
SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES AND WATER

Senator Josh Becker, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	SB 899	Hearing Date:	March 24, 2026
Author:	Grove		
Version:	March 18, 2026 Amended		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Edith Hannigan		

Subject: Fire prevention: Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force: wildfire smoke

SUMMARY

This bill would require the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force, on or before July 1, 2028, and in cooperation with the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment and the Department of Public Health, to assess the health costs and impacts of wildfire smoke, and to develop a model to determine the health benefits of achieving the goals of the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan.

BACKGROUND AND EXISTING LAW

Smoke gets in your eyes....and lungs, and bloodstream. As catastrophically destructive wildfires continue to impact California – most recently the Palisades and Eaton fires in Los Angeles, January 2025 – the health effects of secondary wildfire impacts, such as smoke exposure, are becoming more apparent. Research is increasingly demonstrating the negative health effects of wildfire smoke, including exposure to significant levels of PM_{2.5}, can lead to additional deaths attributable to a discrete wildfire event.

Smoke is made up of tiny, mostly carbon-based particles measured in micrometers. Fine particulate matter – those particles smaller than 2.5 micrometers in diameter – are called “PM_{2.5},” and are generally small enough to enter and deposit in the airways and alveoli of the lungs. These particles can be coughed up or otherwise disposed of by the human body, but they can also enter other organ systems. Besides black carbon, wildfire smoke can also contain compounds such as dioxins or phthalates, which are particularly prevalent when a wildfire burns structures such as homes and business. Those compounds are formed from burning plastic and other man-made materials.

The adverse health impacts from exposure to wildfire smoke are of increasing and widespread interest to academic research due to the potential for widespread impact to public and environmental health and safety. Among other findings, research on rhesus macaques at UC Davis during wildfires in 2008 and again after the Camp Fire in 2018 showed impacts to the monkeys similar to the human lung disease Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder (COPD) and an elevated risk of miscarriage in pregnant monkeys when exposed to the wildfire smoke early in pregnancy.

In addition, Stanford University evaluated the excess mortality from smoke exposure after the January 2025 Los Angeles wildfires. Their research estimated a total of 14 additional deaths can be attributed to the wildfires due to acute wildfire smoke exposure.

Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force (Task Force). Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr, signed Executive Order No. B-52-18 on May 10, 2018, and established the Task Force to oversee its implementation. The Executive Order authorized state agencies to improve forest health and restoration, provide regulatory relief, reduce barriers to prescribed fire boost education and outreach to landowners, and support wood products innovation.

The Task Force issued a “Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan” (Action Plan) in January 2021, and the Legislature required the Task Force to establish an implementation strategy by January 2022, which they did (Public Resources Code (PRC) §4771). The Task Force is required to update the Action Plan every five years (PRC §4771(f)).

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the Task Force (PRC §4005).
- 2) Requires the Task Force to update the Action Plan every five years, beginning March 1, 2026 (PRC §4771(f)).
- 3) Requires the implementation strategy include specific actions:
 - a) Increasing the pace and scale of wildfire and forest resilience activities (PRC §4771(c)(1));
 - b) Strengthening the protection of communities and reducing their fire risk (PRC §4771(c)(2));
 - c) Creating a sustainable wood products market in California (PRC §4771(c)(3);
 - d) Sustaining and expanding outdoor recreation on forestland (PRC §4771(c)(4));
 - e) Protecting and expanding urban canopy and forestry (PRC §4771(c)(5)); and
 - f) Driving innovation and measuring progress in achieving the above goals (PRC §4771(c)(6)).

PROPOSED LAW

This bill would:

- 1) Require the Task Force, on or before July 1, 2028, to cooperate with the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) and the Department of Public Health (DPH) to assess the health costs and impacts of wildfire smoke using existing wildfire smoke and health data.
- 2) Require the assessment to include the following:
 - a) Estimate the number of emergency room visits and deaths from wildfire smoke in California since July 1, 2018;
 - b) Develop a cost estimate for the health care costs of smoke from wildfires in California since July 1, 2018;
 - c) Develop a model to determine the approximate health benefits (both cost and human health benefits) of achieving the goals of the Action Plan; and
 - d) Make recommendations on how the Action Plan can increase its health benefits.

- 3) Allow the Task Force to enter into contracts with an independent group to assist with the assessment.
- 4) Requires the Task Force to include the assessment and additional actions to reduce the health impacts of wildfire smoke in the first update to the Action Plan that occurs after completion of the assessment.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT

According to the author, “Wildfire smoke is impacting the health of millions of Californians, yet we do not consistently measure the full public health and economic costs. SB 899 helps us better understand these impacts so the state can make informed decisions and ensure our policies reflect the true cost of wildfires on our communities.”

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION

None received.

COMMENTS

Promoting a more complete understanding of the benefits of wildfire resilience.

There is general scientific consensus about the value of wildfire mitigation activities for forest health, ecological values, habitat, water quality, and other natural resources. However, catastrophic wildfires also impact public health through smoke inhalation. These public health impacts can be felt hundreds and even thousands of miles away as smoke travels through the atmosphere. This bill would help the state quantify the negative public health impacts of wildfire smoke, and understand the benefits of wildfire mitigation activities as they relate to reducing those impacts.

Related Legislation

SB 223 (Alvarado-Gil, 2025) would have required DPH to maintain a statewide integrated wildfire smoke and health data platform to provide information to understand the negative health impacts of wildfire smoke and evaluate the impacts of wildfire mitigation on health outcomes. This bill was held on the Senate Appropriations Committee suspense file.

SB 945 (Alvarado-Gil, 2024) is identical to SB 223 above. This bill was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee on the suspense file.

AB 2243 (Eduardo Garcia, Chapter 778, Statutes of 2022) requires the Division of Occupational Safety and Health to consider revising the wildfire smoke standard to reduce the existing air quality index threshold for PM_{2.5} at which respiratory equipment becomes mandatory for farmworkers.

AB 661 (McCarty, Chapter 392, Statutes of 2019) requires the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality District to prepare a wildfire smoke emergency plan.

AB 836 (Wicks, Chapter 393, Statutes of 2019) establishes the Wildfire Smoke Clean Air Centers for Vulnerable Populations Incentive Pilot Program. This program sunset on January 1, 2025.

SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS: None

SUPPORT

California Forest Watershed Alliance (sponsor)
Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA)
Bay Area Council
California Farm Bureau
California Forestry Association
League of California Cities
Megafire Action
Sierra Business Council
The Nature Conservancy

OPPOSITION

None Received

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