
THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 1891
Author: Connolly (D), et al.
Amended: 6/25/26 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE NATURAL RES. & WATER COMMITTEE: 7-0, 6/23/26

AYES: Becker, Seyarto, Allen, Cabaldon, Grove, Laird, Stern

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 8/13/26

AYES: Cervantes, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 78-0, 5/26/26 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Forestry: Beneficial Fire Capacity Program

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This bill requires the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Department) to, on an annual basis, use no less than 10% of the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) moneys appropriated to them to expand training, organizational capacity, and support for community-led beneficial fire programs, and would give priority to funding for proposals that involve California Native American tribes or indigenous-led organizations. Additionally, the Department is required to award 25% of the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund appropriation to California Native American tribes or tribally- or indigenous-led organizations.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

1) Pursuant to Public Resources Code (PRC) §4477:

- a) Requires the State Fire Marshal (SFM), with the involvement of the Statewide Training and Education Advisory Committee, to develop a curriculum for, or amend into an existing curriculum, a certification program

for burn bosses, who possess authority to engage in a prescribed burning operation and to enter into the necessary contracts related to a prescribed burning operation. The curriculum shall provide for the initial certification as well as the continuing education of burn bosses.

- b) Requires the Department to develop a training program for prescribed fire users to certify professionals in any agency or organization as burn bosses. Requires the Department to certify these individuals to a common standard.
 - c) Requires the SFM to post and update on its internet website the number of burn bosses with an active burn boss certification.
- 2) Defines “burn boss” as a person certified pursuant to PRC §4477 to conduct prescribed burning operations and to enter into contracts related to prescribed burning operations; or, a person qualified for the National Wildfire Coordinating Group position title of “Prescribed Fire Burn Boss Type 1” or “Prescribed Fire Burn Boss Type 2.” (PRC §4500(a))
 - 3) Establishes the Prescribed Fire Liability Pilot Program to increase the pace and scale of the use of prescribed fire and cultural burning and to reduce barriers for conducting prescribed fires and cultural burning. (PRC 4§500 (b))
 - 4) Establishes the Prescribed Fire Claims Fund (Fund) to support coverage for losses from prescribed fires and cultural burning by nonpublic entities, such as cultural fire practitioners, private landowners, and nongovernmental entities. (PRC §4500 (c)(1))
 - 5) Requires \$165 million to be appropriated from GGRF in the annual Budget Act each year through the 2023–24 fiscal year to the Department for healthy forest and fire prevention programs and projects that improve forest health and reduce greenhouse gas emissions caused by uncontrolled wildfires.
 - 6) Requires \$35 million to be appropriated from GGRF in the annual Budget Act each year through the 2023–24 fiscal year to the Department to complete prescribed fire and other fuel reduction projects through proven forestry practices consistent with the recommendations of the Forest Carbon Plan, including the operation of year-round prescribed fire crews and implementation of a research and monitoring program for climate change adaptation. (Sec. 45 of SB 901 (Dodd), Chapter 626, Statutes of 2018)
 - 7) Requires the annual proceeds of the GGRF to be continuously appropriated, until FY 2028-29, to the Department as follows: \$200 million for healthy forest and fire prevention programs, and \$35 million for the completion of prescribed fire and other fuel reduction projects through proven forestry practices consistent with the recommendations of the California Forest Carbon Plan,

including the operation of year-round prescribed fire crews and implementation of a research and monitoring program for climate adaptation. (Health and Safety Code (HSC) §39719 (b)(4))

- 8) Requires, after specified amounts are fully allocated, as determined by the Department of Finance, moneys in GGRF to be continuously appropriated, without regard to fiscal year, so that \$200 million goes to the Department as follows: 82.5% for healthy forest and fire prevention programs and projects that improve forest health and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases caused by uncontrolled wildfires, and 17.5% for the completion of prescribed fire and other fuel reduction projects through proven forestry practices consistent with the recommendations of the California Forest Carbon Plan, including the operation of year-round prescribed fire crews and implementation of a research and monitoring program for climate adaptation. (HSC §37919.4 (c)(1)(E))

This bill:

- 1) Makes codified legislative findings and declarations regarding:
 - a) The use of beneficial fire for reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire and greenhouse gas emissions, and
 - b) The critical need for investment in training, organizational capacity, and project implementation, regardless of the immediate quantification of greenhouse gas emissions.
- 2) Requires that the Department, on an annual basis, use not less than 10% of any funding appropriated to the Department for local assistance and other grant programs where prescribed fire is an eligible activity, to expand training, organizational capacity, and support for community led beneficial fire programs, as specified.
 - a) Of this 10%, not less than 25% allocated funds shall be awarded to California Native American tribes or tribally led or indigenous-led organizations.
 - b) Specifies that the Department may award less than the 10% only in circumstances where the total funding requested by qualified applicants does not reach the minimum allocation.
 - c) Requires that the Department deliver the funding through grants, programs, and other mechanisms including direct awards, block grants, and subawards.
- 3) Specifies the activities that qualify as part of the 10% allocation are:
 - a) Funding to support and implement community-led beneficial fire programs, including training, and building and maintaining capacity. The Department

shall prioritize organizations with demonstrated effectiveness developing or leading beneficial fire programs.

- b) Funding to implement beneficial fire projects or projects involving beneficial fire capacity building, research, innovation, or training.
- 4) Require the Department collaborate with other relevant state agencies, beneficial fire practitioners, and organizations currently engaged in beneficial fire programs in the administration of the funding.
- 5) Requires the Department, to the extent feasible under grants, programs, and other mechanisms, to
 - a) Allow awarded funds to be used to pay California Native American tribes or tribally designated individuals for consultation or engagement on programs or projects.
 - b) Reduce application and reporting requirements.
 - c) Develop metrics for program success other than acres treated.
 - d) Use the maximum flexibility provided for by law to allow for longer grant or award terms.
- 6) Authorize the Department to prescribe rules, guidelines, procedures, or other guidance to carry out the purposes of this chapter.
- 7) Exempt such rules from the Administrative Procedures Act.
- 8) Make non-codified findings and declarations.

Prescribed burning. Prescribed burning is the controlled application of fire to the land to reduce wildfire hazards, clear downed trees, control plant diseases, improve rangeland and wildlife habitats, and restore natural ecosystems. Prescribed fires are typically conducted in compliance with a written prescribed fire plan that outlines the conditions necessary for the burn to be “within prescription.” Recent research on California’s 2020 wildfire season found prescribed fires decreased wildfire burn severity by 16% and led to a net reduction of 14% in smoke emissions.

California’s Strategic Plan for Expanding the Use of Beneficial Fire (March 2022) (Strategic Plan) estimates that between 10 and 30 million acres in California would benefit from some form of fuel reduction treatment and sets a target for deploying beneficial fire on 400,000 acres annually.

According to the Strategic Plan, approximately 125,000 to 150,000+ acres are treated with prescribed burning in California annually by state and federal agencies. According to the Wildfire Forest Resilience Task Force Dashboard , 188,000 acres were treated with beneficial burns in 2024. While this rate is

increasing to manage wildfire hazards, it remains far below the long-term goal of 400,000 acres annually and the roughly 4.5 million acres that burned annually before the year 1800.

Prescribed burns are safe. The US Forest Service reported in 2022 that 99.84% of prescribed burns operate as planned without incident.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

- The Department estimates ongoing costs of \$354,000 in the first year, \$392,000 in the second, and \$371,000 annually thereafter (Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund [GGRF]) to implement the provisions of this bill.
- The California Air Resources Board (CARB) estimates ongoing costs of \$391,000 annually (GGRF) to develop quantification and reporting materials specific to the new projects for agencies administering California Climate Investments (CCI) programs; conduct additional outreach in disadvantaged communities, including within lands under the control of federally recognized tribes, to inform community members about investment opportunities available through CCI; provide ongoing guidance, including quantification guidance and support; and assist with outreach and engagement, especially to tribes and indigenous-led organizations.
- By requiring the Department to use at least 10% of its funding appropriated for local assistance and other grant programs where prescribed or beneficial fire is an eligible activity to implement the Beneficial Fire Capacity Program, this bill would create ongoing cost pressures of an unknown amount on the department's funding allocation to the extent the proposed set-aside in the bill diverts resources away from projects that would otherwise have received funding from the department. According to the Department, its grant programs are consistently oversubscribed.

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/14/26)

Karuk Tribe (co-sponsor)
The Watershed Research and Training
Center (co-sponsor)
All Hands Ecology
Amah Mutsun Tribal Band
American Rivers
Audobon California
Berkeley; City of

Biswell Forestry
Briceland Volunteer Fire Department
California Association of Local
Conservation Corps
California Cattlemen's Association
California Environmental Voters
California Forward
California Forward (ca Fwd)
California Indian Environmental
Alliance

California Native Plant Society
Californians for Western Wilderness
Calwild
Campfire Restoration Project
Camptonville Community Partnership
Cdp Rural Caucus
Central Coast Prescribed Burn
Association
City of Sunnyvale
Colusa County Resource
Conservation District
Community Environmental Council
Community Wildfire Planning Center
County of Yuba - Office of
Emergency Services
Cross Contour LLC
Cultural Fire Management Council
East Bay Municipal Utility District
Ecoflight
El Dorado Amador Prescribed Fire
Association
Environmental Defense Fund
Environmental Protection Information
Center (EPIC)
Fall Creek Firewise
Fave Trainings
Feather River College
Filoli
Fire Resilience Institute
Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics,
and Ecology (FUSEE)
Firegeneration Collaborative
First Rain Land Stewardship Services
Forestscapes LLC
Forevergreen Forestry
Friends of Plumas Wilderness
Friends of the Inyo
Friends of the Lost Coast
Friends of the River
Habematolel Pomo of Upper Lake

Hamey Woods
Humboldt County Prescribed Burn
Association
Humboldt Fire Resilience Institute
Hybrid Incident Support
Indigenous Stewardship Network
Klamath Forest Alliance
Mak-warép Ohlone Land
Conservancy
Mattole Restoration Council
Mid Klamath Watershed Council
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space
District
Mount Hermon Northwest
Mount Madonna Center
Mt. Madonna Challenge
National Audubon Society
Nevada County Resource
Conservation District
Nourishing Futures, 501 (C) (3)
Orange County Fire Authority
Orleans Volunteer Fire Department
Pacific Forest Trust
Plumas County Fire Safe Council
Plumas Underburn Cooperative
Prometheus Fire Consulting LLC
Rain
Resource Conservation District of
Monterey County
Resource Renewal Institute
Rural Voices for Conservation
Coalition
Salmon River Restoration Council
San Benito Resource Conservation
District
San Luis Obispo Prescribed Burn
Association
Sandhills of Quail Hollow Firewise
Santa Clara County Firesafe Council
Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency

Santa Monica Mountains Fire Safe
 Council
 Santa Rosa Junior College
 Save Mount Diablo
 Save the Redwoods League
 Saving the Sea
 Scott River Watershed Council
 Semillas for Safe Soil
 Sempervirens Fund
 Sierra Business Council
 Sierra Nevada Alliance
 Sonoma Land Trust
 South Bay Prescribed Burn
 Association
 South Yuba River Citizens League
 Spye Conservation INC.
 Storm King Mountain Technologies,
 INC.
 Sustainable Tahoe
 Terra Fuego Resource Foundation
 The Adidam Holy Domains
 The Climate Center

The Fire Restoration Group
 The Hatchet Emergency Response
 INC.
 The Lookout
 The Wilderness Society
 The Wildlands Conservancy
 Transition Habitat Conservancy
 Tribal Ecorestoration Alliance
 Trinity County Resource
 Conservation District
 Trout Unlimited
 Tuolumne Prescribed Burn
 Association
 Ventura County Resource
 Conservation District
 Volcano Land Company
 Wildlands Network
 Wildlands Robotics
 Yosemite Gateway Prescribed Burn
 Cooperative

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/14/26)

None received

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: According to the author, “AB 1891 sets aside 10% of the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund allocated to [the Department] for wildfire resiliency and forest health to support beneficial fire, with 25% of that dedicated specifically to tribes and tribal organizations. Beneficial fire has been a proven practice utilized by California’s first peoples for thousands of years. The evidence is clear, beneficial fire projects help our ecosystems foster biodiversity, reduce wildfire risk, and preserve natural habitats and forests. It is time we expand these practices and give California another tool to help make our state more resilient to wildfires and natural disasters.”

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 78-0, 5/26/26

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Muratsuchi, Celeste Rodriguez

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8/15/26 15:46:30

**** END ****