



## OCTOBER 2023

### TASK FORCE UPDATES

**Recap from Northern California Regional Task Force Meeting:** Over 350 people came together in Redding (with over 200 joining online) for the Governor's Wildfire & Forest Resilience Task Force's Northern California regional meeting. At this meeting the Task Force released [Northern California's Regional Resource Kit](#) and panelists presented on Northern California's unique physical and socio-economic landscapes—including how regional leaders are scaling up landscape restoration and community protection as well as adapting to meet forest sector workforce needs. Some highlights include:

- **Director's Report:** [Director Wright provided](#) an overview of projects and investments achieved by Task Force partners in the region and shared how new Task Force products such as the Interagency Treatment Dashboard and Region Resource Kits will be able to be utilized to assess health and fire risk, plan and prioritize projects, and track progress toward wildfire resilience in every region of the state.
- **Northern California's Landscapes:** A [panel of experts discussed](#) Northern California's unique physical and socio-economic landscapes and the role Indigenous stewardship, water security, and community resilience and recovery play in the region. The Task Force Interagency Science Team then introduced the new data tools for practitioners available in the Task Force's [Regional Resource Kits](#).
- **Scaling Up Landscape Restoration and Community Protection:** A [panel of regional leaders discussed](#) how they are aligning funding and adapting their programs to restore landscapes and protect communities at a meaningful scale. This included a case study of Trinity County, California's highest fire risk county.
- **Forest Sector Workforce Needs and Opportunities:** A [panel of forest sector workforce and training representatives discussed](#) current forestry-related workforce impediments to increasing the pace and scale of landscape restoration.

**Task Force Offers Statewide Set of Regional Resource Kits with Release of Northern CA Region:** On October 5, the Task Force released its fourth and final [Regional Resource Kit and Regional Profile for Northern California](#). This adds to the kits and profiles already available for the Sierra Nevada, Southern California, and Central California regions. Kits provide 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. Regional Profiles add socio-ecological context for each region, highlight examples of current condition assessments from the associated kit, and present findings from interviews and surveys about stakeholder priorities and concerns for community and ecosystem resilience.

### FEDERAL HIGHLIGHTS

**Wildfire Mitigation and Management Commission Releases Final Report:** On September 27, the federal Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission, co-chaired by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Interior and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, [released a final report](#) submitted to Congress that reflects a comprehensive review of the federal



wildfire system. The report makes 148 recommendations covering seven key themes:

- **Urgent new approaches** to address the wildfire crisis
- **Supporting collaboration** to improve partner involvement
- **Shifting from reactive to proactive** in planning for, mitigating and recovering from fire
- **Enabling beneficial fire** to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire
- **Supporting and expanding the workforce** to hire and retain the wildland firefighting staff needed to address the crisis
- **Modernizing tools for informed decision-making** to better leverage available technology and information
- **Investing in resilience** through increased spending now to reduce costs in the long run

**USFS Invests Over \$100 Million in California to Plant Trees and Combat Extreme Heat:** On September 14, the U.S. Forest Service [announced](#) over \$1 billion in Urban and Community Forestry grants to plant and maintain trees, combat extreme heat and climate change, and improve access to nature in cities, towns, and suburbs. This includes [43 funded projects with funds totaling over \\$100 million](#) across cities in California. This is the largest single USDA Inflation Reduction Act investment to date in urban and community forests.

## STATE HIGHLIGHTS

**First-of-their-Kind Grants Support Tribal-led Wildfire Resilience Projects:** On September 22, [CAL FIRE awarded \\$19 million for 13 projects](#) as part of the [Tribal Wildfire Resilience Grant Program](#). This funding supports California Native American tribes in managing ancestral lands, employing Traditional Ecological Knowledge in wildfire resilience, and improving wildfire safety for tribal and surrounding communities. Funded projects include fuels reduction projects on tribal lands, recruitment and training of tribal youth and conservation staff, and the improvement of access to traditional food and basketry materials. These projects support the promotion and innovation of tribal expertise and science to build capacity and improve wildfire resilience throughout tribal ancestral lands.

**CAL FIRE Establishes Training Program to Increase Defensible Space and Home Hardening Efforts:** On September 25, [CAL FIRE announced](#) that qualified entities are now eligible to undergo training to conduct defensible space and home hardening assessments within the State Responsibility Area. This includes educating property owners about wildfire safety improvements that may be undertaken to harden a structure and make it more resistant to wildfire and assessing whether wildfire safety improvements have been completed.

**CAL FIRE and Cal OES Provide Grant Funding for Wildfire Prepared Communities:** This [new pilot program](#) leverages federal and state funds to support defensible space and ignition resistant retrofits in six vulnerable California counties. The pilot home hardening initiative provides funding for defensible space and ignition resistant retrofits to harden approximately 2,500 homes in six counties over the next three years. In the past, home hardening has only been done by individual homeowners, this program scales up home hardening improvements to entire communities.



**State Coastal Conservancy Awards \$84 Million for Climate Resilience, Public Access, Habitat Restoration and Wildfire Resilience:** The Board of the State Coastal Conservancy recently [authorized funding totaling \\$84 million](#) for projects to reduce the impact of wildfire, protect and restore coastal lands, increase coastal resilience to climate change, and improve public access to the coast. Notable projects that promote wildfire resilience include:

- \$1 million to the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County and the San Luis Obispo County Fire Safe Council [to conduct planning and build wildfire resilience capacity](#).
- \$469,000 to Sonoma Land Trust to [reduce wildfire risk and improve forest health](#) through thinning, pile burning, and removing vegetation to prepare for prescribed burns.
- \$1,570,000 to the California Rangeland Trust [to acquire a 1,014-acre conservation easement](#) for natural resource conservation to extend habitat connectivity and sustainable grazing.

**CAL FIRE Forest Health Research Grants Support Cutting-Edge Research:** CAL FIRE's Forest Health Research Program has [awarded \\$5.5 million to support 15 scientific research studies](#). The results of these studies will provide critical information and tools to forest landowners, resource agencies, fire management organizations, and policy makers across California on a variety of topics related to forest health and forest management. Research projects are expected to produce scientific publications, outreach and education events, and decision support tools.

## PROGRESS THROUGH COLLABORATION

**Liberty Utilities Partners for Utilities Powerline Resilience Corridor Project:** To protect the remarkable Lake Tahoe Basin from wildfire risks, Liberty Utilities' Powerline Resilience Corridor Project is [reducing fuels along powerlines](#) and working alongside the U.S. Forest Service, the National Forest Foundation, and the California Tahoe Conservancy to expand fuels treatments to increase energy safety and promote wildfire resilience in this ecologically and economically important region.

**Red Bluff Fuel Break Proves Effective During Creek Fire:** During the Creek Fire that started on July 25, 2023, a handline fuel break built cooperatively by CALFIRE and CALTRANS [acted to completely contain the fire](#) between Interstate 5 and a fuel break 100 feet to the east. This prevented the fire from spreading further to the east into residential and commercial areas. This effectively stopped the head of the fire, creating a slower expanding fire along Interstate 5. Without the fuel break, fire would likely have spread to 10-20 acres which would have burned into residential and commercial properties valued at \$4,000,000.

## LEGISLATION WATCH

**AB 297 (Fong) Wildfires: local assistance grant program: advance payments:** Removed the sunset date for advance payments of Wildfire Prevention Grant awards. (Signed by Governor and Chaptered on 10/9/23)

**AB 338 (Aguiar-Curry) Public Works: definition:** Makes fuel reduction work done as part of specified fire mitigation projects subject to prevailing wages, as stipulated. (Signed by Governor and Chaptered on 10/7/23)



**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 (MWEL), 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. (This is now a 2-year bill)

**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. (This is now a 2-year bill)

**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. (May be considered in 2024)

**PRESS BOX**

**Track California Wildfires with Wildfire Active Map, Costs, and History.**

[CalMatters, 2023.](#)

**Is California's wildfire season finally over? Don't be on it, experts say.**

[Los Angeles Times, September 29, 2023.](#)

**California escapes fire season mostly unharmed, but danger could lie ahead.**

[US News, September 25, 2023.](#)

**How California is using AI to snuff out wildfires before they explode.**

[CNN, September 23, 2023.](#)

**California overhauls home insurance market after wildfire coverage losses.**

**Here's what that means.** [San Francisco Chronicle, September 22, 2023.](#)

**Can this plan fix California's insurance crisis? What you need to know.**

[CalMatters, September 21, 2023.](#)

**Demonstration shows how defensible space could keep your home safe from California wildfires.**

[KCRA, September 20, 2023.](#)

**How wildfire smoke is erasing years of progress toward cleaning up America's air.**

[NPR, September 20, 2023.](#)

**A Northern California tribe works to protect traditions in a warming world.**

[NPR, September 19, 2023.](#)

**Feds award \$1 billion to plant trees, combat extreme heat, including \$100 million for California.**

[Los Angeles Times, September 18, 2023.](#) \$

**A climate scientist wanted to start a debate in academia. He set off a bigger firestorm.**

[Los Angeles Times, September 16, 2023.](#) \$

**Wildfire smoke is the next public health crisis.** [The Hill, September 15, 2023.](#)



**Wildfires knocked out power to an entire California county. The unprecedented fight to bring it back.** [Los Angeles Times, September 9, 2023](#) \$

## LATEST IN SCIENCE

**Building water resilience in the face of cascading wildfire risks.** [Belongia et al., Science Advances 9.37 \(2023\): eadf9534.](#)

**Climate change is narrowing and shifting prescribed fire windows in western United States.** [Swain et al., Nature \(2023\).](#)

**Does large area burned mean a bad fire year? Comparing contemporary wildfire years to historical fire regimes informs the restoration task in fire-dependent forests.** [Donato et al., Forest Ecology and Management 546 \(2023\): 121372.](#)

**Downwind fire and smoke detection during a controlled burn—analyzing the feasibility and robustness of several downwind wildfire sensing modalities through real world applications.** [Chwalek et al., Fire 6.9 \(2023\): 356.](#)

**Emergency department visits respond nonlinearly to wildfire smoke.** [Heft-Neal et al., Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 120.39 \(2023\): e2302409120.](#)

**Emergency department visits associated with wildfire smoke events in California, 2016–2019.** [Chen et al., Environmental Research \(2023\): 117154.](#)

**Evidence for multi-decadal fuel buildup in a large California wildfire from smoke radiocarbon measurements.** [Odwuor et al., Environmental Research Letters 18.9 \(2023\): 094030.](#)

**Forest therapy as a trauma-informed approach to disaster recovery: Insights from a wildfire-affected community.** [Hartwell et al., PLOS Climate 2.9 \(2023\): e0000096.](#)

**Identifying opportunity hot spots for reducing the risk of wildfire-caused carbon loss in western US conifer forests.** [Peeler et al., Environmental Research Letters 18.9 \(2023\): 094040.](#)

**Mapping wildfire ignition probability and predictor sensitivity with ensemble-based machine learning.** [Tong and Gernay, Natural Hazards \(2023\): 1-32.](#)

**Refuge-yeah or refuge-nah? Predicting locations of forest resistance and recruitment in a fiery world.** [Rodman, et al., Global Change Biology \(2023\).](#)

**Social vulnerability of the people exposed to wildfires in US West Coast states.** [Modaresi Radet al., Science Advances 9.38 \(2023\): eadh4615.](#)

**The contribution of wildfire to PM<sub>2.5</sub> trends in the USA.** [Burke et al., Nature \(2023\).](#)

**Using culturally significant birds to guide the timing of prescribed fires in the Klamath Siskiyou Bioregion.** [Long et al., Ecosphere 14.6 \(2023\): e4541.](#)



## 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, science-based restoration of priority forest landscapes, leverage public and private resources, and advance priorities identified in a State Forest Action Plan or other restoration strategy.

**USFS Inflation Reduction Act Forest Landowner Support:** [The Inflation Reduction Act Forest Landowner Support programming](#) supports the participation of underserved and/or small-acreage landowners in emerging private markets for climate mitigation or forest resilience. Track A is for projects with budgets ranging from \$2 - \$25 million. Applications due October 21.

**CNRA Urban Greening Program:** California Natural Resources Agency's [Urban Greening Grant Program](#) is accepting proposals for urban greening projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, mitigate the effects of extreme heat, and provide additional multiple benefits. This program gives priority consideration to projects located within and benefitting disadvantaged communities. Approximately \$23.7 million in specified General Fund dollars are available for awards this cycle. Applications due November 20.

**Action, Implementation, and Mitigation Grant Program:** The Action, Implementation and Mitigation (AIM) Program funds personnel, planning, partnership development, fuel reduction, and equipment to increase community resilience, restore fire-adapted ecosystems, and create safer conditions for residents and firefighters. Deadline is October 27.

**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.

**USFS Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program:** [This program](#) supports the establishment of community forests through fee simple acquisition of private forest land to protect it from conversion to non-forest uses and provide community benefits. Applications due January 12, 2024.

**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

**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 1-15: Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative (TCSI) Webinar Series:** TCSI is holding a [three-part webinar series](#) to learn about science-based tools and products that can be used to guide forest restoration and management.

- **November 1:** 11:00-12:00 PST – [Defining Resilience in California's Forests](#)
- **November 8:** 11:00-12:00 PST – [Planning for Change, Integrating Climate Modeling into Forest Management](#)
- **November 15:** 11:00-12:00 PST – [Case Study on Smoke and Health Impacts from Wildfire and Prescribed Fire](#)

**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.

**November 14-15: California Forest Pest Council Meeting on Fostering Resilience Toward Healthy Forests:** During their 72<sup>nd</sup> annual meeting in Davis, the California Forest Pest Council will be covering: 2023 forest pest observations from around California; speaking panels on climate and forest resilience, mega-disturbance in California forests, the latest on non-native forest pests in California; and a visit to UC Davis's Bohart Museum of Entomology. [Registration now open.](#)

**December 4-8: 10<sup>th</sup> International Fire Ecology and Management Congress:** The 10th International Fire Ecology and Management Congress [will be held in Monterey](#), California December 4-8, 2023. This event will include workshops, field trips, and 3 full days of presentations, discussion groups, and networking opportunities around the theme, [Igniting Connections: Celebrating our fire family across generations, cultures, and disciplines.](#)

**December 7: Using the CalVTP: New Implementation Tools and Lessons :** Cal Poly is hosting [Using the CalVTP: New Implementation Tools and Lessons](#). This webinar will share insights about the latest trends, tips, and practices for agencies, fire safe councils, and landowners seeking to use the California Vegetation Treatment Program (CalVTP) to implement vegetation treatments.

**December 13-15: CA Resource Conservation Districts 78<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference:** [Sacramento.](#)





**December 15: Task Force Meeting in Sacramento:** 9:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m., CNRA Auditorium and via Zoom. Meeting information can be found on the [Task Force Meetings page](#).

