
SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES AND WATER

Senator Josh Becker, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	SB 1270	Hearing Date:	April 14, 2026
Author:	Richardson		
Version:	February 20, 2026	Introduced	
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Edith Hannigan		

Subject: Wildfire mitigation program: financial assistance to counties

SUMMARY

This bill would require the California Wildfire Mitigation Financial Assistance Program to provide financial assistance to the ten counties with the greatest combined risk of wildfire and social vulnerability, as determined by the pre-adopted eligibility criteria.

BACKGROUND AND EXISTING LAW

Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Department). The Department, in accordance with a plan approved by the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, is responsible for the prevention and suppression of forest fires (Public Resources Code (PRC) §§4113, 4114).

Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM). In the mid-1990s, the OSFM was moved from the State and Consumer Services Agency to the Department. The State Fire Marshal (SFM) is established as a Chief Deputy Director of Forestry and Fire Protection in the Department (Health and Safety Code (HSC) § 13100). The mission of the OSFM is to “[protect] life and property through the development and application of fire prevention, engineering, training and education, and enforcement.”

Office of Emergency Services (CalOES). CalOES is a body of state government within the Office of the Governor, under the supervision of a Director of Emergency Services. The California Emergency Services Act (CESA; Chapter 7, Division 1, Title 2 of the Government (GOV) Code) confers upon the Governor and chief executives and governing bodies of the state emergency powers, as specified, and provides for state assistance in the organization and maintenance of their emergency programs. CESA specifies the powers and duties of CalOES (GOV § 8550).

Joint Powers Authority (JPA). The Department and CalOES are authorized to enter into a joint powers agreement to administer a Wildfire Mitigation Financial Assistance Program, known as the California Wildfire Mitigation Program (CWMP), that:

- 1) Encourages cost-effective structure hardening and retrofitting that creates fire-resistant homes, businesses, and public buildings.
- 2) Facilitates vegetation management, the creation and maintenance of defensible space, and other fuel modification activities that provide neighborhood or communitywide benefits against wildfire (GOV § 8654.4).

Federal funding for Community-wide Home Hardening Framework and Pilot Project. CWMP received a Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to implement three objectives:

- a) Develop a scoring methodology that ranks counties based on a combination of social vulnerability factors and wildfire risk factors.
 - i) [This was completed January 29, 2025.](#) The top ten counties on the list are, from 1-10, Lake, Siskiyou, Tuolumne, Shasta, El Dorado, San Diego, Riverside, Calaveras, Los Angeles, and Tehama.
- b) Develop a Wildfire Community Hardening Framework.
 - i) [Version 2.2 was released March 24, 2026.](#)
- c) Fund home hardening retrofits to 2,500 structures in the top six ranked counties from the scoring methodology above.
 - i) [So far, 140 homes have been completed and 27 are in progress.](#)

CWMP is required to submit a report to the Legislature by July 1, 2028 regarding the implementation of the program including:

- The cost effectiveness of the program, compared to similar programs.
- Evaluation of the overall risk mitigation achieved statewide.
- Information regarding barriers to completing the work.

Existing law sunsets CWMP on July 1, 2029.

Existing Law:

- 1) Establishes the Department (PRC § 701).
- 2) Establishes the SFM and the OSFM within the Department (HSC § 13100).
- 3) Establishes CalOES to implement the CESA (GOV § 8550).
- 4) Establishes CWMP (GOV § 8654.2).
 - a) Authorizes the program to:
 - i) Encourage cost-effective structure hardening and retrofitting.
 - ii) Facilitate vegetation management, defensible space, and other fuel modification activities (GOV § 8654.4).
 - b) Requires the SFM, in consultation with the Department and the Department of Housing and Community Development, to identify building retrofits and structure hardening measures eligible for financial assistance (GOV § 8654.5).
 - c) Requires the Department to identify defensible space, vegetation management, and fuel modification activities eligible for financial assistance (GOV § 8654.5).
 - d) Designates wildfire hazard areas eligible for financial assistance (GOV § 8654.6).

- e) Requires CWMP to develop criteria and a scoring methodology to prioritize:
 - i) Areas and communities vulnerable to wildfire;
 - ii) The impact of future climate risk factors on area and community wildfire vulnerability assessments; and
 - iii) Factors that lead some populations to experience a greater risk to wildfire, adverse health outcomes, or an inhibited ability to respond to a wildfire (GOV § 8654.7).
- 5) Requires CWMP to submit a report to the Legislature regarding the implementation of the wildfire mitigation assistance program no later than July 1, 2028 (GOV § 8654.10).
- 6) Sunsets CWMP on July 1, 2029 (GOV § 8654.10).

PROPOSED LAW

This bill would require the CalOES and Department JPA to provide financial assistance under CWMP to the ten counties with the greatest combined risk of wildfire and social vulnerability based on the eligibility criteria developed by the program, and make relevant declarations and findings. This bill would specify that the ten counties with the greatest combined risk, as of January 29, 2025, are: Lake, Siskiyou, Tuolumne, Shasta, El Dorado, San Diego, Riverside, Calaveras, Los Angeles, and Tehama.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT

According to the author's office, "Over the past decade, more than 40,000 acres and over 20,000 structures have been heavily damaged or destroyed as a result of wildland fire. As we continue to rebuild and fortify our communities that were ravaged by the Palisades and Eaton fires, I believe that home hardening assistance is a critical component that must be considered to provide a sense of relief to homeowners, fire departments, cities, counties, and insurance companies. SB 1270 would authorize the joint powers authority to provide home hardening assistance to the top ten counties."

Writing with a "support if amended" position, Rural County Representatives of California and the California League of Cities write "Our organizations have been strongly supportive of the [California Wildfire Mitigation Financial Assistance Program (CWMP)] [CWMP's] efforts to retrofit entire neighborhoods to aid with fire prevention, insurance affordability, and general safety communitywide. We have also been supportive of efforts to increase funding resources for the program so that it can be expanded to other high fire risk areas with qualifying residents. Our organizations have also advocated for expanded funding for the [CWMP] so that additional communities can be added to the program. We appreciate the willingness of your office to work with us on amendments to SB 1270 that will help ensure that communities currently being served by the program can continue receiving support for home hardening even as the [CWMP] expands. We will continue to support the mission of the [CWMP] and hope to eventually see the program funded at a level that allows it to expand statewide.

"For the above reasons, our organizations support SB 1270 with the recommended committee amendments."

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION

None received.

COMMENTS

This bill is double referred. This bill is referred to this committee and the Committee on Emergency Management. This committee is the committee of first referral. Issues discussed in this analysis under the portfolio of the Emergency Management Committee are included here for context and completeness only.

Limited funding. CWMP leveraged a FEMA HMA program grant to develop a framework for community home hardening and establish pilot home hardening programs in San Diego, El Dorado, Tuolumne, Siskiyou, Lake, and Shasta counties. This funding has been fully executed and committed to projects in the pilot counties.

Subrecipient	County	Federal Share	State Share	Local Share
El Dorado County	El Dorado	\$ 22,380,345.00	\$ 1,278,166.00	\$1,208,539.00
North Coast Opportunities, Inc.	Lake	\$ 19,964,277.00	\$ 2,218,253.00	n/a
San Diego County	San Diego	\$ 17,646,450.00	\$ 5,882,150.00	n/a
shasta County Fire Safe Council	Shasta	\$ 17,656,600.00	\$ 5,885,534.00	n/a
Shasta Valley Resource Conservation District	Siskiyou	n/a	\$ 3,598,000.00	n/a
Tuolumne County	Tuolumne	\$ 17,689,680.00	\$ 1,956,520.00	n/a
		\$ 95,337,352.00	\$20,818,623.00	

Payments Completed

County	Total Award	Total Payments	Remaining Award Balance
All	\$117,373,514.00	\$11,587,290.33	\$105,786,223.67
Lake	\$22,182,530	\$2,911,657.02	\$19,270,872.98
San Diego	\$23,528,600	\$2,352,860.00	\$21,175,740.00
Shasta	\$23,542,134	\$4,187,214.00	\$19,354,920.00
Siskiyou	\$3,598,000	\$1,852,849.60	\$1,745,150.40
El Dorado	\$24,867,050	\$234,101.81	\$24,632,948.19
Tuolumne	\$19,655,200	\$48,607.90	\$19,606,592.10

Although the state has only made \$11.5 million of payments so far, the total award of \$117.3 million has been fully legally committed to the subgrant recipients. The remaining award balances are not available to be transferred to other communities or projects.

According to CalOES, each subgrant for any FEMA HMA program must have an eligible subapplicant designated for a specific scope of work. Grants cannot be transferred to a different entity once selected by FEMA. The funds are fully obligated to communities with the highest risk, leveraging the existing ranking methodology for the JPA. Grant agreements for state and federal funds have been executed between state/local and federal/local entities for the grant funds.

Amend findings and declarations. The Committee may wish to amend the findings and declarations of the bill to more accurately reflect the structure and history of the CWMP. **[SEE AMENDMENT #1]**

Realizing the bill's goal. The goal of this bill, according to the author, is to allocate the FEMA HMA grant money to the top ten ranked counties, rather than the top six. The author's district is the number nine ranked county. However, as discussed above, the federal funding is fully allocated and encumbered in grant agreements between the federal government, the state, and local entities.

To achieve the goal of the bill of accessing more funding for home hardening in the top ten ranked counties, the Committee may wish to recommend amending the bill in one of two ways:

Option 1: Fund home hardening in the seventh through tenth ranked counties with state funds.

The Committee may wish to recommend the following amendment:

Section 8654.8 of the Government Code is amended to read:

8654.8. (a) The joint powers authority shall develop eligibility criteria for property owners, community organizations, and local governments who may receive financial assistance under the wildfire mitigation program in accordance with this article.

(b) **Upon an appropriation by the Legislature for this purpose, the** ~~The~~ joint powers authority shall provide financial assistance under the wildfire mitigation program **to the seventh through tenth ranked counties, inclusive,** with the greatest combined risk of wildfire and social vulnerability based on the eligibility criteria developed pursuant to subdivision (a) **dated January 29, 2025, or an updated successor ranking,** ~~which, as of January 29, 2025, are the Counties of Lake, Siskiyou, Tuolumne, Shasta, El Dorado, San Diego, Riverside, Calaveras, Los Angeles, and Tehama.~~

(c) The joint powers authority may also establish financial assistance limits and matching funding or other recipient contribution requirements, as necessary, to ensure the viability and efficient operation of the wildfire mitigation program and to maximize the program's impact on reducing wildfire risk in California.

Option 2: Require the pilot program implementation report to evaluate the cost of expanding the program to the seventh through tenth ranked counties.

Section 8654.10 of the Government Code is amended to read:

(a) The operation of this article is contingent upon an appropriation by the Legislature in the annual Budget Act or another statute for purposes of this article.

(b) No later than July 1, 2028, the joint powers authority shall submit a report to the Legislature, in compliance with Section 9795, regarding the implementation of the wildfire mitigation financial assistance program administered pursuant to this article. The report shall include, but is not limited to, all of the following:

(1) An evaluation of the cost-effectiveness of the wildfire mitigation program compared to other structure hardening, defensible space, vegetation management, and fuel reduction incentive programs.

(2) An evaluation of the overall wildfire risk reduction achieved statewide through awards of financial assistance under the wildfire mitigation program.

(3) Detailed information about the quantity, monetary value, geographic distribution, and categories of awards of financial assistance made under the wildfire mitigation program.

(4) Detailed information about the sources and amounts of funds appropriated or granted to the wildfire mitigation program.

(5) Detailed information about barriers encountered to completing work awarded financial assistance under the wildfire mitigation program, including state, regional, or local permitting requirements.

(6) Any other information the Office of Emergency Services determines is necessary or convenient to evaluate the financial assistance awarded under the program.

(7) An evaluation of additional funding required to expand the wildfire mitigation program to the seventh through tenth ranked counties, inclusive, based on the eligibility criteria developed pursuant to subdivision (a) of section 8654.8 of the Government Code dated January 29, 2025.

(c) This article shall remain in effect only until July 1, 2029, and as of that date is repealed.

Amendments pursuant to Option 1 or Option 2, above, would be in addition to the amendments to the findings and declarations offered by the Committee in **AMENDMENT #1.**

CWMP Funding Eligibility Criteria. A scoring methodology was developed by CWMP to prioritize financial assistance to areas based on the following criteria:

- 1) Area and community vulnerable to wildfire.
- 2) The impact of future climate risk factors on area and community wildfire vulnerability assessments.
- 3) Factors that lead some populations to experience a greater risk to wildfire, adverse health outcomes, or an inhibited ability to respond to a wildfire, such as certain socioeconomic characteristics. (GOV § 8654.7)

Ranking Counties. CWMP ranked each county according to four Wildfire Risk factors, related to proximity to and fire probabilities within fire hazard severity zones (FHSZ) and five Social Vulnerability factors. Counties were ranked according to the sum of those factors.

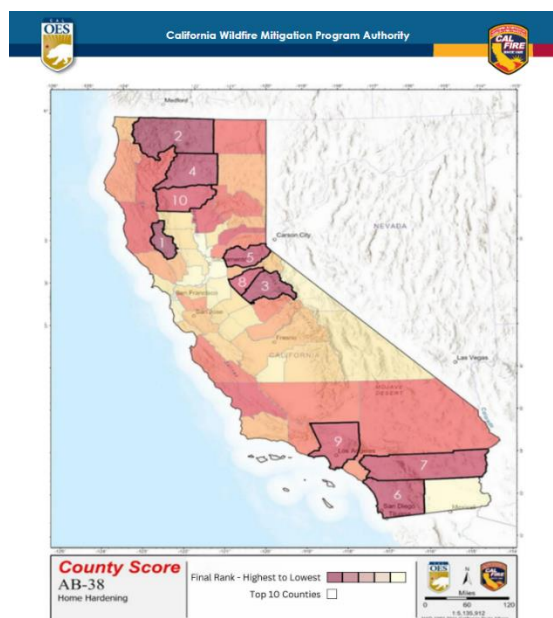
Wildfire Risk factors:

1. Total parcels in FHSZ
2. Percentage of parcels in FHSZ
3. Current fire probability averaged across the FHSZ, per [Pyrologix](#)
4. Future fire probability averaged across the FHSZ, per [Westerling](#)

Social Vulnerability factors:

1. Residents over the age 65 and/or under the age of 5
2. Residents in poverty
3. Residents with a disability
4. Residents without English fluency
5. Residents without a car

The top ten counties under this ranking, developed January 29, 2025, are the Counties of Lake, Siskiyou, Tuolumne, Shasta, El Dorado, San Diego, Riverside, Calaveras, Los Angeles, and Tehama.



Implementation of CWMP and Financial Assistance. A project applicant under CWMP receives an assessment of their home to determine where ignition-resistant materials would be best applied to their structure(s) and financial assistance to implement those retrofits. As a pilot program, CWMP authorized applications from homeowners in the top six ranked counties: Lake, Siskiyou, Tuolumne, Shasta, El Dorado, and San Diego.

Slow path to program goals. The goal of CWMP, which sunsets on July 1, 2029, is to complete retrofits to 2,500 homes in the six pilot counties. According to participating communities, as of April 2026, 140 homes have been completed and 27 are in progress.

Homes completed by year:

2024	2025	Jan-April 2026
11	107	22

Committee amendments will be taken in Senate Emergency Management Committee. Due to legislative time constraints, amendments the author agrees to in this Committee will be taken in the Senate Emergency Management Committee's hearing on this bill.

Related Legislation

AB 38 (Wood, Chapter 391, Statutes of 2019) requires CalOES and the Department to enter into a joint powers agreement to administer a program to encourage cost-effective structure hardening and retrofitting.

AB 2911 (Friedman, Chapter 641, Statutes of 2018) requires the SFM, in consultation with the Department and the Director of Housing and Community Development Department, to develop a list of low-cost retrofits, and a guidance document related to regionally appropriate vegetation management suggestions, that provide for comprehensive site and structure fire risk reduction.

SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS

AMENDMENT 1

Revise proposed Sec. 1 as follows:

[...]

(e) ~~The California Wildfire Mitigation Program (CWMP) was awarded a Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to develop Financial Assistance Program (CWMFAP) developed~~ a criteria and scoring methodology to prioritize financial assistance to areas and communities; create a framework for wildfire community hardening; and fund pilot hardening programs in Lake, San Diego, Shasta, El Dorado, Tuolumne, and Siskiyou Counties. ~~based upon criteria that include, but are not limited to, all of the following:~~

~~(1) Area and community vulnerability to wildfire.~~

~~(2) The impact of future climate risk factors on area and community wildfire vulnerability assessments.~~

~~(3) Factors that lead some populations to experience a greater risk to wildfire, adverse health outcomes, or an inhibited ability to respond to a wildfire, including socioeconomic characteristics of the areas or communities that would be protected by financial assistance.~~

(f) The CWMP FEMA HMA grant funding has been fully allocated for the expenditures described in section (e).

~~The CWMFAP is only accepting applications for financial assistance in specific areas within the following communities:~~

~~(1) Kelseyville Riviera in Lake County.~~

~~(2) Mount Shasta in Siskiyou County.~~

~~(3) Ponderosa Hills, Mira Monte, and Sunrise Subdivisions in Tuolumne County.~~

~~(4) Whitmore, Lakehead, and Oak Run in Shasta County.~~

~~(5) Weber Creek in El Dorado County.~~

~~(6) Dulzura, Campo, Potrero in San Diego County.~~

~~(g) Based on the current criteria and scoring methodology to prioritize financial assistance developed by the CWMFAP, this bill proposes to provide home hardening assistance to the top ten counties, which are all of the following:~~

~~(1) Lake County.~~

~~(2) Siskiyou County.~~

~~(3) Tuolumne County.~~

~~(4) Shasta County.~~

~~(5) El Dorado County.~~

~~(6) San Diego County.~~

~~(7) Riverside County.~~

~~(8) Calaveras County.~~

~~(9) Los Angeles County.~~

~~(10) Tehama County.~~

SUPPORT

American Property Casualty Insurance Association
League of California Cities (if amended)
National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies
Pacific Association of Domestic Insurance Companies
Personal Insurance Federation of California
Rural County Representatives of California (if amended)

OPPOSITION

None Received

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