



## MARCH 2024

### TASK FORCE UPDATES

**Registration is open for the Task Force's Southern CA Regional Meeting:** Join the Task Force and our partners April 4-5 at the [San Diego Zoo Safari Park](#) in Escondido.

Hosted by the RCD of Greater San Diego County and the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, the agenda and activities on April 4 will focus on landscapes and land management issues unique to Southern California. Agenda topics will include cultural burning, utilities & infrastructure, and regional planning & optimization.

On April 5, Task Force Partners will host a variety of field tours offering immersive opportunities to better understand the critical landscape health and wildfire resilience work being done in the Greater San Diego region.

[Register now](#) for to join us in person on April 4 or [remotely via Zoom](#). April 5 tour descriptions and registration will be available soon!

### FEDERAL HIGHLIGHTS

**USDA Forest Service Invests Nearly \$179 Million for Priority Landscapes in California to Confront Wildfire Crisis:** On February 20 the [USDA Forest Service announced it will invest nearly \\$179 million into priority landscapes across California](#) as part of a \$500 million national investment to expand work on the Wildfire Crisis Strategy to reduce risk to communities, critical infrastructure, and natural resources from the nation's ongoing wildfire and climate crisis. This builds on the \$2.8 billion already invested by Governor Newsom and California's Legislature to take proactive actions to reduce catastrophic wildfire risks, protect communities, and restore the health of our landscapes.

Funding has been designated for the following projects in California:

Regional Landscapes	FY24 Allocation
Stanislaus	\$57,663,352
North Yuba	\$16,489,560
Sierra & Elko Fronts (CA & NV)	\$27,692,340
Klamath River Basin (CA & OR)	\$36,831,090
Plumas Community Protection	\$3,522,500
Southern California	\$1,915,000
Trinity	\$34,749,886
<b>Total Allocation FY24</b>	<b>\$178,863,728</b>

**USFS-PSW Study Shows How Fuel Treatments Improve Wildfire Outcomes:** [USFS-Pacific Southwest Research Station recently published](#) findings that provide strong evidence for the use of fuel treatments to mitigate fire behavior and resulting fire severity even under extreme fire weather conditions. The findings make a compelling case for doing both tree thinning and prescribed burning to protect forests in the future.



## STATE HIGHLIGHTS

### State Resource Agencies Publish 2023 Annual Reports:

- [California Tahoe Conservancy](#) summarized its 2023 accomplishments on its community protection, habitat restoration, and landscape resilience goals.
- [CA Wildlife Conservation Board](#) highlighted its 2023 conservation and restoration efforts throughout California.

**Energy Safety Concludes Approval of 2023-2025 Wildfire Mitigation Plans:** Energy Safety has approved [2023-2025 WMPs](#) for each of California's nine electrical corporations. The 2023-2025 WMPs are three-year baseline plans covering the next three-year WMP cycle. The electrical corporations are required to submit WMPs each year to Energy Safety for review and approval.

**Center for Law, Energy & the Environment at UC Berkeley Publishes California's 2021 Year in Fire.** The [California's Year in Fire](#) project, in partnership with the Climate & Wildfire Institute and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, advances a framework for a more complete picture of evolving impacts and consequences from wildfires, and provides more robust data points to inform meaningful solutions.

## PROGRESS THROUGH COLLABORATION

**Tahoe Conservancy Awards \$600,000 Grant to Joint USDA Forest Service-Washoe Tribe Project at Mayala Wata:** The [California Tahoe Conservancy has awarded a \\$600,000 grant](#) to the USDA Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU) for forestry operations as part of its joint project with the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California to restore Mayala Wata (Meeks Meadow). Cattle grazing, logging, and fire suppression have degraded Meeks Meadow, and the absence of low-intensity fire has allowed lodgepole pines to encroach on the meadow. The LTBMU will use these funds, matched by \$1 million in federal funds, to remove encroaching conifers from 213 acres of the meadow and thin 70 acres of the surrounding upland forest. This federal, state, and tribal partnership is an excellent example of how Task Force partners can work together to achieve multiple benefits, from improving wildlife habitat to promoting culturally significant plants.

**California Climate Hub Receives USFS Region 5 Partnership of the Year Award:** USFS Region 5 awarded the [California Climate Hub the 2023 Honor Award for Partnership of the Year](#) for their efforts to develop and deliver climate literacy and web-based climate tools trainings. California Climate Hub has designed and delivered a series of workshops focused on the applications of the California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force's [Regional Resource Kits](#). The [most recent workshop](#) gathered forest managers from local, state, and federal agencies at Shasta-Trinity National Forest in Redding.

**California's RCDs are Making Substantial Progress on Prescribed Burns:** Favorable fall and winter conditions have enabled [California's Resource Conservation Districts](#) to make significant progress on prescribed burns—getting good fire on the ground and showing the way on best practices for safe, effective prescribed burns.



## 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 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.

**AB 2344 (Petrie-Norris) Fire Prevention: grant programs: reporting:** Would require the Task Force to compile and annually post on their website, starting July 1, 2024, comprehensive information pertaining to all publicly funded fire prevention projects in the State. This bill is a re-print of AB 788 from 2023.

**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) The Wildfire Smoke and Health Outcomes Data Act:** 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.

**SB 1176 (Niello) Wildfires: workgroup: toxic heavy metals:** Would require CAL FIRE, CalOES, and the Department of Toxic Substances Control to form a workgroup related to exposure of toxic heavy metals after a wildfire to establish best practices, recommendations for impacted communities and first responders, and methods of mitigation and prevention of exposure. The workgroup would be required to submit a report to the Legislature of their findings on or before January 1, 2026.

**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

**Wildfire map reveals your neighborhood's risk.** [Newsweek, March 5, 2024.](#)

**Forest-thinning project on the Los Padres NF cleared to begin.** [Bakersfield.com, March 4, 2024.](#)

**California offers to help Texas fight wildfires.** [Newsweek, March 4, 2024.](#)

**Wildfires linked with increases in mental health problems in nearby residents, study finds.** [CNN, March 1, 2024](#)

**Wildfire smoke disproportionately affects California's Indigenous communities, new research shows.** [Berkeley News, February 29, 2024.](#)

**California utility will pay \$80M to settle claims its equipment sparked devastating 2017 wildfire.** [Associated Press, February 26, 2024.](#)

**Wildfires are killing California's ancient giants. Can seedlings save sequoia trees?** [CapRadio, February 26, 2024.](#)

**Wildfires on the ballot.** [Politico, February 26, 2024.](#)

**Biden administration announces \$500 million for wildfire resilience.** [The Hill, February 20, 2024.](#)

**TEK (Traditional Ecological Knowledge / Indigenous Ecological Knowledge) with Frank Lake.** [Golden State Naturalist, February 15, 2024.](#)

**California's trees are dying in huge numbers — and Tahoe is the epicenter.** [SF Chronicle, February 8, 2024.](#) (\$)



## LATEST IN SCIENCE

**Burn boss indicted by grand jury.** [Wildfire Today, February 6, 2024.](#)

**Forest thinning and prescribed burning treatments reduce wildfire severity and buffer the impacts of severe fire weather.** [Brodie, Emily G., et al. \*Fire Ecology\* 20.1 \(2024\): 1-20.](#)

**Measuring long-term exposure to wildfire PM2.5 in California: Time-varying inequities in environmental burden.** [Casey, Joan A., et al. \*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences\* 121.8 \(2024\): e2306729121.](#)

**Long-term drought promotes invasive species by reducing wildfire severity.** [Kimball, Sarah, et al. \*Ecology\* \(2024\): e4265.](#)

**Wildfire probability estimated from recent climate and fine fuels across the big sagebrush region.** [Holdrege, Martin C., et al. \*Fire Ecology\* 20.1 \(2024\): 1-20.](#)

**Broadcast burning has persistent, but subtle, effects on understory composition and structure: Results of a long-term study in western Cascade forests.** [Halpern, Charles B., et al., \*Forest Ecology and Management\*, 558 \(2024\): 121772.](#)

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

**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.](#)

**BLM Plant Conservation and Restoration Management Grant Program:** This grant program [funds projects](#) that address the National Seed Strategy to increase the availability and procurement of locally adapted native seeds. [The deadline is March 11, 2024.](#)

**BLM Rangeland Resource Management Grant Program:** This grant program funds [ecosystem conservation and restoration projects](#) on BLM-managed land, which are national or regional in scope. [The deadline is March 11, 2024.](#)

**CA Fire Safe Council County Coordinator Grant Program:** Grant program assists counties with [wildfire-mitigation outreach and coordination](#). Only counties who received and successfully closed out their 2021 County Coordinator Grant Program are eligible to apply. [The deadline is March 13, 2024.](#)

**CA Fire Safe Council State Fire Capacity Grants:** [State Fire Capacity Grants](#) support hazardous fuels reduction, community wildfire prevention planning, and education and mitigation activities. [The deadline is March 15, 2024.](#)

**OPR Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program (ICARP) Adaptation Planning Grant Program:** [This grant program](#) provides funding to help fill local, regional, and tribal adaptation planning needs, provides communities the resources to identify climate-resilience priorities, and supports the development



of a pipeline of climate-resilient-infrastructure projects across the state. [Pre-application interest form due March 18. Deadline is May 6.](#)

**CA Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) Climate Adaptation and Resilience Program:** [This program](#) funds projects that provide climate adaptation and resilience on California's natural and working lands. [Rolling application.](#)

## 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 (Escondido)
- June 20 – Sacramento
- September 26 & 27 – Sierra Nevada Region
- December 13 – Sacramento

**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.

**March 14-April 11 Cal Poly Fuels Management Training Program Offerings:**

- March 14: [Collaboration in a Forest Health Grant](#): Participants will increase their knowledge of how to create successful partnerships and collaborations on forest-health projects with insights and experiences from the Los Gatos Creek Watershed Collaborative.
- April 11: [Cal VTP in Practice webinar](#): CDFW will share lessons learned from the past four years of CalVTP implementation to improve communication and collaboration with project proponents and lead agencies.
- June 10-14: [CA State-Certified Prescribed Burn Boss \(CARX\) Training](#): A 40-hour classroom-based course to develop the skills required for planning and managing prescribed fire on state or private lands.

**March 14 – May 9: Incorporating Climate and Environmental Justice into Research and Resource Management Webinar Series:** The National Climate Adaptation Science Center is hosting a [webinar series](#) on how to integrate principles around climate and environmental justice into research and resource management.

**March 28 – April 11: Yale Forest Forum on Tribal Forestry:** This weekly [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.

**April 10 – 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

**May 7-9: California Chaparral Symposium:** The [4th California Chaparral Symposium](#) will focus 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.

