CALIFORNIA
WILDFIRE & FOREST RESILIENCE
TASK FORCE

CALIFORNIA'S PRIVATE FOREST LANDOWNER ASSISTANCE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

California faces a forest and wildfire crisis, largely driven by a history of fire suppression, the removal of cultural burning, and climate change. To address this crisis, California needs to take an all-lands approach to wildfire resilience, including federal, state, tribal, and private ownership. Small, non-industrial private forestlands comprise approximately 8 million of California's 32 million forested acres (Butler et al., 2021) and are often the missing link in reaching statewide forestry targets. Non-industrial forest owners face barriers to managing their lands, including limited knowledge, high costs, and complex regulations. Providing financial and technical assistance to private forest landowners can alleviate these barriers and is necessary to increase the pace and scale of forest restoration across California.

This strategy aims to empower California's small private forest landowners to improve the resilience of their lands and contribute to federal, state, and regional forest health and wildfire resilience goals. To do so, this strategy identifies four goals and related key actions:

1. **Empower Small Private Landowners**
    - Sustain and expand technical assistance and financial assistance programs.
    - Increase outreach and education to a diversity of landowners.
2. **Align Funding Programs**
    - Align partner agreements and cooperative funding, including the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity program and Wildfire Resilience Block Grants.
3. **Build Local Capacity**
    - Support regional plans and priorities.
4. **Establish and Expand Emergency Forest Restoration Teams**
    - Explore the development of a restoration fund.
    - Pre-establish regional teams.
    - Coordinate with other fire recovery partners.
    - Conduct rapid assessment of and implementation of post-fire restoration actions.

This strategy is focused on forested lands and does not provide guidance for assisting private landowners in other fire-prone landscapes.

Federal partners involved in generating this report are not making any specific recommendations for state or federal funding allocations.

OVERVIEW OF PRIVATE FORESTLAND OWNERSHIP IN CALIFORNIA



Who are Private Forest Landowners?

While private forest landowners include both industrial and non-industrial landowners, **this strategy focuses on non-industrial private forest lands**. Non-industrial private forestlands include landscapes that have tree cover of at least 10%, where the non-industrial owner has primary decision-making power across the property. **These lands cover approximately 8 million acres across California**. In comparison, industrial private forestlands are owned by individuals or companies that have 5,000 or more acres nationwide and either own a wood-using manufacturing plant or employ a permanent forestry staff and a system of regular timber harvests. Private industrial forest companies own 4.5 million acres in the state. Together, private land accounts for 39% of the 32 million acres of total forest land in California. This strategy encompasses all private forested lands that do not meet the industrial private forestland definition.

There are approximately 75,000 private forest landowners in California who own 10 acres or more (Butler et al., 2021). Together, these **landowners own approximately one-quarter of the state's forested land**. According to the National Woodland Owner Survey, nearly 90% of these private landowners own parcels of 50 acres or less. Many of these landowners are older (83% are 55 years or older, and 32% are 65 or older) and typically value their property for its natural attributes such as beauty, scenery, and wildlife habitat. Relatively few rank producing timber and non-timber forest products as important, and only 17% derive income from their forest land. While these landowners have high levels of concern about wildfire, climate change, insects, and diseases, and keeping the land intact for future generations, only approximately 18% have management plans to implement their goals (Butler and Caputo, 2024). Despite available technical expertise and programs, nearly 90% of landowners are not familiar with cost-share programs, and only about one-quarter of owners are familiar with or participate in property tax or carbon sequestration programs. Only 18% of owners have received forest management advice in the past five years (Butler and Caputo, 2024).

Why Focus on Assistance to Private Forest Landowners?

Private forestlands encompass a significant portion of California and are often the missing link between state and federal forest management goals. Assistance to private landowners is necessary to increase the statewide pace and scale of forest restoration for the following reasons:

- Private landowners can make a significant contribution to the state's ability to reach its landscape treatment goals.
- Small landowners are historically underserved, lacking the resources for active forest management, which has left their lands increasingly vulnerable.
- Private forestlands are often at lower elevation in rural areas with high fire hazard severity and are more susceptible to pest damage during droughts.

- Private forestlands are often in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) adjacent to vast public and private forest land holdings which they can affect or be affected by.
- Private forest landowners need technical, financial, and disaster recovery assistance to develop resilience on their forestland.

What are Wildfire Resilience Treatments?

Improving wildfire resilience in many of California's fire-adapted forests involves reducing tree density and the prevalence of other woody fuels. Removing trees with smaller diameters reduces wildfire hazard and improves forest health. This thinning primarily targets intermediate and suppressed trees, although codominant and dominant trees can be removed to further specific objectives (e.g., fuel breaks or forest health). Thinning that targets the weakest trees, mimics mortality caused by competition or abiotic factors such as wildfires. Wildfire resilience is most effectively achieved when silvicultural prescriptions address all components of forest structure, including woody debris on the forest floor (surface fuels), smaller-sized standing live and dead trees and shrubs (ladder fuels), and the density and continuity of larger, taller trees in the forest overstory (crown fuels). Although much is known about how to manage forests for wildfire resilience, implementing these treatments at the necessary scale across the state – especially on private forest lands – has proven difficult.



Figure 1. Before and after fuels reduction treatments at Camp Butano Creek. Photo Credit: San Mateo Resource Conservation District.

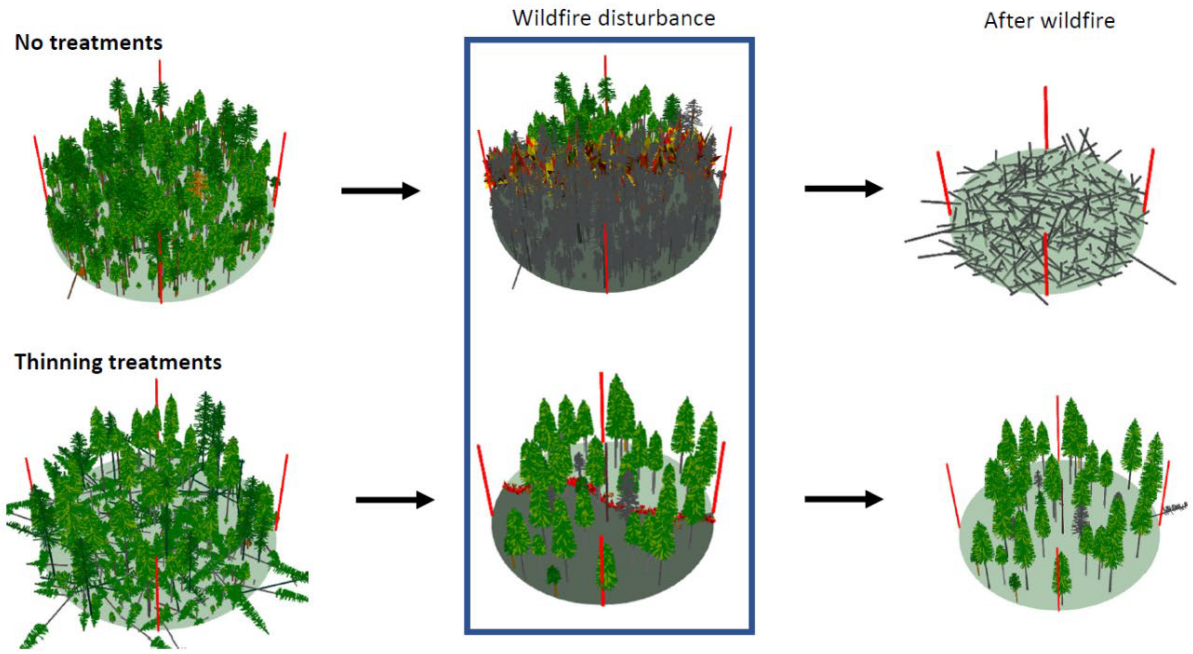


Figure 2. Image created by Kevin Welch, Senior Environmental Scientist, Climate and Energy Program, CAL FIRE

What Barriers Do Private Forest Landowners Face When Implementing Forest Resilience Treatments?

The many challenges faced by private landowners seeking to increase their forest resilience is covered in depth in California's Small Forest Landowners: Goals and Barriers of Landowners Motivated to Manage Their Forests (Ingram et al. 2022) and are summarized here:

Lack of Knowledge: Although some private forest landowners have in-depth knowledge of their forests and have managed their forests for the long-term, many landowners are new to owning forestland or new to realizing the need to manage it. With recent increases in the size and severity of California wildfires, many landowners are now motivated to act but may not know where to begin. While there is a plethora of information available, it can be difficult to find and overwhelming for forest landowners to navigate and access relevant information.

Lack of Engagement: There are limited forums where private forest landowners can engage with each other, experts, and professionals, making it difficult to share knowledge, access resources, and collaborate on forest resilience efforts.

Complex Regulations: Private landowners encounter significant challenges in navigating the intricate web of federal and state regulations, including the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). These regulatory frameworks often prove to be complex and time-consuming. Moreover, compliance can be costly, particularly for owners of smaller parcels who lack the scale to spread fixed costs over a larger area. Despite ongoing efforts to streamline environmental review processes and minimize associated expenses, the costs involved may still outweigh the perceived benefits for many landowners.

Costly Treatments: The costs of many forest resilience treatments such as thinning, fuels reduction, and mastication are increasingly high and often do not generate revenue to offset costs.

Grant Program Eligibility: Private landowners are often left out of existing grant programs. For example, CAL FIRE's Forest Health Grant Program has a minimum acreage of 800 acres, which is greater than most private forest landowners own, and cobbling together multiple ownerships can be difficult. Additionally, individual private landowners cannot apply directly for some assistance programs, such as the CAL FIRE's Fire Prevention program. Landowners must work with local organizations, which are eligible to receive funding assistance for their property. This grant ineligibility, paired with limited markets for wood products, reduces a landowner's ability to offset treatment costs.

Assistance Programs Limitations: Funding for state and federal landowner assistance programs has been highly variable, and demand consistently exceeds availability funding.

Limited Post-Fire Assistance: Though large-scale catastrophic wildfires have regularly occurred over the last decade, there are no widely established, organized regional teams to respond to destructive wildfires that threaten the loss of lives, property, and forest land on private ownership. There are few programs that can assist private landowners after wildfire. Many landowners rely on local organizations, such as Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs), for technical support post-fire. These local entities, however, have limited capacity, as they rely on three- to five-year grants for their entire funding.

Workforce Shortages: A significant challenge in planning forest management projects and participating in grant programs is finding Registered Professional Foresters (RPFs) to develop treatment prescriptions, write forest management plans, and guide implementation. In some parts of the state, there are few RPFs and contractors to implement the work, and those who are available are often already fully engaged, leaving limited additional capacity.

Efforts by government agencies that run forestry assistance programs are primarily limited by the number of staff supporting these programs. For example, as of 2024, there were seven CAL FIRE Forestry Assistant Specialists (FASs) in the state, with only one covering the entire southern half of the state. This shortage of FASs in the south is a significant limitation to landowners in the region.

How are Private Forest Landowners Currently Assisted?

Technical and financial assistance are key tools to help alleviate the barriers private forest landowners face in managing for wildfire resilience. Technical assistance supports the feasibility of wildfire resilience objectives while ensuring that other environmental considerations are protected and enhanced. Technical assistance helps bridge the gap between uncertainty and action for landowners. Financial assistance is defined as the use of public or private funds to support private forest landowners in implementing their forestry objectives through vegetation management. Financial assistance programs often require a monetary or in-kind match or cost-share.

To help address these challenges, the California Wildfire & Forest Resilience Task Force (Task Force) created the Private Landowner Assistance (PLO) Working Group in 2021. Due to overlap in purpose between the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD) Joint Forestry Committee and the PLO Working Group, the two efforts combined to create the Private Forestlands Committee (PFC) in 2025. The Private Forestlands Committee serves as an advisory body to the Task Force, CARCD and California's Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs), CAL FIRE, and the USDA

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to address statewide forestry issues and opportunities, with an emphasis on issues relating to non-industrial private forest lands.



Inland Empire Resource Conservation District (IERCD) staff conducting forest inventories in the San Bernardino Mountains. Photo credit: Alex Chacon, IERCD.

The most prominent and widely used financial and technical assistance programs available for individual landowners are administered by CAL FIRE and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

CAL FIRE's California Forest Improvement Program (CFIP): CFIP, established in the 1980s, offers technical assistance and cost-share funding to private landowners with parcels ranging in size from 20 to 5,000 acres. The cost-shared activities covered by CFIP include preparation of a Forest Management Plan by an RPF, thinning, pruning, follow-up treatments (mechanical, herbicide, and/or slash disposal follow-up), site preparation, reforestation, and fish and wildlife habitat improvement.

CAL FIRE's CFIP provides outreach and information for technical and financial assistance through press releases, workshops, social media, and interest groups such as Forest Landowners of California and the California Licensed Foresters Association.

Engaging with the CFIP program is an entry point that connects landowners with a CAL FIRE Forestry Assistant (FAS) who provides technical assistance and guides the landowner through the application for financial assistance.

CAL FIRE's Wildfire Resilience (WFR) Block Grants: CAL FIRE offers WFR Block Grants as funding becomes available. These grants are awarded in larger amounts to regional entities that develop and manage programs of technical and financial assistance for private forestland owners. This programmatic approach aligns regional priorities with work on private lands while providing a tailored suite of projects specific to local conditions. WFR Block Grants also give grantees the opportunity to refine their project scope as they expend funding, supporting both organizational capacity and on-the-ground project completion within a single grant. CAL FIRE has offered these grants for several years, with notable success in reforestation and fuels reduction. These grants are efficient, provide cost-share payments quickly, and enable organizations and consulting foresters to implement coordinated approaches that align local fire plans and other planning efforts with work on adjacent private parcels.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS): The California office of NRCS provides voluntary programs for private non-industrial forest landowners, ranchers, and agricultural producers to implement conservation treatments. Local field office employees are the primary interface with private forest landowners seeking NRCS services. These employees respond to landowner requests for information, review property conditions, prepare forest conservation plans, and coordinate financial assistance agreements.

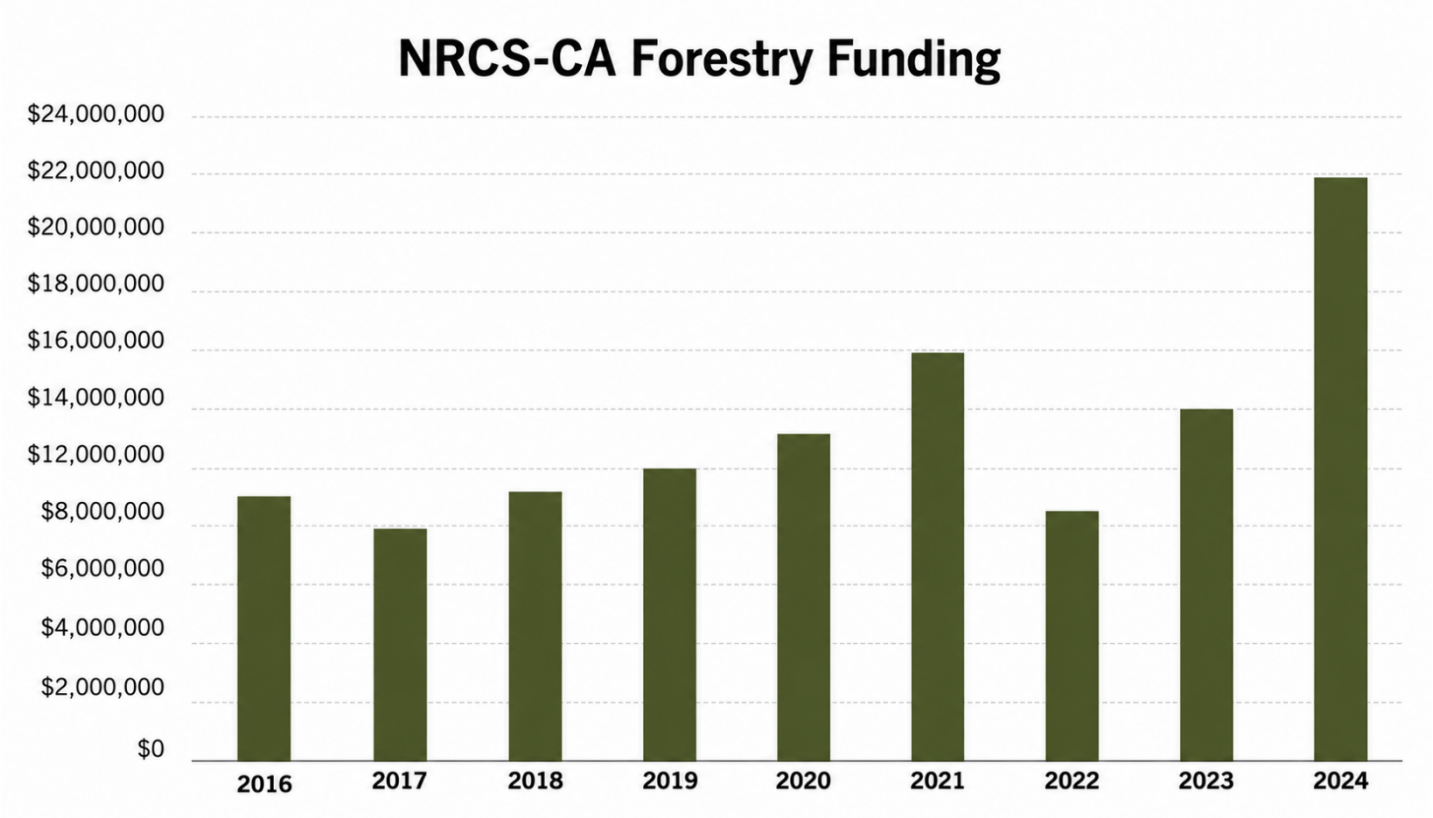


Figure 3. Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) Programs Funding. Funding since 2023 has been highly variable and hit a record high in FY 2024 due to Inflation Reduction Act funding.

Applicable NRCS programs include:

- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**: EQIP provides technical assistance and financial assistance to private forestland owners and managers to address natural resource concerns, including increased forest health and productivity, reduced fuel loading, improved wildlife habitat, and improved water quality.
  EQIP provides cost-share funding for forest management practices such as forest management planning, thinning, mastication, slash disposal, site preparation, reforestation, forest road improvements, prescribed burning, and agroforestry activities (see Figure 3). NRCS works one-on-one with landowners and managers to develop a conservation plan that outlines conservation activities to address the client's goals and objectives and address resource issues. Clients then implement the activities and receive cost-share reimbursement for conservation work performed.
- **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)**: CSP provides a unique opportunity for private forest landowners who have completed initial forest improvement work to build on their existing conservation efforts. NRCS works with landowners and managers to provide technical and financial assistance to address additional natural resource concerns or attain higher stewardship levels. Clients receive an annual payment to maintain the existing level of

conservation on their forestland and implement additional activities to enhance forest health, wildfire resilience, or wildlife habitat.

- **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP):** RCPP is a partner-driven program that addresses specific conservation goals on a regional or more localized geographic area. Partners apply and compete to receive an RCPP contract. RCPP applications must propose effective and compelling solutions that address a more focused suite of natural resource priorities. Partners provide value-added contributions to leverage NRCS' RCPP investments. Technical assistance is provided by the partner, and funding is contracted with landowners and managers similarly to EQIP.

Farm Services Agency (FSA): FSA administers the Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) for approved disasters. EFRP provides payments to eligible non-industrial private forestland owners to carry out emergency measures to restore forestland damaged by a natural disaster. As of 2026, RCDs typically provide the technical assistance for this program in California.

USFS Cooperative Forestry: Cooperative Forestry provides financial and technical assistance to landowners, communities, and businesses to actively manage and sustain long-term investment in non-federal forest land.

Contracted forestry assistance organizations and other partners: Partners play a large role in outreach, education, and technical assistance. Funding for these partners may come through CAL FIRE, NRCS, USFS, or other contracts or grants:

- **Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs):** RCDs are non-regulatory government entities that are local leaders and experts in conservation and forest restoration on private lands. However, RCDs typically lack baseline funding and rely on partners like CAL FIRE, NRCS, and USFS for funding. For example, NRCS-CA has multiple technical assistance agreements with the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD) and local RCDs. These agreements provide technical assistance services to EQIP clients including site evaluation, preparation of forest management plans, detailed silvicultural prescriptions, and certification of completed forest management projects. Some RCDs have their own localized landowner assistance programs.
- **University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE):** Seven county-based UCCE extension foresters do extensive outreach in their geographic areas while two campus-based extension foresters work throughout California.
- **American Forest Foundation (AFF):** AFF's California Wildfire program, funded by NRCS, CAL FIRE, and USFS, implements the My Sierra Woods program for forest landowners in northern California, southeast Calaveras County, and Tuolumne County. When technical assistance is requested after the initial outreach, AFF works with local professional foresters and operators to offer technical and financial assistance to private landowners to help offset the costs of fuels reduction projects.
- **Registered Professional Foresters (RPFs)**: RPFs provide technical assistance directly to landowners through private consulting contracts. Forestland ownership can span many years, and landowners are encouraged to develop a relationship with a local consulting forester who can help them develop a longer-term plan for their forest resources.

More information on forestry assistance programs for private forest landowners is found in *Appendix B: Assistance Programs for Private Forest Landowners*.

What are the Limitations of Current Assistance Programs?

Landowner contributions: Programs, like CAL FIRE's CFIP and NRCS's EQIP, require or expect landowners to pay a share of treatment costs. For example, NRCS's EQIP pays a flat incentive rate that doesn't cover the entire cost of treatment work. For larger, more expensive projects, costs can be prohibitive for many landowners.

Highly variable funding by year: Although assistance programs like CFIP and EQIP have helped many forest landowners, neither has the capacity or funding stability to reach landowners at the scale needed to reduce wildfire hazards across California's private forest lands. Funding for state and federal landowner assistance programs has been highly variable, leading to gaps in service for eligible landowners. The level of funding for CFIP has varied over the years, with recent increases due to a greater emphasis on forest resilience and wildfire hazards (Figure 4).

Program eligibility requirements: These programs also have eligibility requirements that exclude many landowners. CFIP, for example, limits enrollment to properties greater than 20 acres and requires the use of an RPF to apply.

CAL FIRE's Forest Health Grant Program supports wildfire resilience on private forestland, but eligibility requirements, such as an 800-acre minimum project size and pre-defined boundaries, limit access for most private landowners.

Demand consistently exceeds available funding: Due to growing post-fire needs and wildfire hazard, demand for EQIP and CFIP assistance has increased, while funding amounts have remained relatively stable (EQIP, Figure 3) or variable (CFIP, Figure 4). Landowner applications for these cost-share programs currently exceed available funding.

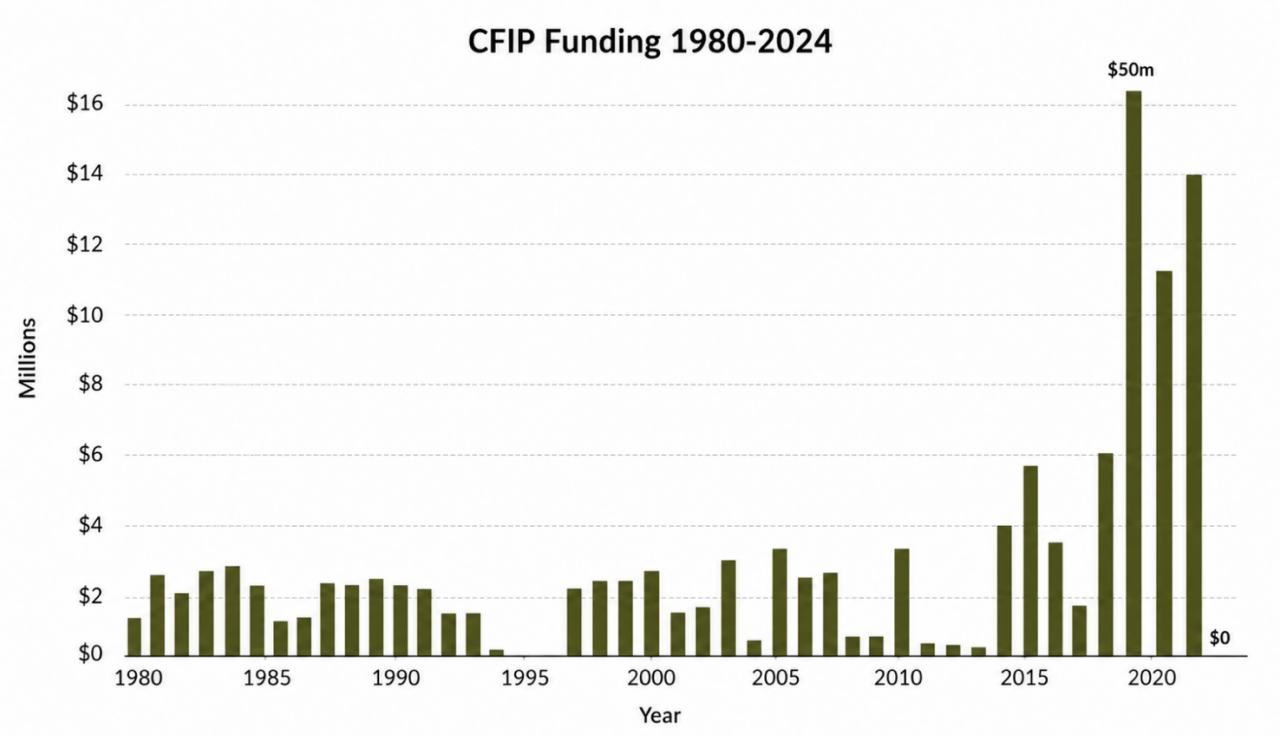


Figure 4. CAL FIRE California Forest Improvement Program (CFIP) funding.

Little support for rapid assistance after wildfires and post-fire rehabilitation: Wildfires can create serious hazards, including dead trees, landslides, damage to infrastructure, soil erosion, and flooding. Post-fire mitigation and rehabilitation of forestlands involve a complex and time-sensitive sequence of activities (site assessment, dead tree removal, site preparation, planting, and vegetation management) that few private forest landowners can plan and implement without assistance. The timing of these activities affects the success, cost, and feasibility of rehabilitation. Additionally, the benefits of restoring post-wildfire extend beyond the boundaries of a single property. Cost-share program application, contracting, and environmental evaluation processes may take up to a year or more from the time a landowner makes initial contact until the project is cleared for implementation.

GOALS AND KEY ACTIONS

The Vision

This strategy is designed to support California's small private forest landowners in strengthening the resilience of their lands while advancing federal, state, and regional forest health and wildfire resilience goals. The goal is to enable these landowners to treat more than 40,000 acres annually. This goal is contingent on available funding and will be supported by programs including, but not limited to, forest health and wildfire resilience grants, as well as technical and financial assistance (see Appendix C for additional detail on achieving this target).

Goal 1: Empower Small Private Landowners

State and federal agencies will continue to empower private forest landowners through technical and financial assistance programs and a variety of outreach and education programs.

Forest management is expensive and complex for those without experience. Adequate technical and financial assistance makes forest management more feasible. Education and outreach provide private landowners with valuable information on the need for forest management, the types of treatments available to meet their goals, relevant regulations, available assistance programs and their requirements, and the partnerships and professionals available to help them succeed.

Traditionally, landowner outreach and education have occurred through in-person workshops, online webinars, field trips, and one-on-one interactions. However, alternative methods, including written resources, videos, podcasts, social media, and direct marketing campaigns, should be implemented and made available in multiple languages, as appropriate.

Communities with poorer socioeconomic conditions are far more vulnerable to wildfires than more affluent communities with similar wildfire potential (Davies et al. 2018). Unfortunately, many underserved or disadvantaged landowners own small parcels and are ineligible or may be less competitive for existing assistance programs. Cost-share requirements in multiple state and federal programs can further limit participation to only those who have the means to pay their share. Reducing or eliminating cost-share requirements for disadvantaged communities will further empower these landowners to participate.

Key Actions

1.1 Sustain and Expand Technical Assistance and Financial Assistance Programs

- CAL FIRE will, as funding allows, ensure CFIP provides technical and financial assistance and outreach visits, with the goal of reaching **4,000 technical assistance and outreach visits, funding 110 landowners, and treating of 5,500 acres per year.** (See Appendix C. Assumptions Leading to Technical Assistance, Outreach, and Forestland Treatment Targets) (Ongoing)
- USFS will continue to use annual allocated funding to **expand outreach and technical assistance** and will use disaster recovery funds to provide grants that expand technical assistance to landowners impacted by specific disasters.

1.2 Increase Outreach and Education to a Diversity of Landowners Across California

- CAL FIRE and USFS will continue to **support, as funding allows, regular forest stewardship workshops for landowners** through sustained funding to the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources' (UC ANR) Forest Stewardship Education Initiative. With sustained and regular funding, UC ANR will continue to offer **regular comprehensive forest stewardship workshops** that help landowners learn about forest stewardship, connect with professionals and cost-share programs, and develop hands-on field skills through educational workshops and field days. Additionally, **UC ANR will continue to host post-fire forest resilience workshops**. Currently funded by USFS, these workshops cover treatments such as erosion control, hazard tree removal, and salvage logging, site preparation, replanting, long-term control of vegetation competing with replanted trees, and invasive species control. (Ongoing)
- CAL FIRE will continue to update and disseminate, as funding allows, its Forest Management Handbook for Small-Parcel Landowners in the Sierra Nevada and Southern Cascade Range (Stine et al., 2021). Published in partnership with the USDA Climate Hub, the Handbook provides succinct and thorough information to help small parcel (10-100 acre), non-industrial private landowners develop a forest management strategy for their property. Additionally, CAL FIRE will support the publication of additional educational resources, including a guide for Planning and Permitting Forest Fuel-Reduction Projects on Private Lands in California (Valachovic et al., 2022), which provides essential guidance on selecting the appropriate permit to facilitate fuel-reduction projects on private lands. (Ongoing)
- CAL FIRE will continue to support, as funding allows, **widespread outreach,** disseminating aggregated information on funding opportunities for non-industrial private forest landowners. From 2023-2025 CAL FIRE funded CARCD to host biannual webinars on programs.



- CARCD will continue to update and maintain, as funding allows, the Programs for CA Private Forestland Owners Dashboard, an interactive map that displays available programs by county. Organizations offering programs for NIPF can fill out this survey to populate the dashboard. (Ongoing)
- The Private Forestlands Committee (PFC) in coordination with the Task Force Communications Work Group will explore avenues to finish an **outreach plan focused on underserved landowners**, including tribal landowners. In 2024, CARCD in collaboration with UCCE and American Forests, began this plan.
- CAL FIRE will develop, as funding allows, a **comprehensive landowner database** to better target services to the estimated 75,000 California family forest landowners to improve outreach to non-participating landowners. The database should include parcel locations by size, vegetation type, prior management, wildfire hazard, and opportunities for assistance. Demographic data on California landowners are available from previous surveys, CAL FIRE's Fire and Resource Assessment Program reports, and county tax assessors. (End of 2030)

Goal 2: Align Funding Programs to Support Partner Agreements

State and federal agencies will better coordinate funding for partners to support priority projects to maximize the scale of forest management and assistance for non-industrial private landowners.

Partners, including local and statewide organizations, often operate without guaranteed baseline funding and rely on funding agencies and private funding to build and sustain capacity. Local partners are nimble and can walk landowners through the full private forestland resilience pipeline, from outreach and education to monitoring and maintenance of projects. Partners can also attract and retain employees and contractors; create larger, locally clustered priority projects at the "fireshed" scale on priority landscapes; and rapidly respond to post-fire restoration needs. Partnerships can yield economic efficiencies by capitalizing on economies of scale. By bundling projects together, partners increase treatment scale and spread their fixed costs (e.g., permitting) across larger areas. Large projects also generate greater quantities of wood products that are a



reliable, stable, longer-term source of wood for manufacturing plants. All of this results in a lower cost per acre for vegetation treatment and enables partners to increase the pace and scale of forest treatment implementation.

Examples of Successful Partner Agreements

- **CAL FIRE's Wildfire Resilience (WFR) Block Grants:**

  Unlike other grant programs, CAL FIRE's Wildfire Resilience (WFR) Block Grants are well suited to serving smaller private ownerships and do not require all project areas to be pre-identified in the application. WFR Block Grants provide flexibility to grantees to identify landowners and parcels for treatments throughout a project's duration. The grants support the capacity of partner entities and allow for coordinating and implementing work on smaller land ownerships. CAL FIRE fiscal year 2022 Early Action budget allocations enabled the award of nearly $28 million in grants.

- **NRCS-CA Forestry Technical Assistance Partner Agreements:**

  NRCS-CA has forestry technical assistance agreements with partners over the past several years. This includes a 2023 three-year agreement with the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD) to provide NRCS-CA forestry outreach and technical assistance services in 15 NRCS Field Offices throughout the state.

- **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP):**

  NRCS has offered partner organizations the opportunity to apply for program funding under the national Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). In addition to a specific financial assistance funding pool, RCPP projects include technical assistance funding for the awarded partner organization to provide the necessary assistance to landowners and

managers to apply for financial assistance. The RCPP project may also include funding to support the partner in outreach and education. RCPP projects require the partner organization to contribute at least a 1:1 match in cash or in-kind services to support the project goals and objectives and leverage NRCS' RCPP investments. RCPP facilitates bringing various funding sources together to fund large priority landscapes and demonstrates the power of public-private partnerships in delivering results for conservation.

- **USFS State, Private, and Tribal Forestry:**

  The USFS State, Private, and Tribal Forestry reaches across the boundaries of the national forests to states, tribes, communities, and private landowners to provide technical and financial assistance to these entities to help sustain the nation's forests and grasslands, protect communities from wildland fire, and restore fire-adapted ecosystems.

- **California Native American tribes:**

  Many California Native American tribes have been removed from their traditional territory, and accessing their land to carry out traditional practices remains a barrier. Partnering with NIPF can help alleviate this challenge and create mutually beneficial relationships. Tribes can gain access to ancestral lands and resources that are on private lands and also help landowners to incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge in the managing their forestlands.

Key Actions

2.1 Align Partner Agreements and Cooperative Funding, including the RFFC Program and Wildfire Resilience Block Grants



- The Private Forestlands Committee (PFC)will continue to meet regularly to discuss priority forest resilience and restoration projects to ensure cooperative planning occurs between agency funders and key partners, including CAL FIRE, NRCS-CA, USFS, RCDs, CARCD, and private forest landowners. The PFC will aim to better **align all landowner assistance funding programs,** including CFIP, EQIP, USFS cooperative agreements, NRCS RCPP and TA agreements, the Department of Conservation's Regional Forestry and Fire Capacity Program, CAL FIRE's WFR Block Grants, and other CAL FIRE grant programs. The PFC will explore how partner organizations, including philanthropic donors, private forest industries, investment ventures, and utility companies, can contribute to long-term forest resilience. The PFC will also explore ways to align funding between organizations to reduce the burden of cost-share programs on landowners. (Ongoing)
- CAL FIRE will, as funding allows, continue to offer **Wildfire Resilience Block Grants**, or other grants to support private forest landowners. CAL FIRE will support the needs of these landowners by prioritizing grant offerings that don't have high minimum acreage requirements, and that don't require all the land to be pre-identified. (Ongoing)

Goal 3: Build Local Capacity

State and federal agencies will work together to develop and support regional partners, plans, and priorities.

Building local and regional capacity is essential to address the needs of non-industrial private forest landowners. In its 2002 white paper, *Achieving Pace Through SCALE: A Blueprint for Implementing Landscape Restoration and Community Resiliency* the Sierra Institute suggests that supporting local partnerships is the best available implementation strategy for state and federal agencies to reduce catastrophic wildfires and restore both ecological and economic resilience.

To meet regional priorities, agencies must support the long-term capacity of local and regional partners. Partners operating under three- to five-year grants often struggle to retain staff due to unstable funding. Extended partner agreement durations can help local and regional partners attract and retain talented professionals, provide organizational stability, and build trust in the community through consistent local presence. Longer-term grants provide economic stability in the business community by giving greater assurance to lenders and forest management companies that stable work and income will be available to support private investment.

Empowering partners is the basis of the California Department of Conservation's Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFC), which funds regional entities to build local capacity to plan and implement private forestland improvement projects. RFFC grantees and other collaboratives are positioned to deliver a suite of assistance to private landowners in a regionally appropriate and efficient manner. Regional investment strategies will better enable state and federal funding to be allocated to a regional partner that can deliver technical and financial assistance to smaller landowners in a region or community.

Key Actions

3.1 Support Regional Plans and Priorities

CAL FIRE, NRCS-CA, USFS, and other partners will work together to assist the Department of Conservation's RFFC Program in supporting the long-term capacity of regional partners, along with other key partners, and private non-industrial private forest landowners. (Ongoing)

Goal 4: Establish Emergency Forest Restoration Teams

State and federal agencies, in partnership with private, local government, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), will develop Emergency Forest Restoration Teams to assist private landowners impacted by wildfire by providing funding and expertise to restore their properties and prevent further damage to life, property, and natural resources.

Without rapid action immediately after a large wildfire, the effort and costs involved in rehabilitating forested landscapes rise dramatically, and without financial and technical assistance, private landowners are less likely to reforest their property (Waks and Kocher 2019).

There is a critical gap in addressing the recovery of private forestlands. Without Emergency Forest Restoration Teams (EFRTs), landowners are burdened with undertaking complicated and expensive restoration efforts on their own. Restoring these lands has public benefits, including carbon, water, aesthetic, and wildlife benefits. Other post-fire restoration groups include:

- **Post-fire erosion hazard assessment and removal teams:** CAL OES, CalRecycle, USFS Burn Area Emergency Response teams, NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection teams, State and Regional Water Board staff, and various branches of county government are involved in assessing post-fire hazards, removing hazardous material, and installing erosion control measures.
- **USFS National Forest staff and Rapid Assessment Teams:** These teams assess roadside public safety hazards, burned vegetation conditions, salvage options, and help prioritize post-fire restoration projects on national forest lands.
- **Utility companies:** Utility companies develop and deploy power line restoration teams.
- **California Department of Transportation (Caltrans):** Caltrans develops and implements state highway hazard tree removal projects using staff and contractors.
- **Contractors:** Private Registered Professional Foresters, associated logging contractors, and wood utilization staff are involved in removing and disposing of burned trees.



THE ROLE OF EMERGENCY FOREST RESTORATION TEAMS

An Emergency Forest Restoration Teams (EFRT) is an organized group of stakeholders with a lead entity deployed to rapidly assess and implement post-wildfire restoration on non-industrial private forestland, and associated lands. This work includes:

Fire hazard: Removing excess woody debris that is a future fire hazard – especially in areas that pose a long-term fire threat to community or other natural resources.

Hazard trees: Removing weakened trees that pose a risk to structures or communities.

Road infrastructure: Repairing private road infrastructure including damaged or at-risk culverts. Clearing private roads for emergency evacuation routes.

Woody debris: Developing opportunities for commercial salvaging and utilization of woody debris to offset other restoration action costs where feasible. Restoration: Reforesting, enhancing wildlife habitat, controlling invasive species, and implementing long-term fire suppression measures like fuel breaks.

Reforestation: Rehabilitating and reforesting with ecologically appropriate species.

Several programs are available to aid in the recovery of forests on private land, including CAL FIRE's CFIP, NRCS's EQIP and Emergency Watershed Protection Program, and the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Emergency Forest Restoration Program. However, none of these programs are designed for rapid assistance, as the process of developing client agreements takes too long, and the programs require navigation of complex post-fire restoration actions and often involve high costs.

Pilot Emergency Forest Restoration Teams (EFRTs):

After the catastrophic fires of 2021, CAL FIRE, NRCS-CA, RCDs, USFS, and UC Cooperative Extension worked to mobilize three pilot EFRTs with the goal of developing a comprehensive approach to rapid post-fire recovery efforts that transcends jurisdictional boundaries. The interagency teams coordinated to assess post-fire conditions; engage interested landowners; determine seedling requirements; evaluate wood debris loads; and prepare contracts to remove dead trees, control weeds, and reforest.

The pilot EFRTs included:

- **Caldor Fire:** El Dorado Resource Conservation District (EDCRCD) is the lead partner on the EFRT for the 2021 Caldor Fire in El Dorado County with over $30 million, mostly from CAL FIRE and USFS. Additional funding is currently being sought to continue supporting this EFRT.
- **Dixie Fire:** Feather River Resource Conservation District is the lead partner on the EFRT for the 2021 Dixie Fire in Plumas County. The EFRT is funded with over $20 million from CAL FIRE and USFS.
- **Tamarack Fire:** The 2021 Tamarack Fire spurred another pilot led by Alpine County with $4.5 million in funding. This pilot integrates FSA's Emergency Forest Restoration Program.
- **Additional EFRTs:** In 2022, the USFS collaborated with local RCDs, CARCD, to develop and execute agreements that support and expand additional Emergency Forest Restoration Teams in areas affected by wildfires between 2019 and 2021. In 2023, the Mosquito EFRT, led by Placer RCD was also established. See more about all RCD EFRT's at this story map.

Environmental Compliance: Post-fire recovery costs and risks quickly grow after wildfire. For example, immediately after a wildfire brush is minimal, trees have merchantable value, and erosion issues are preventable; however, these conditions worsen over time. Thus, rapid assistance post-fire is critical.

However, complex environmental compliance processes can delay post-fire recovery. Other emergency response teams have special regulatory pathways to ensure a rapid response while still protecting key resources. CalRecycle uses an accelerated pathway for environmental compliance when remediating toxic substances. The California Natural Resources Agency and CalEPA have suspended environmental compliance for applicable programs when reducing dead tree hazards along public roads.

Reforestation: In high-severity wildfire footprints, reforestation is often necessary to prevent conversion to non-forested vegetation types. Maintaining forest cover is critical for wildlife, carbon sequestration, recreation, and economic resources. In alignment with California's Reforestation Strategy, the Private Forestlands Committee incorporate climate-informed reforestation into EFRTs.

Key Actions

4.1 Explore Legislative Action Needed for Successful EFRTs

- The Private Forestlands Committee (PFC) **will seek to establish a restoration fund (R-fund)** that is dedicated to funding permanent, dynamic, and responsive EFRTs (End of 2028). A R-fund would allow for readily available funding immediately after wildfires.

  Competitive grants involve uncertainty and long delays before funding is accessible. Therefore, significant, permanent, and long-term funding is needed to implement post-fire restoration on non-industrial private forestlands. The concept of a Restoration Fund is modeled after California's Emergency Fund used for wildfire suppression actions. Establishing an R-fund requires examining regulatory options, extending funding durations, and defining funding criteria. The R-fund will provide long-term sustained capacity funding so that EFRTs can perform monitoring and follow-up treatments. Between fires, EFRTs can also focus on preparing and conducting fire resilience treatments.

- The Task Force, in coordination with CNRA, CalEPA, and the Board of Forestry **will explore options for establishing a durable framework for streamlining and environmental review approval for post-fire restoration for EFRTs**.

4.2 Pre-establish Regional Teams

- PFC will seek to **develop and implement an interagency process for selecting EFRT lead partner(s) and suitable locations** to ensure that EFRTs are located across the state and are ready as needed. (End of 2029)

4.3 Coordinate With Other Fire Recovery Partners

- EFRTs will **coordinate and align with other state, tribal, and federal post-wildfire recovery programs.** Partners, including state and federal agencies, will likewise coordinate the deployment of their post-fire teams with local EFRTs and share resources to the extent feasible. Partners will also educate other post-fire teams, including those of utility companies, to be aware of EFRTs and inform them about the benefits and importance of cooperating with EFRTs. (Ongoing)

4.4 Conduct Rapid Assessment of and Implementation of Post-Fire Restoration Actions

- EFRTs will **address multiple phases of restoration work**. This includes landowner outreach and education, forest restoration planning, technical assistance, coordination with resource and regulatory agencies on environmental review and permitting, forest restoration

implementation, and monitoring and maintenance activities. While the focus of EFRTs is non-industrial private forest lands, EFRTs may also work on associated lands, including land of high economic importance for the local community or adjacent land that poses a threat to private land, where such coordination improves overall project effectiveness. (Ongoing)

- EFRTs will **pre-prepare contractor lists and identify disposal sites ahead of wildfire**. The contractor lists will include pre-qualified forestry contractors and operators who will be on call to bid on and provide EFRT services when needed. By pre-establishing wood disposal or utilization sites for excess woody debris, operations can be more efficiently executed post-fire. (Ongoing)

For more on EFRTs see Appendix E.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Table of Goal and Actions

Lead	Action	Timeline
GOAL 1: EMPOWER SMALL PRIVATE LANDOWNERS		
1.1 Sustain and Expand Technical Assistance & Financial Assistance Programs.		
The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)	The Forest Stewardship Program will provide technical and financial assistance and outreach visits through the California Forest Improvement Program with the goal of reaching 4,000 technical assistance and outreach visits, funding of 110 landowners, and treatment of 5,500 acres per year.	Ongoing
Natural Resources Conservation Services, California (NRCS-CA)	Continue providing the opportunity for additional enrollment of Technical Service Providers (TSPs) and continue agreements with partners to provide technical assistance to NRCS-CA Field Offices and forest landowners, as funding allows.	Ongoing
NRCS-CA	Continue assisting non-industrial private forest landowners with forest resilience work under its Environmental Quality Incentive Program and Conservation Stewardship Program.	Ongoing
USDA Forest Service (USFS)	Continue to use annual allocated funding to expand outreach and technical assistance.	Ongoing
1.2 Increase Outreach and Education to a Diversity of Landowners Across California		
CAL FIRE and USFS	Continue regular forest stewardship workshops for landowners through sustained funding to University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources' (UC ANR) Forest Stewardship Education Initiative, as funding allows.	Ongoing
CAL FIRE	Continue to update and disseminate their Forest Management Handbook for Small-parcel Landowners in the Sierra Nevada and southern Cascade Range, and continue to support published educational resources for private forest landowners.	Ongoing
CAL FIRE	Sustain, as possible, funding for widespread outreach to disperse aggregated information on funding opportunities for non-industrial private forest landowners.	Ongoing

CARCD	Maintain, as possible, the Programs for CA Private Forestland Owners Dashboard. Organizations offering programs for NIPF can fill out this survey to populate the dashboard.	Ongoing
Private Forestlands Committee (PFC)	Explore means to finish an outreach plan focused on underserved landowners, including tribal landowners.	Ongoing
NRCS-CA	NRCS-CA's website and social media include public information on forestry assistance opportunities. Continue updating it with announcements on programs, funding opportunities, and application deadlines.	Ongoing
CAL FIRE	Develop a comprehensive landowner database to better target outreach services that includes locations of parcels by size, vegetation type, wildfire hazard, and opportunities for assistance, as feasible.	End of 2030
GOAL 2: ALIGN FUNDING PROGRAMS		
2.1 Align Partner Agreements, and Cooperative Funding, including the RFFC Program and Wildfire Resilience Block Grants		
PFC	Continue to convene regularly to discuss priorities and spending patterns. Explore creative ways to leverage funds to reduce burden posed by cost share programs.	Ongoing
CAL FIRE	Continue to solicit and grant funds through the Wildfire Resilience Block Grant program to regional partners who will deliver assistance to private landowners in regionally appropriate ways, as feasible.	Ongoing
GOAL 3: BUILD LOCAL CAPACITY		
3.1 Support Regional Plans and Priorities		
CAL FIRE, USFS, and other relevant partners	Support the RFFC program and other regional partners. Specifically, find methods to support the long-term capacity of regional partners (e.g., longer grant durations, committed funding, etc.)	Ongoing
GOAL 4: ESTABLISH AND EXPAND EMERGENCY FOREST RESTORATION TEAMS (EFRTS)		

4.1 Explore Legislative action needed to establish a restoration fund		
PFC	Explore legislative action needed to establish a restoration fund that is dedicated to funding permanent, dynamic, and responsive EFRTs.	End of 2028
Task Force in conjunction with CNRA and CalEPA	Explore an accelerated pathway for environmental compliance for EFRTs.	End of 2028
4.2 Pre-establish regional teams		
PFC	Develop and implement, as feasible, an interagency process of selecting EFRT lead partners and suitable locations.	End of 2029
4.3 Coordinate with other fire recovery partners.		
Emergency Forest Restoration Teams (EFRTs) with support from CAL FIRE, USFS, NRCS-CA, and partners	Coordinate and align EFRTs and other state and federal programs, along with tribes, that assist with recovery post wildfire.	Ongoing
4.4 Conduct rapid assessment of and implementation of post fire restoration actions.		
EFRTs	Address all relevant aspects of restoration work.	Ongoing
EFRTs	Pre-prepare contractor lists and locate disposal sites ahead of wildfire.	Ongoing

Appendix B. Assistance Programs for Private Forest Landowners

CAL FIRE California Forest Improvement Program (CFIP): CFIP (https://www.fire.ca.gov/what-we-do/grants/california-forest-improvement) is a long-standing state cost-share effort developed "to encourage private and public investment in, and improved management of, California forest lands and resources." Cost-share assistance of up to 75% of project costs is often available for private and public lands damaged by fire, insects, and disease, and for development of Cooperative Forest Management Plans. The program is generally for owners of less than 500 acres of forest land. Consultation with and project supervision by a Registered Professional Forester is required with some of the costs covered by the program. Funded practices include thinning, pruning, follow up treatments, site preparation, reforestation, and fish and wildlife habitat improvement.

CAL FIRE Wildfire Resilience Block Grants: CAL FIRE created Wildfire Resilience Block Grants (https://www.fire.ca.gov/what-we-do/natural-resource-management/wildfire-resilience) to build local capacity while providing financial and technical forestry assistance to nonindustrial forest landowners. The power of this program comes from the regional partner's ability to set parameters for assistance that directly meet the unique needs of the landowners in their local region. As part of these grants, CAL FIRE also created and funded Emergency Forest Restoration Teams (EFRTs) to quickly restore forestlands burned by wildfires, often funding them while the fire is still ongoing.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP): EQIP (https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/eqip-environmental-quality-incentives/california/environmental-quality) is NRCS's flagship conservation program and NRCS-CA's most widely used program. EQIP provides technical assistance at no cost and eligible landowners can apply to receive financial assistance to address natural resource concerns including increased forest health and productivity, reduced fuel loading, improved wildlife habitat, and improved water quality. EQIP's financial assistance can cover part of the cost of silvicultural practices such as forest management planning, thinning, mastication, slash disposal, site preparation, reforestation, forest road improvements, prescribed burning, and agroforestry practices. NRCS works one-on-one with landowners and managers to develop a conservation plan that outlines conservation activities to address the client's goals and objectives and solve resource issues. Clients then implement the activities and receive incentive payment reimbursement for conservation work performed. The incentive payment reimbursement provided is a flat-rate per unit of work performed (e.g., acre thinned) and is intended to cover a portion of the actual costs.

NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP): CSP (https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/conservation-stewardship-program) offers an opportunity for non-industrial private forest landowners to maintain and enhance their forest management operations while adopting conservation activities that can improve forest health, water quality, and wildlife habitat conditions. NRCS works with landowners and managers to provide technical and financial assistance to address additional natural resource concerns or attain higher stewardship levels. Clients receive an annual payment to maintain the existing level of conservation on their forestland and implement additional conservation activities.

Farm Service Agency Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP): EFRP (https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/disaster-assistance-program/emergency-forest-restoration/index) helps the owners of private land restore forests damaged by natural disasters. The program does so by authorizing cost-share payments (reimbursable funds) to owners for up to 75 percent of the cost to implement an approved forestry practice.

USFS State, Private, and Tribal Forestry (SPTF): SPTF (https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/state-private-tribal-forestry) partners with CAL FIRE and other private and government entities to promote the health and productivity of California's forestlands and achieve integrated landscape scale management. Annual allocations for cooperative programs including state and volunteer fire assistance and urban and community forestry. Assistance for private landowners includes:

- Forest Health Protection - forest health staff for technical assistance to private landowners (https://www.fs.usda.gov/science-technology/forest-health-protection).
- Forest Stewardship – With CAL FIRE, they provide funding for outreach, education and technical assistance to private non-industrial forest landowners. https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/forest-stewardship/program. Forest Legacy and Community Forests –These funds, administered by CAL FIRE, allow for purchase of conservation easements and purchases of fee title private forest land to maintain it in a working forest condition (https://www.fire.ca.gov/grants/forest-legacy/).
- Landscape Scale Restoration Program - This is a federal competitive grant program that promotes collaborative, science-based restoration of priority forest landscapes across multiple jurisdictions, including Tribal, state and local government, and private forest land. https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/landscape-scale-restoration/.

University of California Forestry Cooperative Extension (UCCE): This outreach arm of the land grant universities in California (https://ucanr.edu/forestry/) has academics and offices located in all 58 California counties. Seven forest advisors located in forested counties of California focus on outreach and education about forestland management through programs such as:

- Forest Stewardship Education Initiative (https://link.ucanr.edu/stewardshipworkshops) with over 33 nine-week long stewardship workshops series held throughout the state and attended by 650 people since 2019.
- Post-fire Forest Resilience Program (https://link.ucanr.edu/post-fireworkshops) with nine seven-week long post-fire workshops held throughout the state and attended by over 293 people since 2022.
- Forest stewardship publications (https://ucanr.edu/sites/default/files/2026-02/ForestStewardshipSeries.pdf) and videos (https://www.youtube.com/c/UCForestryandRange).
- California Family Forest website (https://www.cafamilyforest.org/) and UCCE Forestry website (https://ucanr.edu/site/forest-research-and-outreach) with the Ask an Expert web based technical assistance portal.
- The Forest Stewardship Story map profiles landowners, professionals and students https://link.ucanr.edu/stewardshipstorymap. The project highlights the landowners and forestry professionals taking action today to protect forests for the future. The project highlights the community of forest landowners learning from each other and moving forward towards their management goals.
- Forestry Institute for Teachers (https://www.forestryinstitute.org/) held in collaboration with the California Society of American Foresters. Four week-long Forestry Institute for Teachers summer sessions are held a year reaching over 3,200 California teachers in the last 33 years.
- In collaboration with CAL FIRE and the USFS, UCEE also offers:

- Project Learning Tree - the California based program which offers professional development workshops and curriculum for formal and non-formal educators (https://ucanr.edu/sites/PLT_UCCE/).
- The Forestland Steward Newsletter – a quarterly publication for California landowners on relevant forestry topics (https://placerrcd.org/placer-resource-conservation-district/forestland-steward-newsletters/).

American Forest Foundation (AFF): AFF (https://www.forestfoundation.org/) is a national conservation organization working to empower family forest owners to make a meaningful conservation impact in carbon sequestration, wildfire reduction, wildlife habitat, clean water, sustainable wood supplies and support for rural communities. Programs active in California include:

- My Sierra Woods – A technical and financial assistance program for family forest landowners across Northern California (https://www.mysierrawoods.org/).
- California Tree Farm Program – a program that gives landowners the tools they need to be effective stewards of their forests (https://www.treefarmsystem.org/).

Forest Landowners of California (FLOC): FLOC (https://forestlandowners.org/) is a nonprofit organization that advocates for CA family forest owners. They promote policies and practices that consider the needs of small private landowners, supporting affordable, predictable, and easy to implement rules.

California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD) and Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs): CARCD (https://carcd.org/) is a 501c3 non-profit organization dedicated to serving as a strong advocate, technical resource, and partner to the California's 96 RCDs so that they can be relevant, visible, and successful "go-to" hubs for conservation in their communities. RCDs are local experts, reliable providers of technical assistance, non-regulatory, trusted, and publicly accountable entities and collaborative partners. A few RCDs run their own grant funded cost-share landowner assistance programs, and many provide a variety of services to small landowners in their districts.

California Forest Conservation Foundation (CFCF): CA Forest Conservation Program is a nonprofit providing forestry-related educational services to the CA public and FLOC members. CFCF also delivers technical/financial assistance to small forest landowners as they seek state support to improve wildfire resilience on their properties.

California Fire Science Consortium (CFSC): CFSC (https://www.cafirescience.org/) is a network of scientists and managers that work to accelerate the awareness, understanding, and adoption of wildland fire science information by federal, tribal, state, local, and private landowners.

California Society of American Foresters (CSAF): California SAF is the statewide chapter of the national professional organization which serves as an accreditation and research body representing all segments of the forestry profession. CSA sponsors conservation education programs

- Forestry Institute for Teachers offering four week-long summer sessions a year in collaboration with UCCE (https://californiasaf.org/outreach-education/forestry-institute-for-teachers/).
- Forest Conservation Days for 5th graders to engage them in the science and practice of forest conservation through forest trail hikes with lessons on ecology, resource management, and sustainable management of forestlands. (https://californiasaf.org/outreach-education/forest-conservation-days/).

Appendix C. Assumptions leading to Technical Assistance, Outreach and Forestland Treatment Targets

Grants and Technical Assistance Programs:

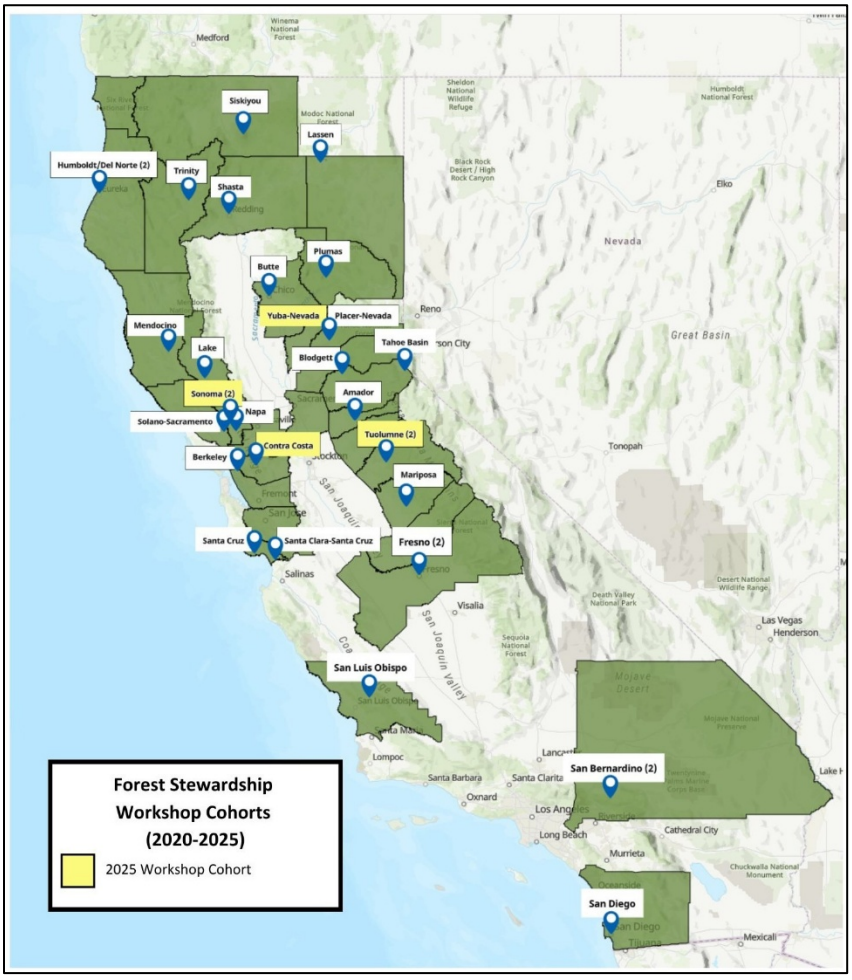
- CAL FIRE California Forest Improvement Program and Wildfire Resilience Block Grants
    - Per one million dollars, CAL FIRE can deliver approximately 400 treated acres, serve 10 landowners (assuming an average of 40 acres/landowner), complete 14 outreach visits, and 42 technical assistant visits.
- NRCS EQIP
    - Past NRCS investments have provided per one million dollars, approximately 595 acres thinned, serving approximately 225 landowners.
    - EQIP deliverables are based on FY 2021-2023 average of approximately $7.6M/yr. for forest thinning work only (NRCS Practices 666 Forest Stand Improvement, 384 Woody Residue, and 383 Fuel Break).
    - Based on average NRCS practice payment scenarios for FY 2021-2023, an estimated 4,500 acres are thinned per year.
    - Approximately 225 clients are awarded thinning contracts estimating the average projects are 20 acres per contract.
    - EQIP technical assistance (TA) is estimated to be three TA visits per client project.
    - All figures included in the above document are based on implementation dollars. Staff and partner costs are not included.
- Emergency Forest Restoration Teams
    - Per one million dollars, EFRTs can deliver between 150-400 treated acres (including reforestation), serve between 4-10 landowners (assuming an average of 40 acres/landowner), complete 14 outreach visits, and 42 technical assistance visits.

Appendix D. University of California Cooperative Extension Programs

Forest Stewardship Education Initiative

To overcome barriers for forest management experienced by private forest landowners, the 2018 Governor's Forest Management Task Force recommended the development of a comprehensive forest stewardship education program. Since 2019, CAL FIRE has funded the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) to develop and deliver an on-line and in-person workshop series on forest stewardship for private forest landowners and interested parties. Workshops span nine weeks with weekly online meetings and one in-person field day.

Workshops help landowners learn about foundational forestry concepts, vegetation management, regulations, financial aspects of ownership, regional markets, cost share programs, and forestry assistance organizations. Participants learn how to develop a property-specific forest management plan that summarizes existing conditions, defines desired future condition goals, and helps identify and implement practical steps to meet individual ownership objectives. In preparation of their plan, landowners are encouraged to consult with a Registered Professional Forester for expert input on objectives, forest conditions, and future management strategies. Participants qualify for a free initial site visit by an RPF and can become eligible for cost-share programs.



A total of 27 workshop series were held throughout California between January 2020 and December 2024 (see figure for locations). A total of 549 participants completed a workshop series. Participants have included private forestland owners, and staff from local non-profits and governments, community colleges, Fire Safe Councils, land trusts, and tribes. Workshops were held in collaboration with local, state, and federal governments, community-based organizations, nonprofits, and private industry partners including the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Resource Conservation Districts, Fire Safe Councils and CAL FIRE. Collaboration allows participants to share local knowledge and develop relationships with local agencies and professionals.

Outcomes: Participants completing a workshop series were surveyed indicating their intentions for action. Over three quarters of respondents indicated they planned to develop a management plan, consult with their local CAL FIRE/NRCS/RCD offices, and apply for cost share funding; 88% said they planned to consult with an RPF. Specific management activities

they planned to carry out included fuels reduction (95%), tree thinning (87%), prescribed fire (76%), reforestation (61%) and timber harvest (37%). As of December 2024, 106 participants used the program's stipend to pay for an RPF site visit. Together these participants manage over 11,000 acres of forested lands. RPFs recommended a variety of resilience treatments on these properties, with the most common recommendations being thinning, piling and burning, mastication and prescribed fire.

Post-fire Forest Resilience Program

UCCE received funding from the USFS State and Private Forestry in 2022 to help forestland owners affected by recent wildfires. The program is modeled after the Forest Stewardship Education Initiative offering a seven-week long workshop series that delivers educational resources and information for forest landowners and communities about restoring forest resilience to burned lands. The sessions cover important concepts for post-fire forest management including increasing disturbance in California forests, impacts of specific fires, dealing with snags and erosion, salvage logging and slash treatments, reforestation, vegetation control and landowner assistance organizations. Six workshop series were held through December 2024 in Plumas, El Dorado, Alpine, Mariposa, Fresno, Napa, Siskiyou, Santa Cruz, Lake counties. A total of 234 participants completed a workshop series. Participants and collaborators are similar to those in the Forest Stewardship workshops.

Outcomes: Participants completing a workshop series were surveyed indicating their intentions for action. Learning outcomes showed growth in many subject areas covered by the workshop. Participants learned about individual fires, post-fire assistance programs, hazard tree removal and planting and reforestation practices. The number of participants that said they were likely to use recommended post-fire management practices including removing dead trees, controlling competing vegetation around planted trees, controlling invasive weeds, planting new trees and managing sprouting trees after the workshop, increased substantially.

Educational materials have been developed and are being used to develop an online asynchronous course available to landowners and professionals to complete after future wildfires.

California Tree School

UCCE hosted the first California Tree School events in spring of 2024. These consisted of two all-day educational events for forest landowners, and anyone interested in forest stewardship. Participants attended four classes of their choosing on forest-related topics including forest inventory, oak woodland management, Avenza mapping, permitting for fuels reduction projects, prescribed fire basics, forest pests and diseases, the role of mycorrhiza, nature journaling, targeted grazing, forestland taxes, monitoring, and wood products. Class instructors volunteered from a variety of natural resource organizations including American Forests, the Audubon Society, CAL FIRE, Forest Landowners of California, NRCS, local RCDs, the Sierra Nevada Alliance, and UC ANR academics and specialists. Ninety-nine individuals registered for California Tree Schools held in Hopland and Placerville in its first year. Registration has doubled for the 2025 schools to be held in Santa Cruz and Oakhurst in April.

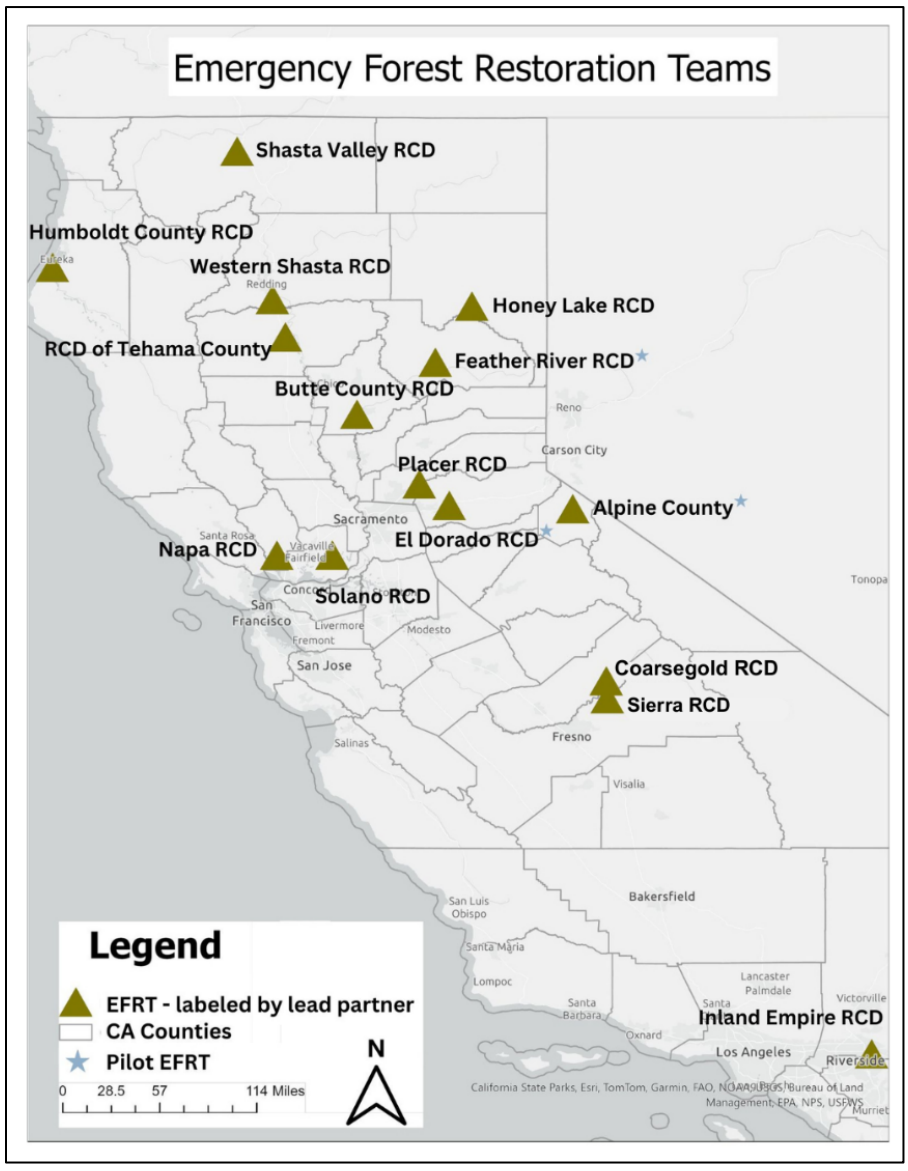
Appendix E: Emergency Forest Restoration Teams

From Concept to Rapid Recovery – Future of Emergency Forest Restoration Teams

Key Action 1.19 of the 2026 California Wildfire and Landscape Resilience Action Plan calls for the establishment of Emergency Forest Restoration Teams (EFRTs). The goal of EFRTs is to rapidly assess and implement post-wildfire restoration on Non-Industrial Private Forestland (NIPF) and associated lands. NIPF refers to small parcels of land, averaging about 50 acres in size, that are not typically managed for commercial purposes, and frequently have residential uses. The most common EFRT restoration actions are clearing excess burned trees and woody material and timely reforestation.

Definition of "Emergency Forest Restoration Team": An organized group of stakeholders with a lead entity deployed to rapidly assess and implement post-wildfire restoration on Non-Industrial Private Forestland (NIPF), and associated lands.

EFRTs distinguish themselves from existing postfire recovery teams by focusing on comprehensive restoration of NIPF. While other teams in California address specific aspects of wildfire - such as structure clean up, flood mitigation, watershed protection, utility hazard clearing, roadside tree removal, and Forest Service lands - NIPFs are largely unaddressed. Comprising nearly a quarter of California's forestland, NIPFs play a vital role in the resilience of the state's forests and communities. Restoring NIPF to reduce future fire risk is key, as many are located in the "Wildland Urban Interface," where natural and human environments intersect. Without EFRT support, NIPF landowners often lack the resources to manage the costly, complex restoration process. EFRTs can also address associated lands, including access roads to private lands, adjacent public lands that threaten NIPF, and lands important to the local economy.



EFRTs are not just a concept; they deliver real results. CAL FIRE, USFS, and other entities are currently funding multi-agency EFRTs to assist

forest landowners impacted by wildfires. In 2021/2022, three pilot EFRTs were established in the footprint of 2021 wildfires: Caldor Fire (El Dorado County, led by El Dorado Resource Conservation District), Dixie Fire (Plumas County, led by Feather River RCD), and Tamarack Fire (Alpine County, led by Alpine County). Funding goes directly to local and regional partners to form EFRTs. Rapid, coordinated action is critical to restoring forest cover and preventing further damage.

The 2021 pilot projects received significant funding from state and federal agencies and delivered substantial restoration actions (Table 1), providing valuable lessons learned. Since then, 12 other EFRT, or EFRT-like entities have been established (see map and this story map).

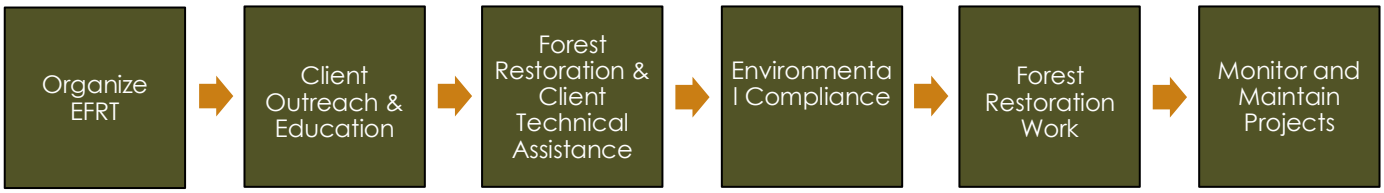
Table 1. Pilot EFRT accomplishments as of Jan 2024.

	Lead Partner	NIPF affected acres	Funding allocated	Accomplishments
Caldor	El Dorado County RCD	14,700	$9M USFS SPF $24.79M USFS ENF $1.8M BLM $2.5M CAL FIRE $1M SNC	• 3,429.48 acres site-prepped (Hazard Tree remediation, process trees/ brush, soil ripping). 1071 acres completed treatments in Sierra Tahoe Ski Area. • 1,296 acres planted. • 20 commercial Emergency Notices filed, 833 acres salvaged logging completed. • Partnered with Team Rubicon to bring over 360 volunteers to Grizzly Flats to remediate hazard trees adjacent to home lots and roads.
Dixie	Feather River RCD	19,730	$8.3M CAL FIRE $3.3M USFS SPF $8.4M USDA CWDG $2.4M CAL FIRE FH	• End of 2024: 2,649 acres prepped/cleared, 1,717 acres reforested, 1,274 acres spraying. • 2025: In progress, working on est. 550 acres (chipping and adding properties), completed spraying
Tamarack	Alpine County	4,000	$2.8M USFS SPF $1.7M FSA	• 18 clients enrolled in FSA's program • 13 clients enrolled in USFS SPF program. 2300 acres completed in site preparation, 900 acres planted

Recommendations: Emergency Forest Restoration Teams

A. Organize EFRTs

1. **Elevate and support the EFRT concept in action**: Given the success of existing EFRTs, the concept should be further promoted and more EFRTs created. Existing EFRTs should continue to receive capacity support.
2. **Ensure EFRTs conduct all aspects of the forest restoration process: EFRTs** should be permanently funded and designed with the capacity to handle all aspects of the restoration process, from landowner outreach to monitoring completed work, to maximize effectiveness.



3. **Create pathways for EFRTS to gain capacity**: The start-up and post-fire actions required of EFRTs can overwhelm local entities. Local organizations awarded EFRT funds should be carefully evaluated to ensure they have the necessary capacity. Smaller EFRT partners should seek commitments from other entities, contractors, private industrial forest companies, and consultants to manage portions of the EFRT operations.

B. Fund EFRTs

4. **Ensure consistently available funding source (e.g., "Restoration Fund"):** Significant funding is needed for NIPF restoration following large fires. To ensure regular funding is available, EFRTs should be prioritized in existing grant programs and a dedicated Restoration Fund, or another reliable funding source should be established.
    - New and existing EFRTs should be eligible for CAL FIRE grants or other public agency grants (e.g. NRCS-RCPP, Department of Conservation's Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program, FEMA and Cal OES Hazard Mitigation grants). Where possible, priority for direct funding should be given to existing EFRTs to alleviate the burdens of applying for competitive grants.
    - Funding for EFRTs should have long durations, ideally 10 years if possible. There is great uncertainty around when a wildfire will occur in the jurisdiction of an EFRT. Having regional entities or EFRTs prepared to deploy immediately after wildfire is advantageous, with the capacity to support extended implementation timelines, is essential.
    - To enable rapid response, match requirements should be removed where possible.
    - In the long term, a consistent funding source (Restoration Fund), modeled after the California's Emergency Fund, should be established to allow established EFRTs to quickly mobilize. Rapid response is critical to the success of EFRTs. Competitive grants involve uncertainty and typically a long delay before funding is available. Additionally, most competitive grants (except for CAL FIRE Wildfire Resilience Block Grant) require all lands to be pre-identified and are not well suited to EFRTs.
5. **Promote combined funding sources:** CAL FIRE and USFS R5 State and Private Forestry are recent successful funding source combinations for EFRTs. However, other agencies' programs, NGOs, and private conservation enterprises should be considered as additional funding sources. Publicly funded programs are useful but have limited ability to be a rapid "year 1" contributor to EFRTs. The Farm Service Agency Emergency Forest Restoration Program offers potential for more immediate funding but has limitations, including upfront technical assistance costs, a 20-acre minimum for eligible lands, and significant matching contributions required from landowners, which can limit participation.

    Utilization of wood debris and products can offset the cost of the restoration actions and should be taken advantage of when possible. Once landowners are enrolled, any merchantable woody debris generated by EFRT-funded activities should be used to offset the cost of subsequent EFRT restoration projects.
6. **Designate two levels of funding**: **"Startup organization" and "Post fire response":** "Startup organization" funding supports EFRTs in proactively preparing a post-fire response. Start-up funding is of lesser financial value compared to "Post fire response" funding. "Startup" actions

for the lead partner include: (1) staff up, (2) coordinate with local partners and other post fire response teams (e.g., Burned Area Emergency Response - Federal, and Watershed Emergency Response Team - State), (3) secure call- when-needed contractors, (4) plan deployment response, (5) begin outreach and education to relevant NIPF landowners. Startup actions also include planning and implementation of pre-fire fuel reduction projects. Pre-fire actions emphasize inclusion and organization within underserved communities. "Post fire response "funding supports the restoration after a wildfire.

7. **Prioritize new EFRT funding:** When agencies and partners (NRCS-CA, USFS R5, counties, private companies etc.) have funding to contribute to EFRTs, contributions should be prioritized:
    a. Areas where EFRTs are already established
    b. Locations mapped with high or very high fire hazard severity
    c. Areas with active local forestry work groups and pre-identified priority projects
    d. Locations where public agencies plan to prioritize public forest improvement investments.
    e. Regional partners who can support local EFRTs

C. Deploy EFRTs

8. **Streamline regulatory and contracting pathways for rapid deployment:** Consider extending Environmental Protection Program/Environmental Suspension authorities similar to those used by OES to EFRTs. Permitting should be coordinated with other groups who are similarly exploring streamlining and synchronizing permitting. Consider authorizations with Best Management Practice conditions from GOV 8550 "Emergency Services Act" to conduct EFRT activities, along with exploring the use of California Department of General Service's Master Agreement for management and motoring of hazard tree removal.