

October 29, 2025**STATE HIGHLIGHTS**

Governor Newsom Signs Executive Order to Expand Beneficial Fire Use: On October 29, [Governor Newsom signed an executive order](#) directing state agencies to reduce red tape and expand tools to safely deploy beneficial fire projects. The order directs a suite of actions to fast-track critical work in the coming months with a key focus on directing state agencies to provide immediate on-the-ground support to local governments and fire practitioners to maximize use of beneficial fire, helping ensure that California does not miss the critical fall weather window to conduct prescribed and cultural burns. The order supports collaborative efforts to update beneficial fire permitting, address air quality concerns associated with smoke and enable resource conservation districts and other entities to carry out beneficial fire projects. The executive order helps strengthen and build on California's wildfire prevention strategy by:

- Accelerating funding and projects: Distributes funding to resource conservation districts and other eligible government agencies in advance of beneficial fire work, as well as creates more simplified grant funding processes.
- Expanding local participation: Removes policies and regulatory roadblocks that would make it more difficult for local agencies to engage in this work, including suspending the state law that prohibits resource conservation districts and volunteer fire departments from participating in the Prescribed Fire Liability Claims Fund Pilot Program.
- Working with tribal communities: Directs state agencies to continue prioritizing tribal consultation, access, collaboration, and co-management—so we can work together to expand and support cultural burning and other forms of tribal stewardship.
- Increasing education and data: Directs the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to create new modeling and related technologies, such as the Prescribed Fire Information Reporting System (PFIRS) and make this technology available to support air districts' efforts to promote fast, efficient and low-cost permitting, and expands training opportunities for beneficial fire practitioners.
- Mitigating air quality risks: Increases collaboration and creates new best practices that provide beneficial fire practitioners consistent permitting and smoke management plan guidance while protecting public health and communicating potential smoke impacts to the public and create guidance for local communities.

Governor Newsom Signs Executive Order to Address Economic Consequences of the State's Climate and Wildfire Crisis: On September 30, Governor Gavin Newsom [signed an executive order](#) that calls for multiple state agencies and departments to collaborate on research and recommendations to develop long-term durable tools to mitigate and fairly allocate the costs of recovering from natural catastrophes, further stabilize the insurance market and utility sector, make insurance more affordable and accessible, protect ratepayers, ensure compensation for wildfire survivors, and more. The order will expedite



the state's work to undertake the analysis called for in [SB 254](#), which will create a new Wildfire Fund to support wildfire survivors and protect ratepayers from excessive utility liability costs and directs the state's wildfire fund administrator to prepare a report by April 2026 analyzing new approaches to responding to catastrophes, including wildfires.

CDPH and CAL FIRE Partner to Raise Public Awareness of Prescribed Fire: The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has partnered with CAL FIRE to [raise public awareness on prescribed fire](#). CAL FIRE previously funded CDPH research on how prescribed fire smoke affects the health of California's communities. The [Public Health Impacts of Prescribed Fire \(PHIRE\) Study](#) found that community members want local public health messages when they see or smell smoke, even if not from a wildfire.

California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) Strengthens Tribal Consultation Policy: CNRA has released an updated [Tribal Consultation Policy](#) setting clear standards for early, often, and meaningful consultations with tribes in agency actions. The revised policy formalizes CNRA's commitment to building lasting partnerships with California Native American tribes.

Tule River Indian Tribe of California Reclaims 17,030 Acres of Ancestral Land: In a historic milestone, the Tule River Indian Tribe, in partnership with the CNRA, the Wildlife Conservation Board, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and The Conservation Fund, [announced the return of 17,030 acres of ancestral land](#) in the Sierra Nevada foothills and Central Valley region. This marks the largest ancestral land return in history. In partnership with CDFW the Tribe will reintroduce tule elk, protect important habitat, and sustain the recovery of the California condor.

CAL FIRE Holds First Graduation Ceremony at Atwater Training Center: Governor Newsom celebrated [the first graduating class of Company Officers at CAL FIRE's new Atwater Training Center](#) on the location of the former Castle Air Force Base in Merced County. The Atwater Training Center opened in July 2025 to meet increasing training demands driven by the growth of CAL FIRE's permanent and seasonal workforce. With this graduating class, CAL FIRE has trained more than 500 new Company Officers in 2025 and is on track to surpass a record 650 by year's end – further sharpening the frontline capacity of the state's firefighting system.

FEDERAL UPDATES

U.S. EPA Issues Policy Guidance to Remove Barriers for Prescribed Fires: On October 16, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [issued policy guidance](#) directing regional offices to work with local, state, tribal, and federal partners to remove barriers in State Implementation Plans (SIPs) that discourage prescribed fires. Under the Clean Air Act (CAA) and EPA's Exceptional Events Rule, prescribed fires are eligible to be treated as an exceptional event, meaning air quality data resulting from these strategic fires does not need to be taken into account when determining if an area meets National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). Therefore, the EPA will not require inclusion of air quality regulatory provisions in SIPs that limit the strategic use of prescribed fires.



The memorandum directs EPA's ten regional offices to engage with local, state, tribal, and federal partners to develop approaches consistent with the CAA that will not limit the use of wildland prescribed fires. EPA regional offices must also collaborate with state air agencies to evaluate provisions already incorporated into SIPs, and those proposed for inclusion into SIPs, to ensure they are consistent with the CAA and do not limit the strategic application of wildland prescribed fires. Finally, to enable more effective coordination and collaboration on smoke and air quality management, EPA regional offices will work to promote recordkeeping and smoke management practices associated with prescribed fire activities.

Senate Advances Bipartisan Fix Our Forests Act: On October 21, the U.S. Senate [advanced](#) the [Fix Our Forests Act](#) through the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, setting the pivotal fire and forestry legislation up for a vote by the full Senate. The bipartisan legislation would help combat catastrophic wildfires, restore forest ecosystems, and make federal forest management more efficient. The Fix Our Forests Act would:

- Establish new and updated cross-jurisdictional programs to reduce wildfire risks across large, high-priority areas.
- Streamline and expand tools for forest health projects (e.g., stewardship contracting, Good Neighbor Agreements) and provide faster processes for certain hazardous fuels treatments.
- Create a single interagency program to help communities in the wildland-urban interface build and retrofit with wildfire-resistant measures, while simplifying and consolidating grant applications.
- Expand research and demonstration initiatives — including biochar projects and the Community Wildfire Defense Research Program — to test and deploy cutting-edge wildfire prevention, detection, and mitigation technologies.
- Strengthen coordination efforts across agencies through a new Wildfire Intelligence Center which would streamline the federal response and create a whole-of-government approach to combating wildfires.
- Create fire safe electrical corridors by allowing electric utilities with permits or easements on National Forest System or BLM land to cut and remove vegetation near power lines without requiring a separate timber sale.
- Improve reforestation, seedling supply, and nursery capacity; as well as clarify policies to reduce wildfire-related litigation and expedite forest health treatments.

U.S. Forest Service Invests Nearly \$25 Million to Protect Communities from Wildfire: On September 23, the U.S. Forest Service [announced](#) it is investing \$200 million in 58 projects through its [Community Wildfire Defense Grant Program](#). Nearly \$25 million will be allocated to 6 projects that will protect communities across California. These projects are intended to help at-risk communities plan for and reduce wildfire risk, protecting homes, businesses, and infrastructure. See details on each of California's funded projects [here](#).

U.S. Forest Service Invests Over \$7 Million to Increase Timber Production and Reduce Wildfire Risk in California: On September 16, the U.S. Forest Service [announced](#) it is investing \$7.1 million for 18 projects in California. These projects



are on or adjacent to 8 National Forests and will remove more than 275,000 tons of biomass that would otherwise remain in the forests. These investments into California are part of a national investment of \$23 million to help 35 grant recipients remove and transport an estimated 1.1 million tons of low-value trees and woody debris from national forests to processing facilities. The grants are delivered through the agency's [Hazardous Fuels Transportation Assistance Program](#), which is designed to help businesses, nonprofits, and state, local, and tribal governments make use of trees, downed vegetation, and other hazardous fuels that would otherwise go to waste or fuel catastrophic wildfires. The trees and woody debris, often too low in value to cover transportation costs, are transformed from a wildfire hazard to valuable products and a source of energy.

PROGRESS THROUGH COLLABORATION

CNRA and Partners Install First Ever Redwood Forest Observatory: CNRA, in partnership with UC Davis, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, the California Air Resources Board, and CAL FIRE, [installed the first ever redwood forest observatory](#) consisting of two research towers that will provide critical forest health information on California's coast redwood forests. The recently installed flux towers are located in Jackson Demonstration State Forest, where they directly and continuously measure the inflow and outflow of carbon dioxide, water vapor, and energy between the redwoods and the surrounding environment. Instruments on these towers provide real time understanding of how redwoods respond to changing environmental conditions, wildfire, and management to help land managers protect this iconic forest ecosystem undergoing rapid change. Within the next year, aggregated measurements produced by these towers will be processed for public use.

USDA California Climate Hub and Partners Release New Reforestation Planning Resources: The recently launched [California Reforestation Toolshed](#) website consolidates a variety of reforestation resources into one location, thereby improving access to essential reforestation guidance and science. The Toolshed was collaboratively developed by the USDA California Climate Hub, CAL FIRE, American Forests, the Southwest Climate Adaptation Science Center and University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources. The Toolshed includes 12 new California Climate-Informed Reforestation Guidance booklets. These booklets provide regionally specific recommendations for site preparation, planting, and post-planting management actions that can help establish forests that are resilient to climate change and wildfires. Access the booklets [here](#).

CAL FIRE and the Community Wildfire Planning Center Awarded for Training Program: In October 2025, the [American Planning Association](#) (APA) [awarded](#) CAL FIRE and the Community Wildfire Planning Center with the 2025 National Planning Award for Resiliency & Sustainability in recognition of their [Land Use Planning for Wildfires in California training program](#). Launched in 2023, the training program offers free, full-day, in-person sessions designed for land use planners, fire marshals, fire chiefs, fire mitigation specialists, building officials, and other professionals from both government agencies and the private sector. To date, nearly 700 attendees participated in one of 24 trainings held across the State. Trainings have helped attendees:



- Increase understanding of the most up-to-date state requirements for planning in fire hazard areas.
- Expand knowledge of wildfire vulnerabilities in the built environment.
- Share information on best practices and resources.
- Interact with peers to exchange perspectives on fire mitigation and planning.

Watershed Research and Training Center Launches Quarterly Wildfire Resilience Newsletter: [The Watershed Research and Training Center](#) (WRTC) is launching a quarterly Wildfire Resilience newsletter starting this fall. These newsletters will feature resources, updates, and curated stories related to the WRTC's wildfire resilience offerings in California, as well as relevant news from WRTC's partners and other key players in the state. This newsletter will come quarterly, with occasional supplemental emails as important news or events arise. Subscribe to the newsletter [here](#).

Climate and Wildfire Institute Hosts Webinar on “Insuring Resilience: Pathways Through California’s Wildfire Insurance Crisis”: A [CWI hosted webinar](#) in October featured conversations about how improving underlying insurability depends on large-scale, evidence-based risk reduction—at the home, community, and landscape level—and on translating those efforts into insurance models and policies. Panelists highlighted the need for sustained investments, stronger financing strategies, and better data alignment to ensure mitigation is both recognized and rewarded.

LEGISLATION WATCH

The California Legislature adjourned on September 13 and will not reconvene until January 5, 2026. The following bills were signed by the Governor:

AB 1 (Connolly) Residential property insurance: wildfire risk. Requires 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 900 (Papan) Environmental protection: 30x30 goals: land conservation: science-based management and stewardship. Requires CNRA, as part of its 2027 annual report on progress made toward achieving the 30x30 goal, to include recommendations to increase and improve 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 (Board): ember-resistant zone. Requires the Board to adopt regulations to implement the Zone 0 defensible regulations in the State Responsibility Area and very high fire hazard severity zone in the Local Responsibility Area and authorizes the Board to adopt those regulations as emergency regulations.



SB 429 (Cortese) Wildfire Safety and Risk Mitigation Program. Establishes the Wildfire Safety and Risk Mitigation Program to fund the development, demonstration, and deployment of a public wildfire catastrophe model 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. Creates the Wildfire Safety and Risk Mitigation Account within the Insurance Fund for these purposes. Requires 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 653 (Cortese) Wildfire prevention: environmentally sensitive vegetation management. Defines 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. Requires 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 approves grant for homeowners—find out if you qualify. [Newsweek, October 21, 2025.](#)

Bureaucracy holds back Los Angeles's wildfire recovery. [The Washington Post, October 18, 2025.](#) \$

The state's wildfire policy long overlooked SoCal. Now it's course correcting. [Los Angeles Times, October 16, 2025.](#) \$

CO2 from wildfires increases by 9% as climate crisis supercharges infernos. [The Guardian, October 16, 2025.](#)

California needs a new approach to wildfire planning, experts say. Cost is an issue. [KQED, October 15, 2025.](#)

Investigation: California brush clearance stalling 9 months after January fires. [The Center Square, October 15, 2025.](#)

New IBSH study finds adding greater wildfire resilience to new construction in Altadena is affordable. [PR Newswire, October 14, 2025.](#)

'We can do better': Calif.'s incarcerated firefighters just got a nearly 700% raise. [SF Gate, October 14, 2025.](#)

Painting with fire: How Indigenous practices can help protect forests. [The Washington Post, October 14, 2025.](#) \$



California governor signs bills to aid Los Angeles wildfire recovery and reform disaster response. [Associated Press, October 10, 2025.](#)

New California law aims to stabilize insurance for people who can't get private coverage. [Associated Press, October 9, 2025.](#)

After Palisades fire failures, L.A. promises to beef up staffing during high-risk fire weather. [LA Times, October 8, 2025](#) (\$)

Forest Service lags on prescribed burns after Calif. loses 600-year-old trees to wildfire. [SF Gate, October 8, 2025.](#)

This wildfire evacuation checklist that could save lives this season. [International Fire & Safety Journal, October 6, 2025.](#)

'All the trees are dead': An ancient California forest has been wiped out. [San Francisco Chronicle, October 5, 2025.](#) \$

California FAIR Plan seeks huge rate hike. Map shows which ZIPs hit hardest. [San Francisco Chronicle, October 3, 2025.](#) \$

Here's what the government shutdown means for wildfires, weather and disaster response. [Los Angeles Times, October 1, 2025.](#) \$

Gavin Newsom calls for CA homeowner insurance recommendations in executive order. [The Sacramento Bee, October 1, 2025.](#)

California needs biomass energy to meet its wildfire goals. Its projects keep going South. [Los Angeles Times, September 30, 2025.](#) \$

California's wildfire season was going relatively well. A shutdown could change that. [Politico, September 29, 2025.](#)

The L.A. wildfire cleanup was fast. Residents eager to rebuild worry officials chose speed over safety. [Los Angeles Times, September 22, 2025.](#) \$

'Game changer' forestry project begins in Tahoe Keys a year early. [Tahoe Daily Tribune, September 17, 2025.](#)

LATEST IN SCIENCE State of wildfires 2024-2025. [Kelley et al., Earth System Science Data 17.10 \(2025\): 5377-5488.](#)

Climate-linked escalation of societally disastrous wildfires. [Cunningham, et al. Science 390.6768 \(2025\): 53-58.](#)

Wildfire management at a crossroads: Mitigation and prevention or response and recovery? [Gray, Gregory, and Sandborn. Science 390.6768 \(2025\): 30-33.](#)



Predicting soil temperatures associated with reintroduction of prescribed burning in western coniferous forests. [Weise, et al. Forest Science \(2025\): 1-27.](#)

Fire gives avian populations a rapid and enduring boost in protected forests of California. [Ray, et al. Fire Ecology 21.1 \(2025\): 56.](#)

Rising from the ashes: treatments stabilize carbon storage in California's frequent-fire forests. [O Yackulic, et al. Frontiers in Forests and Global Change 8 \(2025\): 1498430.](#)

Preventing Catastrophic Wildfires: Annual Grid Inspection and Maintenance Plan. [Taghavi et al., SSRN \(2025\).](#)

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

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: [Upcoming meetings](#) include:

- December 12: Sacramento, 9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
- March 19-20: Regional – TBD, Central Sierra
- June 5: Sacramento
- October 1-2: Regional – Fortuna River Lodge, Humboldt County
- December 11: Sacramento

November 7, 2025 – Sierra Nevada Conservancy & USDA California Climate Hub Monitoring Workshop: Funded by the Department of Conservation's Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program, the [November 7 Q&A](#) will be focused on forest health and community-protection monitoring for entities working in the [Sierra Nevada Conservancy Service Area](#).

November-December 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 13 and December 11, 2025 – California Jobs First: Project Financing Webinar Series: [Monthly webinars](#) are designed to support the implementation of projects identified in the California Jobs First Regional Plans by sharing a diverse range of financing tools, strategies, and co-investment opportunities.

November 18, 2025 – California Forest Pest Council 2025 Annual Business Meeting: The [agenda](#) will cover updates on USDA aerial detection survey, CDFA Plant Pest Diagnostic Center, Gold Spotted Oak Borer, Invasive Shot Hole Borers, Mediterranean Oak Borer.

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 those aimed specifically at RCDs and those that are interactive and engaging.

December 3-4, 2025 – California Reforestation Pipeline Partnership Fall Gathering: [Save the date](#) for this event in Roseville, CA. Agenda and registration coming soon.

