Date of Hearing: August 5, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
Buffy Wicks, Chair
SB 1370 (Stern) – As Amended July 2, 2026

Policy Committee: Natural Resources Vote: 10 - 0

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: No Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill establishes a streamlined authorization process at the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), in coordination with the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA), referred to as “consolidated review agencies,” for covered wildfire mitigation projects (CWMPs).

More specifically, this bill, among other things:

1) Defines a CWMP as any one of the following categories of activities undertaken for the purpose of reducing wildfire risk: (a) required by law, (b) identified in a utility’s wildfire mitigation plan or in a community wildfire preparedness plan, or (c) in a plan proposed by the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), and lists the activities that qualify as a CWMP.

2) Defines “expedited authorization” as a written decision by the Secretary of CalEPA or the Secretary of CNRA authorizing a CWMP and requiring the CWMP to comply with the State Environmental Protection Plan (EPP), as defined, the issuance of which waives the requirements that the CWMP comply with state statutes, rules, regulations, and requirements within the jurisdiction of the boards, departments, and agencies within the consolidated review agencies.

3) Provides that without limiting any other statutory exemption or categorical exemption, notwithstanding any other law, and consistent with Executive Order No. N-38-25, any state-level environmental and resource permits, approvals, consultations, and reviews required for a CWMP shall be consolidated into a single coordinated review by a project review team, as defined, and administered jointly by the consolidated review agencies.

4) Requires specified timber operations to comply with the Z’berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act of 1973 and the Forest Practice Rules and provides that this bill does not affect any stipulated agreement issued by an administrative law judge for an electrical corporation or public utility regarding applicability of the Forest Practice Act Rules to that utility’s operations.

5) Specifies requirements related to a single, consolidated application package and requires the consolidated review agencies to issue an authorization within 60 calendar days of application receipt, provided the application is complete, but authorizes the applicant and consolidated review agencies to extend the 60-day timeline if both parties agree more information is required.

6) Requires an authorization to include a description of the project; the basis for eligibility; a list of permits, agreements, consultations, or authorizations waived by the review agencies' authorization; and the required environmental protection measures, including documentation of compliance with the EPP.

7) Provides that an expedited authorization issued pursuant to this bill waives the requirement that the CWMP comply with certain state statutes, rules, regulations, and requirements and replaces any other permit, agreement, or authorization required by state statutes, rules, regulations, and requirements, as specified.

8) Excludes from the expedited authorization any applicable pesticide requirement under certain sections of the Food and Agricultural Code or the implementing regulations, as specified.

9) Subjects any person who intentionally, knowingly, or negligently violates any provision of the EPP to a civil penalty imposed by a court in an amount not to exceed $10,000 for each violation, as specified.

10) Limits CWMPs to specified sizes and completed within two years of approval by the consolidated review agencies; restricts allowable project activities that may lead to "type conversion" in certain landscapes; and requires CAL FIRE to conduct a risk reduction per cost unit for all publicly funded projects.

11) Requires the consolidated review agencies, on or before July 1, 2029, to report to the Legislature on the implementation of all wildfire mitigation projects permitted in compliance with the EPP as authorized by this bill, as specified.

12) Sunsets on December 31, 2030.

FISCAL EFFECT:

As discussed in the background, this bill codifies (with some modifications) a 2025 emergency proclamation (EP) that suspends all statutes, regulations, rules, and requirements that fall under the jurisdiction of CalEPA and CNRA for critical fuels reduction projects. Several state agencies assert that while the streamlined permitting process under the EP has accelerated project approvals, it has not reduced existing workload. Instead, it has required coordinated review of hundreds of complex projects and diverted staff from core responsibilities such as timber harvest reviews, coastal development permits, and geological hazard assessments. Without added staff capacity, agencies face growing backlogs, reduced oversight, and increased risks to public safety and environmental compliance.

Relatedly, the 2026 Budget Act approved $719,000 and $1.8 million in reimbursement authority in fiscal year (FY) 2026-27 and $710,000 and $1.6 million in reimbursement authority in FY 2027-28 (Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration Fund (TRFRF)) spread across CNRA, the Department of Conservation (two positions), the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) (three positions), the Coastal Commission (four positions), and the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) for wildfire and vegetation management streamlining under the EP. In their request for these temporary resources, the administration noted that "future funding needs to support [state of emergency] streamlined permitting workload will be evaluated after this period."

1) CNRA estimates annual General Fund costs of approximately $1.4 million until FY 2030-31, for about six limited-term staff and information technology storage and licensing. Tasks include administering a centralized intake and one-stop review process for CWMPs; ensuring conformity with EPP best management practices; providing written authorizations; and reporting on implementation, non-compliance, enforcement actions, staff adequacy, and herbicide use.

2) CalEPA estimates annual General Fund costs of $342,000 until FY 2030-31 to participate in project reviews and approvals and for interagency coordination.

3) The Department of Pesticide Regulation anticipates costs of an unknown amount, ranging from minor and absorbable to the low hundreds of thousands of dollars, depending on the extent to which the department is requested to participate in permitting processes for projects authorized to use herbicides.

4) CAL FIRE preliminarily estimates annual General Fund costs of approximately $6.5 million until FY 2030-31 for vehicles, software contracts, and 26 positions across various classifications to conduct technical forestry and environmental analyses to support the consolidated environmental review and authorization process, conduct enforcement, and create and use a methodology for the standardized quantification of risk-reduction benefit of all publicly funded projects.

5) The California Geological Survey (CGS) estimates costs of approximately $1.4 million in year one and $1.1 million in year two and until FY 2030-31 (TRFRF) for five positions, vehicles, and equipment (such as photogrammetric drones for inspections). CGS anticipates a senior engineering geologist will serve as the primary technical liaison with applicants and partner agencies, coordinate staff workloads, ensure consistency in technical reviews across regions, and oversee implementation of the review program; three engineering geologists located in the Santa Rosa, Redding, and Los Angeles CGS regional offices will conduct project reviews, site inspections, compliance and performance monitoring, technical analyses, and reporting; and one research data specialist will provide project geospatial tracking analysis, field data processing, and data management.

6) The State Water Board estimates annual costs of at least $6.8 million until FY 2030-31 for State Water Board and regional water board staff to participate in required expedited project review and interagency coordination for CWMPs within the 60-day timeline and to conduct audits and field inspections of projects to verify compliance with the EPP. In addition to staff costs, the State Water Board anticipates one-time contracting costs of $500,000 to develop adequate informational technology (IT) resources for project intake and review and $250,000 in annual licensing costs for software to support the IT resources (TRFRF, General Fund, Water Rights Fund).

7) The California Coastal Commission estimates costs of approximately $537,000 for two positions in FY 2027-28 (until, as discussed above, recently approved funding for four limited-term positions expires) followed by $1.5 million annually for six limited-term positions from FY 2028-29 through FY 2030-31 (General Fund, TRFRF) to collaborate with applicants and the other departments on the project review team and conduct expedited review of proposed wildfire resilience projects throughout the coastal zone to determine and document whether each project complies with the EPP and meets the other criteria in the bill. The commission further notes that under the EP, approximately one-third of the statewide

projects were located in the coastal zone. The commission expects a similarly large number of projects to continue to be located on the coast under this bill.

8) The Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) estimates annual General Fund costs until FY 2030-31 of roughly $2.2 million for 12 positions to implement this bill. State Parks anticipates a significant increase in the number of fuel reduction projects in and adjacent to state parks, which would require significant engagement from department staff to review projects and avoid and minimize detrimental impacts to the state park system.

   State Parks further notes that under existing agreements with Pacific Gas and Electric, the department receives annual reimbursements of roughly $400,000 for reviewing utility line or pole maintenance projects within the state park system. If utilities are not required to consult with State Parks or obtain a right-of-entry permit from the department to conduct work, the department argues it would lose this revenue source.

9) CDFW estimates General Fund costs of approximately $2.2 million in FY 2027-28 and $1.9 million from FY 2028-29 through FY 2030-31 for eight positions and six vehicles to implement this bill. CDFW reports its staff spent roughly 694 hours per month on EP implementation from June 2025 through May 2026 and anticipates workload of a similar magnitude should this bill go into effect.

10) Cost pressures (Trial Court Trust Fund, General Fund) of an unknown amount to the courts to adjudicate additional filings resulting from this bill. Costs will depend on the number of cases filed and the amount of court time needed to resolve each case. It generally costs approximately $1,000 to operate a courtroom for one hour. Although courts are not funded based on workload, increased pressure on the Trial Court Trust Fund may create a demand for increased funding for courts from the General Fund. The state budget provides annual General Fund backfills to the Trial Court Trust Fund to offset revenue reductions, totaling approximately $117.3 million in FY 2025-26.

Finally, by waiving a CWMP's obligation to comply with state statutes, rules, regulations, and requirements within the jurisdiction of the consolidated review agencies and replacing any other permit, agreement, or authorization required by those agencies, the bill will likely result in indeterminate but potentially significant workload or cost savings to affected agencies to the extent that expedited authorization reduces or eliminates the need for stand-alone agency permitting and review.

COMMENTS:

1) **Purpose.** In 2025, the Legislature required the California Earthquake Authority (CEA) to conduct a study and report on options to enhance natural catastrophe resiliency. In its report, released in April 2026, the CEA recommends establishing “in statute the authority to facilitate ongoing fast-track environmental permitting for critical, short-term projects” covered under the Governor’s EP. In response, this bill aims to streamline the review and approval process for certain wildfire mitigation projects. According to the author:

   > SB 1370 builds on the success of Governor Newsom's emergency wildfire streamlining efforts by creating a permanent framework for the expedited review of qualifying wildfire mitigation projects…By reducing unnecessary permitting delays while maintaining

environmental safeguards, SB 1370 will help California better protect communities, infrastructure, and natural resources from catastrophic wildfire.

2) **Background.** In March 2025, following the devastating Los Angeles fires, the Governor issued an EP ordering a suspension of all statutes, regulations, rules, and requirements that fall within the jurisdiction of the boards, departments, and offices within CalEPA and CNRA to the extent necessary for expediting critical fuels reduction projects initiated in 2025. In December 2025, the Governor decreed that a project must be initiated by May 1, 2026, to be eligible for the streamlined process. The EP requires an individual or entity who wishes to conduct an activity under the suspension to first request that the appropriate agency secretary make a determination that the proposed activity is eligible for the suspension and requires the relevant secretary to use "sound direction" in applying this authority to ensure the suspension serves the purpose of accelerating critical fuels reduction projects, while at the same time protecting public health and the environment. The EP requires each agency to maintain on its website a list of all approved suspensions and any activity conducted under the suspension to comply with the EPP or a comparable plan, as specified. According to the state's dashboard for tracking permits approved under the EP, 230 projects have been approved; 186 projects are underway, and 48 projects have been completed.

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