

- b) Facilitate vegetation management, the creation and maintenance of defensible space, and other fuel modification activities that provide neighborhood or communitywide benefits against wildfire.
- 6) Requires the SFM, in consultation with the CAL FIRE and the Department of Housing and Community Development to identify building retrofits and structure hardening measures eligible for financial assistance.
- 7) Directs CAL FIRE to identify defensible space, vegetation management, and fuel modification activities eligible for financial assistance.
- 8) Designates wildfire hazard areas eligible for financial assistance.
- 9) Requires the CWMP to develop criteria and a scoring methodology to prioritize the following:
 - a) Areas and communities vulnerability to wildfire.
 - b) The impact of future climate risk factors on area and community wildfire vulnerability assessments.
 - c) Factors that lead some populations to experience a greater risk to wildfire, adverse health outcomes, or an inhibited ability to respond to a wildfire.
- 10) Requires the CWMP to submit a report to the Legislature regarding program implementation by July 1, 2028.
- 11) Sunsets the CWMP on July 1, 2029.

This bill:

- 1) Makes various findings and declarations for purposes of this bill, including the following:
 - a) The CWMP was awarded a Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to develop 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 the Counties of Lake, San Diego, Shasta, El Dorado, Tuolumne, and Siskiyou.
 - b) The CWMP HMA grant funding has been fully allocated to the expenditures noted in a) above; and,
 - c) It is further the intent of the Legislature to fund home hardening, through state or federal funding mechanisms, to expand the CWMP to the top seventh to tenth ranked counties, inclusive, with the greatest combined risk

of wildfire and social vulnerability based on eligibility criteria developed as of January 29, 2025, or an updated successor ranking.

- 2) Directs the CWMP to provide financial assistance to the top seventh through tenth ranked counties, inclusive, with the greatest combined risk of wildfire and social vulnerability based on the eligibility criteria developed as of January 29, 2025, or an updated successor ranking, if one of the following conditions are met:
 - a) Federal funding received to implement the CWMP is not liquidated by July 1, 2029, and shall be reverted to the CWMP JPA for this purpose; or
 - b) The Legislature makes an appropriation or additional federal funding is received for this purpose.
- 3) Requires the CWMP implementation report due to the Legislature by July 1, 2028, to include an evaluation of additional funding required to expand the CWMP to the seventh through tenth ranked counties.

Background

Author's statement. According to the author, "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."

FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). The HMGP funds plans and projects that reduce the effects of future natural disasters. In California, these funds are administered by the Cal OES Hazard Mitigation Assistance Branch. These funding opportunities provide support for communities to implement mitigation activities to reduce risk to life and property from natural hazards. In California, natural hazards include wildfire, earthquake, drought, extreme weather, flooding, and other natural hazards as defined in the State Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Under the HMGP, federal funding is available for 75% of project costs, with the other 25% non-federal share being matched by either the state or local jurisdictions. After a disaster meets a certain damage threshold, the president authorizes a disaster declaration and opens this federal funding. Available HMPG funding is divided into three main categories: 7% for planning-related projects, 5%

for initiatives, and the remainder for construction projects. Projects are evaluated based on the criteria and requirements set forth in the Federal Disaster Declaration.

Overview of the CWMP. As noted in the CWMP March 2026 Status Report, the primary goal of the CWMP is to provide financial assistance to underserved populations in wildfire-prone areas throughout California. A project applicant receives an assessment of their home to determine where ignition-resistant materials would be best applied to their structure and financial assistance to implement those retrofits. The CWMP covers the full cost of retrofit and defensible space implementation, upwards of \$40,000, for applicants earning up to 120% of the area median income. At the same time, CWMP is structured to work with all community members and includes established income guidelines for participation.

In addition to providing financial support, the CWMP delivers educational resources on wildfire home hardening and defensible space, as well as technical assistance and grant management support to help communities implement the program at the local level. The intent of the CWMP is to retrofit more than 2,000 homes at the neighborhood and community scale by 2029. According to figures from the March Status Report, 143 homes have been completed and 24 are underway, suggesting that progress toward achieving the program's goal of hardening over 2,000 homes has been slow to date.

The county selection process. As directed by AB 38, the CWMP developed a criteria and scoring methodology to prioritize financial assistance to areas and communities 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; and, 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.

To comply with this requirement, all 58 counties were ranked on nine factors, four wildfire risk factors related to proximity to fire hazard severity zones (FHSZ) and fire probabilities, and five social vulnerability factors, outlined below:

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

Each county received a ranking based on the sum of their respective factors. The top ten counties under this ranking, developed January 29, 2025, in order of 1-10 are: Lake, Siskiyou, Tuolumne, Shasta, El Dorado, San Diego, Riverside, Calaveras, Los Angeles, and Tehama. The author's district, Los Angeles, is the ninth-ranked county.

Limited funding. The FEMA share of the CWMP consists of about \$95 million from HMGP and the state share is about \$21 million. The CWMP leveraged the federal HMGP funds to establish home hardening pilot programs in the top six ranked counties of Lake, Siskiyou, Tuolumne, Shasta, El Dorado, and San Diego. Five of the six CWMP participating counties submitted their HMGP applications to FEMA in 2021 and 2022, while the sixth demonstration community, Siskiyou County, will implement a program using State funds only. The CWMP reports that, within each pilot county, project areas were selected with input from local representatives with on-the-ground expertise and required to be in areas at elevated wildfire risk with high concentrations of socially vulnerable residents.

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 grant recipients. According to Cal OES, grants cannot be transferred to a different entity once selected by FEMA. These funds are fully obligated to communities with the highest risk, leveraging the existing ranking methodology. Grant agreements have already been executed between the federal government, the state, and the pilot counties.

This bill requires the CWMP to provide financial assistance to the seventh through tenth ranked counties, if the existing funds are not liquidated by July 1, 2029, as specified, or the Legislature makes an appropriation, or additional federal funds are received for this purpose. The author's district, Los Angeles, is the ninth ranked county.

Proposed author's amendments. To ensure future CWMP funding reaches more counties, the author is proposing amendments to include additional counties in the redistribution of funds after July 1, 2029, and future funding allocations, and to clarify that the CWMP must maximize cost-effective structure hardening practices.

These amendments will be accepted by the author in committee and are described below:

Section 8654.2 of the Government Code is amended to read:

*(f) It is further the intent of the Legislature to fund home hardening, through state or federal funding mechanisms, to expand the California Wildfire Mitigation Financial Assistance Program to **additional counties** ~~the top 7th to 10th ranked counties, inclusive,~~ with the greatest combined risk of wildfire and social vulnerability based on the eligibility criteria developed pursuant to subdivision (a) of Section 8654.8, dated January 29, 2025, or an updated successor ranking.*

Section 8654.7 of the Government Code is amended to read:

*(d) Federal funding received to implement this article that is not liquidated by July 1, 2029, shall be reverted to the joint powers authority for the purpose of funding home hardening in **additional counties** ~~the top 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) of Section 8654.8, dated January 29, 2025, or an updated successor ranking.*

Section 8654.8 of the Government Code is amended to read:

*(b) ~~The~~ Upon an appropriation by the Legislature for this purpose or the receipt of additional federal funding, the joint powers authority shall provide financial assistance under the wildfire mitigation program to the **counties** ~~ten counties 7th to 10th ranked counties, inclusive,~~ with the greatest combined risk of wildfire and social vulnerability based on the eligibility criteria developed pursuant to subdivision (a), ~~which, as of January 29, 2025, are the Counties of Lake, Siskiyou, Tuolumne, Shasta, El Dorado, San Diego, Riverside, Calaveras, Los Angeles, and Tehama.~~ dated January 29, 2025, or an updated successor ranking.*

*(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, **consistent with paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) of***

Section 8654.4 of the Government Code.

Section 8654.10 of the Government Code is amended to read:

*(b)(7) An evaluation of the amount of additional funding that would be required to expand the wildfire mitigation program to the **counties with the greatest combined risk of wildfire and social vulnerability 7th to 10th ranked counties, inclusive,** based on the eligibility criteria developed pursuant to subdivision (a) of Section 8654.8, dated January 29, 2025.*

Recommended amendments. To maximize the discretion of Cal OES in implementing the CWMP, the Committee may wish to consider amending this bill to 1) add intent language to authorize Cal OES to determine how much of the existing funding allocations can be modified without impacting federal funds; and 2) clarify that CalOES shall have maximum discretion to adjust its funding allocations and strategy to include more counties with smaller dollar, larger scale whole community approaches to hardening that strategically and cost effectively maximize risk mitigation. Specifically, the Committee may wish to amend this bill as described below:

Section 8654.2 of the Government Code is amended to read:

(g) It is further the intent of the Legislature to authorize the Office of Emergency Services to determine how much of the existing funding allocations can be modified without impacting federal funds.

Section 8654.7 of the Government Code is amended to read:

(e) Notwithstanding subdivision (b), the Office of Emergency Services shall have maximum discretion to adjust its funding allocations and strategy to include more counties with smaller dollar, larger scale whole community approaches to hardening that strategically and cost effectively maximize risk mitigation.

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

SUPPORT:

American Property Casualty Insurance Association
California State Association of Counties
National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies

Pacific Association of Domestic Insurance Companies
Personal Insurance Federation of California

OPPOSITION:

None on file

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: In support of this bill, the California State Association of Counties writes that, “SB 1270 would extend financial assistance to counties ranked seventh through tenth in combined wildfire risk and social vulnerability. By building on the state’s existing efforts and further targeting resources to the highest-risk communities, the bill advances cost-effective, data-driven investments in wildfire mitigation. For these reasons, we are pleased to support SB 1270. We also respectfully encourage expanding the program to include all 58 counties, with funding prioritized based on demonstrated levels of wildfire risk and need.”

DUAL REFERRAL: Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee and Senate Emergency Management Committee