



AUGUST 2023

FEDERAL HIGHLIGHTS

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Announces Ambitious Approach to Reduce Wildfire Risk in California: On August 8, the [BLM announced](#) it is taking an ambitious and coordinated approach to accelerate fuels reduction projects on public lands with high wildfire risk throughout California. The [Statewide Wildland-Urban Interface \(WUI\) Fuels Treatment Programmatic Environmental Assessment \(EA\)](#) will streamline plans to protect communities, reduce wildfire risk, and improve forest health. Fuels treatment projects will be coordinated across land ownerships to provide the best results for communities, creating a landscape-level network of strategic fuels treatments and breaks within the WUI.

DOI Invests \$185 Million for Wildfire Mitigation and Resilience: On July 12, the Department of the Interior [announced](#) an investment of \$185 million from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to support wildland fire management nationwide in fiscal year 2023 and to assist land managers in planning for wildfire management activities in fiscal year 2024. The investments build on \$278 million already allocated in fiscal year 2023 funding for wildland fire management.

U.S. Forest Service Makes Progress on Projects Under the Southern California Regional Investment Strategy: Earlier this year, the [USFS announced](#) an expanded effort to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire through their [Wildfire Crisis Strategy](#) which includes \$10 million to reduce wildfire risk on 4 million acres in Southern California. At the Task Force's Southern California Regional Meeting (February 2023), it was announced that the USFS investment would be leveraged by state agencies and foundation partners under a [regional investment strategy](#). The [Angeles, Cleveland, Los Padres, and San Bernardino National Forests](#) have started work on the risk reduction projects in partnership with seven of the region's non-profit collaborators.

STATE HIGHLIGHTS

CAL FIRE Awards \$113 Million in Wildfire Prevention Grants: On July 27, [CAL FIRE announced a \\$113 million investment](#) that will help prepare communities for wildfire season, including projects that help homeowners create defensible spaces around homes, reduce overgrown vegetation, and improve evacuation routes for rural communities. The funding, made possible by the Governor's \$52 billion California Climate Commitment budget, will support [96 wildfire prevention projects](#) across the state – with more than 8 in 10 grants directed towards vulnerable or underserved communities.

CAL FIRE Invests \$47 Million in School Greening: On July 13, Governor Newsom announced CAL FIRE's \$47 million investment [to help schools convert pavement to green spaces](#) and plant trees and other vegetation. This first round of CAL FIRE's \$117 million [Green Schoolyard Grant](#) program will support [6 implementation projects and 9 planning projects](#) on 100 schoolyards



statewide. The program is part of the Governor's [Extreme Heat Action Plan](#), which is backed by the \$52.3 billion California Climate Commitment budget.

Tahoe Conservancy Awards \$4.6 Million to Reduce Wildfire Risk: The California Tahoe Conservancy has [awarded two grants](#) totaling \$4,627,000 to build partner capacity for forest and wildfire resilience projects in the Tahoe Basin. A \$3,302,500 grant will enable the Lake Valley Fire Protection District and South Lake Tahoe Fire Rescue to better plan and oversee wildfire risk reduction projects on the South Shore and a \$1,324,500 grant will enable the Tahoe RCD to provide professional forestry services including environmental review and forest management plans.

CAL FIRE and UCSD ALERTCalifornia Program: With the shared goal of improving firefighting capabilities and response times, CAL FIRE and UCSD's [ALERTCalifornia](#) are embarking on an innovative Artificial Intelligence (AI) [implementation trial](#). ALERTCalifornia deployed 1,032 high-definition, pan-tilt-zoom cameras as a 24-hour surveillance network for efficient monitoring of active wildfires and other disasters. The pilot will enlist AI to identify abnormalities in the camera feeds and promptly notify emergency command centers.

ENGAGING PRIVATE LANDOWNERS

CAL FIRE Enlists Private Landowners in Reforestation: CAL FIRE's L.A. Moran Reforestation Center, which houses the only State-run Seed Bank in California, is [requesting private landowners](#) allow cone surveys to be conducted on their private lands. Through the "Reforestation Because of You" campaign, CAL FIRE will assess private lands for viable cone crops.

University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR) Hosting Forest Stewardship Workshops: [Workshop series](#) in San Bernardino and Santa Clara counties will help landowners develop plans to improve and protect their forest lands in an ecologically and economically sustainable manner. The workshops are organized by a collaboration of federal, state, and non-profit partners to address management objectives and planning, forest restoration, fuels reduction, project development, permitting, and cost-share opportunities. UC ANR is also hosting special webinars and field days focused on vegetation management in fuel breaks.

Private Landowners Weigh in on UCANR's Forest Stewardship Workshops: [UC ANR's new story map](#) highlights the impact of their [Forest Stewardship Workshops](#). Included are narratives from private forest landowners and forestry professionals from 11 counties that have participated in the nine-week education and technical assistance workshops.

PROGRESS ON- THE-GROUND

A Partnership Aims to Protect California's Majestic Sequoias: In a [collaborative effort](#), CA State Parks, CAL FIRE, and Save the Redwoods League are working together to protect giant sequoias in Calaveras Big Trees State Park through the use of prescribed fire. The partners are reintroducing fire to this fire-dependent landscape to reduce fuels, stand density, and the possibility of catastrophic fire.



Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Bishop Field Office Partners with Communities to Reduce Wildfire Risk: The BLM Bishop Field Office recently sponsored [Chipper Days events](#) for homeowners in communities near Bishop and Lone Pine. Fire crews from the Bishop Field Office and Inyo National Forest participated by bringing and operating a chipper to remove vegetation cut by the homeowners from their properties. These events were supported by funds from the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#) to reduce wildfire risk.

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 annually post on their website, starting July 1, 2024, information pertaining to all grant programs managed by the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

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% 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 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 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 resiliency 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

California’s wet winter lowered the risk of big fires, experts say. [Capital Public Radio, August 4, 2023.](#)

The Mojave Desert is burning in California’s biggest fire of year, torching Joshua trees. [Los Angeles Times, July 31, 2023.](#) (\$)

Are America’s wild horses the answer to wildfires? [The Guardian, July 27, 2023.](#)

How AI could help detect wildfires earlier. [Axios, July 24, 2023.](#)

Wildland Firefighter Memorial Unveiled at Camp Smokey. [Public Now, July 21, 2023](#)



What to expect from wildfire season in California this year. [New York Times, July 20, 2023](#) (\$)

San Jose State researchers work to predict California wildfire behavior on steep terrain. [KCRA, July 19, 2023](#).

2023 California Wildfire Preparedness Guide. [KCRA, July 14, 2023](#).

A century of fire suppression is worsening wildfires and hurting forests. [CBS News, July 13, 2023](#).

Drones, satellites and AI: How California fights its unpredictable wildfires with analytics. [Cal Matters, July 12, 2023](#).

CAL FIRE's North Bay unit among those testing AI technology through AlertCalifornia wildfire cameras. [The Press Democrat, July 12, 2023](#).

Can mushrooms prevent megafires? [The Washington Post, July 10, 2023](#).

LATEST IN SCIENCE

Contemporary wildfires are more severe compared to the historical reference period in western US dry conifer forests. [Parks et al., Forest Ecology and Management 544 \(2023\): 121232](#).

Drivers of California's changing wildfires: a state-of-the-knowledge synthesis. [Glen et al., International Journal of Wildland Fire \(2023\)](#).

Economic analysis of wildfire impacts to water quality: a review. [Wibbenmeyer et al., Journal of Forestry \(2023\): fvad012](#).

Effects of thinning and climate on stem radial fluctuations of *Pinus ponderosa* and *Pinus lambertiana* in the Sierra Nevada. [Hirsch et al., Journal of Forest and Environmental Science 39.2 \(2023\): 81-95](#).

Proportion of forest area burned at high severity increases with increasing forest cover and connectivity in western US watersheds. [Francis et al., Landscape Ecology \(2023\): 1-18](#).

Mammalian resistance to megafire in western US woodland savannas. [Calhoun et al., Ecosphere 14.7 \(2023\): e4613](#).

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Joint Chief's Restoration Partnership Program: This [joint program between USFS and Natural Resource Conservation Service](#) supports collaborative projects that address several program objectives: reduce the risk of wildfire; protect water quality and supply; and/or improve wildlife habitat for at-risk species. Deadline is September 4, 2023.

Tribal Nature-Based Solutions Program: CNRA has launched the establishment of a \$101 million [Tribal Nature-Based Solutions Program](#). The program was developed in response to the consultations and input received from California



Native American tribes. CNRA is soliciting proposals for tribal multi-benefit nature-based solutions projects and is seeking nominations for the Technical Expert Panel to review project proposals.

Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Grant Program: [Cal OES's BRIC program](#) supports states, local communities, tribes, and territories as they undertake hazard mitigation projects, reducing the risks they face from disasters and natural hazards.

Regional Resilience Grant Program: [OPR's program funds](#) regional climate resilience efforts, including identifying climate resilience priorities, building capacity, and implementing projects, that respond to a region's greatest climate risks. The deadline to apply is August 29, 2023.

CAL FIRE Business and Workforce Development Grant Update: CAL FIRE has updated the [Wood Products and Bioenergy Business and Workforce Development Grant Guidelines](#). Highlights of this grant program include: \$5 million available for Biomass Transportations Projects and \$10 million available for Business and Workforce Projects. [Applications are now being accepted.](#)

Grid Resilience State and Tribal Formula Grant Program: Administered through the Grid Deployment Office, [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](#) is August 31, 2023.

National Fire Plan: Wildland Urban Interface Community Fire Assistance Grant Program: [U.S. Fish and Wildlife's program](#) funds implementation of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy and assists communities at risk from catastrophic wildland fires. Applications are due September 1, 2023.

Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG) Program: [The U.S. Forest Service CWDG](#) Program is intended to help at-risk local communities and tribes plan for and reduce wildfire risk. Applications are due October 31, 2023.

LOOKING AHEAD

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

- **August 29, Sacramento:** 1-4 p.m., CNRA Auditorium (no registration necessary) and via [Zoom](#).
- **October 5-6, Redding:** The [Northern California Regional Meeting](#) will be hosted by Shasta College in Redding on October 5 with field tours on October 6. Registration will open soon.
- **December 15, Sacramento:** 9:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m., CNRA Auditorium and via Zoom.

August 23: CNRA Secretary Speaker Series— Managing Megafires: In this [webinar](#), Secretary Wade Crowfoot will speak with experts in wildfire



management who will be looking back on the 2013 Rim Fire to reflect on the past decade's era of megafires.

August – September 2023: California's Fifth Climate Change Assessment

Regional Workshops: [California's Fifth Climate Change Assessment team](#) is hosting in-person workshops across the state. Attendees have an opportunity to give input on the draft framework for the Regional Synthesis Reports, identify local priorities for the Fifth Assessment to address, and begin identifying partners interested in being part of regional author teams.

September 14: California Vegetation Treatment Program in Practice Webinar:

Hosted at Huddart and Wunderlich County Parks, the [webinar](#) will help participants increase their knowledge of the planning and design process for ecosystem focused forest health treatments and gain insights into applications of the CalVTP.

October 11-12: 30x30 Partnership 2023 Gathering: [Connect with others](#), co-create new tools and partnerships, and celebrate stories from across California about how lands and coastal waters are being conserved and cared for through 30x30.

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.

November 6-8: California Forestry Workforce Summit: At this summit sponsored by the [Foundation of California Community Colleges' Resilient Careers in Forestry Program](#), federal and state leaders will identify challenges and resources for effective, equitable workforce development in forestry and wildfire management to help Californians prepare for and secure good jobs in this vital sector.

