



FEBRUARY 2024

TASK FORCE UPDATES

Task Force Opens Survey for Core Reporting Metrics: The Task Force is seeking public input on a list of candidate [Core Reporting Metrics](#) that will be used to effectively report on progress toward landscape and wildfire resilience goals. Access the [Candidate Core Reporting Metrics Review Packet](#) to provide feedback. The deadline to submit feedback is Friday, March 8.

On February 9, the Task Force hosted a Core Reporting Metrics Virtual Workshop ([watch video](#)) which provided background on the development and intended use of Core Reporting Metrics.

Task Force to Host Southern CA Regional Meeting in Escondido: The Task Force will host its [fifth regional meeting](#) on April 4 at [San Diego Zoo's Safari Park](#) in Escondido, California. The agenda will focus on issues unique to Southern California and give a preview of the 2024 update to the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan. Look for more information and registration in early March. The Task Force website lists the dates and locations of all [2024 Task Force meetings](#).

FEDERAL HIGHLIGHTS

USFS Awards Stanislaus National Forest \$57.6M in FY24 Wildfire Crisis Strategy Landscape Funding: Stanislaus National Forest is currently into year three of a [ten-year, 305,000-acre project](#) to reduce fuel loads through a variety of methods including prescribed fire and mechanical thinning. FY24 funding is part of USFS' Wildfire Crisis Strategy, which also includes the already underway [Social and Ecological Resilience Across the Landscape \(SERAL\) Project](#) being implemented by Stanislaus National Forest, Tuolumne County and [Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions](#) (YSS), a collaborative of 25 local industry, environmental, and recreational groups.

NOAA Invests \$34M in Fire Behavior Prediction: The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) [will award more than \\$34 million](#) to six research universities in NOAA's Cooperative Institute system to improve wildfire behavior modeling, forecasting, and wildfire warnings. Over the next five years, the funding will:

- Help NOAA build and deploy new observing systems that detect and monitor wildfires and their impacts.
- Advance high-resolution models to predict fires, emissions, and air quality.
- Establish a new NOAA Fire Weather Testbed that will allow scientists and forecasters to evaluate experimental products and speed their transition to operations.
- Improve the ability of NOAA's incident meteorologists (IMETs) to provide emergency support at fire locations.

USDA Forest Service & BLM Release Introductory Report: Analysis of Threats to Mature and Old-Growth Forests on Lands Managed: In an effort to analyze the threats to mature and old-growth forests on Federal lands, including from wildfires and climate change, the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land



Management (BLM) and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service released an [introductory report](#) that summarizes initial key findings. A full report will be available in early 2024. Additionally, old-growth threat analysis layers are now available in the USDA Forest Service [Climate Risk Viewer](#).

USDA Forest Service Celebrates Historic Investments in 2023. [Historic investments included:](#) increases in the size, scope and impact of the agency's 10-Year Strategy to Confront the Wildfire Crisis; advancing greater equity in access to agency programs and decision-making processes that impact national forest and grassland management; strengthening relationships and honoring the trust, responsibility, and sovereign treaty rights of Indian Tribes; and supporting economies and creating jobs in communities nationwide, all while leveraging innovative approaches to agency work.

STATE HIGHLIGHTS

Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Share's Draft Strategic Plan for Public Comment. Over the past year, the SNC has been taking stock of the past five years and gathering input from their Board, partners, and the public in order to craft a Strategic Plan for 2024-2029 that will help the SNC best serve the Sierra-Cascade and all of California. Comments on the [Draft Strategic Plan](#) can be [emailed](#) or delivered in person at [SNC's March 7 Governing Board meeting](#) in Sacramento. Public comment closes Friday, March 8 at 5pm. After review of public comment, the SNC anticipates that the Board will consider adoption of a 2024-2029 Strategic Plan at its June 2024 meeting.

Secretary Crowfoot Shares a 2024 New Year's Message. In a [New Year's blog](#), [Secretary Crowfoot](#) reviewed progress made in 2023 and identified Governor Newsom's environmental priorities for 2024.

PROGRESS THROUGH COLLABORATION

Planscape Launches Plan Journey: [Planscape](#) is a free decision support tool built to maximize wildfire resilience and ecological benefits across California. Planscape has expanded its coverage to Northern California and now offers statewide coverage. The recently launched Plan journey helps determine the best locations for land treatment. Planscape is a collaborative effort by the California Natural Resources Agency, the US Forest Service, The University of California, and Spatial Informatics Group (SIG) with support from Google.org.

LEGISLATION WATCH

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 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 percent increase of green highways in specified urban areas by 2035.

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.

SB 571 (Allen) Fire safety regulations: development projects: ingress and egress route standards. Would require the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (Board) to develop a report regarding standards for ingress and egress routes in new development within the State Responsibility Area (SRA) and High and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ) in the Local Responsibility Area (LRA).

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.

SB 945 (Alvarado-Gil) would require CAL FIRE to coordinate with CDPH, the Task Force, and CARB to create, operate, and maintain a Statewide wildfire smoke and health data platform; require CAL FIRE to consult with those same entities to develop protocols for sharing, documenting, quality control, and promotion of open-source platforms and decision support tools related to wildfire smoke and health data, as specified; create the Wildfire Smoke and Health Administration Fund, which would make funding available upon appropriation for the collection, management, and improvement of wildfire smoke data.

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 faces health hazard from extreme heat and wildfires combined.
[Newsweek, February 2, 2024.](#)



Many California native plants adapt to fire. Some are threatened by it. [Washington Post, January 30, 2024.](#)

Everyone says trees are good for us. This scientist wants to prove it. [The Washington Post, January 29, 2024.](#)

In Oregon, a new program is training burn bosses to help put more “good fire” on the ground. [Inside Climate News, January 29, 2024.](#)

Dixie Fire: PG&E agrees to \$45 million settlement related to California’s second-largest wildfire. [Daily Bulletin, January 26, 2024.](#)

California insurance crisis deepens as providers pull out of state. [Newsweek, January 25, 2024.](#)

Smoke exposure from California’s wildfire-busting controlled burns is raising concerns. Are they safe? [The Mercury News, January 24, 2024.](#)

350,000 Californians are on the FAIR Plan, the last resort for fire insurance. [CalMatters, January 24, 2024.](#)

Tree mortality from a bird’s-eye view. [USDA Forest Service, January 24, 2024.](#)

Startup AiDash raises \$50 million for tech using AI, satellites to spot wildfire risk. [U.S News, January 23, 2024.](#)

Senator Marie Alvarado-Gil introduces new bill targeting health, economic impacts of wildfire smoke across California. [Tahoe Daily Tribune, January 23, 2024](#)

Having a mix of tree heights enhances drought resilience in Sierra Nevada forests. [UC Merced News, January 19, 2024.](#)

Old forests are critically important for slowing climate change and merit immediate protection from logging. [The Conversation, January 19, 2024.](#)

Wildfire: A modern day paradox. [U.S. Forest Service Region 5, January 10, 2024.](#)

Air quality and health impacts of the 2020 wildfires in California. [Carreras-Sospedra, Marc, et al. *Fire Ecology* 20.1 \(2024\): 1-22.](#)

Exploring spatial heterogeneity in synergistic effects of compound climate hazards: Extreme heat and wildfire smoke on cardiorespiratory hospitalizations in California. [Chen, Chen, et al. *Science Advances* 10, eadj7264 \(2024\).](#)

Increasing wildfires and changing sociodemographics in communities across California, USA. [Yadav, Kamini, et al. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 98 \(2023\): 104065.](#)

Predicting snag fall in an old-growth forest after fire. [Becker, Kendall ML, and James A. Lutz. *Fire Ecology* 19.1 \(2023\): 1-17.](#)

LATEST IN SCIENCE



Thinning and managed burning enhance forest resilience in northeastern California. [Loverin, John K., et al. *Ecosystem Health and Sustainability*.](#)

Thinning increases forest ecosystem carbon stocks. [Zhang, Hailong, et al. *Forest Ecology and Management* 555 \(2024\): 121702.](#)

Thinning and prescribed burning increase shade-tolerant conifer regeneration in a fire excluded mixed-conifer forest. [Zald, Harold SJ, et al. *Forest Ecology and Management* 551 \(2024\): 121531.](#)

Snag dynamics and surface fuel loads in the Sierra Nevada: Predicting the impact of the 2012–2016 drought. [Northrop, Hudson, et al. *Forest Ecology and Management* 551 \(2024\): 121521.](#)

Using PODs to integrate fire and fuels planning. [Buettner, William C., et al. *International Journal of Wildland Fire* 32.12 \(2023\): 1704-1710.](#)

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

CAL FIRE Wildfire Resilience Block Grants to support private forestland owners:

The purpose of [the block grant](#) is to allow prospective grantees the ability to provide a program of financial and technical forestry assistance to nonindustrial forest landowners, where the grantee serves as the supervising entity, receives the grant from CAL FIRE and then provides outreach and/or technical/financial assistance to landowners so they can conduct forest restoration or management activities on their property. [Proposals are due February 26, 2024.](#)

CAL FIRE Business and Workforce Development: [CAL FIRE Wood Products and Bioenergy](#) will award funding for California business and workforce development projects that support healthy resilient forests and the people and ecosystems that depend on them. [Watch the virtual](#) workshop to learn more. [Application deadline is March 8, 2024.](#)

USDA Forest Service Urban & Community Forestry Climate-Resilient Tree

Nurseries: [This year's grant program](#) will focus on biodiversity, health, and resilience of trees in urban and community forests through supporting the use of more locally grown, regionally adapted, insect and pest-resistant, and diverse native or site-appropriate species, and facilitating funding to promote planting higher quality trees in urban forests with less emphasis on the quantity of trees planted. [Application deadline is February 29, 2024.](#)

LOOKING AHEAD

Task Force 2024 Meeting Dates: The Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force will be holding meetings on the following [dates](#):

- [April 4 & 5 – Southern CA Region](#)
- June 20 – Sacramento
- September 26 & 27 – Sierra Nevada Region
- December 13 – Sacramento

January 31 – May 15: USFS Region 5 Climate Change Integration Team (CCIT) Webinar Series:

Remaining webinars in the 2024 series includes the following topics:

- [Wednesday April 10 10:00 - 11:30 AM PT](#): Exploring the Urban Forestry and Climate Change Nexus



- [Wednesday, May 15 10:00 - 11:30 AM PT](#): Climate-Informed Design Considerations for Transportation Infrastructure

February 1 – April 25: Yale Forest Forum on Tribal Forestry: In the face of climate change, tribes and First Nations continue to work with institutions, NGOs, and federal and state agencies to support Indigenous sovereignty and resilient forested landscapes. This weekly (Thu. at 9am PT) [webinar series](#) will focus on the current state of tribal forest management and Indigenous stewardship with a series of speakers from different tribes, universities, non-profits, and agencies.

February 22: California Pest Council, Southern CA Committee Meeting: Updates on the invasive shot hole borer, white pine blister rust, ghost canker and others.

February 26 – 27: Calforests Annual Forestry Strategies & Innovations (FSI) Conference: FSI brings together the state's forestry sector and key partners to engage in critical policy level conversations, to evaluate and improve best practices, to share important knowledge and innovations, and to invite key stakeholders to further the work of forest management and wildfire protection. [Registration is open now](#) for the event in downtown Sacramento.

February 29 – May 9: Incorporating Climate and Environmental Justice into Research and Resource Management Webinar Series: The National Climate Adaptation Science Center (CASC) is hosting a [webinar series](#) on Thursdays on how to integrate principles around climate and environmental justice into research and resource management. In this webinar series, speakers will explore the ethics of engaging with the populations most vulnerable to the impacts of environmental and climate change.

March 8: SNC's Watershed Improvement Summit (WIP): The [Sierra Nevada Conservancy's WIP Summit](#) connects California policymakers to Sierra-Cascade issues that resonate across the state. This is the 20th Anniversary of the SNC and will show-case the many accomplishments, people, projects, collaborations, and events that have shaped the SNC and the Sierra-Cascade over the past two decades.

May 7-9: California Chaparral Symposium: The [4th California Chaparral Symposium](#) will be held at Cal-poly San Luis Obispo and will Build on the results of the earlier California Chaparral Symposia. the focus is on the resilience of chaparral ecosystems and the societies and assets that exist within and adjacent to them. Scientists, managers, and stakeholders will work together to assess and address the costs and benefits of management action, and inaction, in the face of a rapidly warming climate, increasing wildfire risk, and growing threats to biodiversity and ecosystem integrity.

