



**To:** RCRC Board of Directors  
**From:** Staci Heaton, Regulatory Affairs Advocate  
Mary-Ann Warmerdam, Senior Legislative Advocate  
**Date:** January 14, 2019  
**Re:** Forest Management and Wildfire Update

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### **Summary**

Several efforts are underway in the Legislature and various state and federal agencies to address California's persistent catastrophic wildfire events. This memo provides an update on many of those activities, as well as RCRC's involvement and advocacy efforts.

### **Background**

California has experienced increased levels of wildfire risk and faster, more intense burning fires each year over the past decade due to years of mismanaged forests and escalating impacts from climate change. The 2018 fire season eclipsed the 2017 fire season, with the Camp Fire in Butte County recorded as the most destructive wildfire in California State history, the Mendocino Complex Fire as the largest wildfire in modern history, and the Carr Fire destroying more than 1,000 homes and killing six. The state is undertaking a number of actions designed to respond to California's increased fire activity.

### **Issue**

#### **Governor Newsom's Wildfire Prevention and Emergency Response Plan**

On his first full day in office, Governor Gavin Newsom held a press event in Placer County to announce a comprehensive plan to address California's wildfire prevention and emergency response deficiencies in light of 2018's devastating wildfire events. The Governor was supported by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES), and the California Highway Patrol (CHP), as well as local representatives, including RCRC Board Member and Placer County Supervisor Jim Holmes, as he discussed the need for upgrades to California's emergency response and alert systems, forest management and wildfire prevention programs, and community emergency planning and education efforts.

In conjunction with the press event, Governor Newsom took three significant actions. First, the Governor issued two Executive Orders to aid in his goals to address wildfire prevention and emergency response going forward in California. Executive Order N-04-19 (Attachment 1) initiates a new procurement process for technology and equipment to expedite emergency response during the state's most urgent disaster events. Executive Order N-05-19 (Attachment 2) orders CAL FIRE to develop a report within 45 days

recommending the most impactful administrative, regulatory, and policy changes the Governor can initiate in order to prevent and mitigate wildfires to the greatest possible extent. Subsequent to issuing the Executive Orders, Governor Newsom proposed dedicating approximately \$415 million in his January 2019-20 proposed Budget to wildfire prevention, forest health, and emergency response.

Governor Newsom also announced the permanent appointment of Chief Thom Porter as Director of CAL FIRE during the press event. Chief Porter had been serving as Acting Director since his predecessor Chief Ken Pimlott's retirement on December 14, 2018, and was the Chief of Strategic Planning for CAL FIRE in Sacramento before that. Chief Porter has also been actively involved in both the Forest Management Task Force and the Tree Mortality Task Force, as well as the daily activities of the CAL FIRE Units around the state.

Finally, the Governor co-authored a letter with the Governors of Oregon and Washington requesting that President Trump provide additional financial resources to those three states (Attachment 3) to help mitigate wildfire events on national forest lands and other federally managed lands.

#### CPUC Investor-Owned Utilities De-Energization Rulemaking

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) held two workshops to discuss potential and already-seen impacts of utility de-energization practices in Santa Rosa in December 2018, and Calabasas in January 2019. The workshops served to kick off an in-depth CPUC proceeding to examine its rules allowing utility de-energization of power lines during severe wildfire threat conditions and how to minimize unintended consequences. The press release for the proceeding, along with the agenda for the December workshop and presentations by the CPUC and Pacific Gas & Electric are attached (Attachments 4-7).

RCRC offered commentary to the CPUC on the de-energization issue after conducting a survey within the impacted RCRC membership on their impressions of the utilities' shut-down procedures during the fall wildfire events (Attachment 8).

#### Forest Management Task Force

The Forest Management Task Force (FMTF) continues to meet, including its various working groups and Regional Prioritization Groups. RCRC has been working with members of the Administration and the Legislature to try and help focus the activities of the FMTF. A permanent CAL FIRE Director, along with an appointment of a California Natural Resources Agency Secretary, could help stabilize and focus the group as the Newsom Administration continues to settle in. RCRC continues to encourage members to participate on the appropriate groups along with RCRC staff if not already doing so.

#### Staff Recommendation

RCRC will continue to update the RCRC Board of Directors on the State's activities on forest health and wildfire prevention as the new Administration and Legislature continue to map out their plans for 2019.

## **Attachments**

- Governor's Executive Order N-04-19
- Governor's Executive Order N-05-19
- Letter to President Donald Trump from California Governor Gavin Newsom, Oregon Governor Kate Brown, and Washington Governor Jay Inslee, January 8, 2019
- California Public Utilities Media Advisory, December 13, 2018—Impacts of De-Energization on Vulnerable Customers and First Responders
- CPUC Workshop on Impacts from De-Energization: Focus on Vulnerable Populations, December 14, 2018, Agenda
- CPUC Workshop on Impacts from De-Energization: Focus on Vulnerable Populations, December 14, 2018, CPUC Presentation
- CPUC Workshop on Impacts from De-Energization: Focus on Vulnerable Populations, December 14, 2018, PG&E Presentation
- RCRC Letter to the California Public Utilities Commission on Utility De-Energization, January 4, 2019