

Date of Hearing: April 6, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

AB 2513 (Petrie-Norris) – As Amended April 6, 2026

SUBJECT: Wildfire: Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program: local assistance grant program: regional landscape grants

SUMMARY: Amends various state grant programs to explicitly allow regional landscape grants to be directly awarded to regional entities.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity (RFFC) Program at the Department of Conservation (DOC) to support regional leadership to build local and regional capacity and develop, prioritize, and implement strategies and projects that create fire adapted communities and landscapes by improving ecosystem health, community wildfire preparedness, and fire resilience. (Public Resources Code (PRC) 4208.1)
- 2) Defines “regional entity” as a state conservancy, local government, tribal government, resource conservation district, joint powers authority, or nongovernmental organization with a history of implementing related projects, demonstrated capacity to work across regional partners, and ability to serve as fiscal administrators for the RFFC Program. (PRC 4208)
- 3) Establishes, pursuant to Executive Order No. B-52-18, a Forest Management Task Force, now known as the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force (Task Force), involving specified state agencies to create the action plan for wildfire and forest resilience.
- 4) Requires the Task Force to develop a “Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan” (Action Plan) as a strategy to integrate recommendations from existing state and federal plans that tackle various aspects of the state’s forest health and wildfire crisis. Requires the Task Force to develop a comprehensive implementation strategy to track and ensure the achievement of the goals and key actions identified in the Action Plan issued by the Task Force in January 2021. (PRC 4771)
- 5) Requires the Task Force, including the Natural Resources Agency (NRA), the California Environmental Protection Agency, the Office of Planning and Research, and the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), in coordination with certain public agencies, to develop a comprehensive implementation strategy to track and ensure the achievement of the goals and key actions identified in the Action Plan. (PRC 4771)
- 6) Requires CAL FIRE to establish a local assistance grant program for fire prevention and home hardening education activities in California. (PRC 4124.5)
- 7) Authorizes the director of CAL FIRE to provide grants to, or enter into contracts or other cooperative agreements with, entities, including, but not limited to, private or nongovernmental entities, Native American tribes, or local, state, and federal public agencies,

for the implementation and administration of projects and programs to improve forest health and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. (PRC 4799.05)

THIS BILL:

- 1) Authorizes the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) to award regional landscape grants to regional entities to implement regional priority strategies developed pursuant to the RFFC Program.
- 2) Prior to the issuance of regional landscape grants, requires the WCB, in collaboration with the Task Force, to establish guidelines for funding regional landscape grants to contribute to the achievement of the goals of the Action Plan, and any subsequent updates to that plan. Exempts development and adoption of the guidelines from the Administrative Procedures Act (APA).
- 3) Defines the following terms:
 - a) “Fire prevention activities” as those lawful activities that reduce the risk of wildfire in California, including, but not limited to, mechanical and manual vegetation management and modification, prescribed grazing, prescribed burns, creation of defensible space, creation of fuel breaks, ignition prevention, replacement of ignition-prone nonnative flashy fuels with heavier and less flammable native vegetation, technologies that improve detection and assessment of new fire ignitions, and retrofitting of structures to increase fire resistance.
 - b) “Ignition prevention” as those lawful activities that reduce the likelihood of wildfire ignitions caused directly or indirectly by human activity or infrastructure, including replacement or modification of ignition-prone nonnative flashy fuels to less flammable native vegetation, hardening of infrastructure, including primary roadways, utility corridors, and public access points, to prevent fire ignition and spread, use of ignition-resistant materials, and community education or planning programs that reduce human-caused ignitions.
 - c) “Nonnative flashy fuels” as a nonnative or invasive plant species including grasses, mustard, and other annual plants, and pine needles and leaves, that dry or cure rapidly, ignite easily, and spread fire quickly, significantly increasing wildlife risk.
- 4) Updates the eligible fire prevention activities under CAL FIRE’s local assistance grant program for fire prevention and home hardening education activities in California, and itemizes ignition prevention activities as eligible for funding.
- 5) Strikes the January 1, 2027, sunset date on DOC’s authority to provide advance payments on grants awarded under the RFFC Program.
- 6) Authorizes the director of DOC to directly award regional landscape grants to regional entities to implement regional priority strategies developed pursuant to the RFFC Program.
- 7) Prior to the issuance of regional landscape grants, requires the director of DOC, in collaboration with the Task Force, to establish guidelines for funding regional landscape

grants to contribute to the achievement of the goals of the Action Plan. Exempts the guideline development from the APA.

- 8) Expands CAL FIRE's forest health grant program for landscape-scale projects to additionally include:
 - a) Activities that improve ecosystem health on chaparral, shrubland, grassland, and coastal sage scrub lands, including, but not limited to, replacement of ignition-prone nonnative flashy fuels with heavier and less flammable native vegetation; and,
 - b) Regional landscape grants that the director may directly award to regional entities to implement regional priority strategies.
- 9) For purposes of the forest health grant program, defines the following terms:
 - a) "Ecosystem" includes forest, chaparral, shrubland, grasslands, and coastal sage ecosystems and natural communities.
 - b) "Nonnative flashy fuels" means a nonnative or invasive plant species including grasses, mustard, and other annual plants, and pine needles and leaves, that dry or cure rapidly, ignite easily, and spread fire quickly, significantly increasing wildlife risk.
- 10) Prior to the issuance of regional landscape grants, requires the director of CAL FIRE, in collaboration with the Task Force, to establish guidelines for funding regional landscape grants to contribute to the achievement of the goals of the Action Plan. Exempts the guideline development from the APA.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

1) **Author's statement:**

AB 2513 addresses two critical gaps in our efforts to achieve the goals of California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan. First, the bill ensures that Regional Forest and Fire Capacity grantors can distribute funds for wildfire mitigation projects in the flammable shrubland ecosystems typical of Southern California, reflecting the full range of ecosystems at risk of catastrophic wildfire across the state. Second, AB 2513 increases the pace and scale of grant distribution by authorizing the Department of Conservation and the Wildlife Conservation Board to distribute regional landscape grants to local entities.

- 2) **Regional fire prevention.** California's forests naturally adapted to low-intensity fire, nature's preferred management tool, but Gold Rush-era clearcutting followed by a wholesale policy of fire suppression resulted in the overly dense, ailing forests that dominate the landscape today. Compounding risks have made it nearly impossible for nature to self-correct. A cycle of catastrophic wildfires, longer fire seasons, severe drought, intense wind, tree mortality, invasive species, and human population pressure threaten to convert conifer forests to shrublands and shrublands to invasive grasses. With California's landscape heavily divided among multiple landowners, coordinated stewardship is critical to success. Since fire

doesn't abide by human-made land-owner boundaries, regional coordination is critical to forest health management and wildfire prevention.

- 3) **Flashy fuels.** Flashy fuels are a significant concern in wildfire management. According to the California Invasive Plant Council, readily ignitable invasive annual grasses can provide a flashy fuel bed for fires to start and quickly spread into adjacent vegetation. When shrublands burn too frequently, or are disturbed too frequently, they are overtaken by nonnative annual grasses, which can lead to a positive feedback loop of habitat type conversion and more frequent fires on the landscape.

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS), along with non-federal agencies and non-profit partners, formed a coalition called the Southern California Ignition Reduction Program (SCIRP) to reduce fire risk (specifically along California's highways), and the tactics include 1) greatly reducing readily ignitable non-native plants along roadsides, and 2) replacing them with less ignitable native vegetation, bare ground, or, in some instances, hardscape.

According to Irvine Ranch Conservancy, Southern California region's strategic fire management priorities are not large-scale fuels reduction or biomass utilization, or a focus on forests, but rather ignition prevention (hardening transportation and utility infrastructure against fire starts) and fuels modification (replacing ignition-prone, non-native "flashy" fuels with fire-adapted native vegetation in high ignition risk areas.) While the existing Forest Health program activities provide effective tools for some of the state, the current definition of "forest" and the strong emphasis on forested natural communities renders shrubland ecosystems, and the millions of Californians who live nearby, ineligible for this critical funding.

AB 2513 allows funding from CAL FIRE's local assistance grant program for fire prevention and Forest Health grants to be used for ignition reduction activities, including the replacement or modification of ignition-prone nonnative flashy fuels to less flammable native vegetation.

The bill defines nonnative flashy fuels to include pine needles, which are highly flammable, but are also native. The bill could clarify the definitions used in the bill by separately defining nonnative fuels and flashy fuels.

- 4) **Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program.** Pursuant to AB 9 (Wood), Chapter 225, Statutes of 2021, DOC launched the RFFC program to build the capacity of regional collaboratives through a common framework of regional forest and community resilience plans. Through RFFC, DOC provides block grants to regional entities to develop regional strategies that develop governance structures, identify wildfire risks, foster collaboration, and prioritize and implement projects within the region to achieve the goals of the program. Block grants are used by recipients to support partner capacity, project readiness, implementation of demonstration projects, and regional priority planning to achieve landscape-level and community wildfire resilience consistent with the Action Plan as well as the California Forest Carbon Plan and Executive Order B-52-18.

Regional block grantees are expected to partner extensively across their region to identify priorities and develop projects. Current block grantees partner heavily with state, federal, tribal, and local governments as well as water agencies, resource conservation districts, fire safe councils, and other nonprofits.

- 5) **Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force.** The Task Force was established in 2018 to develop a framework for establishing healthy and resilient forests that can withstand and adapt to wildfire, drought and a changing climate. The Task Force developed the Action Plan to integrate recommendations from existing state and federal plans that tackle various aspects of the state’s forest health and wildfire crisis. The January 2021 Action Plan is the initial five-year plan for implementing the Agreement for Shared Stewardship of California’s Forest and Rangelands (Shared Stewardship Agreement) with the USFS, coordinating the state’s forestry efforts with other federal, local, tribal, regional, and private organizations.
- 6) **This bill.** AB 2513 amends three existing grant programs, including CAL FIRE’s local assistance grant program for fire prevention and home hardening education activities, the RFFC Program, and CAL FIRE’s Forest Health Grants, to explicitly authorize regional landscape grants to be awarded directly to regional entities with regional priority strategies developed pursuant to the RFFC Program, and creates a new grant program for that same purpose at WCB.

For the WCB and RFFC grants, the bill requires the administering state entities to coordinate with the Task Force to establish grant guidelines consistent with the goals of the Action Plan.

- 7) **Committee amendments.** The *committee may consider* amending the bill to create one definition for “nonnative fuels” and a separate definition for “flashy fuels,” and make other technical and clarifying changes. Due to timing of the double referral, the committee amendments will be adopted in the next policy committee.
- 8) **Double referral.** This bill is also referred to the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee.
- 9) **Related legislation.** AB 388 (Connolly, 2023) requires CAL FIRE to establish a roadmap for developing and deploying larger landscape level projects to contribute to the achievement of the goals of the implementation strategy for the Action Plan. This bill was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California State Association of Counties
 League of California Cities
 Orange; County of
 Save the Redwoods League
 Sierra Business Council

Opposition

None on file

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