

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Bill No: SB 973
Author: Becker (D) and Stern (D), et al.
Amended: 8/13/26
Vote: 21

SENATE NATURAL RES. & WATER COMMITTEE: 7-0, 3/24/26

AYES: Becker, Seyarto, Allen, Cabaldon, Grove, Laird, Stern

SENATE EMERGENCY MGT. COMMITTEE: 9-0, 4/21/26

AYES: Stern, Seyarto, Allen, Ashby, Blakespear, Dahle, Grayson, Pérez, Rubio

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 5-0, 5/14/26

AYES: Cervantes, Cabaldon, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

NO VOTE RECORDED: Seyarto, Dahle

SENATE FLOOR: 37-0, 5/26/26

AYES: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Durazo, Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Reyes, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

NO VOTE RECORDED: Dahle, Gonzalez, Niello

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: Passed, 8/24/26

SUBJECT: Wildfire County Coordinator Program

SOURCE: California Fire Safe Council
Megafire Action

DIGEST: This bill requires the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Department) to establish the California Wildfire Preparedness Program and enter

into an agreement with the California Fire Safe Council (CFSC) to administer and deliver the Wildfire County Coordinator Program.

Assembly Amendments establish the Wildfire Preparedness Program, provide greater clarity towards its authorities, and make technical and editorial changes.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the Department (Public Resources Code (PRC) §701).
- 2) Establishes the Task Force (PRC §4005).
- 3) Requires the Task Force to update the Action Plan every five years, beginning March 1, 2026 (PRC §4771(f)).
- 4) 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).

This bill:

- 1) Requires the Department to establish the California Wildfire Preparedness Program to
 - a) Establish recommended standards for wildfire risk modeling and analysis tools;
 - 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 risk reduction outcomes;
 - c) Coordinate with the Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI) to develop guidance and templates for county-level wildfire resilience prioritization and implementation plans.

- 2) Establishes the Wildfire County Coordinator Program within the Department, and requires the Department to enter into an agreement with CFSC to administer the program.
 - a) Establishes the purpose of the program as to support county-level coordination of and capacity for wildfire mitigation, prevention, preparedness, and recovery activities.
- 3) Requires the Wildfire County Coordinator Program to:
 - 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 risk assessment tools and guidance to enhance county-level risk assessment, wildfire planning, and project prioritization.
 - c) Facilitate local coordination on priority wildfire resilience planning and implementation with federal, state, tribal, local, and regional wildfire resilience partners.
 - d) Facilitate coordination between county-level community wildfire preparedness efforts, regional landscape resilience efforts, and other applicable federal, state, tribal, and local planning efforts to improve information sharing, identify shared implementation opportunities, and strengthen alignment across jurisdictions and planning scales.
 - e) Develop and disseminate educational materials and programming on wildfire and smoke mitigation and preparedness.
 - f) Provide information on available local, state, and federal financial resources to support wildfire resilience planning and implementation.
 - g) Support local capacity to access and implement state or federal wildfire resilience funding programs.
 - h) Support the planning and implementation of home hardening, defensible space, and related mitigation activities.
 - i) Improve access to and streamline financial assistance for home hardening and defensible space in high-risk communities.
 - j) Support activities to increase community resilience to smoke.
 - k) Collect data on local mitigation and preparedness activities, outcomes, and costs.

Comments

Wildfire County Coordinator Program (County Coordinators). Established in 2021, the Wildfire County Coordinator Program seeks to educate, encourage, and develop countywide community collaboration and coordination among wildfire

mitigation groups. The program, powered by a partnership between the CFSC and the Department, has provided funding to 52 of California's 58 counties to hire a Wildfire County Coordinator and establish critical local capacity to plan and implement wildfire resilience strategies on the ground.

Codifying success. According to the author's office, since 2021, the County Coordinator program has achieved the following results:

- Secured over \$104 million for local mitigation and preparedness projects,
- Reached nearly 1 million residents with wildfire resilience education,
- Established 100+ new Firewise Communities and Fire Safe Councils, and
- Built a durable, statewide network to advance coordinated mitigation efforts.

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

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee analysis, on a previous version of the bill:

- The Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (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 CalFire 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 WCC Program after 2027.

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/24/26)

California Fire Safe Council (co-sponsor)
Megafire Action (co-sponsor)
Butte County Fire Safe Council
California Building Industry Association
California Forward
California State Association of Counties
California State Association of

Counties (CSAC)
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 San Luis Obispo
 County of Trinity
 Escondido Fire Safe Council
 Fire Safe Council of San Diego
 County
 Fire Safe Marin
 Firewerx
 Insurance Institute for Business &
 Home Safety
 Inyo County Board of Supervisors
 Irvine Ranch Conservancy
 Lamorinda Legislative Coalition
 Lassen Fire Safe Council
 Mattole Restoration Council
 Mendocino County Fire Safe Council
 Midpeninsula Regional Open Space
 District
 Modoc Fire Safe Council
 Monterey; County of
 Nevada County Board of Supervisors
 Ojai Valley Fire Safe Council
 Orange County Fire Authority
 Pacific Gas and Electric Company

Palomar Mountain Fire Safe Council
 Resource Conservation District of
 Tehama County
 Rural County Representatives of
 California
 Sacramento County Board of
 Supervisors
 Sacramento; County of
 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
 Ventura Regional Fire Safe Council
 Yolo County Resource Conservation
 District

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/24/26)

None received

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: According to the author, “SB 973 establishes a statewide framework to strengthen community wildfire resilience by directing [the Department] to develop guidance and recommended standards for local entities assessing wildfire risk and prioritizing wildfire mitigation activities, and to expand the Wildfire County Coordinator Program, administered in partnership with the California Fire Safe Council. The program builds county-level capacity to plan, coordinate, and implement wildfire prevention, preparedness, mitigation, and recovery activities aligned with state wildfire strategy.”

Prepared by: Edith Hannigan / N.R. & W. / (916) 651-4116
 8/24/26 16:56:54

**** END ****