

Date of Hearing: June 22, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

SB 973 (Becker) – As Amended June 9, 2026

**SENATE VOTE:** 37-0

**SUBJECT:** Wildfire County Coordinator Program

**SUMMARY:** Codifies the Wildfire County Coordinator Program (County Coordinator Program) into state statute.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Establishes within the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) a Deputy Director Community Wildfire Preparedness and Mitigation to be responsible for fire preparedness and mitigation missions of the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). (Public Resources Code (PRC) 4209)
- 2) Requires the OSFM to establish the Wildfire Mitigation Advisory Committee to provide a public forum to solicit and consider public input on programs and activities and to advise the Deputy Director in developing and implementing programs and activities. (PRC 4209.4)
- 3) Defines the California Wildfire Mitigation Program Joint Powers Authority (WMP JPA) as the agency or entity designated or created pursuant to a joint powers agreement between the Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) and CAL FIRE to develop and administer a comprehensive wildfire mitigation program. (Government Code 8654.2, 8654.4)
- 4) 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. (PRC 4005)
- 5) 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. (PRC 4771)
- 6) Defines “Community Wildfire Protection Plan” as a plan for an at-risk community that (a) is developed within the context of the collaborative agreements and the guidance established by the Wildland Fire Leadership Council and agreed to by the applicable local government, local fire department, and state agency responsible for forest management, in consultation with interested parties and the federal land management agencies managing land in the vicinity of the at-risk community; (b) identifies and prioritizes areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommends the types and methods of treatment on federal and non-federal land that will protect one or more at-risk communities and essential infrastructure; and, (c) recommends measures to reduce structural ignitability throughout the at-risk community. (16 United States Code 6511(3))

**THIS BILL:**

- 1) Defines the California Fire Safe Council (CFSC) as the non-profit entity that supports communities across the state in wildfire preparedness and resiliency through grant funding, programmatic support, and technical assistance.
- 2) Requires CAL FIRE to do all of the following:
  - a) Establish recommended guidance for the use of available wildfire risk modeling and analysis tools by organizations, including but not limited to fire departments, local department units, local fire safe councils, resource conservation districts, tribal entities, counties, cities, special districts, communities, and mitigation practitioners, seeking to support the work of the County Coordinator Program, in consultation with the Risk Modeling Advisory Workgroup within CAL FIRE. Prohibits the guidance from applying to or affecting the regulation, or use of catastrophe or wildfire risk models used by insurers for ratemaking filings under Insurance Code Section 1861.05.
  - b) Develop guidance and tools to support county-level wildfire risk assessments, the identification of high-risk communities, prioritization of mitigation activities, and evaluation of quantifiable risk reduction outcomes;
  - c) Support the development, updating, or procurement of county-level wildfire risk assessments;
  - d) Maintain oversight authority for program implementation, performance, and alignment with Community Wildfire Protection Plans and CAL FIRE's Unit Fire Plans, and ensure, to the extent feasible, activities conducted align with those relevant fire agency plans and existing applicable state and local fire agency standards in order to avoid duplicative planning and reporting requirements, reduce administrative burden, and improve coordination; and,
  - e) In coordination with the Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI), develop guidance and templates for the creation or revision of county-level wildfire resilience prioritization and implementation plans, along with accompanying guidance for integrating these plans with county and local Community Wildfire Protection Plans, regional resilience plans, and related wildfire resilience programs.
- 3) Requires CAL FIRE to establish the County Coordinator Program and enter into an agreement with the CFSC to administer and deliver the County Coordinator Program.
- 4) Establishes that the purpose of the County Coordinator Program is to support county-level coordination of and capacity for wildfire mitigation, prevention, preparedness, and recovery activities, including, but not limited to, evacuation and resilience planning, data collection, public education and outreach, smoke mitigation, home hardening, defensible space, fuels reduction, and community-scale mitigation.
- 5) Requires the County Coordinator Program to do all of the following:

- a) Establish capacity in participating counties to plan and execute community- and county-level wildfire prevention, preparedness, mitigation, and recovery activities in support of the Action Plan;
- b) Support the use of the risk assessment tools and guidance to enhance county-level risk assessment, wildfire planning, and project prioritization, including the integration with Community Wildfire Protection Plans;
- c) Facilitate local coordination on priority wildfire resilience planning and implementation with federal, local, and regional wildfire resilience partners, including, but not limited to, fire departments, local department units, local fire safe councils, resource conservation districts, tribal entities, counties, cities, special districts, communities, and mitigation practitioners;
- d) Develop and disseminate educational materials and programming on wildfire and smoke mitigation and preparedness, including targeted outreach to high-risk communities and populations;
- e) Provide information on available local, state, and federal financial resources to support wildfire resilience planning and implementation;
- f) Support local capacity to access and implement state or federal wildfire resilience funding programs;
- g) Support the planning and implementation of home hardening, defensible space, and related mitigation activities, through activities such as the following:
  - i) Implementing cost-reduction strategies, standardized implementation practices, contractor or workforce development, and data collection to evaluate program effectiveness;
  - ii) Implementing strategies to lower the cost of home hardening and defensible space, including bulk-purchasing agreements, shared procurement, and other logistical efficiencies;
  - iii) Establishing clear guidelines, standardized scopes of work, and cost estimates for common retrofits; and,
  - iv) Identifying, training, and creating a centralized list of wildfire mitigation practitioners.
- h) Coordinate with the WMP JPA to improve access to and streamline financial assistance for home hardening and defensible space in high-risk communities;
- i) Support activities to increase community resilience to smoke, including, but not limited to, increasing community access to indoor clean air spaces, distribution of high efficiency particulate air filters, educational initiatives, and improved communication of planned prescribed burns. County coordinators may disseminate the latest information from air districts, public health departments, and other partners to support outreach and education efforts; and,

- j) Collect data on local mitigation and preparedness activities, including costs and quantifiable risk reduction outcomes.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- LCI estimates one-time costs of \$870,000 spread over two years for two limited-term positions to develop the wildfire resilience guidance, templates, and implementation guidance as required by the bill.
- Unknown, but potentially significant ongoing costs (General Fund) for CAL FIRE to implement the provisions of this bill.
- Unknown, but potentially significant ongoing cost pressures (General Fund and other funds) to continue providing funding for home hardening certification and the County Coordinator Program after 2027.

**COMMENTS:**

1) **Author's statement:**

SB 973 establishes a statewide framework to strengthen community wildfire resilience by directing CAL FIRE to develop standardized wildfire risk assessment guidance and tools. This bill establishes in statute the Wildfire County Coordinator Program, which the CFSC has been successfully delivering in partnership with CAL FIRE since 2021 to increase county-level coordination of wildfire prevention, preparedness, mitigation, and recovery activities, by supporting a Country Coordinator position for each participating county. This bill expands the program to provide more tools and resources to the Coordinators and establishes a pathway to scale home hardening and defensible space activities through the program.

- 2) **California Fire Safe Council.** CFSC is a California non-profit organization established in 1993 as part of CAL FIRE to address the state's growing wildfire challenges. Over the years, CFSC moved out of CAL FIRE and became an independent non-profit organization, focusing on channeling federal, state, and private funds to support wildfire preparedness, mitigation, and resiliency across California.
- 3) **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 notes that CAL FIRE and other state agencies will increase their assistance programs and partnerships with local communities to reduce risk, improve preparedness, and foster resilience. While each community has a unique set of needs, values, risks, and capacities, CAL FIRE will develop a common framework to facilitate comprehensive local plans. State agencies have partnered with the CFSC, among others, to expand and integrate these efforts into creating fire-adapted communities.
- 4) **Wildfire County Coordinator Program.** Many counties have historically lacked the technical and administrative capacity to assess risk, prioritize projects, and implement

mitigation at scale. The County Coordinator Program was established in 2021 as a partnership between the CFSC and CAL FIRE to operationalize recommendations in the Action Plan at the county level. The purpose of the County Coordinator Program is to develop countywide community collaboration and coordination among wildfire mitigation groups and accelerate home hardening, defensible space implementation, and public education. The County Coordinator Program has provided funding to 52 of California's 58 counties to hire a County Coordinator and establish critical local capacity to plan and implement wildfire resilience strategies on the ground.

The 2025-2026 Budget Act of 2025 provided for a community hardening program at CAL FIRE that includes home hardening certification and a Wildfire County Coordinator Program, authorizing \$12.5 million dollars for it through 2027, and required the county coordinators to prioritize home hardening, defensible space, planning, and education for community-level wildfire mitigation efforts.

Since the County Coordinator Program's inception, county coordinators have secured more than \$104 million for local mitigation and preparedness projects; coordinated with more than 10,000 organizations to increase collaboration; and, established more than 100 new FireWise Communities and Fire Safe Councils.

A 2025 Program Evaluation Brief assessed early implementation of the County Coordinator Program and found CFSC's core statewide functions – grant administration, compliance support, technical assistance, convening and shared learning, and alignment/oversight – are in place and actively shaping county efforts.

- 5) **This bill.** In 2025, the Legislature assigned the California Earthquake Authority (CEA) the task of conducting a study and reporting on options to enhance natural catastrophe resiliency while meeting California's climate change and clean energy goals. The CEA's report, *Enhancing California's Resiliency to Natural Catastrophes: Senate Bill 254 (2025) Study Report*, released April 7, recommends the state support community mitigation planning and implementation through programs like the Wildfire County Coordinator Program to build local capacity for wildfire mitigation.

SB 973 codifies the existing County Coordinator Program in state law to build upon the existing County Coordinator Program infrastructure and create a long-term, sustainable mechanism for community-level execution of state strategy, tailored to meet local needs.

CFSC writes in support of this bill that through county coordinators, counties can effectively translate statewide wildfire resilience goals into coordinated, on-the-ground action aligned with regional landscape resilience efforts. By placing the County Coordinator Program into statute, SB 973 ensures stability, accountability, and long-term impact—while requiring no new appropriation to support this program this year beyond existing funding.

- 6) **Double referral.** This bill is also referred to the Assembly Emergency Management Committee.

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:****Support**

40 Acres Fire Safe Council  
 Alpine Viejas Fire Safe Council  
 American Property Casualty Insurance Association  
 Butte County Fire Safe Council  
 California Building Industry Association  
 California Fire Safe Council  
 California Forward  
 California State Association of Counties  
 Colusa County Resource Conservation District  
 Community Wildfire Planning Center  
 County of Kern  
 County of Mendocino  
 County of Mono  
 County of Monterey  
 County of Nevada  
 County of Sacramento  
 County of Sacramento Board of Supervisors  
 County of San Luis Obispo  
 County of San Luis Obispo Board of Supervisors  
 County of Trinity  
 Del Mar Mesa Fire Safe Council  
 Del Norte Fire Safe Council  
 Diablo Firesafe Council Executive Committee  
 Elevate California  
 Escondido Fire Safe Council  
 Eucalyptus Hills Landowner's Association  
 Fire Safe Council of San Diego County  
 Fire Safe Council of Siskiyou County  
 Fire Safe Marin  
 Firegeneration Collaborative  
 Firewerx  
 IBHS - Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety  
 Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara / California Department of Insurance  
 Inyo County Board of Supervisors  
 Irvine Ranch Conservancy  
 Kern Fire Safe Council  
 Lassen Fire Safe Council  
 Mariposa Fire Safe Council  
 Mattole Restoration Council  
 Megafire Action  
 Mendocino County Fire Safe Council  
 Mercury Insurance  
 Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District  
 Modoc Fire Safe Council  
 National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies  
 Neighborhood Partnership Housing Services, INC.  
 Net-zero California  
 Nevada County Board of Supervisors  
 Ojai Valley Fire Safe Council  
 Orange County Fire Authority  
 Pacific Association of Domestic Insurance Companies  
 Pacific Forest Trust  
 Pacific Gas and Electric Company  
 Palomar Mountain Fire Safe Council  
 Personal Insurance Federation of California  
 Resource Conservation District of Tehama County  
 Rural County Representatives of California  
 Safe Community Project  
 San Bernardino County  
 Santa Barbara County Fire Safe Council  
 Santa Clara County Firesafe Council  
 Sierra Business Council  
 Southern Humboldt Fire Safe Council  
 Sunnyslope Firewise Committee  
 The Nature Conservancy  
 Town of Mammoth Lakes  
 Trinity County Resource Conservation District  
 Tulare County Board of Supervisors  
 United Policyholders  
 University City Fire Safe Council  
 Ventura Regional Fire Safe Council  
 Via Crest Fire Safe Council of San Diego County  
 Yolo County Resource Conservation District

**Opposition**

None on file

**Analysis Prepared by:** Paige Brokaw / NAT. RES. /