-of-its-kind approach](#) to curbing the state's catastrophic wildfire problem by providing new protections for prescribed fire



and cultural burn practitioners. The \$20 million allocated for the “[Prescribed Fire Liability Claims Fund Pilot](#)” will cover losses in the rare instance that a prescribed or cultural burn escapes control.

**CAL FIRE Invests in Biomass Energy, Wood Products and Workforce:** CAL FIRE’s [Wood Products and Bioenergy Program](#) awarded [\\$16 million through 14 grants](#) to non-profits, small business, and manufacturing facilities. Grants will allow the subsidized transport of low-value forest biomass, job training opportunities, forestry outreach, and the development or expansion of small forest operations and milling businesses.

**Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety Issues Revision Notice for PG&E’s Wildfire Mitigation Plan (WMP):** On June 22, PG&E was issued a [Revision Notice](#) for their 2023-2025 WMP. [Eight critical issues](#) were identified with PG&E’s WMP. PG&E has 45 days to submit a revised WMP, after which, stakeholders will have an opportunity to submit comments.

## FEDERAL HIGHLIGHTS

**USFS Invests \$43 Million in Wood Innovations Projects:** California will receive nearly \$3.5 million to invest in 12 Wood Innovations grants as part of USFS’ \$54 million nationwide investment. [The funded projects](#) will expand modern wood use — as construction material in commercial buildings, as an energy source, and as manufacturing and processing for wood products used in framing homes and more.

**DOE Invests \$77 Million in States and Tribal Nations to Modernize America’s Electric Grid for Greater Wildfire Resilience:** The U.S. Department of Energy announced seven states, three tribes, and the District of Columbia as the [second cohort](#) to receive more than \$77 million in Grid Resilience State and Tribal Formula Grants. These grants will help modernize the electric grid and reduce impacts of wildfires and extreme weather events.

**USFS Conserves Private Forestland in California:** On June 29, the U.S. Forest Service announced 25,110 acres of working forests will be conserved between [two conservation easements in California](#) thanks to \$13 million from the Forest Legacy Program. The Trinity Timberlands project will protect 12,090 acres within Shasta-Trinity and Six Rivers National Forests and the 13,020-acre Brushy Mountain project will conserve three miles of the federally designated Wild and Scenic Eel River.

## REGIONAL SPOTLIGHT

**Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative (TCSI) Launches New Forest Health and Resilience Story Maps:** With support from federal, state, nonprofit, and private partners, TCSI established a four-part “Roadmap to Resilience” as part of a [new story map](#) that features a framework for resilience, an assessment of current and future landscape conditions, as well as a blueprint for resilience.

## PROGRESS ON-THE-GROUND

**USFS Concow Resilience Project:** [Replanting trees](#) is not as simple as it seems. The Forest Service and partners are restoring areas impacted by devastating wildfires in recent years, including the 2018 Camp Fire, and mitigating risks of future catastrophic wildfires with the [Concow Resilience Project](#). The project re-establishes widely-spaced oak and pine woodlands to more closely resemble how the land looked prior to European settlement.



**River Pines Community Fuel Break:** In the wake of the nearby 2021 Caldor Fire, [local residents](#) in Amador County are working with the Amador Fire Safe Council to put CAL FIRE [Vegetation Management Program](#) grant money to work to create a [fuel break around their community](#).

**USFS Teams up with Shasta College to Provide Hands-on Learning about Forest Health:** Shasta College's Heavy Equipment Construction and [Heavy Equipment Logging](#) students have invested 120 hours this summer in the completion of a [fuels reduction project at the Hirz Campground](#) on Shasta Lake with implementation oversight provided by the USFS. Funding for the project was provided by the Shasta Resource Advisory Committee and funding for the Heavy Equipment Logging Operations Program is from California Climate Investments and administered by the CAL FIRE Forest Health Program.

## LEGISLATION WATCH

**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.

**AB 824 (Calderon) Highway greening:** statewide strategic plan: Would require Caltrans to consult with CAL FIRE to complete a Statewide strategic plan for the achievement of at least a 10 percent increase of green highways in specified urban areas by 2035.

**AB 1573 (Friedman) Water conservation: landscape design:** model ordinance: Would require DWR to convene a working group by July 1, 2024, to develop a strategic plan to reach a requirement by January 1, 2035, for all



new and renovated nonresidential areas to install no less than 75 percent native plants, excluding edible plants and areas using recycled water, or an equivalent evidence-based metric for the native plant biomass needed to support native wildlife biodiversity in landscaped areas. The working group would include CAL FIRE.

**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

**Can a \$20-million liability fund encourage more ‘good fire’ in California?** [Los Angeles Times, June 24, 2023](#). (\$)

**How bad is wildfire smoke for your health? Here’s my view as a toxicologist.** [The Guardian, June 19, 2023](#).

**How sensors could help catch wildfires before they spread.** [The Washington Post, June 15, 2023](#).



**Wildfire burn areas in California are growing ever larger due to greenhouse gas emissions.** [Los Angeles Times, June 14, 2023.](#) (\$)

**California's 2020 smoke storm was horrific. What did the state learn?**  
The Washington Post, [June 10, 2023.](#)

**California takes a big step to help insure private companies that fight fire with fire.** [LAist, June 9, 2023.](#)

**'California is meant to burn': Experts teach landowners art of prescribed burns.**  
[Reuters, June 1, 2023.](#)

## LATEST IN SCIENCE

**Anthropogenic climate change impacts exacerbate summer forest fires in California.** [Turco et al., Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 120.25 \(2023\): e2213815120.](#)

**Improving adaptation to wildfire smoke and extreme heat in frontline communities: evidence from a community-engaged pilot study in the San Francisco Bay Area.** [Herbert et al., Environmental Research Letters \(2023\)](#)

**Environmental Justice in Forest Management Decision-Making: Challenges and Opportunities in California.** [Martinez et al., Society & Natural Resources \(2023\): 10.1080/08941920.2023.2203103.](#)

**Prescribed burns as a tool to mitigate future wildfire smoke exposure: Lessons for states and rural environmental justice communities.** [Kelp et al., Earth's Future 11.6 \(2023\): e2022EF003468.](#)

**Quantifying the effectiveness of shaded fuel breaks from ground-based, aerial, and spaceborne observations.** [Bajinath-Rodino et al., Forest Ecology and Management \(2023\), 543, 121142.](#)

**Quantifying the premature mortality and economic loss from wildfire-induced PM2.5 in the contiguous US.** [Pan et al., Science of The Total Environment 875 \(2023\): 162614.](#)

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

**CAL FIRE Forest Legacy Grant Program:** The purpose of [the Forest Legacy Program](#) is to protect forest land threatened with conversion to non-forest uses. Under this competitive grant program, CAL FIRE purchases or accepts donations of conservation easements or fee title of productive forest lands to encourage their long-term conservation. The pre-application period closes July 16, 2023.

**Grid Resilience State and Tribal Formula Grant Program:** Administered through the Grid Deployment Office (GDO), [grants](#) are available to strengthen and modernize America's power grid against wildfires and other natural disasters that are being exacerbated by the climate crisis. The FY 22/23 [application deadline](#) has been extended for Indian tribes, including Alaska Native Corporations until August 31, 2023.



**Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program (ICARP) Regional Resilience Grant Program:** ICARP published the [Round 1 Regional Resilience Grant Program \(RRGP\) Final Guidelines](#). The RRGP is aimed to help combat climate change and increase regional resilience. The first step to apply is to fill out [the RRGP Intent to Apply Survey](#). The deadline to apply is August 29, 2023.

## LOOKING AHEAD

**July 11: UCANR Prescribed Fire Claims Fund Webinar:** This [webinar](#) will cover CAL FIRE's new Prescribed Fire Claims Fund including the larger context and benefits of the fund in addition to enrollment requirements.

**July 17, July 18, July 20, July 25: California Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) Toolkit Development:** [Multiple listening sessions](#) on the statewide CWPP Toolkit, its purpose, goals and how it can help California communities.

**July 26: Webinar - Using Landscape-Scale Passive Acoustic Monitoring to Inform Forest Management:** Hosted by CAL FIRE's Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP), the [webinar](#) will highlight Forest Health Research Program-funded research on the use of landscape-scale passive acoustic monitoring to inform forest management across the Sierra Nevada.

**July 27: Field Training: Fuels Treatments in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI):** This [opportunity](#) at Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo's Swanton Pacific Ranch will provide training on forest health treatments, and hazard tree and biomass removal within a WUI landscape.

**October 24-26: California Wildfire Conference:** Coastal Quest and Ventura County Wildfire Collaborative are hosting a [three-day exchange](#) on understanding, preventing, and recovering from wildfires.

**November 6: California Prescribed-Fire Burn Boss Training:** Training on skills required for planning and managing prescribed fire on State or private lands. [Deadline to apply](#) is September 6.

