



## November 2024

### TASK FORCE HIGHLIGHTS

**Task Force Meeting to Highlight Synthesis of Latest Science:** On December 13, the Task Force will host a meeting in Sacramento that will include a synthesis of scientific findings since 2021 on various issues related to wildfire and landscape resilience. These findings, compiled by the Task Force's Science Advisory Panel, will help inform the Task Force's 2025 Action Plan. The [meeting](#) will include a preview of findings on such topics as: effects of wildfire, community health impacts, landscape resilience and community protection, and post-fire considerations. The meeting will also feature a preview of [CAL FIRE's 2024 Forest and Rangelands Assessment](#). The meeting will be held from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. in the CNRA Auditorium, 715 P St., Sacramento (no registration necessary) and [Via Zoom](#) (registration required).

**Task Force 2025 Meeting Dates:** The Task Force has released its [2025 meeting dates](#) – look for a “Save the Date” coming soon via Outlook.

- March 27-28: Regional Meeting – Marin County
- June 6: Sacramento, 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
- September 4-5: Regional Meeting – TBD
- December 12: Sacramento, 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

### STATE HIGHLIGHTS

**California Passes Proposition 4 — Providing Substantial Investments to Reduce Wildfire Risk and Respond to Climate Change:** On November 5, Californians passed Proposition 4, the first-ever climate bond to go before California voters. The proposition provides \$10 billion in bond funds for critical wildfire, flood protection, and other climate resilience projects around the state, including **\$1.5 billion for wildfire resilience**. This funding will enable agencies to improve landscape health and resilience and protect communities from wildfire risks through programs such as the [Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program](#). The funding also includes \$50 million for long-term capital infrastructure projects that utilize wildfire mitigation waste for non-combustible uses.

In addition to funding wildfire resilience, \$1.2 billion will be used to protect natural lands and preserve biodiversity, with \$870 million directed to the Wildlife Conservation Board to help the state to meet its goal to protect [30% of lands by 2030](#). The approval of Proposition 4 is a major advancement for California's efforts to increase the pace and scale of wildfire and landscape resilience treatments, adapt to a changing climate, and reach goals set in the [California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan](#).

**Governor Announces New Appointments:** On [October 31](#) and [November 6](#), Governor Gavin Newsom announced new appointments for positions that are helping to lead the State's wildfire resilience efforts:

- **Vickie Sakamoto has been appointed Assistant State Fire Marshal at CAL FIRE.** Sakamoto has been Assistant Deputy Director at the CAL FIRE since 2024 and has served in several positions there since 1989, including



Division Chief, Deputy State Fire Marshal – Supervisor, Deputy State Fire Marshal III – Specialist and Deputy State Fire Marshal.

- **Keali'i Bright has been appointed Undersecretary of the California Natural Resources Agency.** Bright has been Division Director of the Division of Land Resource Protection and Deputy Tribal Liaison at the California Department of Conservation since 2018.
- **Jennifer Lucchesi has been appointed Director at the California Department of Conservation.** Lucchesi has been the Executive Officer at the California State Lands Commission since 2012.

**State Commission Adopts Report on Wildfire Insurance Crisis:** On November 7, the nonpartisan Little Hoover Commission [adopted a report on California's ongoing property insurance crisis](#) which was issued for public review earlier in the week. The report, which was developed over the course of 2024 through hearings, interviews, and public comment from impacted stakeholders, contains several recommendations to state lawmakers for addressing California's insurance crisis for areas with high wildfire risk, including:

- Allowing insurers to use catastrophe models for pricing, but requiring that wildfire mitigations performed by homeowners are reflected in those models;
- Creation of an independent panel of experts to evaluate the usage of those models, rather than relying on the California Department of Insurance's internal processes; and,
- Forming a state working group of wildfire experts to develop a minimum set of wildfire mitigation standards for homeowners and communities to undertake.

**New Tools and Partnerships Boost CAL FIRE Cone Collections:** CAL FIRE's Reforestation Services Program (RSP) collected over 4000 bushels of cones in 2024 compared to 210 in 2023. With the expansion of partnerships through initiatives like the Reforestation Pipeline Cooperative and the Reforestation Because of You program, CAL FIRE's RSP has had a great year of cone collecting. A [new video documents cone collectors](#) in action.

## FEDERAL HIGHLIGHTS

**USFS Strengthens Forest Products Economy and Forest Sector Jobs:** On October 24, the [USFS announced](#) it is making up to \$34 million in funding available to support innovation and jobs in the forestry sector while supporting healthy forest landscapes. The agency is seeking proposals that will spark innovation, create new markets for sustainable wood products and renewable wood energy, and expand processing capacity. Funding is available through [three key grant programs](#): Wood Innovations Grant, Community Wood Grant, and Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance Grant Programs.

**USFS Photographs Help Understanding of How Forests Respond to Treatments and Fire:** The USFS has published [a compendium of photographs and studies](#) that help display how different types of fire and other forest management affect the trajectory of forests. The photos depict and related studies explain the different affects in forest treatments have and provides a comparison of how fire interacts with managed versus unmanaged forests.



**State and Federal Investments Conserve Forestlands in Perpetuity:** In October, both CAL FIRE and the U.S. Forest Service announced grant awards to protect forestlands threatened with conversion to non-forest uses. Together, these investments improve forest health and reduce wildfire risk throughout the state.

- CAL FIRE awarded \$8.5 million through [California Forest Legacy](#) to [four projects](#) that ensure long-term land stewardship on properties that will continue to provide, in perpetuity, such benefits as sustainable timber production, wildlife habitat, recreation opportunities, carbon sequestration, watershed protection, and open space. One funded project will enable the [Colfax-Todds Valley Consolidated Tribe](#) to acquire the Owl Creek property in Placer County; while [Placer Land Trust](#) will hold a conservation easement to ensure protection of the property, the Tribe will manage the land using Indigenous management practices.
- The [USFS awarded](#) more than \$265 million to 21 projects nationwide through the [federal Forest Legacy program](#) to conserve nearly 335,000 acres of private forestlands. In California, a \$1.5 million grant will conserve 94 acres of unique montane mixed-conifer forest in the recreation destination of Lake Arrowhead, east of Los Angeles. The property provides habitat for 7 federal and 4 state species of concern.

**CA State Parks and Partners Treat Over 900 Acres with Beneficial Fire:**

From October 29 to November 1, California State Parks with the assistance of CAL FIRE and US Forest Service treated 914 acres in the South Grove Natural Preserve at [Calaveras Big Trees State Park](#) with prescribed fire. State Parks, CAL FIRE, USFS, and contractors, spent years organizing interagency collaboration and preparing the perimeter and [giant sequoias for beneficial fire](#). Preparation included using mechanical treatments appropriate for State Parks Natural Preserves to remove large fuels a certain distance from the surrounding fire road and using hand tools to remove large material from the base of over 700 mature giant sequoias. The entire South Grove Natural Preserve is over 1,300 acres. State Parks continues to prepare the remaining acres and bring fire back to the entire landscape in regular intervals which is critical to giant sequoia stewardship and regeneration. This project, funded by the State Parks Wildfire and Forest Resilience Program, restores and maintains a complex forest community, promotes giant sequoia regeneration and wildfire resilience, reduces hazardous fuel loads, improves wildlife habitat, and protects park infrastructure.

**Documentary Showcases California's First Spanish Language Prescribed Fire Training Exchange:** A new documentary, titled [Voces del Fuego](#) (Voices of Fire), tells the story of California's first Spanish language Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (TRES) which was hosted by the [Watershed Research and Training Center](#) for two weeks in October 2023. The film provides a vibrant testimony of how fire shapes landscapes, communities, and cultures. The documentary highlights the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives and cultures in wildfire and landscape management.

**CWI Hosts Convening on Wildfire Data & Technology:** [The Climate & Wildfire Institute](#) (CWI)'s 2024 Signature Convening brought together 60 experts at the forefront of wildfire innovation, research, and practice to share insights and recommendations on how to accelerate solutions to pressing climate and



wildfire challenges. Leaders from federal, state, and local agencies, Tribal communities, research institutions, and more joined to examine the intersections of wildfire data and technology, policy, and practice through a series of presentations, panel discussions, and breakout sessions. A 2024 Signature Convening Report will be shared in the coming weeks.

## **LOCAL SPOTLIGHT** Environmental Review Opens for Golden State Natural Resources'

**Demonstration Project:** [Golden State Natural Resources](#) (GSNR) is a 501(c)(3) public benefit corporation established by rural counties, to address the urgent issue of catastrophic fires from overgrown and under-managed forests. The organization's proposed [Forest Resiliency Project](#) addresses the critical need of establishing a marketable outlet for woody biomass from fuel reduction projects. The [draft Environmental Impact Report](#) for GSNR's proposed project is publicly available until December 23, 2024.

## **LEGISLATION WATCH**

The CA State Legislature is out of session until January 2025. The following bills were chaptered in the last session:

**AB 2276 (Wood) Forestry: timber harvesting plans: exemptions:** Repeals the Small Timberland Owner Exemption, renames, amends, and extends the sunset date of the Forest Fire Prevention Exemption; and extends the sunset date of the 150'-300' Defensible Space Around a Habitable Structure Exemption to January 1, 2031.

**AB 2469 (Committee on Emergency Management) Emergency Management Assistance Compact: California Wildfire Mitigation Financial Assistance Program:** Removes the sunset dates for the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) and would extend the sunset of the California Wildfire Mitigation Program from 2025 until 2029.

**SB 310 (Dodd) Prescribed Fire: civil liability: cultural burns:** Creates a process for federally recognized California Native American tribes and the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) to enter into agreements to waive various State regulatory requirements to conduct prescribed fire or cultural burn projects within the tribe's ancestral territory.

**SB 504 (Dodd) Wildfires: defensible space: grant programs: local governments:** Requires CAL FIRE to give priority on Wildfire Prevention Grant applications to certain local government entities that provide Defensible Space Assessment data to CAL FIRE using the common reporting platform. Requires defensible space be maintained in SRA under all weather conditions and allows a 3-yr. phase-in of new ember-resistant zone standards (Zone 0).

**SB 675 (Limón) Prescribed Grazing: local assistance grant program: Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program: Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force:** Expands the Wildfire Prevention Grants eligible activities list to include the installation of fencing and watering improvements for prescribed grazing projects and requires CAL FIRE to consider incorporating prescribed grazing guidance developed by the Range Management Advisory Committee.



**SB 946 (McGuire) Personal Income Tax Law: Corporation Tax Law: exclusions: wildfire mitigation payments:** Excludes payments received from the California Wildfire Mitigation Program (CWMP) as taxable income from taxable years between January 1, 2024, and January 1, 2029.

**SB 1101 (Limón) Fire prevention: prescribed fire: state contracts: maps:** Exempts 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. Requires 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. Requires CAL FIRE to develop maps of the severity of impacts from wildfires across all land ownerships in the State.

## PRESS BOX

**Lessons learned from the Caldor Fire.** [Tahoe Daily Tribune, November 1, 2024.](#)

**Could Trump really cut off wildfire aid for California? Absolutely.** [Los Angeles Times, October 31, 2024.](#) \$

**Sierra Pacific Industries to open its California forestlands for public access and recreation.** [Action News Now, October 31, 2024.](#)

**Forest Service and Washoe Tribe work together to improve forest health and resilience.** [South Tahoe Now, October 30, 2024.](#)

**Field Notes: Life in the Eldorado National Forest after wildfire strikes.** [USDA Forest Service, October 30, 2024.](#)

**California wildfires are spreading and intensifying faster, putting more people in danger.** [Los Angeles Times, October 26, 2024.](#) \$

**Forest Service Halts Prescribed Burns in California.** [Is It Worth the Risk? KQED, October 24, 2024.](#)

**California's giant sequoias are acting weird, and experts are worried.** [Journé Mondiale, October 24, 2024.](#)

**This data shows just how much faster California wildfires are getting — and why that's so dangerous.** [San Francisco Chronicle, October 24, 2024.](#) \$

**Extreme fire seasons are looming — science can help us adapt.** [Nature, October 24, 2024.](#)

**US Forest Service announces hiring freeze of over 2,000 seasonal workers.** [SF Gate, October 23, 2024.](#)

**A New Economy for Wood Is Slowly Taking Root in California.** [Bloomberg, October 23, 2024.](#)



**Carbon emissions from forest fires are surging globally, UC Merced professors find.** [KVPR, October 23, 2024.](#)

**Opinion: Together, we can reduce death and destruction from wildfires.** [San Diego Union Tribune, October 22, 2024.](#)

**Colorado researchers exploring rebuilding scorched forests amid climate change.** [Bakersfield ABC 3, October 22, 2024.](#)

**Wood is good: Wood products build the way to healthy forests of the future.** [U.S. Forest Service Office of Communication, October 21, 2024.](#)

## LATEST IN SCIENCE

**Measuring the ecological outcomes of fire: metrics to guide fire management.** [Haslem, Angie, et al. \*Fire Ecology\* 20.1 \(2024\): 99.](#)

**Prescribed fires effects on actual and modeled fuel loads and forest structure in southern coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) forests.** [Katuna, Taj A., Brandon M. Collins, and Scott L. Stephens. \*Fire Ecology\* 20.1 \(2024\): 1-22.](#)

**Thinning with follow-up burning treatments have increased effectiveness at reducing severity in California's largest wildfire.** [Shive, Kristen L., et al. \*Forest Ecology and Management\* 572 \(2024\): 122171.](#)

**The fastest-growing and most destructive fires in the US (2001 to 2020).** [Balch, Jennifer K., et al. \*Science\* 386.6720 \(2024\): 425-431.](#)

**Urban forest cover and ecosystem service response to fire varies across California communities.** [Escobedo, Francisco J., et al. \*Urban Forestry & Urban Greening\* \(2024\): 128547.](#)

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

**CAL FIRE Forest Health Research Grant Program:** [The Forest Health Research Program](#) is offering \$4 million in research funding through its [FY 2024-2025 grant solicitation](#). These grants will support research that directly benefits landowners, resource agencies, fire management organizations, and decision-makers throughout the state. [Deadline for concept proposals is November 14, 2024.](#)

**Landscape Scale Restoration Competitive Grant Program:** [This grant program](#) is administered by the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition and supports 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. [Deadline is November 15, 2024.](#)

**Scale Collaborative Capacity Micro-Grant Opportunity:** [These grants](#) are intended to assist collaborative groups in strengthening their capacity to move forward work on the national forests and across boundaries by addressing specific collaborative group needs. Eligible applicants include non-profits, collaborative groups, and partner entities that participate in the collaborative (e.g., Resource Conservation Districts). [Deadline is November 15, 2024.](#)



**Cal OES Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Post Fire:** [This program](#) provides mitigation project funding to implement mitigation activities that reduce risk to life, property, and infrastructure from wildfire in areas where FEMA has approved a Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) declaration during the previous Federal fiscal year. 2024 FMAG eligible counties include Butte, Mariposa, Riverside, Kern, Tehama, Lake, San Bernardino, and Los Angeles. [Notice of interest due November 15, 2024.](#)

**The USFS Landscape Scale Restoration Grant Program for Federally Recognized Tribes:** [This grant](#) supports collaborative, high-impact projects that leverage public and private resources and further priorities identified in a science-based restoration strategy, such as a tribal forest plan, state forest action plan, or other equivalent restoration strategy. [Deadline is December 16, 2024.](#)

**USFS Wood Innovations, Community Wood, and Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance Grants:** Up to \$34 million is available to [support innovation and jobs in the forestry sector](#) while supporting healthy forest landscapes. The agency is seeking proposals that will spark innovation, create new markets for sustainable wood products and renewable wood energy, and expand processing capacity. [Deadline is December 11 for Wood Innovations and December 18 for Community Wood and Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance.](#)

**The Council of Western State Foresters Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Grant Program:** [This program](#) funds fuel reduction, education, and planning projects that mitigate risk from wildland fire within the WUI. [Deadline is December 20, 2024.](#)

**Community Forest Legacy Program:** [The Community Forest Program](#) assists communities to acquire and conserve forests that provide public access and recreational opportunities, protect vital water supplies and wildlife habitat, serve as demonstration sites for private forest landowners, and provide economic benefits from timber and non-timber products. [CAL FIRE's Forest Legacy Program](#) facilitates applications to the USFS for the Community Forest Program. [Deadline is January 13, 2025.](#)

**CAL FIRE Forest Health Grant Program:** [This program](#) funds active restoration and reforestation activities, as well as fuels management, fire reintroduction, treatment of degraded areas, and conservation of forests. Solicitation opens November 13, 2024. [Deadline is January 15, 2025.](#)

**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.](#)

**The Headwaters Economics Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire:** This [technical assistance program](#) provides support for communities to reduce wildfire risks through improved land-use planning, compelling communication, and applied research. [Rolling application.](#)



**Wetlands and Mountain Meadows Restoration:** [This program](#) provides funding for projects that restore or enhance wetlands and watershed ecosystems and provide co-benefits, consistent with the Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy and Pathways to 30x30. [Rolling Application](#).

- LOOKING AHEAD**
- November 13: Cal Poly VTP webinar:** Partnering with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the CalVTP to protect wildlife and promote wildfire resilience [webinar](#) on November 13, from 1 p.m.- 3:35 p.m.
- November 12-13: California Forest Pest Council's 73<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting:** Held at UC Davis's Putah Creek Lodge, [the agenda](#) will be focused on familiar and unexpected new threats to California's forests.
- November 20: Biomass & Beyond: The Future of our Forests and Working Lands:** Join Valley Vision at the Folsom Community Center for a [Sacramento regional event](#) that seeks to establish a shared understanding of biomass utilization, explore the future of forest management and agricultural careers in the region, and mobilize leaders and decision-makers for action.
- November 21 - December 4: Emergency Forest Restoration Teams (EFRTs) Showcase:** Join the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts on Thursday, November 21 from 12:00 p.m. - 1:15 p.m. and Wednesday, December 4th from 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. for a [two-part webinar](#) featuring Resource Conservation Districts as they describe their EFRTs across the state.
- January 13-17: California State-Certified Prescribed Fire Burn Boss (CARX) Training in Siskiyou County:** This in-person classroom-based [course](#) provides information about, and develops the skills required for, planning and managing prescribed fire on State or private lands. [Deadline to apply: October 28th at 5 p.m.](#)

