



**To:** Members of the RCRC Board of Directors  
**From:** Staci Heaton, Senior Regulatory Affairs Advocate  
**Date:** January 11, 2020  
**Re:** Forest Management and Wildfire Update

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### **Summary**

Several efforts have been 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 combined with escalating impacts from climate change. The year 2020 saw the most devastating wildfire season in California's modern history with more than 9,000 wildfires burning more than 4.3 million acres of land, and the state's precipitation levels so far this winter have not promised much hope for a better wildfire scenario in 2021.

The state is undertaking a number of actions designed to respond to California's increased fire activity in both the near and long-term, and the federal government has also begun taking measures to respond to increased wildfire activity nationwide.

### **Issue**

#### **Forest Management Task Force Action Plan**

The Governor's Forest Management Task Force (FMTF) released a comprehensive Action Plan on Friday, January 8 to bring together the state's biggest outstanding forest management, restoration, and wildfire prevention needs. The FMTF working groups have been meeting for several months to contribute various components to the Action Plan, including:

- Plans for increased pace and scale of vegetation treatment, including mechanical thinning and prescribed fire and around roadways;
- Promulgation of the state's wood products utilization industry, including biomass;
- Restoration and reforestation of areas that have been burned in fires over the past decade;

- Increased frequency of defensible space inspections by fortifying the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's inspections units;
- Education on home hardening in high fire risk areas, as well as aid for low income homeowners with retrofits to help make their homes more wildfire resistant;
- Plans to expand and sustain outdoor recreation on forest lands; and,
- Further training of a forest management workforce.

The Governor's 2021-22 proposed Budget includes \$1 billion in funding to implement the Action Plan, including \$323 million in current year, "early action" funds for projects to be completed before the traditional start of the 2021 wildfire season. While the Action Plan is substantial, there is no plan to ensure implementation beyond accountability to the FMTF and the Administration.

The final document, entitled "California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan," can be downloaded at the FMTF website:

<https://fmtf.fire.ca.gov/media/cjwfpckz/californiawildfireandforestresilienceactionplan.pdf>

#### RCRC Wildfire Prevention and Response Package

RCRC staff continues to pursue legislative actions and to support policies to further sound forest management, restoration, and wildfire prevention in California's forest lands in accordance with the Wildfire Prevention and Response Package adopted at the December RCRC Board of Directors meeting. The delayed start to the 2021 California legislative session due to coronavirus has promulgated a slow start to the bill introduction process. However, RCRC staff is in continued discussions with potential authors as well as coordinating efforts with other organizations with similar policy goals for the coming year.

#### 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 Administration and Legislature continue to map out their plans into 2021.