



## SUMMARY SENATE BILL 901 (DODD, 2018): HEALTHY FORESTS CAFWA RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

**Background:** Governor Jerry Brown signed SB 901 (Dodd) in 2018. This landmark legislation begins to address some of the underlying issues that have led to the megafires the state has experienced in recent years. SB 901 provides a significant investment in forest health, fire prevention and fuels reduction, and highlights the importance and value of healthy forests to California as a whole. Now that the state has recognized the need, it's time for the incoming Administration and Legislature to develop strategic policy solutions that begin to reverse the unhealthy conditions found within and around California's forests. SB 901 is an important initial step to mitigate California's wildfire risk and to reverse decades of forest mismanagement and fire suppression efforts.

### **SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT FOR FORESTRY, FIRE, AND CARBON REDUCTION ACTIVITIES**

CAFWA supports the \$200 million annual funding to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) from the cap and trade auction revenues for forest health, fire prevention, and fuels reduction.

CalFire should prioritize projects that will reduce the risk of high-severity wildfire and promote forest watershed health and resilience through use of ecological thinning and prescribed fire and that meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Projects that consider a comprehensive, "all lands" approach to improving forest health covering large landscapes and all ownerships within California, including local, state, private and federal lands.
- Projects that implement landscape-scale, collaborative planning efforts involving multiple stakeholders.



*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](http://www.caforestsandwatersheds.org).*

- Projects that include master stewardship agreements, fuel breaks, vegetation management, mechanical thinning, biomass, and prescribed fire.
- Projects that maintain the integrity of watersheds that serve as municipal water supplies.
- Projects that reduce risk to infrastructure (e.g. reservoirs, roads, etc.) and ecosystems services (e.g. carbon sequestration) and address future avoided costs.
- Projects that assist with community preparedness, including grants to fire safe councils and communities for vegetation management and defensible space.

CalFire should develop reporting metrics for the highest and best use of the funding.

## **FORESTRY AND LANDSCAPE-SCALE MANAGEMENT**

The pace and scale of ecologically based forest management needs to be significantly increased, given the magnitude and urgency of the problem. One key barrier is the lack of resources available to actively restore our forests at a landscape scale. SB 901 included important and robust actions to improve the health and resilience of California's forest and will reduce the risk of future catastrophic wildfire events.

SB 901 included incentives to small landowners to help with fuel reduction.

The bill also expanded the Forest Fire Prevention Pilot Program and clarified that multiple landowners may participate in a single Working Forest Management Plan or Nonindustrial Timber Management Plan located within a single watershed.

California should actively use the Good Neighbor Authority to improve forest health on federal lands. SB 901 included provisions to streamline the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act to advance ecologically based forest management on U.S. Forest Service lands, consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act. This policy change would make it easier to implement good projects on the ground while maintaining federal environmental laws.

CAFWA encourages the use of state funding and personnel to accelerate forest restoration on all lands in California, including federal lands. Reporting metrics for how many acres have been treated and the number of landowners using the new permits should be developed.