



CALIFORNIA
NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

April 2, 2019

The Honorable Senator Connie M. Leyva
Senate Education Committee
State Capitol, Room 2083
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Senator Henry I. Stern
Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee
State Capitol, Room 5046
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support for Senate Bill 462 (Stern) – Forest Restoration Curriculum

Dear Chairs Leyva and Stern,

We write today to express strong support for Senate Bill 462 and for expanding the restoration workforce in California. By creating an accessible, science-driven curriculum for forest restoration and community protection at the community college level, and simultaneously investing in the UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE) Fire Advisors program, California is laying the foundation necessary to conduct restoration at ecologically-meaningful levels throughout the state. The programs outlined in SB 462 will add considerable value to California's recent investments in restoration through SB 901 (Dodd, 2018), while benefiting rural economies and private landowners.

We are particularly glad to see SB 462's focus on expanding prescribed fire use, as well as treating the surface and ladder fuels that actually drive fire behavior in California's frequent-fire forests. Most importantly, investing in a permanent local workforce will help *maintain* ecosystem and community resilience in the years and decades beyond initial treatments.

Community College Curriculum for Forestland Restoration

We support development of a science-based forest restoration curriculum in California. A [2018 survey](#) of federal land managers in the Western U.S. identified capacity to burn – including a well-trained available workforce – as the primary challenge to accomplishing more prescribed fire on federal lands. Meanwhile, many of California's rural counties continue to experience relatively high unemployment rates compared to the state's urban areas. SB 462's direction to establish a model curriculum for forest restoration helps address both of these issues by giving prospective students a clear, accessible pathway into the restoration workforce. This curriculum will provide important direction for CA residents seeking meaningful career paths that benefit their communities over the long term. By creating a new curriculum – independent of traditional training around timber management, forestry, or fire suppression – SB 462 fills an important professional niche in California's workforce. These new professionals will be uniquely situated to focus on actions like prescribed fire use, home hardening, and defensible space maintenance that influence social and ecological resilience of communities within California's fire-adapted vegetation over the long term.

UC Cooperative Extension Fire Advisors

We also support SB 462's proposal for Fire Advisors nested within UCCE. This forward-thinking investment would build upon current community interest in proactive fuel reduction, home hardening, and forest restoration, by providing a clear, identifiable representative who can add coordination and expertise around fire management in their counties. UC Fire Advisors could provide critical assistance to smaller landowners with limited technical capacity, potentially enabling restoration to occur across a

significant portion of California's forested landscape. UC Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources is particularly well-situated to house the Fire Advisor program due to their connection to fire expertise through UC researchers, as well as their connections to property owners through resource conservation districts, fire safe councils, and others. Placing the program within UCCE will add value to all of these existing efforts by ensuring that restoration activities are thoughtful and science-based.

We appreciate the Legislature's commitment to investing in forest health throughout California. We strongly support SB 462 and urge you to establish and fully fund the restoration workforce curriculum, as well as the UCCE Fire Advisors program.

Sincerely,

Jamie Ervin
Sierra Forest Legacy

Pamela Flick
Defenders of Wildlife

Elizabeth Forsburg
The Nature Conservancy

Greg Suba
California Native Plant Society

Paul Mason
Pacific Forest Trust

Ryan Henson
California Wilderness Coalition

Chris Mertens
Sierra Business Council

cc:

Lynn Lorber, Chief Consultant, California Senate Education Committee
Bill Craven, Chief Consultant, California Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee
Members and Staff of the Committees