



To: RCRC Board of Directors

From: Justin Caporusso, Vice President External Affairs
Staci Heaton, Regulatory Affairs Advocate

Date: March 11, 2019

Re: California Forest Watershed Alliance (CAFWA) Update

Summary

This memo provides an update on the ongoing efforts of the California Forest Watershed Alliance (CAFWA), of which RCRC is a Charter Member. CAFWA is a nonpartisan, 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. CAFWA's mission is to engage state and federal officials on the topic of forest management, encouraging them to develop solutions to the current large-scale problems related to forest management, and to highlight how current forest management practices affect wildfire prevention and watershed health within California.

Background

RCRC continues to advocate for the creation of a common sense approach toward reducing the effects and severity of wildfires that have plagued California (and the nation) over the last decade. Because current state and federal forest management law makes fire prevention work prohibitively expensive, slow to gain approval, and subject to widespread legal challenge, it is important for RCRC to engage state and federal officials in order to obtain action in our wildlands and in the wildland urban interface. Selective fuel reduction work, along with other forest management tools, must be encouraged in private, state, and federal forestland in order to protect people, homes, businesses, and natural resources.

In 2014, RCRC re-evaluated its wildfire strategy, and actively sought to establish a new paradigm in forestry advocacy. A component of this new strategy included finding new and innovative partners to work with on selective communications and advocacy efforts. One of these efforts expanded into CAFWA. Chartered in 2014, CAFWA has become a powerful voice in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. for sound, science-based forestry reform that increases the pace and scale of vegetation management for improving the health of our watersheds and air quality. In addition to RCRC, CAFWA's founding members include the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA), the California

Forestry Association (Calforests), the California Farm Bureau Federation (CFBF), and the Nature Conservancy (TNC).

Issue

CAFWA's advocacy strategy is based on delivering clear consistent messaging on a few basic themes, including:

- Increasing the pace and scale of forest restoration;
- Advocating for policy reforms that will promote ecologically sound forest restoration; and,
- Highlighting the critical need for fire prevention work.

CAFWA's organizational structure includes workgroups with a specific focus on state policy, federal policy, and communications.

Policy Workgroups

CAFWA's State Policy Workgroup has outlined state-level recommendations that emphasize the importance of healthy forests by highlighting the multiple values that they provide. These recommendations include:

- A comprehensive, "all lands" approach to improving forest health covering large landscapes and all ownerships within California, including local, state, private and federal lands.
- Increasing the pace and scale of ecologically-based active forest management and prescribed fire.
- Supporting policies that increase the economic feasibility of forest restoration through biomass and new innovative wood products. CAFWA supports AB 2518 (Aguar-Curry).
- Encouraging the use of watershed scale planning and project implementation.
- Encouraging the use of state funding and personnel to accelerate forest restoration on all lands in California, including federal lands (Good Neighbor Authority).
- Increasing funding and identifying new funding sources for forest restoration from federal, state, local, and private sources.

The State Policy Workgroup is currently scheduling introductory meetings to discuss CAFWA's policy recommendations with various members of Governor Gavin Newsom's Administration.

CAFWA's Federal Policy Workgroup has been engaged in advocacy efforts around the 2018 Farm Bill, and is currently discussing coordinating CAFWA comments on the Forestry Title, due March 1, 2019. The Federal Policy Workgroup is also working together to prioritize federal funding recommendations.

Communications Workgroup

CAFWA's Communications Workgroup supports the alliance's state and federal advocacy efforts through strategic message development and content placement. CAFWA's website (www.caforestsandwatersheds.org) hosts all CAFWA approved work product, and a comprehensive video outlining the alliance's priorities. CAFWA engages

with legislators, industry experts, and stakeholders via Twitter, and has successfully placed a number of opinion editorials and commentary pieces.

The full CAFWA group meets on a monthly basis, and the specific workgroups meet on an as-needed basis for staff-level work.

Staff Recommendation

Information only. RCRC staff will continue to seek opportunities to engage and participate on forestry issues in the media and in the policy arenas, both at the state and federal levels, to demonstrate the efficacy of a broad coalition effort in effecting changes to current forest management activities. RCRC staff will continue to update the RCRC Board of Directors on CAFWA's advocacy efforts.

Attachments

- CAFWA Charter
- Background One-Pager
- State-Level Policy Recommendations
- Biomass Policy Recommendations
- 2018 Farm Bill Recommendations