





March 2025

TASK FORCE HIGHLIGHTS

Task Force Releases 2025 Key Deliverables to Outline California's Top Priorities Underway to Increase Wildfire Resilience: On March 24, the Task Force released its 2025 Key Deliverables, which include California's top priorities and initiatives now underway to continue promoting wildfire and community resilience across the state. The deliverables outline the highest priority actions underway this year to achieve the commitments in the 2021 Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan and to advance key new initiatives that will be highlighted in the forthcoming update of the Action Plan which will be released later this year. The deliverables focus on actions that will improve home and community wildfire resilience, expand landscape-scale resilience programs, streamline regulatory processes, expand timber production and more.

Task Force to Hold Spring Regional Meeting in San Rafael: Hosted by the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority and Fire Safe Marin, the Task Force's next <u>Regional Meeting</u> will be held in San Rafael, CA on March 27. The evening of March 26 will feature special speaker event sponsored by Climate and Wildfire Institute and Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority. Site tours will be offered on March 28.

STATE HIGHLIGHTS

Governor Newsom Proclaims State of Emergency to Fast-Track Critical Wildfire Prevention Projects: On March 1, Governor Newsom <u>proclaimed a state of emergency</u> to expedite projects that will protect California communities from catastrophic wildfire. The proclamation includes:

- Suspending environmental regulations, including CEQA and the Coastal Act, as needed to expedite fuels reduction projects. Projects include vegetation and tree removal, adding fuel breaks, prescribed fire, and more.
- Allowing non-state entities to conduct approved fuels reduction work with expedited and streamlined approval.
- Directing state agencies to submit recommendations for increasing the pace and scale of prescribed fire.
- Increasing the California Vegetation Treatment Program's (CalVTP)
 efficiency and utilization, to continue promoting rapid environmental
 review for large wildfire risk reduction treatments.

California Advances Wildfire Resilience and Honors Tribal Sovereignty Through Cultural Burning Agreement with the Karuk Tribe: The Karuk Tribe and CNRA have entered into a historic agreement as part of CNRA and CalEPA's announcement that SB 310 is now in effect. This legislation and agreement acknowledge tribal sovereignty and addresses historical injustices while contributing to the mitigation of catastrophic wildfire by enabling CNRA and local air districts to enter into agreements with federally recognized California Native American tribes to support them in conducting cultural burns in their ancestral territories. For more information, read the FAQ on SB 310.

SNC Awards \$2.3 Million to 40 Acre Conservation League Forest Health Project: On March 6, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) <u>awarded</u> a grant of \$2.3



million to the 40 Acre Conservation League to complete forest health work on its 650-acre property just west of Emigrant Gap in Placer County. The grant will pay for fuels-reduction treatment on 189 acres, complementing 374 acres currently being treated under a grant from the Wildlife Conservation Board. The project will reduce overgrown stand density, reduce brush and ladder fuels, improve existing tree health and species structure, replant native species, and improve wildlife habitat. As the only Black-led land conservancy in California, the 40 Acre Conservation League has a dual mission of conserving and restoring natural lands and developing inclusive and welcoming access for recreational and educational opportunities in nature.

FEDERAL HIGHLIGHTS

President Trump Orders Immediate Expansion of American Timber Production:

On March 1, President Trump signed an <u>executive order</u> which aims to boost domestic timber production. The order directs the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to:

- Within 30 days, issue new or updated guidance regarding tools to increase timber production, reduce time to deliver timber, and decrease timber supply uncertainty;
- Within 60 days, complete a strategy on USFS and BLM forest management projects to increase speed of approving forestry projects under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA);
- Within 90 days, set a target for the annual amount of timber per year to be offered for sale over the next 4 years;
- Within 120 days, complete the Whitebark Pine Rangewide Programmatic Consultation under section 7 of the ESA;
- Within 180 days, consider adopting categorical exclusions administratively established by other agencies to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act for timber production, forest management, and wildfire risk reduction treatments; and
- Within 280 days, consider establishing a new categorical exclusion for timber thinning and re-establish a categorical exclusion for timber salvage activities.

The order also directs all relevant agencies to eliminate all undue delays within their respective permitting processes related to timber production and use ESA regulations on consultations in emergencies to facilitate timber production. Lastly, the order directs the federal members of the Endangered Species Committee to submit a report that identifies obstacles to domestic timber production related to the ESA.

U.S. EPA Announcement Calls for Reconsideration of Exceptional Events Rulemaking for Prescribed Fires: On March 12, the U.S. EPA <u>announced</u> the agency will undertake 31 actions aimed toward environmental deregulation. This includes reconsideration of exceptional events rulemaking to work with states to prioritize the allowance of prescribed fires within State and Tribal Implementation Plans.

USDA Announces Tom Schultz as New USFS Chief: On February 27, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins<u>announced</u> Tom Schultz will serve as the 21st chief of the U.S. Forest Service. Schultz previously served as vice president of resources and government affairs at Idaho Forest Group, where he led



timber procurement operations. This comes after Chief Randy Moore announced his retirement on February 26.

PROGRESS THROUGH COLLABORATION

USFS Initiates New Public-Private Partnership with Sierra Pacific Industries to **Reduce Wildfire Risk:** On February 26, the USFS <u>announced</u> a \$75 million Stewardship Agreement with Sierra Pacific Industries for the construction and maintenance of strategically placed fuel breaks on national forests in California and Oregon. This investment significantly expands upon efforts to create a network of fuel breaks across private and federal land to protect communities, reduce wildfire risk, and promote rural prosperity. The agreement will initiate the process to develop, construct and maintain shaded fuel break projects over a three-year period in California, adding about 400 miles to the existing 2,200-mile network of interconnected fuel breaks across private and federal land. Fuel break project locations were selected in partnership with the Forest Service and CAL FIRE to protect lives, property, critical water infrastructure, and the environment.

Planscape Adds Free Tool to Model the Impact of Wildfire Resilience Treatments: The Planscape Partnership, a collaboration of public and nonprofit organizations, announced the release of Planscape Treatment Effects, the latest update to the Planscape collaborative tool which adds a new suite of features that enables land managers and collaboratives to quickly and efficiently model and report out on landscape resilience treatments. Built in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Google.org, and the State of California, Planscape Treatment Effects allows land managers to run treatment scenarios, see 20-year projections of scenario outcomes, optimize resources, and share data instantly.

With Planscape Treatment Effects, land managers can:

- Plan and compare management options by fuel treatment type, location, and sequence;
- Understand the impact of treatments on outputs such as canopy cover, large tree biomass, and fire intensity in forests, as well as rate of spread and flame length in non-forested areas;
- View outputs over the next 5, 10, 15, and 20 years; and
- Leverage the best science and models to run models directly in a web browser.

New Report on Effects of Forest Management on Carbon Storage in California:

American Forests, USFS, CAL FIRE, The Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science, and Michigan State University recently released a collaborative report on the effects of forest management and wood utilization on carbon sequestration and storage in California. The report provides comprehensive forest sector carbon modeling results, estimated treatment costs, wood product revenue, and wood processing capacity constraints for a broad range of forest management scenarios to help identify climate-smart forestry (CSF) practices. The modeling results provide information about forest climate mitigation and adaption opportunities that will be utilized to help inform the 2025 California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force Action Plan. Notably, the report:



- Identifies 11 million acres in California as having high or very high wildfire hazard potential;
- Emphasizes the importance of wood utilization to improve carbon benefits:
- Predicts that under a business-as-usual scenario, California could lose up to up to 48% of forest area & 50% of forest carbon by 2071; and
- Models scenarios that include a portfolio of actions that drastically reduce predicted losses to forest areas and forest carbon.

One Tam Partners Secure \$10.9 Million to Boost Wildfire and Forest Resilience:

On March 21, the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy and its One Tam partners announced \$10.9 million in new funding—a \$6.9 million CAL FIRE Forest Health Grant and a \$4 million State Coastal Conservancy Grant—to expand critical forest health and wildfire prevention efforts across Marin County's national, state, and local parks. This funding builds on a \$4.26 million grant to the Parks Conservancy on behalf of One Tam from the Wildlife Conservation Board in February 2024. Together, these grants represent significant commitment to forest health and wildfire resilience in the region and provide a model for other regions to follow to implement large landscape collaborative projects that provide multiple benefits.

Climate & Wildfire Institute Releases 2024 Convening Report: The Climate and Wildfire Institute recently released a report that highlights key findings from its 2024 Signature Convening, "Wildfire Data & Technology: Reducing Barriers & Building Resilience," where over 60 experts, practitioners, community leaders, and policymakers came together to explore how data and technology can better serve communities and ecosystems facing escalating fire risks.

LEGISLATION WATCH

As it is early in the legislative season and as the legislators are likely responding to the Los Angeles fires, there is a greater number of bills that are currently being watched as compared to in previous years.

AB 1 (Connolly) Residential property insurance: wildfire risk. Would require the department, on or before January 1, 2030, and every 5 years thereafter, to consider whether or not to update its regulations to include additional building hardening measures for property-level mitigation efforts and communitywide wildfire mitigation programs. As part of this consideration, the bill would require the department to consult with specified agencies to identify additional building hardening measures to consider, as well as to develop and implement a public participation process during the evaluation.

AB 66 (Tangipa) California Environmental Quality Act: exemption: egress route projects: fire safety. Would, until January 1, 2032, exempt from CEQA egress route projects undertaken by a public agency to improve emergency access to and evacuation from a subdivision without a secondary egress route if the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection has recommended the creation of a secondary access to the subdivision and certain conditions are met.

AB 252 (Bains) Wildfire protection: Department of Forestry and Fire Protection: staffing. Would provide that it is the intent of the Legislature to enact



subsequent legislation relating to increasing year-round staffing levels at the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

AB 261 (Quirk-Silva) Fire safety: fire hazard severity zones: State Fire Marshal. Would, as applied to both state responsibility areas and lands that are not state responsibility areas, authorize the State Fire Marshal, in periods between the State Fire Marshal's review of areas of the state for recommendations regarding an area's fire hazard severity zone, to confer with entities, including, but not limited to, public agencies, tribes, nonprofit organizations, project applicants, and members of the public, on actions that may impact the degree of fire hazard in an area or the area's recommended fire hazard severity zone designation. The bill would authorize the State Fire Marshal to provide a written response to an entity on actions that may impact the degree of fire hazard and would require this written response to be posted on the State Fire Marshal's internet website.

AB 270 (Petrie-Norris) Office of Emergency Services: autonomous firefighting activities. Would require the Office of Emergency Services to establish a pilot program to equip the state with the nation's first testbed autonomous firefighting helicopter and the associated configuration, familiarization, and training activities to transition the aircraft into operational use.

AB 300 (Lackey) Fire hazard severity zones: State Fire Marshal. Would require the State Fire Marshall to classify and review of lands within state responsibility areas as fire hazard severity zones, and identification and review of areas in the state as moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones every 5 years versus periodically.

AB 307 (Petrie-Norris) Bond Act of 2024: Department of Forestry and Fire **Protection: fire camera mapping system.** This bill would require, of the \$25,000,000 made available to CAL FIRE from the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024, \$10,000,000 be allocated for purposes of the ALERTCalifornia fire camera mapping system.

AB 404 (Sanchez) California Environmental Quality Act: exemption: prescribed fire, reforestation, habitat restoration, thinning, or fuel reduction projects. Would extend indefinitely an existing law (currently expiring January 1, 2028), that exempts from the requirements of CEQA prescribed fire, reforestation, habitat restoration, thinning, or fuel reduction projects, or related activities, undertaken, in whole or in part, on federal lands to reduce the risk of highseverity wildfire that have been reviewed under the federal National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 meeting certain requirements. Existing law requires a lead agency, if it determines that a project qualifies for the above exemption to file a notice of exemption with the Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation and with the county clerk in the county in which the project will be located. By extending the requirements on the lead agency, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program.



AB 442 (Hadwick) California Environmental Quality Act: exemption: prescribed fire, reforestation, habitat restoration, thinning, or fuel reduction projects. Would exempt from CEQA prescribed fire, thinning, or fuel reduction projects undertaken within a community with a single ingress and egress evacuation route. Because the bill would require the lead agency to determine whether the exemption is applicable to a project, this bill would impose a statemandated local program.

AB 513 (Gonzalez, Jeff) California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006: scoping plan. Would require the State Air Resources Board to include greenhouse gas emissions from wildlands and forest fires in the scoping plan.

AB 550 (Petrie-Norris) Fire prevention: grant programs: reporting. Would require the Task Force to compile and post to its website comprehensive details of all publicly funded fire prevention grant programs administered in the State, including, but not limited to, those administered by CAL FIRE and the federal government.

AB 623 (Dixon) Fuel modification and reduction projects: California Environmental Quality Act: coastal development permits: exemptions. Would exempt a fuel modification project to maintain defensible space of 100 feet from each side and from the front and rear of a building or structure from the requirements of CEQA.

AB 687 (Patterson) Forestry: timber operations: maintenance of timberlands for fuels reduction. Would authorize projects exclusively for noncommercial wildfire fuels reduction in timberland, paid for in part or in whole with public funds, to prepare a timber harvesting plan as an alternative to complying with CEQA, and would require these projects to be regulated as timber operations, as provided.

AB 763 (Ward) Timber harvesting: streambed agreement: waste discharge requirements. Existing law provides that an entity submitting a timber harvesting plan is deemed to have given notice to the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) of a lake or stream alteration and specifies that DFW is not required to issue an agreement fewer than 60 days from the date the notification is complete. This bill would require DFW issue an agreement within 5 working days of the approval of a timber harvesting plan by CAL FIRE.

AB 846 (Connolly)/SB 375 (Grove) Endangered species: incidental take: wildfire preparedness activities. Would authorize a local agency to submit to the department a wildfire preparedness plan to conduct wildfire preparedness activities on land designated as a fire hazard severity zone, as defined, that minimizes impacts to wildlife and habitat for candidate, threatened, and endangered species and require DFW to notify the local agency within 90 days of receipt of the wildfire preparedness plan if an incidental take permit or other permit is needed, or if there are other considerations, exemptions, or streamlined pathways that the wildfire preparedness activities qualify. The bill would also require the DFW, on or before July 1, 2026, to make a standard



wildfire preparedness plan submission form publicly available on its internet website.

AB 900 (Papan) Environmental protection: 30x30 goals: land conservation: science-based management and stewardship. Would require CNRA, on or before July 1, 2026, to update the Pathways to 30x30 Report, and for the update to include, among other things, recommendations to increase science-based management and stewardship of 30x30 lands, including innovative ways to reduce barriers and increase federal, state, and local support for science-based management and stewardship.

AB 1227 (Essayli) CA Environmental Quality Act: exemption wildfire prevention projects. Would exempt a wildfire prevention project from the CEQA requirement that: a mitigated negative declaration be prepared if a project may have a significant effect on the environment if revisions in the project would avoid or mitigate that effect and there is no substantial evidence that the project, as revised, would have a significant effect on the environment. Because a lead agency would be required to determine whether a project qualifies for this exemption.

AB 1456 (Bryan) CA Environmental Quality Act: vegetation fuel management project exemption. Would exempt from CEQA a vegetation fuel management project undertaken or funded by a public agency, or the adoption of an ordinance requiring the implementation of a vegetation fuel management project. The bill would require a lead agency that determines to carry out or approve an activity that is within the exemption to file a notice of exemption with the Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation

SB 88 (Caballero) Air resources: carbon emissions: biomass. Would require CARB, on or before January 1, 2027, to finalize the standardized system and historic baseline of GHG emissions from California's natural fire regime reflecting conditions before modern fire suppression. The bill would require CARB, on or before January 1, 2028, to adopt a method of quantification or a lifecycle model for avoided carbon emissions from wildfire from the application of prescribed fire to forest biomass resources and agricultural biomass resources, and to develop a carbon credit or offset protocol for biochar and other beneficial carbon-removal products that result from the avoidance of megafires and prescribed fire using existing methodologies.

SB 223 (Alvarado-Gil) The Wildfire Smoke and Health Outcomes Data Act. Would require CA Dept. of Public Health in consultation with CAL FIRE and the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force, to create, operate, and maintain a statewide integrated wildfire smoke and health data platform on or before July 1, 2028, that, among other things, would integrate wildfire smoke and health data from multiple databases. The purpose for the data platform would include providing adequate information to understand the negative health impacts on California's population caused by wildfire smoke and evaluating the effectiveness of investments in forest health and wildfire mitigation on health outcomes in California. This bill is a reprint of SB 945 (Alvarado-Gil, 2024).



SB 326 (Becker) Wildfire safety: The California Wildfire Mitigation Strategic Planning Act. Would require the deputy director of CAL FIRE's office of Community Wildfire Preparedness and Mitigation, on or before January 1, 2027, and every 3 years thereafter, to prepare a Wildfire Risk Mitigation Planning Framework sufficient to quantitatively evaluate wildfire risk mitigation actions, as provided. The bill would require the framework to allow for geospatial evaluation and comparison of wildfire risk mitigation actions sufficient to direct coordinated mitigation efforts and long-term collaborative mitigation planning. The bill would require the be submitted to the Legislature, the Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety, and the Public Utilities Commission for review and consideration.

SB 581 (McGuire) Department of Forestry and Fire Protection: seasonal firefighters. Would require the Department of Human Resources, the State Personnel Board, and any other relevant state agency to take the necessary actions to transition seasonal firefighters employed by CAL FIRE to a permanent firefighter employment classification.

PRESS BOX

National Parks at escalated wildfire risk, thanks to DOGE cuts. Rolling Stone, March 14, 2025. \$

Cal Fire rolls out new fire hazard maps for Central California. Up next: L.A. Los Angeles Times, March 11, 2025.

What old trees can teach us about modern wildfires. The Washington Post, March 11, 2025. \$

Cal Fire updates fire risk maps, with information on impacts for even more California homeowners. San Francisco Chronicle, March 10, 2025. \$

'There is literally no one': The fallout coming to Lake Tahoe after forest service gutted. SF Gate, March 8, 2025.

California delegation unites behind wildfire aid plea. Politico, March 7, 2025.

Trump's Canadian tariffs include lumber. He is pushing to cut down American trees instead. CNN, March 6, 2025.

Cuts Could Close Campsites and Trails in California, Forest Service Memo Says. New York Times, March 5, 2025. \$

Thousands of California campsites could close this summer due to Trump budget freeze, report says. San Francisco Chronicle, March 5, 2025. \$

Trump wants to use the 'God Squad' to increase logging, but it must follow strict rules. Associated Press, March 4, 2025.

California's effort to streamline wildfire prevention could have long-term consequences. San Francisco Chronicle, March 4, 2025. \$



Governor Gavin Newsom declares state of emergency for California forests. What it means. Sacramento Bee, March 3, 2025. \$

Saturday's rake-measuring contest. Politico, March 3, 2025.

Trump moves to increase logging in national forests. New York Times, March 3, 2025.\$

With eye on Trump, Newsom declares California emergency for forest fires. Politico, March 1, 2025.

Californians approved \$1.5 billion for wildfire prevention. How will the state spend it? CalMatters, February 28, 2025.

California tribe enters first-of-its-kind agreement with the state to practice cultural burns. Los Angeles Times, February 27, 2025.

Why bills to help prevent California fires fail. CalMatters, February 27, 2025.

Wildfire health effects: The 10-year monitoring plan. KCRW, February 25, 2025.

California governor asks Congress for nearly \$40 billion for Los Angeles wildfire relief. Associated Press, February 22, 2025.

How Trump's mass layoffs raise the risk of wildfires in the US West, according to fired workers. Associated Press, February 21, 2025.

Could this Irvine neighborhood be the blueprint for a more fire-resistant L.A.? Los Angeles Times, February 19, 2025. \$

Current climate: DOGE cuts are undermining wildfire readiness. Forbes, February 17, 2025.

More than 80% of new California properties are in high fire-risk areas. The Guardian, February 15, 2025.

LATEST IN SCIENCE Community impacts of wildfire. Cydzik, Kristina. Climate, Vulnerability and Health. Springer Nature Switzerland, 2025. 9-22.

> Decision science for multi-objective fuel management: integrating fire risk reduction and biodiversity conservation. Cawson, Jane G., et al. Fire 8.3 (2025): 100.

Enhancing urban resilience to California wildfires: a systemic risk mechanism design and theory framework for a comprehensive risk assessment. Marolla, Cesar. Int. J. Management and Data Analytics 5.1 (2025): 60-77.

Health-care system adaptability during wildfire disasters: crucial insights from LA County. Hertelendy, Attila J., Jeremy Maggin, and Gregory R. Ciottone. The Lancet (2025). Volume 405, Issue 10479, 621 - 622.



Integrating the physical harvesting of dead wood into fuel treatments to reduce wildfire hazards and enhance carbon benefits. Parajuli, Rabindra, Asha Paudel, and Scott H. Markwith. Journal of Environmental Management 376 (2025): 124535.

Long-term influence of prescribed burning on subsequent wildfire in an oldgrowth coast redwood forest. Biblin, Sky, Will Russell, and Kate Wilkin. Fire Ecology 21, 11 (2025).

Seed maturation and mortality patterns support non-serotinous conifer regeneration mechanism following high-severity fire. Lopez, Madeleine A., Jeffrey M. Kane, and David F. Greene. Fire Ecology 21.1 (2025): 10.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

CAL FIRE Tribal Wildfire Resilience Grants: Up to \$5 million are available for Tribal Wildfire Resilience grants to support California Native American tribes in managing ancestral lands, implementing and promoting Traditional Environmental Knowledges in wildfire resilience, and establishing wildfire safety for tribal communities. Deadline is March 28, 2025.

CAL FIRE California Forest Improvement Program. This program provides support to eligible landowners to implement planning, reforestation, and resourcemanagement activities that will improve the quality and value of forestland. Deadline is April 1, 2025.

CAL FIRE Business and Workforce Development Grant: \$5 million in grant funding is available for <u>California business and workforce development</u> projects that support healthy, resilient forests and the people and ecosystems that depend on them. Deadline is April 25, 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

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.



April 1: CNRA Webinar on Cultural Burn Agreements: This webinar will cover the landmark cultural burn agreement with the Karuk Tribe and the new law, Senate Bill 310 (Dodd 2024), granting authority to the California Natural Resources Agency and local air districts to enter into cultural fire agreements with federally recognized tribes to honor tribal sovereignty, to heal from the historical wrong of criminalizing tribal cultural burning practices, and to expand the use of beneficial fire to strengthen California's resilience to wildfire and climate change.

April 1-May 27: UCANR Forest Stewardship Workshop Series: This workshop series will help landowners develop plans to improve and protect their forestlands in an ecologically and economically sustainable manner. The workshops will address management objectives and planning, forest restoration, fuels reduction, project development, permitting, and cost-share opportunities. Participants will connect with other landowners and learn how to collect information to develop their own management plans.