



## December 2024

### TASK FORCE HIGHLIGHTS

**Leading Researchers Share Latest Science to Drive California's Actions to Improve Wildfire Resilience:** On December 13, the Task Force will host a [meeting](#) in Sacramento where preeminent scientists will share recent research that is guiding California's efforts to respond to increasing wildfire risks in a changing climate. The Task Force's [Science Advisory Panel](#) will be joined by scientists at the forefront of wildfire research to provide a synthesis of key findings on reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire, impacts of wildfire to ecosystems and public health, post-fire restoration, and new technologies and innovations to accelerate progress toward resilience. These findings will help inform the Task Force's 2025 Action Plan to ensure the plan is based on the latest science being published by leading researchers from across California. The meeting will also feature a preview of [CAL FIRE's 2024 Forest and Rangelands Assessment](#). The meeting will be held from 9:30 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](#).

- 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.

**CAL FIRE Seeks Analyst to Join Task Force Team:** CAL FIRE's Climate & Energy Program is [hiring an Analyst](#) to assist in overall program coordination, administration, and logistical support of the Task Force, as well as grant support for Regional Pilots under the Forest Health Program. The candidate should have excellent communication and organization skills and will work with an array of professionals on a variety of issues relating to wildfire and landscape resilience. The deadline to apply is January 2, 2025. Contact [Kristen Merrill](#) with questions.

### STATE HIGHLIGHTS

#### **State Coastal Conservancy Awards Nearly \$6 Million For Wildfire Resilience**

**Projects:** On November 21, the Board of the State Coastal Conservancy [approved grants totaling over \\$113 million](#) for coastal restoration, protection, public access, and climate resilience. Nearly \$6 million will support six projects that will directly address hazardous fuels and promote wildfire resilience along California's coast. Funded projects include:

- \$250,000 to support Civicorps' [East Bay Wildfire Risk Reduction project](#) for workforce development and vegetation removal in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties.
- \$1,542,000 for the [San Mateo County Critical Evacuation Corridors Wildfire Resilience Project](#) to remove hazardous vegetation along two critical road evacuation corridors.
- \$500,000 to implement the [Garland Ranch Wildfire Resilience Project](#) to thin 12 acres of eucalyptus trees and create a 6.2 acre shaded fuel



break, maintain previously treated areas, collect data, and conduct community engagement in Monterey County.

- \$1,626,000 to the [U.S. Forest Service to treat approximately 24 miles of historic fuel breaks](#) by removing vegetation along the Santa Lucia ridge line within the Los Padres National Forest to protect neighboring communities in Monterey County from catastrophic wildfire.
- \$947,850 for Santa Barbara's [Wildfire Resilience Project](#) to reduce wildland vegetation fuels acres, restore native species, and conducting community engagement.
- \$1,131,700 for the [Ascot Hills Resilience Project](#) in Los Angeles to enhance 33 acres of habitat through the removal of invasive plants and planting of native plants to increase wildfire resilience.

**Energy Safety Approves 2025 Wildfire Mitigation Plan Update for Pacific Gas and Electric:** On November 19, the Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety (Energy Safety) issued its evaluation and approval of Pacific Gas and Electric's (PG&E) 2025 Wildfire Mitigation Plan (WMP) Update. Energy Safety found that PG&E's vegetation management programs are improving in response to Energy Safety's previous feedback. However, PG&E's WMP has areas that can be improved, including further development of its ignition risk analysis, the evaluation of the safety impacts related to Enhanced Powerline Safety Settings, and the continuation of cross-utility collaboration.

## FEDERAL HIGHLIGHTS

**USFS Completes Record Setting Year for Prescribed Fire:** During the 2024 fiscal year, the USFS [completed a record-setting number](#) of prescribed fire in California. The USFS successfully treated over 325,000 acres for forest health on national forests in California. This includes over 72,000 acres of prescribed burning alone. The previous USFS record for prescribed fire was set in 2018 when 63,711 acres were treated. This marks significant progress toward the USFS target of deploying 150,000 acres of beneficial fire in [California's Strategic Plan for Expanding the Use of Beneficial Fire](#).

**USFS Thinning Projects Protect Southern California Communities:** Two of this year's larger fires in Southern California, the [Line Fire](#) and the [Bridge Fire](#), [demonstrated how fuels treatments protect communities and natural landscapes](#). The Line Fire was fueled by high winds and steep terrain and quickly spread toward the community of Angelus Oaks. Luckily for firefighters defending Angelus Oaks, previous wildfire mitigation work in San Bernardino National Forest, including prescribed fire and mechanical thinning, enabled firefighters to suppress the wildfire before it was able to burn through Angelus Oaks.

A few days later, the Bridge Fire was heading toward the community of Wrightwood but first hit Forest Service fuel breaks, where trees had been thinned out five years prior. When the fire reached the fuel breaks, fire behavior altered, slowed, and allowed firefighters to contain the blazes before the fire could reach the 5,000 residents of Wrightwood. These success stories on the importance of preventive treatments build on [effectiveness reporting by CAL FIRE](#) and other Task Force partners that are doing the proactive work to protect landscapes and communities before wildfire strikes.



### **USFS Awards Over \$7 Million to Reduce Wildfire Risk and Support Local Economies in California:**

On November 13, the U.S. Forest Service awarded \$20 million to transport hazardous fuels from forests to facilities for processing into wood products or energy sources. These awards fund 66 projects in 13 states, including nearly \$7.3 million for [12 projects in California](#). Awarded projects will increase the pace and scale of wildfire resilience treatments and provide economic benefits to local communities and businesses. Projects will support critical wood products industries and underserved communities by providing jobs in rural areas that may be impacted by mill closures.

**CNN Documentary Features USFS Efforts to Restore Sierra Nevada Meadows:** On November 11, CNN released a documentary feature, [Restoring Our Planet's Threatened Habitats](#). The film spotlights restoration efforts being conducted by the USFS PSW Research Station to [use machine learning](#) to identify where critical meadow habitats previously existed to guide restoration efforts to support healthy landscapes that are more resilient to wildfire and climate change impacts.

## **PROGRESS THROUGH COLLABORATION**

**Over \$40 Million in Federal Funds Support Wildfire Impacted Communities:** On November 15, [Governor Newsom announced](#) that five communities hit hardest by the devastating wildfires in 2018 will receive \$40.7 million in new federal aid to support community development and help communities reach full economic recovery. This funding will reach communities that are still recovering from the economic and mental health impacts of wildfires and demonstrates the importance of continued support for disaster-impacted communities, even years after initial disaster relief has concluded. The funding comes from the federal 2018 Community Development Block Grant—Disaster Recovery Workforce Development program and will go to communities in the counties of Butte, Lake, Los Angeles, Shasta, and Ventura.

### **California Public Seed Banks Complete Historic Cone Collection Year:**

California's two public seed banks collected a total of 11,330 bushels of conifer seed-bearing cones in 2024. The U.S. Forest Service [Placerville Nursery](#) collected 6,700 bushels and CAL FIRE's [L.A. Moran Reforestation Center](#) collected 4,630 bushels. 30% of the bushels collected in 2024 were supported by the [California Reforestation Pipeline Partnership](#) which helped increase cone collection in public seed banks in 2024 by 275% from the total collected in 2023. In addition to public seed banks, voluntarily reported private sector seed collection in California totaled 8,670 bushels which brings the statewide total to at least 20,000 bushels which could potentially reforest as much as 681,000 acres.

## **LEGISLATION WATCH**

The CA State Legislature is out of session until January 2025. We will publish an update on all new legislation in the January Governor's Update.

## **PRESS BOX**

**Californians pay billions for power companies' wildfire prevention efforts. Are they cost-effective?** [Associated Press, December 3, 2024.](#)

**San Manual Band of Mission Indians announces \$1 million in charitable grants for wildfire relief and conservation on giving Tuesday.** [PR Newswire, December 3, 2024.](#)



**Tahoe National Forest invites public to provide feedback on community wildfire risk reduction project in Nevada County.** [YubNet, December 3, 2024.](#)

**'Public is going to be so impacted': California's national forests face huge staffing cuts.** [San Francisco Chronicle, December 2, 2024.](#) \$

**California biofuel project aims to cut wildfire risk, but at what cost?** [Los Angeles Times, December 1, 2024.](#)

**A meadow in the Tahoe National Forest was drying up with sagebrush. Now it's a lush wetland.** [SFGate, November 26, 2024.](#) \$

**Elemental: Reimagine Wildfire.** Season 1, Episode 1 in a PBS Streaming Series. [PBS SoCal, November 25, 2024.](#)

**Agencies, local stakeholders must collaborate to restore wildlands.** [UC Merced Newsroom, November 21, 2024.](#)

**U.S. Forest Service looks back on successful fire year.** [USFS Press Release, November 20, 2024.](#)

**CAL FIRE unveils a newly "fire-resistant" home in San Diego.** [Fox 5 News, November 20, 2024.](#)

**A closer look at Google's first mass timber building.** [Google Company News, November 20, 2024.](#)

**Controlled burn revives rare plant in Bay Area preserve for first time in 100 years.** [SF Gate, November 19, 2024.](#)

**CA orders insurance protections for more than 200,000 Mountain Fire survivors.** [CA Department of Insurance, November 15, 2024.](#)

**Urban Forestry Project in California Has Begun and Has Lofty Goals to Achieve.** [Adventure, November 13, 2024.](#)

**As California wildfires become more frequent, people will need to fireproof their homes. Here's what it takes to do it.** [CNN, November 10, 2024.](#)

## LATEST IN SCIENCE

**A fire-use decision model to improve the United States' wildfire management and support climate change adaptation.** [Russell, Aaron, et al. Cell Reports Sustainability 1.6 \(2024\).](#)

**Characteristics of pyrolysis products of California chaparral and their potential effect on wildland fires.** [Alizadeh, Mahsa, David R. Weise, and Thomas H. Fletcher. Fire. 7 \(8\): 271. 7.8 \(2024\).](#)



**Comparing individual and collective valuation of ecosystem service tradeoffs: A case study from montane forests in southern California, USA.** [Cheng, Haotian, et al. \*Ecosystem Services\* 69 \(2024\): 101648.](#)

**Protecting Conifers from Bark Beetles (Coleoptera: Curculionidae, Scolytinae) with Insecticides in the Western United States.** [Fettig, Christopher J., et al. \*Journal of Entomological Science\* \(2024\).](#)

**Recent fire history enhances semi-arid conifer forest drought resistance.** [Norlen, Carl A., et al. \*Forest Ecology and Management\* 573 \(2024\): 122331.](#)

**Testing source elevation versus genotype as predictors of sugar pine performance in a post-fire restoration planting.** [Moran, Emily V., et al. \*Ecosphere\* 15.10 \(2024\): e70010.](#)

**The potential of collaborative solutions to improve management of California (United States) wildlands.** [Eriksson, Max, et al. \*Restoration Ecology\* \(2024\): e14330.](#)

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

**USFS Wood Innovations Grant Program:** [This program](#) expands and supports U.S. wood-product and wood-energy markets, with a focus on mass timber, renewable wood energy, and technological development that supports hazardous fuel reduction and sustainable forest management. Deadline is December 11, 2024.

**USFS Landscape Scale Restoration Grant Program for Federally Recognized Tribes:** [This program](#) 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 Community Wood Grant Program:** [This program](#) provides funding to install thermally led community wood-energy systems or to build innovative wood-product-manufacturing facilities, with an emphasis on assisting sawmills in economically challenged areas to retool or add advanced technology. Deadline is December 18, 2024.

**USFS Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance Grant Program:** [This program](#) provides support for facilities that purchase and process byproducts of ecosystem-restoration projects, including applications to establish, reopen, retrofit, expand, or improve a sawmill or other wood-processing facility in close proximity to federal or Indian lands that need ecosystem restoration and generate byproducts. Deadline is December 18, 2024.

**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.



### **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Assistance to Firefighters**

**Grant Program:** [This program](#) provides financial assistance directly to eligible fire departments, non-affiliated emergency medical service (EMS) organizations, and state fire-training academies for critical training and equipment. 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:** [Up to \\$70 million in funding](#) is available for projects that work to proactively prevent catastrophic wildfires and restore forests to healthy, functioning ecosystems while also sequestering carbon and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. A virtual pre-recorded workshop is available to explain the grant process and requirements. Deadline is January 15, 2025.

**Pacific Gas and Electric Company Resilience Hub Grant Program:** [This program](#) funds feasibility studies and design/build projects for Resilience Hubs that further community resilience to climate-driven extreme weather events, including wildfires and future public safety power shutoffs. Deadline is January 31, 2024.

**USFS Community Wildfire Defense Grants:** [This program](#) assists at-risk communities and tribes with planning for and mitigating wildfire risks. Out of the up to \$200 million available, individual grants of up to \$250,000 can be used to develop and update community wildfire protection plans. Individual grants of up to \$10 million can be used for wildfire resilience projects that implement community wildfire protection plans. Deadline is February 28, 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** **January 16-April 24, 2025: SCIENCEx Fire Panel Discussions:** USFS Research and Development is hosting a [series of panel discussions](#) intended for fire, fuels and land managers on topics associated with the Wildfire Crisis Strategy and beyond.



Ten SCIENCEx Fire panel discussions will provide big picture and synthetic looks at the current state of knowledge and management considerations for each topic.

**December 12, 2025: Cal Poly Forest Health Webinar:** [This webinar](#) is an opportunity for participants to increase their understanding of planning, permitting, and implementing large-scale fuel reduction broadcast burns in the CZU Unit.

**January 30, 2025: Cal Poly CalVTP Q&A:** A panel of specialists will answer questions [via webinar](#) on preparing and implementing the CalVTP and address the CalVTP and other efficient regulatory pathways can help expedite project implementation. January 30, from 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

**February 11-12, 2025: Calforests Forestry Strategies & Innovations (FSI):** [Register now](#) for Calforests' Annual Conference, FSI brings together the state's forestry sector and key partners in an effort 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.

