



SEPTEMBER 2023

TASK FORCE UPDATES

California Launches Online Tool to Track Wildfire Resilience Projects: On August 29, the Task Force launched the beta version of a first-of-its-kind [Interagency Treatment Dashboard](#) that displays the size and location of state and federal forest and landscape resilience projects in California. The dashboard offers a one-stop-shop to access data, provide transparency, and align the efforts of more than a dozen agencies to build resilient landscapes and communities in California.

It reports treatment activities such as prescribed fire, targeted grazing, uneven-aged timber harvest, mechanical and hand fuels reduction, and tree planting. The beta version of the dashboard will continue to be refined to include additional data, including projects by local and tribal entities, along with revisions based on public feedback. An official launch is expected in spring 2024 with more complete data on projects implemented in 2022.

Recap from August 29 Task Force Meeting: The 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:

- **Interagency Treatment Dashboard:** The Task Force [formally announced](#) the beta release of the Interagency Treatment Dashboard. CAL FIRE's Alan Talhelm [demonstrated](#) how the highly interactive online tool will allow users to sort treatments by region, county, land ownership, and more.
- **Agency Spotlight – Bureau of Land Management:** Karen Mouritsen from the BLM [provided updates](#) on a new [Statewide Wildland-Urban Interface Fuels Treatments Programmatic EA](#) which accelerates fuels treatments on 930,000 acres of public lands as well as a new [Good Neighbor Authority Agreement](#) with CAL FIRE which makes it easier to work across land jurisdictions.
- **Regional Frameworks Panel:** Forest Schafer from the Task Force moderated a [panel of regional leaders](#) discussing how they are organizing regionally to support both capacity building and large-scale implementation.
- **Regional Investment Highlights:** A [panel of regional funders](#) offered overviews of how they are aligning investments on the ground.

Registration is open for the Northern California Regional Meeting – October 5-6 in Redding: Hosted by Shasta College, Northern CA Resource Partnership, and Tehama & Napa County RCDs. [The meeting agenda](#) on October 5 will focus on Northern California's unique physical and socioeconomic landscapes and the partnerships that are working to address all aspects of forest health and community resilience, including water security and watershed health, workforce & business development, and Indigenous stewardship. Field tours will be offered on October 6 – tour registration will be available soon.



STATE HIGHLIGHTS

Lisa Lien-Mager Appointed CNRA Deputy Secretary for Forest and Wildfire Resilience:

On September 5, Lisa Lien-Mager was sworn in as CNRA's new Deputy Secretary for Forest and Wildfire Resilience. [This position](#) oversees a wide swath of programs, all intended to promote forest health for wildfire and community resilience. Prior to her appointment, Lien-Mager served as CNRA's Senior Advisor for Strategic Communications since 2021 and as Deputy Secretary for Communications since 2017. Tony Andersen, formally the Deputy Director for Strategic Communications at CAL FIRE, will succeed Lien-Mager as CNRA's new Deputy Secretary of Communications.

UC Cooperative Extension Empowers Community Science with Forest ReCONEissance Guide:

UC Cooperative Extension in collaboration with the USFS and CAL FIRE are asking for [YOUR help](#) to support local reforestation efforts by conducting cone surveys in your area. Seed collection is critical to reforestation of California's forest landscapes. In addition to seed orchards and laboratory propagation, collection of natural seed helps ensure the state can meet its growing reforestation needs.

Energy Safety Releases Draft Decisions on 2023-2025 Wildfire Mitigation Plans (WMPs) for Public Comment:

On August 30, Energy Safety released [Draft Decisions on the 2023-2025 WMPs for Southern California Edison and San Diego Gas and Electric](#). Energy Safety's approval of these three-year WMPs are necessary criteria for consideration for a safety certification. The certification is designed to encourage electrical corporations to invest in safety and improve safety culture to limit wildfire risks and reduce costs. The 30-day public comment period is [now open](#).

FEDERAL HIGHLIGHTS

USFS Announces Landscape Scale Investments to Restore Forests in California:

On August 29, the [USFS announced](#) a \$16.2 million nationwide investment to restore forests across tribal, state and private lands. As part of this investment, over \$1.1 million is allocated between four California tribal projects conducted by the Hoopa Valley Tribe, Pechanga Band of Indians, Redwood Valley Rancheria Little River Band of Pomo Indians, and the Yurok Tribe. Additionally, \$105,000 from state project funding is allocated to restore native forests in the Elkhorn Slough Watershed.

USFS-PSW Uses Machine Learning to Promote Meadow Restoration:

U.S. Forest Service-Pacific Southwest Research Station ecologists have developed new machine learning algorithms [to identify potential locations of lost meadows](#) where forests now encroach. Meadows in California's Sierra Nevada mountains historically covered nearly three times the area they do today. New maps of lost meadows provide a large-scale perspective to help us think differently about the historical importance of meadows and the positive impact their restoration could have on streamflow and wildfire management.

USFS Funds Invasive Species Early Detection, Rapid Response, and Mapping:

The USFS is investing nearly \$19 million nationwide in early detection, rapid response, prevention, mapping, and research to control priority invasive plants. Funds will focus on associated priority firesheds and watersheds. Investments into California include:

- \$195,000 to revise the Western Weed Action Plan.



- \$150,000 for monitoring and development of the California Interagency Action Plan.
- \$460,000 to control invasive plants in California national forests.

ALIGNING STATE AND FEDERAL EFFORTS

CAL FIRE and BLM Join Forces to Work Across Jurisdictions on Forest and Fuels Management Projects: Through a nationwide initiative known as the [Good Neighbor Authority](#), CAL FIRE and the BLM have entered a [statewide agreement](#) and contract worth approximately \$4.5 million, made available to CAL FIRE as part of the agreement. The primary objective of this contract is to mitigate the potential devastation caused by wildfires specifically on BLM lands. By joining forces, the agencies can pair similar goals of separate projects on adjacent or nearby lands and further reduce the risks associated with wildfires while improving overall ecosystem health.

PROGRESS ON-THE-GROUND

Reclamation Continues Wildfire Prevention in Auburn Project Lands with Fuels Reduction Project: The Auburn area [Five-Year Fuels Reduction Project](#) work is on schedule and the Bureau of Reclamation's contractor, Wildfire Services Group, Inc., has completed several segments of shaded fuel break construction and maintenance work on Auburn Project Lands within the Auburn State Recreation Area in Placer and El Dorado counties.

700TH Community in California Designated as 'firewise': On August 15, - California set a record for wildfire prepared communities with the Upper Mark West Fire Safe Council in Sonoma County honored as the [700th Firewise](#) USA community in the state.

Forest Service Conducts Fuel Reduction Work in Lake Tahoe Basin: The USDA Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit continues cut-to-length mechanical fuels reduction (forest thinning) operations on approximately 275 acres around the Lake Tahoe Basin. [This fuels reduction work](#) is part of the NV Energy Resilience Corridors Project that aims to reduce the risk of severe wildfire and create healthier and more resilient forests.

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. (This is now a 2-year bill)

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. (This is now a 2-year bill)

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. (This is now a 2-year bill)

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. (This is now a 2-year bill)

AB 1573 (Friedman) Water conservation: landscape design: model ordinance: would make changes to the Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELo), developed by the Department of Water Resources (DWR), to increase the use of native plants and restrict the use of nonfunctional turf in new or renovated commercial and industrial areas.

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. (This is now a 2-year bill)

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. (This is now a 2-year bill)

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

B.C.'s southern neighbors have wildfire risk reduction plans; B.C. doesn't. [Vancouver Sun, September 1, 2023.](#)

Climate change makes wildfires in California more explosive. [NPR, August 30, 2023.](#)

Here's where California still needs to rake its forests. [Politico, August 29, 2023.](#)

Native American knowledge, and now AI, can teach us to build wildfire resilience. [Phys, August 29, 2023.](#)

New study shows value of letting fires burn. [Axios, August 25, 2023.](#)

Severe wildfires are difficult to control – but one research model shows ‘a better way forward. [Geek Wire, August 25, 2023.](#)

Shutting off power to reduce wildfire risk on windy days isn't a simple decision – an energy expert explains the trade-offs electric utilities face. [SF Gate, August 28, 2023.](#)

Why California wildfires are getting worse. [Cal Matters, August 15, 2023.](#)

What's machine learning? How Forest Service is reshaping Sierra Nevada in California. [The Fresno Bee, August 23, 2023.](#)

Utilities face a growing dilemma: shut off power or risk wildfires. [The Wall Street Journal, August 27, 2023.](#) \$

4 things to know about California's wildfire smoke and climate change. [KQED, September 6, 2023.](#)

LATEST IN SCIENCE

Consequential lightning-caused wildfires and the “let burn” narrative. [Pietruszka et al., Fire Ecology 19.1 \(2023\): 1-15.](#)

Human and climatic influences on wildfires ignited by recreational activities in national forests in Washington, Oregon, and California. [Jenkins et al., Environmental Research Communications \(2023\).](#)

Local and utility-wide cost allocations for a more equitable wildfire-resilient distribution grid. [Wang et al., Nature Energy \(2023\): 1-12.](#)

Projected smoke impacts from increased prescribed fire activity in California's high wildfire risk landscape. [Kramer et al., Atmospheric Environment 311 \(2023\): 119993.](#)



Resetting the baseline: using machine learning to find lost meadows. [Cummings et al., USDA Forest Service \(2023\)](#).

Sharing the cost of wildfire resilience. [Roald, Nature Energy \(2023\): 1-2](#).

The analysis of traffic data of wildfire evacuation: the case study of the 2020 Glass Fire. [Rohaert et al., Fire Safety Journal \(2023\): 103909](#).

Wildfire, evacuation, and cardiovascular events: A spatial exposure approach. [Arabadjis et al., Applied Geography 159 \(2023\): 103033](#).

Where are the large trees? A census of Sierra Nevada large trees to determine their frequency and spatial distribution across three large landscapes. [Kane et al., Forest Ecology and Management 546 \(2023\): 121351](#).

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Western Forestry Leadership Coalition Landscape Restoration Grants: The 2024 Landscape Scale Restoration Grants proposal period is [now open](#) and will [close on November 17](#). Grants are intended to support high impact projects that promote collaborative, sciencebased restoration of priority forest landscapes, leverage public and private resources, and advance priorities identified in a State Forest Action Plan or other restoration strategy.

Tribal Nature-Based Solutions Grant Program: \$100 million of [grant funds](#) are designated to assist California Native American tribes in advancing multi-benefit nature-based solutions priorities for their communities. [The deadline is September 29](#).

Community Wildfire Defense Tribal Grants: The USFS Landscape Scale Restoration Grant Program for Federally Recognized Tribes is [now open](#). The program funds collaborative, science-based restoration of priority forest landscapes on tribal lands. [The deadline is December 15](#).

California Resilience Challenge Grant Program: [The California Resilience Challenge](#) is a statewide effort, with support from the Governor's Office of Planning and Research to develop a pipeline of climate adaptation projects across the state to strengthen local and regional resilience to heat, drought, floods, and wildfire. [Applications open until September 29](#).

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](#).

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](#).



- **December 15, Sacramento:** 9:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m., CNRA Auditorium and via Zoom.

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 1: CalVTP Field Training: Sierra Foothills: Cal Poly is hosting [CalVTP Field Training: Sierra Foothills, Vista Del Rio Project](#) in Oakhurst (Madera County). This training will cover the use of the Cal Vegetation Treatment Program (CalVTP) to facilitate vegetation management and fuels reduction. Participants will complete a field treatment tour of the project area, learning about the different treatment methods used and why they were chosen.

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.

