



APRIL 2024

TASK FORCE UPDATES

Southern CA Regional Meeting Recap: On April 4, a full-capacity audience of over 300 people came together at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park in Escondido (with over 200 joining online) for the Governor's Wildfire & Forest Resilience Task Force's Southern California regional meeting. Hosted by the Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County and the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, the meeting focused on landscapes and land management issues unique to Southern California. Meeting highlights include:

- **Director's Report:** [Director Wright provided](#) an update on recent accomplishments and investments in Southern California, progress being made on Task Force key actions and products as well as an overview of the process to update the Task Force Action Plan.
- **Southern California's Unique Landscapes & Challenges:** [University researchers discussed](#) threats to the incredibly biodiverse region and management techniques needed to build ecological resilience in the densely populated, shrubland dominated region. Additionally, an update on [Regional Resource Kits](#) and how they can be utilized in the region was provided.
- **Regional Leadership Panel:** [Regional leaders shared](#) local project highlights and showcased their efforts to develop landscape-scale projects and align federal, state, and regional plans, priorities, and investments.
- **Cultural Fire & Indigenous Stewardship:** [A panel of cultural practitioners and resource managers](#) discussed obstacles and barriers facing cultural burners, including difficulties in obtaining burn permits, threats to tribal sovereignty, and the continued struggles of California tribes to overcome structural racism in order to maintain traditions and steward ancestral lands.
- **Utilities & Infrastructure in Wildfire Resilience:** [A panel of energy, water, and transportation agency representatives discussed](#) new and emerging strategies to address wildfire impacts to infrastructure as well as the role utilities play in reducing ignitions risks.

FEDERAL HIGHLIGHTS

USFS Releases Monitoring Results for California: On April 5, the USFS Pacific Southwest Region released the first [results of their Broader-Scale Monitoring Strategy](#) which evaluates the status and trend of social, economic, and ecological conditions on National Forest Service lands in California. Monitoring results show that national forests in California have been weakened by chronic stress from climate change as well as climate-amplified disturbances like insect infestation, disease, and wildfire. You can download pdf reports of the results or explore the results and data yourself with interactive features such as dashboards and searchable maps.

USFS Invests \$33M to Support Rural Schools & Communities: On April 12, the U.S. Forest Service [announced](#) that California will receive over \$33 million of a \$232 million package to support public schools, roads and other municipal services



through the agency's [Secure Rural Schools program](#). The funds support crucial public services and pave the way for more jobs. In addition to directly aiding rural schools and roads, funds will reimburse counties for national forest emergency services, and assist in creating community wildfire protection plans.

US Department of Labor Awards \$2.9M for Clean-Up & Recovery After Northern California's 2021 Wildfires: On March 25, the US Department of Labor [announced](#) the incremental award of more than \$2.9 million to California to continue supporting disaster-relief employment and training services for residents as the state continues to recover from the wildfires that devastated several Northern California communities between July and October 2021. The grant allows the state to provide temporary jobs for debris removal and forest restoration activities in Lassen, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Tehama and Trinity counties and employment and training services for eligible people in the affected areas. This award builds on a [previous award](#) from 2022 and brings the department's total award to California to \$5,936,700.

STATE HIGHLIGHTS **SNC Celebrates 20 Years of Impact and Awards \$27.5 Million to Forest Resilience & Community Protection Projects:** The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) released a [report](#) of accomplishments made with its partners over the past 20 years. SNC is keeping up the good work with [the announcement of \\$27.5 million](#) to 16 different projects to help with the planning and implementation of forest-health efforts that promote recovery and resilience throughout the Sierra-Cascade. Of the 16 projects awarded, eight went to the implementation of shovel-ready projects in Amador, Placer, Plumas, Shasta, Siskiyou, and Tulare counties.

PROGRESS THROUGH COLLABORATION

New Films Showcase Paths Forward to Heal California's Relationships with Fire and Watersheds:

- **MATTAAW: The Fire Within Us** is an Indigenous-led research documentary created by the [Condor Visual Media](#) team with support from the [Climate Science Alliance](#) that documents the cultural, emotional, and scientific relationships of Southern California Tribes with the gift of fire. The film features cultural practitioners who were part of a [panel on Cultural Fire and Indigenous Stewardship](#) at our recent Southern California Task Force meeting. The project is still in production with an anticipated release in Spring 2024. However, you can watch the informative and inspiring 12-minute [extended trailer](#) now! Learn more about the project [here](#).
- **California's Watershed Healing** documents how restoring forests to healthier densities has cascading benefits starting from headwaters to watersheds and ultimately to the state's water supply. The film features an array of Task Force partners and makes a compelling case for California to better align goals for forest, wildfire, watershed, and landscape resilience. The full-length film created by [UC's Center for Ecosystem Climate Solutions](#) and the nonprofit [Chronicles Group](#) is available to watch [here](#)!

USFS Investments Help Landowners Access Climate Markets: On March 15, the [USFS announced](#) it is investing nearly \$145 million from the Inflation Reduction Act to connect forest landowners with emerging climate markets. This will



expand access to markets for underserved and small-acreage forest landowners to address climate change, while also supporting rural economies and maintaining land ownership for future generations. \$32 million will support organizations with multi-state projects that will impact California.

Partnered Efforts Will More Than Double Firefighting Capability of Redding Air

Attack Base: On April 25, the US Forest Service and partners, including the Army Corps of Engineers and the City of Redding, will celebrate the completion of Phase 1 in a five-year, \$28 million project to expand airtanker loading capabilities by 132% at the [Redding Interagency Air Attack Base](#). The upgrades allow for simultaneous loading of five aircraft, up from two and increases the bases' fire-retardant loading capacity from 3 million up to 6 million gallons. This base is vital in providing initial and extended attack for wildfires across California and the western United States.

**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 2276 (Wood) Forestry: timber harvesting plans: exemptions: Would extend the sunset dates for the Small Timberland Owner exemption, the Forest Fire Prevention exemption, and the 150'-300' Defensible Space Around a Habitable Structure exemption through January 1, 2031.

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.

AB 2600 (Calderon) Urban forestry: school greening projects: grants: Would establish the School Greening and Resiliency Fund within the State Treasury and direct those funds to urban forestry programs, including CAL FIRE's Urban and Community Forestry Grants program. Would also require CAL FIRE to develop a competitive grant process to support school greening projects. This bill is a re-print of AB 527 from 2023.



AB 2639 (Patterson, Joe) Forestry: timber operations: maintenance of timberlands for fuels reduction: Would expand the definition of timber operations to include fuels reduction activities. Would also allow THP Exemptions to be used to meet CEQA requirements when performing fuels reduction projects, paid for in whole or in part with public funds, on timberlands.

AB 3023 (Papan) Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force: watershed restoration plans: forest resilience actions: Would require the Task Force, in future developments of implementation strategy for the Action Plan, to coordinate State boards, departments, and other stakeholders to incorporate planning for permanent conservation into forest and watershed restoration actions. Would require CNRA and other relevant State agencies to align grant guidelines of climate change, forest, fire, and watershed restoration programs at State boards and departments to promote greater program coordination and more integrated planning outcomes.

SB 1402 (Min) 30x30 goal: state agencies: adoption, revision, or establishment of plans, policies, and regulations: Would require all State agencies, departments, boards, offices, commissions, and conservancies to consider the 30x30 goal when adopting, revising, or establishing plans, policies, and regulations.

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 946 (McGuire) Personal Income Tax Law: Corporation Tax Law: exclusions: wildfire mitigation payments: Would, for taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 2024, and before January 1, 2029, provide an exclusion from gross income for amounts received as a California qualified wildfire loss mitigation payment.

SB 1088 (Alvarado-Gil) Office of Emergency Services: state matching funds: water system infrastructure improvements: Would, contingent on funding through a bond act, establish the Rural and Small Community Fire Resilience Program within the Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) to distribute state matching funds to communities within the Wildland Urban Interface for the purpose of improving aging water delivery infrastructure. The bill requires CalOES to work with the Department of Water Resources, the State Water Resources Control Board, the Office of the State Fire Marshal, and other State entities to achieve the purposes of the program.

SB 1101 (Limon) Fire prevention: prescribed fire: state contracts: maps: Would exempt CAL FIRE from State contracting rules for activities that provide logistical support to large-scale prescribed fire operations, including meals, lodging, hired equipment, and land use agreements, or any related subcontract. Would also require CAL FIRE to coordinate with the USFS and other entities to identify and map potential operational delineations to be used for strategic wildfire response or the proactive use of prescribed fire. This bill would also require CAL FIRE to develop maps of the severity of impacts from wildfires across all land ownerships in the State.

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

California's firefighters can't get fire insurance. [Politico, April 11, 2024.](#)

US wildfires are getting bigger and more complex, prompting changes in firefighting workforce. [Associated Press, April 9, 2024.](#)



How California's fire season might shape up this year. [New York Times, April 3, 2024.](#) \$

California wildland firefighters, communities need better fire protection. Here's what experts suggest. [CBS News, April 2, 2024.](#)

Are California homeowners getting any insurance breaks for beefing up their property to protect against wildfires? [Mercury News, April 1, 2024.](#)

Yes, even most temperate landscapes in the US can and will burn. [Vox, March 28, 2024.](#)

Yes, beavers can help stop wildfires. And more places in California are embracing them. [Los Angeles Times, March 26, 2024.](#) \$

Fire suppression is exacerbating wildfire severity in the US West. [The Hill, March 25, 2024.](#)

Climate change helping drive an increase in large wildfires in the US. [USA Today, March 24, 2024.](#)

California hit by fresh home insurance blow. [Newsweek, March 22, 2024.](#)

A plant that's everywhere is fueling a growing risk of wildfire disaster. [CNN, March 21, 2024.](#)

Northern California tribe to get back 125 acres of ancestral land stolen during gold rush. [KQED, March 20, 2024.](#)

How large fires are altering the face of California's Mojave Desert. [Los Angeles Times, March 19, 2024.](#) \$

California proposes rule that would change how insurers assess wildfire risk. [San Francisco Chronicle, March 18, 2024.](#) \$

California's property insurer of last resort adds record number of policies in February. [Sacramento Bee, March 14, 2024.](#) \$

These 11 California counties are most at risk for wildfires, FEMA map shows. Here's where. [Sacramento Bee, March 13, 2024.](#) \$

Team of researchers find wildfire is future to saving California's giant sequoias. [CBS News, March 13, 2024.](#)

LATEST IN SCIENCE

Fire suppression makes wildfires more severe and accentuates impacts of climate change and fuel accumulation. [Kreider, Mark R., et al. *Nature Communications* 15.1 \(2024\): 2412.](#)



Forest resilience and post-fire conifer regeneration in the southern Cascades, Lassen Volcanic National Park California, USA. [Niziolek, Dani, Lucas B. Harris, and Alan H. Taylor. *Forest Ecology and Management* 561 \(2024\): 121848.](#)

Future transition from forests to shrublands and grasslands in the western United States is expected to reduce carbon storage. [Kodero, Jared M., Benjamin S. Felzer, and Yuning Shi. *Communications Earth & Environment* 5.1 \(2024\): 1-11.](#)

Postfire reproduction of a serotinous conifer, the giant sequoia, in the Nelder Grove, California. [Hanson, Chad T., et al. *Ecology and Evolution* \(2024\): e11213.](#)

Tamm review: A meta-analysis of thinning, prescribed fire, and wildfire effects on subsequent wildfire severity in conifer dominated forests of the Western US. [Davis, Kimberley T., et al. *Forest Ecology and Management* 561 \(2024\): 121885.](#)

Wildfires are associated with increased emergency department visits for anxiety disorders in the western United States. [Zhu, Qingyang, et al. *Nature Mental Health* \(2024\): 1-9.](#)

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

CAL FIRE Grant Programs:

- **Forest Legacy Grant Program:** CAL FIRE has made available up to \$10 million in funding for [Forest Legacy Grants](#) to protect environmentally important forest land threatened with conversion to non-forest uses through purchase or donation. [Pre-applications are due April 16, 2024.](#)
- **Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program:** CAL FIRE's Urban and Community Forestry Program is [administering \\$30.8 million](#) available through the federal Inflation Reduction Act. Available grants include Forest Expansion and Improvement, Urban Forest Management Activities, Urban Forestry Education and Workforce Development, Urban Forestry Regional or Statewide Impact, Urban Forest Equity Capacity Building, and Green Schoolyards. [Applications are due May 30, 2024.](#)

USFS Inflation Reduction Act Forest Landowner Support Grants:

- **Underserved and Small-Acreage Landowner Participation in Emerging Private Markets:** The Forest Service is seeking proposals to support the participation of underserved landowners and landowners owning less than 2,500 acres in emerging private markets for climate mitigation or forest resilience. [Deadline is August 21, 2024.](#)
- **Tribal Access to Emerging Private Markets for Climate Mitigation and Forest Resilience:** [The Forest Service is providing](#) at least \$20 million in competitive funds to federally recognized tribes and Alaska Native corporations and villages to support tribal participation in emerging private markets for climate mitigation or forest resilience. Examples of emerging markets may include markets for water quality and quantity, carbon, biodiversity, and wetland restoration. [Deadline is August 21, 2024.](#)

CA Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program (ICARP) Grant Programs:



- **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. Deadline is May 6, 2024.
- **Extreme Heat and Community Resilience Program:** [This grant program](#) funds planning and implementation projects to reduce the impacts of extreme heat and build community resilience. Deadline is April 23, 2024.

First Nations Development Institute: Advancing Tribal Nature-Based Solutions

Grant: [This grant](#) supports climate action that addresses adaptation and disaster preparation through projects that aim to grow tribal capacity and programs, such as cultural burning and beaver restoration. Deadline is May 22, 2024.

The Innovative Finance for National Forests (IFNF) Grant Program: [This grant program](#) supports the development and implementation of innovative finance models that leverage private and public capital other than US Forest Service (USFS) appropriations to enhance the resilience of the National Forest System (NFS) and deliver commensurate returns to stakeholders. Deadline April 22, 2024.

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](#):

- July 12 – Sacramento
- September 26 & 27 – Sierra Nevada Region
- December 13 – Sacramento

May 20 – June 14: Cal Poly Fuels Management Training Program Offerings:

- 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.
- May 20: Planning for Fire Resilience in the Coastal Zone: [This field workshop](#) will provide an opportunity to learn about coastal fire resilience planning through a case study of Marin County.
- June 8: Forest Health and Fire Resiliency on the Jenner Headlands: [This field workshop](#) will provide an overview of vegetation management and fuels reduction for landowners and communities.
- 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.

April 11 – 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.

April 11 – April 25: 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.

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.

