



February 3, 2021

The Honorable Bob Wieckowski
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee
No. 2 on Resources, Environmental
Protection, Energy & Transportation
State Capitol, Room 5019
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Richard Bloom
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee
No. 3 on Resources & Transportation
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Proposed Wildfire and Forest Resilience Expenditure Plan - SUPPORT

Dear Senator Wieckowski and Assembly Member Bloom:

On behalf of the California Forest Watershed Alliance (CAFWA), we are writing to offer our strong support for the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Expenditure Plan as outlined in the Governor's January proposed Budget. The proposed Expenditure Plan includes \$323 in current year funding, with a total of \$1 billion for wildfire and forest resilience, which is critical to the immediate advancement of the State's forest health and watershed restoration needs.

CAFWA is a unique coalition of diverse interests including organizations that represent water, environment, local government, timber, and agricultural interests all dedicated to finding a solution to California's ever-growing forest health and fire risk issues. The members of CAFWA, the Association of California Water Agencies, California Farm Bureau Federation, California Forestry Association, The Nature Conservancy, and Rural County Representatives of California, are working together to seek new ways to promote proactive, science-based, and ecologically sound forest management practices that will reduce the risk of destructive megafires. Our goal is to protect our forests, our natural resources, and our local economies and communities by accelerating the pace and scale of forest restoration.



The California Forest Watershed Alliance (CAFWA) is an urban-rural coalition representing water interests, local governments, the conservation community, agriculture, and the forestry sector, created to promote the restoration and improvement of California's forested watersheds. For more information, visit www.caforestsandwatersheds.org.

Each year, California's wildfire problem grows, and more resources must be spent on fire suppression and emergency response as we continue to be reactionary rather than proactive. We continue to find ourselves struggling to fund necessary efforts to get ahead of wildfires such as large-scale forest and vegetation management, fuels treatment, and watershed restoration. As you know, this has culminated in 2020 being California's most devastating wildfire season in modern history, as more than 9,000 wildfires burned more than 4.3 million acres, destroying homes and endangering the lives of Californians while devastating the state's watersheds, ecosystem and air quality.

It has become clear that a robust short-term investment is needed to truly slow the impacts of climate change on already overly dense vegetation in our State's forests and wildlands. Wildfires continue to represent a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions while diminishing the state's total carbon sequestration capacity. The State's forested lands provide the vital co-benefit of protecting the quality and quantity of our State's water supply, which largely originates in forested watersheds. We cannot continue to delay investments in forest health while we wait for the next wave of catastrophic wildfire events.

The members of CAFWA strongly believe that investments in the health of California's forests must become a higher priority for the state in order to preserve the myriad benefits our forests provide to all Californians. The Governor's proposed Expenditure Plan, which includes \$323 million in current budget year expenditures and \$1 billion total, is much more in line with the necessary spending to finally start catching up with our forest resilience needs. The Expenditure Plan contains funding that will be used for important programs that will benefit the health and resilience of our wildlands and watersheds by encouraging multi-agency partnerships between the state and federal land managers to work together to minimize the threat of wildfire on federal lands, while restoring forests that have already burned. The Expenditure Plan will also fund much-needed programs to promote the use of prescribed fire as well as help develop a forest resilience workforce to create jobs and keep this vital work going on the State's most vulnerable lands. Finally, the Expenditure Plan will also jumpstart a move toward establishing an innovative wood products industry in California, which is vital to the maintenance of wildland fuels treatment.

In concert with the Governor's proposal, the members of CAFWA would also strongly urge you to call on the Biden Administration and Congress to dramatically increase federal funding for wildfire risk reduction activities. We applaud efforts by Governor Newsom and the leadership of the USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5) to work together on both the recently finalized Stewardship Agreement and the Forest Management Task Force Action Plan. However, without significant funding commitments from the federal government the efforts on federal lands in California will remain unrealized just as they have in the past.

Our organizations look forward to continued engagement on this issue and would be happy to discuss our request.

Sincerely,



Staci Heaton, Senior Regulatory Affairs Advocate
Rural County Representatives of California



Elizabeth Forsburg, Associate Director,
External Affairs and Policy
The Nature Conservancy



Yianni Kazanis, Communications Director
California Forestry Association



Dave Eggerton, Executive Director
Association of California Water Agencies



Robert Spiegel, Governmental Affairs Advocate
California Farm Bureau Federation

cc: Wade Crowfoot, Secretary, California Natural Resources Agency
Jared Blumenfeld, Secretary, California Environmental Protection Agency
Members of the Senate Budget Subcommittee on Resources, Environmental Protection,
Energy & Transportation
Members of the Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Resources & Transportation