

# CALIFORNIA'S PROGRESS ON WILDFIRE RESILIENCE

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Governor Newsom took office shortly after several of the most destructive and deadly fires in California history including the Camp and Woolsey Fires in Butte and Los Angeles Counties. He immediately directed CAL FIRE to carry out 35 priority projects to protect the state's most vulnerable communities, suspended CEQA review to complete them faster, and declared wildfire resilience as a top priority of his administration.

Since then, the Governor has made unprecedented and targeted investments in both firefighting response and building wildfire resilience across California's landscapes.

**Firefighting and Community Protection:** The Governor has:

- Nearly doubled CAL FIRE's fire protection staff from 5,829 to 10,741 positions, and committed to 2,400 more positions over the next several years;
- Nearly doubled CAL FIRE's fire protection budget from \$2 to \$3.8 billion since 2019;
- Expanded the world's largest aerial firefighting fleet, adding 16 helicopters, five helitack bases, and seven C-130 air tankers;
- Invested heavily in drones, artificial intelligence, and satellite technology to better track and prevent fires; and
- Increased the budget of the Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) from \$1.8 billion to \$3.1 billion and staffing from 1,139 to 1,879 positions since 2019.

**Wildfire Resilience:** Since 2020, 40 programs across 22 state agencies have:

- Invested more than \$2.5 billion on more than 2,200 forest health and fire prevention projects;
- Treated nearly 1.9 million acres with federal and local partners between 2021 and 2023, including more than 730,000 acres in 2023;
- Nearly doubled the use of prescribed fire; Federal, state, and local agencies completed 260,000 acres of prescribed fire treatments in 2023.
- Expanded the nation's largest network of Firewise designated communities to more than 1,000;
- Committed more than \$500 million in support of 150 wildfire and forest resilience projects through its Forest Health program.
- Established the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program, and awarded more than \$140 million to communities across the state to build local and regional capacity for creating fire adapted communities and landscapes;
- Developed an interagency vegetation management tracking system and an effectiveness dashboard to provide transparency and document progress; and
- Issued the nation's most comprehensive Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan to guide and align federal, state, local, private, and tribal wildfire programs.



**Southern California:** The State and its partners completed more than 500 targeted wildfire resilience projects between 2021 and 2023, including 129 in Los Angeles County. These include fuel breaks, forest thinning, and roadway ignition reduction projects, and a broad range of community and neighborhood-focused wildfire resilience programs and projects.

## HISTORIC INVESTMENTS

**Wildfire Resilience Projects:** Since 2021, the Governor has increased state spending on wildfire resilience to protect communities and landscapes across the state, surging investments to more than \$2.5 billion over several years. With the inclusion of a recent bond measure passed by California voters, a total of more than \$4 billion in wildfire resilience projects and programs are being rapidly deployed.

**State Staffing and Response Capacity:** In addition to ramping up state work to increase wildland and forest resilience, the Governor has substantially increased funding and staffing levels at CAL FIRE and Cal OES to improve the state's ability to track, fight, and recover from fires.

- Since 2019, CAL FIRE has more than doubled its fire protection personnel (from 5,829 to 10,741) and fire protection budget (\$2 billion to \$3.8 billion). Additional state investments will add 2,400 new firefighters at CAL FIRE over the next five years.
- Since 2019, Cal OES' budget has increased from \$1.8 billion to \$3.1 billion, and its staffing has grown from 1,139 to 1,879 positions.
- CAL FIRE has enhanced its firefighting capabilities with 16 state-of-the-art helicopters (FireHawks) and 7 C-130 tankers. Since 2019, CAL FIRE has added 55 type III engines, for a total of 398. Cal OES has added 106 engines to its fleet, for a total of 261.

## INCREASING TRANSPARENCY AND MEASURING RESULTS

Over 20 federal, state, local, and private organizations have completed or initiated more than 2,200 wildfire resilience projects across California. Now, for the first time, data is publicly available to track progress and communicate the impact of these critical projects.

- The Governor's Task Force launched an [Interagency Treatment Dashboard](#) to display completed federal, state, local, and private vegetation management projects across the state. The Dashboard, launched in 2023, provides transparency, tracks progress, facilitates planning, and informs firefighting efforts.
  - From 2021-2023, the state and its partners treated nearly 1.9 million acres, including nearly 730,000 acres in 2023.
  - Prescribed fire treatments nearly doubled between 2021 and 2023. Federal, state, and local agencies completed 260,000 acres of prescribed fire treatments in 2023.
  - Caltrans treated almost 370,000 acres along roadsides between 2021 and 2023.



- CAL FIRE's [Fuels Treatment Effectiveness Dashboard](#) spotlights and documents how recent wildfire resilience projects are protecting communities and landscapes when wildfire strikes. Examples of effective resilience projects include the Loafer Creek LLC Vegetation Management Project, where prescribed fires and forest health [treatments slowed the 2024 Park Fire](#) and the Starchman Fuel Break Project that [reduced the rate of spread of the 2024 French Fire](#), enabling fire crews to extinguish it.
- CAL FIRE has expanded its capabilities for incident reporting at [fire.ca.gov](#), updating the incident map with near real time information about firefighting aircraft activity, 3-D maps with evacuation orders, local shelter information, road closures, and more.
- The Task Force is developing [Core Reporting Metrics](#) to document the multiple benefits of landscape treatments beyond acres treated, including improvements in fire behavior, water availability, and carbon storage.
- CNRA and CARB's Nature-Based Strategies teams are evaluating carbon and other co-benefits of implementing [Nature-Based Solution Climate Targets](#) including forest health and fuel reduction efforts.

## LEADING WITH TECHNOLOGY

California is leading the nation in developing cutting-edge technologies to protect residents and natural resources from the devastating effects of wildfire and climate change.

- Since 2019, CA has enhanced its firefighting capabilities with 16 state of the art helicopters (FireHawks) and 7 C-130 tankers, which are currently being retrofitted to install 4,000-gallon internal tanks.
- CAL FIRE partnered with UC San Diego to support the development of [ALERTCalifornia](#) which utilizes AI to identify and monitor wildfires. ALERTCalifornia was named one of [TIME's Best Inventions of 2023](#).
- CAL FIRE has continued to expand the use of uncrewed aircraft systems (UAS) for critical tasks like aerial ignition during prescribed burns, wildfire containment, and real-time assessments.
- CNRA is working with NASA and USGS to [develop](#) new publicly available remote sensing data, leveraging more than 40 million acres of new LiDAR data, for direct use in planning, public safety, and science applications. Freshly collected LiDAR data is being used now by emergency responders in wildfire response and recovery efforts.
- In 2021, Cal OES and CAL FIRE established the [Wildfire Forecast and Threat Intelligence Integration Center](#), in collaboration with the California Military Department and California Public Utilities Commission, to serve as the state's central organizing hub for wildfire forecasting and coordination of wildfire threat intelligence and data sharing. This better positions California to quickly address fire risk conditions.



- In 2022, Cal OES and CAL FIRE launched the [Fire Integrated Real-Time Intelligence System](#) (FIRIS) as a joint effort to use aircraft for a more accurate and faster birds-eye view of incidents to increase incident mapping quality, awareness, and intelligence.
- In 2022, Cal OES increased capacity within the [California State Warning Center and the Alert and Warning Program](#), allowing the state to have more real-time information on developing hazards and to provide increased technical assistance to locals for wireless emergency alerts.

## EXPANDING BENEFICIAL FIRE

State, federal, tribal, local, and nonprofit partners continued to expand beneficial fire as a key tool for restoring landscapes and protecting communities.

- The Task Force issued [California's Strategic Plan for Expanding the Use of Beneficial Fire](#) (2022), a comprehensive roadmap to coordinate the efforts of state, federal, and tribal partners to treat up to 400,000 acres with beneficial fire annually by 2025.
- CAL FIRE established a first in the nation [Prescribed Fire Liability Claims Fund](#), backed with \$20 million in state funding, to accelerate beneficial fire on private lands by covering losses in the rare instance that a prescribed or cultural burn escapes control.
- Prescribed fire treatments nearly doubled between 2021 and 2023. Federal, state, and local agencies completed 260,000 acres of prescribed fire treatments in 2023.
- In September 2024, Governor Newsom signed [SB 310](#), which helps enable California Native American Tribes to conduct cultural burns on ancestral territories, and [SB 1101](#), which streamlines CAL FIRE's contracting and procurement process to support beneficial fire.
- CAL FIRE's Prescribed Fire Monitoring Program released the first version of a [manual outlining field monitoring protocols](#) to assist land managers with unit selection, data collection, tools and technologies, data storage, and analysis procedures.

## PROTECTING COMMUNITIES

CAL FIRE and its partner agencies are ramping up their wildfire prevention programs to improve community safety and resilience.

### Wildfire Prevention and Home Hardening:

- CAL FIRE awarded over \$450 million to support over 450 wildfire prevention projects across the state between July 1, 2019, and June 30, 2024.
- In FY 2023/24 CAL FIRE inspected over 299,000 homes (up from 204,000 in 2018/19) for defensible space.
- CAL FIRE and Cal OES established a new [California Wildfire Mitigation Assistance Program](#) to coordinate regional and local efforts with state policies, strategies, and programs for community wildfire mitigation, including a [home hardening initiative](#)



that will provide funding for defensible space and ignition resistant retrofits to approximately 2,400 homes.

- CAL FIRE's Office of State Fire Marshal established a Defensible Space Assessment Training Program to increase defensible space and home hardening assessments within the State Responsibility Area.
- In 2024, Governor Newsom signed [SB 504](#) to strengthen defensible space standards.
- The Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety adopted its [2025 Wildfire Mitigation Plan \(WMP\) Update Guidelines](#) to assist California's electrical corporations in meeting a statutory requirement to submit three-year WMPs to Energy Safety on an annual basis for review and approval.

#### **Public Safety:**

- CAL FIRE responded to more than 600,000 all-hazard (medical, search and rescue, storm response, etc.) incidents in 2024, an increase from 500,518 in 2019.
- CAL FIRE is getting more arsonists off the street with 109 arson arrests in 2024. This is up from 70 arrests made in 2019. There were 149 in 2021, 162 in 2022, and 111 in 2023.

#### **Public Health:**

- The CA Air Resources Board (CARB) launched a statewide [Clean Air Centers](#) map to display safe places to go during periods of intense wildfire smoke.
- The Department of Public Health published a [California Wildfire Smoke and Air Pollution Health Burden Mapping Dashboard](#) that displays the health burden (excess emergency room visits) related to air pollution and wildfire smoke.
- CARB's California [Smoke Spotter](#) mobile app and [Prescribed Fire Information Reporting System](#) provide real-time information on smoke impacts from wildfires and prescribed burns.

## **RESTORING LANDSCAPE HEALTH AND RESILIENCE**

Catastrophic wildfires put California's rich and unique biodiversity in peril. In addition to reducing wildfire risk to communities, wildfire resilience projects are enhancing biodiversity, safeguarding water and air quality, protecting wildlife habitat, reforesting lands, and storing carbon.

- California has invested over \$9.6 billion since 2020 to harness the power of nature to build resilience to climate impacts with nation-leading strategies that prioritize Nature Based Solutions (NBS), including:
  - [California's 2024 NBS Climate Targets](#)
  - [The 2022 Scoping Plan to Achieve Carbon Neutrality by 2045](#).
  - [The 2022 California's Natural and Working Lands \(NWL\) Climate Smart Strategy](#)
  - [California's 2021 Climate Adaptation Strategy](#)



- Since 2021, CALFIRE and its federal partners have established 15 [Emergency Forest Restoration Teams](#) (EFRTs) across the state to rapidly restore private forestlands after fires. EFRTs are helping small private landowners who otherwise may lack the funding, expertise, or time to recover their lands. Three pilot EFRTs established in response to the Dixie, Tamarack, and Caldor fires have already proved successful with over 9,000 acres treated and over 2,300 landowners enrolled.
- The Task Force partnered with American Forests to develop a [Reforestation Pipeline Partnership](#) to ensure California has the capacity to actively reforest lands impacted by wildfires, drought, and pests.
- California has ramped up efforts to collect cones to enable reforestation with [a record 11,330 bushels](#) of seed-bearing cones at the state's two public seed banks in 2024.

## SUPPORTING TRIBAL STEWARDSHIP

Indigenous land management has shaped healthy and resilient landscapes for thousands of years. California is strengthening partnerships with California Native American tribes to support more cultural fire and Indigenous stewardship.

- In 2024 CNRA awarded \$107.7 million to fund 33 projects and support the return of approximately 38,950 acres of land to California Native American tribes through the [Tribal Nature-Based Solutions](#) grant program.
- In 2023 CAL FIRE awarded \$19 million for 13 projects [to help California Native American tribes manage ancestral lands and promote wildfire resilience](#). This program [awarded \\$6.7 million](#) to five projects in 2024.
- In September 2024, Governor Newsom signed [SB 310](#), which supports tribal sovereignty by enabling California Native American Tribes to conduct cultural burns on ancestral territories.
- CAL FIRE has helped organize 9 workshops to promote cultural burning.

## CUTTING GREEN TAPE AND MOVING FASTER

Beginning in 2019, when the Governor issued an Emergency Proclamation suspending CEQA to complete 35 high priority fuel breaks in the state's most vulnerable communities, the Newsom Administration has aggressively sought to streamline regulatory processes and permitting to accelerate essential vegetation management projects.

- Most recently, the Governor issued Executive Order [N-4-25](#) in January 2025 to support families and emergency recovery efforts related to the southern California





wildfires. The Order suspends CEQA and Coastal Act permitting requirements to enable homeowners and businesses to rebuild without undue delay.

- In 2022, the Governor sought and signed legislation to exempt from CEQA any projects receiving state funding for treatments on federally managed lands that have already undergone NEPA review.
- In 2020, in coordination with partner agencies, the Board of Forestry established the [California Vegetation Treatment Program](#) leveraging the 2019 California Vegetation Treatment Programmatic Environmental Impact Report covering 20-million-acres of the state providing CEQA coverage for non-commercial forest health and wildfire resilience projects.
- In response to 2019 legislative mandates, in coordination with partner agencies, the Board of Forestry commenced action to streamline environmental review and permitting for wildfire prevention projects within non-federal timberlands to address catastrophic wildfire risk.

## EMPOWERING LOCAL ACTION

California has made swift progress to empower local organizations with resources to implement projects tailored to unique regional needs and ensure that California's most vulnerable communities are protected from wildfires.

- The Department of Conservation, through the [Regional Forest and Fire Capacity \(RFFC\)](#) program, has awarded more than \$140 million to communities across the state to build local and regional capacity for creating fire adapted communities and landscapes.
- The Task Force published [Regional Profiles and Regional Resource Kits](#) for California's four regions. The kits bring together the scientific data needed to help regional entities more rapidly and effectively plan, prioritize, and monitor projects.
- The Task Force is also partnering with the U.S. Forest Service, CNRA, University of California, and Google.org, to develop and expand [Planscape](#) a free, open-source decision support tool that is helping land managers maximize the wildfire resilience and ecological benefits of their programs and projects.
- In 2021 CAL FIRE established a new [Community Wildfire Preparedness and Mitigation Division](#) to collaborate with federal, state, and local agencies, tribes, non-profit entities, and stakeholders to prepare California communities against wildfires.
- In 2019, Cal OES established [the Community Resiliency and Listos California Grant Programs](#) to ensure resources are available to communities before, during, and after a disaster, including those who have often been underserved or without resources. The Listos grant program supports community-based organizations to ensure every Californian, regardless of age, ability, income or language, has access to information to prepare for wildfires and other hazards.



## EXPANDING RECREATION

California continues to be a national leader in prioritizing projects that not only promote landscape resilience but also ensure access to recreational opportunities.

- [California's Joint Strategy for Sustainable Outdoor Recreation and Wildfire Resilience](#) provides key actions to advance the integration of sustainable recreation into wildfire and landscape resilience planning.
- In November 2023, CNRA released the [Outdoors for All Strategy](#) to increase access to California's forests.

## INCREASING WOOD UTILIZATION CAPACITY

California is expanding wood processing capacity to make productive use of the tremendous volumes of woody biomass generated from vegetation treatments across the state.

- CAL FIRE's Wood Products and Bioenergy Business and Workforce Development Grant Program awarded \$105 million to educational institutions, non-profits, new business startups, and existing forestry and forest products businesses between 2022 and 2024.
- The IBank Climate Catalyst Revolving Loan Fund has approved \$25 million to support financing projects in the biomass utilization sector.
- DOC's Forest Biomass to Carbon-Negative Biofuels Pilot Program awarded \$4 million in 2023 for projects that convert sustainably sourced forest waste to carbon negative biofuels.
- OPR's Feedstock Aggregation Pilot Program launched five pilot projects to develop regional strategies to establish reliable access to sustainably sourced woody feedstock.
- CPUC's Bioenergy Renewable Auction Mechanism (BioRAM) program requires California's investor-owned utilities to procure bioenergy from High Hazard Zone (HHZ) fuel to aid in mitigating the threat of wildfires.

