Date of Hearing: April 20, 2022

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
Ash Kalra, Chair
AB 1644 (Flora) – As Amended March 30, 2022

SUBJECT: Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund: California Jobs Plan Act of 2021

SUMMARY: Seeks to ensure the timely delivery of funds to prevent and fight wildfires as soon as possible, by exempting certain projects funded by the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) from the requirements of the California Jobs Plan Act of 2021 (Act).

EXISTING LAW:

1) Establishes the Act, which requires the State Air Resources Board (CARB) to work with the Labor and Workforce Development Agency (LWDA) to update, by July 1, 2025, the funding guidelines for administering agencies to ensure that all applicants to grant programs funded by the GGRF meet fair and responsible employer standards and provide inclusive procurement policies.

2) Requires all moneys, as specified, collected by the CARB from a market-based compliance mechanism to be deposited in the GGRF and to be available to the state upon appropriation by the Legislature.

3) Appropriates continuously $200,000,000 beginning in the 2022–23 fiscal year through the 2028–29 fiscal year from the GGRF to the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection for healthy forest and fire prevention programs and projects, and the completion of prescribed fire and other fuel reduction projects.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: According to the author, “AB 1644 will help clarify that wildfire projects were not intended to be included in new requirements outlined in AB 680. Allowing this exemption will help to further support wildfire projects and safe wildfire management with the most skilled workforce available.”

A letter of intent submitted to the Assembly Journal, dated September 9, 2021 by Assemblymember Burke states, “AB 680 was not intended to apply to wildfire prevention projects that receive continuous funding from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. Due to newly amended budget language, funding was continuously appropriated for wildfire prevention projects, and I was unable to amend AB 680 in a timely fashion to expressly state that such projects are not affected by my bill. AB 680 was drafted with the intent to affect projects funded via Health & Safety Code Section 39719 (included in the current version of the bill) as they existed in statute when the bill was drafted. I will introduce urgency legislation with Senator Dodd in January to address this issue in order to assure that money for wildfire prevention projects will not be affected in 2025 when the bill guidelines would go into effect. I am committed to reinforcing the clear intention and plain language of AB 680 relative to wildfire prevention projects.”

Arguments in Support
The Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) supports this measure stating, “RCRC worked diligently with the author’s office to exclude forest health and resilience projects from inclusion in the California Jobs Plan Act of 2021, but a permanent budget allocation to wildfire and forest resilience programs from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) in the 2021-22 State Budget Package folded those projects back into the provisions of the Act and, as such, will have profound impacts on the ability for local governments to execute much needed forest health and resilience projects in high fire risk areas where a skilled local workforce is already difficult to secure. The ability to utilize GGRF dollars through programs like California Climate Investments has afforded rural local governments the ability to undertake such vital projects as clearing dead and dying trees from critical infrastructure and residential properties during California’s recent tree mortality epidemic, as well as completing community wildfire mitigation projects in concert with local fire prevention organizations.

By exempting forest health and fire prevention projects from certain standards in the Act that would have disadvantaged rural, fire prone communities that desperately need resources to complete forest resilience projects, AB 1644 alleviates the burden on fire-impacted communities where access to GGRF funding is essential.”

Prior Legislation

AB 680 (Burke) Chapter 746, Statutes of 2021 established the California Jobs Plan Act of 2021 which requires State Air Resources Board (CARB) to work with the Labor and Workforce Development Agency (LWDA) to update, by July 1, 2025, the funding guidelines for administering agencies to ensure that all applicants to grant programs funded by the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) meet fair and responsible employer standards and provide inclusive procurement policies.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Association of California Water Agencies
Rural County Representative of California

Opposition

None on file.

Analysis Prepared by: Lorie Alvarez / L. & E. /