

September 15, 2025

TASK FORCE HIGHLIGHTS

Task Force Convenes Regional Meeting in the Inland Empire: Nearly 400 people filled the Orton Center at the University of Redlands, with more than 350 additional participants joining online, for the Wildfire & Forest Resilience Task Force's Inland Empire Regional Meeting on September 4. Hosted by the Inland Empire Community Foundation and the Inland Empire Resource Conservation District, the gathering spotlighted issues of particular importance to Southern California and the Inland Empire. If you couldn't make it in person, or missed the real-time webinar, video recordings are available [online](#).

Task Force Announces 2026 Meeting Dates: The last Task Force meeting in 2025 will be held on December 12 in Sacramento (9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.). Dates have been announced, and save-the-dates will soon be distributed, for the Task Force's 2026 [meetings](#):

March 19-20: Regional – Sierra (location TBD)

June 5: Sacramento

October 1-2: Regional- North Coast (location TBD)

December 11: Sacramento

STATE HIGHLIGHTS

Lawmakers Pass Climate and Wildfire Legislation Package: On September 13, California lawmakers passed new legislation to replenish the state's wildfire liability fund, extend the state's greenhouse gas trading program, and set up a West-wide electricity grid.

- **Wildfire Liability Fund:** [Senate Bill 254](#) includes a proposal to add to the state's wildfire fund with revenue bonds to support power-grid investments. Utilities can draw on this money to cover liability if their electrical equipment starts a damaging wildfire. The legislation proposes that utilities and ratepayers will each cover half of the nearly \$18 billion fund.
- **Cap-and-Invest:** Lawmakers settled on a version of the cap-and-invest extension similar to Newsom's May proposal to reauthorize the program largely as-is. [Assembly Bill 1207](#) will extend cap-and-invest through 2045, sending a signal of stability to the carbon markets that supporters hope will increase auction returns. A companion measure, [Senate Bill 840](#), details how the revenues from carbon auctions will be spent.
- **West-wide electricity grid:** [Assembly Bill 825](#) will enable California to join a new Western electricity market. Supporters touted the plan as a way to ensure the reliability of California's grid by letting the state buy and sell power across the region.

California Extends Timeline for Some On-the-ground Work Eligible for Streamlining, Recognizing the Importance of Long-term Fuel Reduction Projects: Following Governor Newsom's [Emergency Proclamation on wildfire](#), the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) and the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) have [approved over 100 critical fuels reduction projects](#) spanning tens of thousands of acres across the state, moving at record pace while also ensuring environmental protections are upheld.



Recognizing that reducing wildfire risk to landscapes and communities may require multiple stages of treatments, California recently extended regulatory suspensions to allow qualifying long-term fuels reduction projects up to five years from commencement to complete on-the-ground work. Typically, projects must be completed within two years of initiating work on-the-ground. However, extensions may be allowed for up to five years from the commencement of on-the-ground work for fuels reduction projects that have been awarded funding from the following state grant programs:

- CAL FIRE Wildfire Prevention Grants
- CAL FIRE Forest Health Grants
- California Forest Improvement Program within the Coastal Zone (projects must have fuels reduction as a key objective)
- Climate Bond early action funding (Prop 4)
- [Programs funded through Wildfire Resilience Packages in FY 21/22, 22/23, and 23/24](#)

Projects that receive extensions must submit progress reports that are required under their grant agreements to the suspension review teams at CNRA and CalEPA. Additionally, projects directly implemented by state land-owning agencies within CNRA (i.e., CAL FIRE, State Parks, CDFW, State Lands Commission and California Tahoe Conservancy) also are eligible for extensions of up to five years from the commencement of on-the-ground work. For eligibility criteria, requirements for environmental protections, FAQs, support resources for project assistance, a map of approved projects, and the application link, [visit the Task Force webpage](#). The deadline to submit suspension requests for projects is December 31, 2025.

CAL FIRE Awards Nearly \$10 Million to Support Tribal Wildfire Resilience and Boost Forestry Workforce:

- **4.7 Million to Support Tribal Wildfire Resilience and Cultural Stewardship:** On August 1, CAL FIRE [awarded](#) nearly \$4.7 million through its [Tribal Wildfire Resilience Program](#) to support six tribes and tribal non-profits in implementing projects on tribal, federal, and private lands. These grants focus on cultural fire, workforce training, fuels reduction, reforestation, land stewardship, and other efforts that promote wildfire resilience and safety for tribal communities. The funding also supports the use and promotion of Traditional Ecological Knowledge to help California Native American tribes manage their ancestral lands.
- **\$5 Million to Expand Biomass Utilization and Forestry Workforce:** On August 18, CAL FIRE [announced](#) \$5 million in grant funding through its [Business and Workforce Development Grant program](#) to eight projects that will create jobs, train future forestry workers, and help small businesses expand their role in protecting California's forests and communities from wildfire. Together, these eight projects will train more than 300 people, create or retain dozens of jobs, and increase the capacity to treat thousands of acres per year.

Governor Newsom Unveils California's Updated Climate Adaptation Strategy:

On September 4, Governor Newsom unveiled California's updated [Climate Adaptation Strategy](#) — the state's overarching framework to better protect



communities and landscapes from dangerous climate impacts. California last updated the Strategy in 2021. The updated strategy sets strategic direction through six priorities:

- Protecting communities most vulnerable to climate change;
- Improving public health and safety to protect against increasing climate risk;
- Building a climate-resilient economy;
- Expanding nature-based climate solutions and strengthening the resilience of natural systems;
- Making decisions based on best available climate science; and
- Partnering and collaborating to leverage resources.

These priorities are supported by cross-cutting climate resilience actions, each with associated success metrics. The strategy aligns with and builds on the goals set forth by [California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan](#). See the actions that directly address wildfire resilience [here](#).

California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection Announces New Executive

Officer: On August 15, The California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection [announced the appointment](#) of Tony Andersen as its new Executive Officer. Andersen will lead the Board's operations and policy implementation, serving as the Board's lead staff person and liaison between government agencies, stakeholders, and the public. Andersen brings nearly two decades of experience in policy, strategic communications, and government affairs through a range of environmental, forestry, and wildfire-related leadership positions. Most recently, he served as the deputy secretary for communications at the California Natural Resources Agency following an appointed leadership position at CAL FIRE.

FEDERAL UPDATES

U.S. Forest Service Invests in Reducing Wildfire Risk in Humboldt County: On August 20, the U.S. Forest Service [announced](#) it is investing nearly \$300,000 to the Humboldt County Resource Conservation District to support collaboration and public-private partnerships to help increase the pace and scale of prescribed fire projects and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire in Southern Humboldt County. The project will treat 235 acres for hazardous fuels and enhanced wildlife habitat, 100+ acres for invasive plant/weed management, add 3,000+ acres under new forest stewardship plans, and support community engagement with landowners and prescribed fire training opportunities.

U.S. Forest Service Opens Public Comment on Roadless Rule Recission: The U.S. Forest Service is [now accepting public comments](#) for the 2001 Roadless Rule recission through September 19, 2025. The proposed rule would rescind the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, which prohibits road construction, road reconstruction, and timber harvesting in inventoried roadless areas, with limited exceptions.

PROGRESS THROUGH COLLABORATION

Interagency Partners Sign Charter to Reduce Wildfire Ignitions in Southern California: On September 3, federal, state, and nonprofit partners, including the U.S. Forest Service, CAL FIRE, the California Department of Conservation, Caltrans, and the California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force signed the Southern California Ignition Reduction Program (SCIRP) charter at the Southern



California Geographic Area Coordination Center in Riverside. SCIRP is a public-private partnership created to reduce human-caused wildfire ignitions, particularly along roadways where nearly two-thirds of Southern California wildfires begin. The charter will reduce ignitions, lower costs, and limit wildfire impacts across jurisdictional boundaries. With nearly 95 percent of wildfires in the region sparked by human activity, SCIRP was established in 2023 to directly confront wildfire risk. SCIRP's mission is to systematically plan, fund, and carry out projects that reduce human caused ignitions while building public awareness and support. Its vision is a future where Southern California fires are limited to natural or beneficial ignitions, and roadways are lined with ignition-resistant materials and native plants.

California Joins Northwest Wildland Fire Fighting Compact: On September 5, California along with Nevada became the newest members of the [Northwest Wildland Fire Protection Agreement](#). Joining the Northwest Compact will give California access to additional wildfire prevention and firefighting resources and expertise during major incidents. The Compact also will facilitate California's firefighters gaining experience with fire suppression efforts in other member regions. The Northwest Compact was created in 1998 and is one of eight forest firefighting Compacts currently operating across North America. The purpose of the NW Compact is to promote effective prevention, suppression, and control of forest fires in the Northwest wildland region of the United States and western areas of Canada. It provides an efficient way for member states, provinces, and territories to address wildland fires that might be beyond the capabilities of a single member agency, through information sharing, technology, and resource distribution. The NW Compact's existing members include Alaska, Arizona, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, Montana and Hawaii in the U.S., as well as the Canadian provinces Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and the Yukon and Northwest territories.

New U.S. Forest Service Videos Demonstrate How Collaborative Fuels Treatments Protected Communities from 2024 Wildfires: One year ago, the [Line Fire](#) on the San Bernardino National Forest threatened homes, infrastructure, and lives. At the same time, wildfires on the Angeles and Cleveland National Forests—the [Bridge](#) and [Airport](#) Fires—burned nearby, posing similar threats. Thanks to advanced planning and proactive forest management across Southern California forests, fire crews were able to hold the line and protect nearby communities. The Task Force [showcased these videos](#) at its recent Inland Empire Regional Meeting in addition to featuring panels with staff that were critical to implementing these proactive life-saving projects. [Learn more about crucial wildfire risk reduction work](#) throughout the region.

Scientists Prove Crucial to Southern California's Immediate Post-fire Recovery, Steering Emergency Mitigation and Remediation Planning. After wildfire, emergency stabilization is critical to prevent further damage to life, property, and natural resources. [After the Eaton and Palisades fires](#), the interagency [BAER Team](#) evaluated the burned areas and prescribed erosion stabilization treatments to prevent roads and bridges from washing out during floods. The team used a suite of [publicly available tools](#) and models to assess the conditions in the forest after the fire. The tools were also used by multiple



agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service, California's Watershed Emergency Response Team, the California Geological Survey, and Los Angeles County, among others, to assess the fires' aftermath.

The PG&E Corporation Foundation (PG&E Foundation) and California Fire Foundation (CFF) Announce Wildfire Safety Grants. CFF, with support from the PG&E Foundation, have [awarded \\$950,000 in wildfire safety grants](#) to 63 local fire departments, fire agencies and non-profit groups primarily in northern and central California. This is the eighth year the foundation has partnered to award grants to help communities bolster their disaster preparedness and response programs.

LEGISLATION WATCH

AB 1 (Connolly) Residential property insurance: wildfire risk. Would require the Department of Insurance, 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 706 (Aguiar-Curry) Forest Organic Residue, Energy, and Safety Transformation and Wildfire Prevention Fund Act. Would establish the Forest and Wildfire Prevention Fund in the State Treasury, and would continuously appropriate the fund to the Natural Resources Agency to reduce organic fuel sources that increase fire risk by providing funding for the fire fuel reduction procurement program, which the bill would also establish, to support sufficient procurement, transport, and beneficial use of forest biomass waste that reduces fuel for wildfires, as specified.

AB 900 (Papan) Environmental protection: 30x30 goals: land conservation: science-based management and stewardship. Would require CNRA, as part of its 2027 annual report on progress made toward achieving the 30x30 goal, 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 1455 (Bryan) California Environmental Quality Act: certified regulatory program: State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection: ember-resistant zone. Expands the scope of existing defensible space requirements by creating an ember-resistant zone standard, in which materials that would likely be ignited by embers are required to be eliminated, within 5 feet of the structure. The bill authorizes the Board of Forestry to update guidance documents accordingly.

SB 88 (Caballero) Air resources: carbon emissions: biomass. Would require the State Air Resources Board (CARB), on or before January 1, 2028, 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 publish on its website an assessment of the life-cycle emissions from alternative uses of forest and agricultural biomass residues.

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.

SB 429 (Cortese) Wildfire Safety and Risk Mitigation Program. Would establish the Wildfire Safety and Risk Mitigation Program to fund the development, demonstration, and deployment of a public wildfire catastrophe model, as defined, and to provide grant funding to one or more universities for eligible projects with specified criteria for the purpose of creating a research and educational center responsible for developing, demonstrating, and deploying a public wildfire catastrophe model that provides significant wildfire safety benefits to California communities and assists alignment of federal, state, and local wildfire risk reduction efforts. The bill would create the Wildfire Safety and Risk Mitigation Account within the Insurance Fund for these purposes. The bill, also upon appropriation for these purposes, would require the department to create a framework and multiyear plan with available data for the development, demonstration, and deployment of a public wildfire catastrophe model that includes specified information and to publish the plan on the department's internet website.

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

SB 629 (Durazo) Wildfires: fire hazard severity zones: defensible space, vegetation management, and fuel modification enforcement. Would require the factors on which the State Fire Marshal bases the identification of fire severity zones include areas within the perimeter of a wildfire that burned 1,000 or more acres, destroyed more than 10 structures, or resulted in a fatality, and to include areas at risk for an urban conflagration that accounts for the potential for structures to serve as a fuel source that extends the ember cast outside of wildland areas. Would require OSFM to publish the model and methodology used to develop the fire hazard severity zones on its internet website at least 60 days before finalizing those designations and to publish the model and methodology for specified factors whenever OSFM reviews the fire severity zones.

SB 653 (Cortese) Wildfire prevention: environmentally sensitive vegetation management. Would define an environmentally sensitive vegetation



management project to mean vegetation management that reduces catastrophic wildfire risk over the long term while supporting native wildlife and biodiversity. The bill would require an environmentally sensitive vegetation management project to prioritize specified practices, including, among other things, practices that follow the principles of integrated pest management.

PRESS BOX

California lawmakers reach last-minute deals on climate, energy. [KQED](#), September 11, 2025.

How to put together a six-piece climate puzzle. [Politico](#), September 10, 2025.

Newsom strikes climate deal extending California cap and trade, boosting oil production. [CalMatters](#), September 10, 2025.

Twice as many California homes could survive major wildfires by doing this. [San Francisco Chronicle](#), September 10, 2025. \$

Electric customers to pay \$9 billion more to state wildfire fund under proposed bill. [Los Angeles Times](#), September 10, 2025. \$

UC wildfire study highlights benefit of 'Zone 0' defense buffer. [Marin Independent Journal](#), September 8, 2025. \$

A eulogy for Teakettle. [Earth Systems Ecology Lab](#), September 8, 2025.

A 'Roomba for the forest' could be SoCal's next wildfire weapon. [Los Angeles Times](#), September 5, 2025. \$

California joins firefighting compact with a dozen Northwest states and Canadian provinces. [Los Angeles Times](#), September 5, 2025. \$

Wildfires producing 'witches' brew' of air pollution: UN. [Phys.org](#), September 5, 2025.

Federal government sues major SoCal utility after the deadly Eaton Fire in LA. [KCRA 3](#), September 4, 2025.

Dozens of lightning strike fires are burning across California. A warming climate could bring more, according to new study. [CalMatters](#), September 4, 2025.

Tahoe agencies sign a 10-year fire prevention strategy. [MyNews4.com](#), September 4, 2025.

UCLA-led research reveals extent of L.A. and California wildfires' impact on air quality. [UCLA Newsroom](#), September 4, 2025.

Teakettle experimental forest burns in Garnet Fire. [The Lookout](#), September 3, 2025.



California boosts wildfire safety with fuel reduction projects timeline extensions. [Action News Now](#), September 2, 2025.

Here's what's really going on at the Forest Service as wildfire season ramps up. [San Francisco Chronicle](#), September 2, 2025. \$

To solve the wildfire crisis, we have to let the myth of 'the wild' die. [Los Angeles Times](#), August 28, 2025. \$

How California can prepare for wildfires before they break out. [Sacramento Bee](#), August 28, 2025.

Breathing poison: you can't outrun wildfire smoke. [KQED](#), August 25, 2025.

Does logging really reduce wildfire danger? New California study finds key exception. [San Francisco Chronicle](#), August 20, 2025. \$

California moves against state's insurer of last resort over smoke policies. [Newsweek](#), August 1, 2025.

LATEST IN SCIENCE **Big trees burning: Divergent wildfire effects on large trees in open-vs. closed-canopy forests.** Meigs, Garrett W., et al. [Ecosphere](#), September 4.

Fire risk to structures in California's Wildland-Urban Interface. Zamanialaei, et al. [Nature Communications](#), August 28, 2025.

A novel methodology to assess fuel treatment effectiveness: application to California's forests projections of lightning-ignited wildfire risk in the Western United States. Kalashnikov et al., [Earth's Future](#), August 26, 2025.

Increasing global human exposure to wildland fires despite declining burned area. Seydi et al., [Science](#), August 21, 2025.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

NFWF's Angeles National Forest Wildfire Restoration Grant Program: [This program](#) is focused on the recovery of Angeles National Forest (ANF) lands and watersheds degraded from the influences of the Copper (2002) and Sayre (2008) wildfires. [Proposals due October 3, 2025.](#)

The USDA Timber Production Expansion Guaranteed Loan Program: [This program](#) provides loan guarantees to establish, reopen, expand, or improve sawmills and other wood-processing facilities. [Rolling application until funds depleted.](#)

SNC's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program: [This Program](#) is focused on protecting people and communities while achieving a combination of multiple watershed, ecosystem, and community benefits. [Proposals accepted on continuous basis until January 31, 2026, or as long as funding is available.](#)

SNC's Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Grant Program: [This program](#) aims to support innovative efforts to enhance, promote,



and develop sustainable recreation and tourism opportunities and increase access for all to public lands in the Sierra-Cascade region. [Rolling application.](#)

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.](#)

Wood Energy Management Assistance Team: The U.S. Forest Service has partnered with the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities to support direct, expert technical assistance to wood products manufacturers, provided by industry expert consults, through the [Wood Manufacturing Assistance Team](#) (WMAT). The WMAT can support a wide range of services, including operational efficiency audits, identification of equipment or process improvements, development of long-term strategic investment plans, maintenance and safety program reviews, capital investment feasibility studies, identification of new markets or expansion opportunities. [Rolling application.](#)

LOOKING AHEAD

Task Force 2025-2026 Meeting Dates: The Task Force's 2025-2026 meeting dates are available on the Task Force's [Meetings page](#).

October 2025: 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.

November 18-20, 2025: CARCD 80th Annual Conference: [Register](#) for this year's conference to be held at the DoubleTree Hilton in Sacramento. CARCD is also [soliciting proposals](#), with preference given to aimed specifically at RCDs and those that are interactive and engaging.

