



PRESS RELEASE

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New Partnership Focuses on Increased Use of Fire in California for Natural Resource and Public Benefits

Sacramento, Calif. – Federal and State agency officials gathered today with conservation and community fire protection groups to kick off the inaugural workshop for a Memorandum of Understanding that will promote the careful and expanded use of fire for natural resource and other social benefits in California. Wildland fuels are continuing to build up and wildfires are growing larger and more difficult to control, especially in light of California’s extended drought experience and changing climate. These factors have helped bring this unique partnership together. Citing recent fire science and large, damaging wildfires like the Rim, King, Valley, and Butte fires, this new fire partnership is calling for an expanded response and a broader suite of tools to restore resilience and protect communities across California’s rural landscape.

Randy Moore, Forest Service Regional Forester for the Pacific Southwest Region stated, “This MOU builds on our strong relationships and partnerships in California and allows us to retain our commitment to community fire protection while achieving our [goal of ecological resilience](#) by expanding the use of fire. This MOU provides another way for us to work with our partners in an “all-lands, all-hands” approach by expanding the use of fire to significantly increase the pace and scale of restoration. The MOU is also consistent with the Forest Service’s [National Cohesive Strategy](#).”

[The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection \(CAL FIRE\)](#), the State of California's primary wildland fire-fighting agency has also taken up the call for expanding the use of fire. "We are seeing an increase in the occurrence of large, damaging fires and tens of millions of trees killed by bark beetles," stated Chief Ken Pimlott, CAL FIRE director and California's State forester. "We need to double-down on increased community protection and education, at the same time recognizing that prescribed fire has a key role in reducing the intensity of these fires. Returning more prescribed fire to the landscape can help renew ecosystems and assist landowners in reducing the accumulation of flammable vegetation."

The recent [Tree Mortality State of Emergency Proclamation](#) issued by Governor Brown on October 30, 2015, requires that CAL FIRE and the California Air Resources Board work with their federal partners (Forest Service and Federal EPA) to expand the use of prescribed burning. "The Governor's State of Emergency Proclamation identifies prescribed fire as an extremely valuable tool to restore our forests while limiting pollution from larger, uncontrolled wildfire events," added Pimlott.

Conservation groups, Prescribed Fire Councils and community fire safe councils strongly support this new Fire MOU as providing multiple benefits to forests, forest communities and public health. "We have joined this new Fire Partnership with the understanding that it is time for increased, unified action in support of forest restoration – and that includes working with fire," stated Craig Thomas, Conservation Director for Sierra Forest Legacy. "While large wildfires and homes burning are now routine in the California summer weekly news cycle, it is a century of fire exclusion that is driving these increasingly negative effects. This new Fire MOU Partnership is committed to turning the current fire situation into something more beneficial for Californians and our natural resources," stated Thomas.

Nick Goulette, chair of the Northern California Prescribed Fire Council state, "This Fire MOU Partnership is committed to integrating and training community fire safety and fire service leaders in expanding prescribed fire use. The work of local

Fire Safe Councils, fire departments, and programs like Firewise are all making progress in expanding awareness and reducing hazardous fuels around homes and communities. It starts with the home ignition zone and grows out from there. Maintaining and expanding upon that progress to build resilient landscapes and fire adapted communities will require the careful and increasing use of prescribed fire,” stated Goulette.

Jim Branham, Executive Officer for the [Sierra Nevada Conservancy](#), the State agency primarily concerned with the health of Sierra Nevada communities and natural resources, is a strong supporter of the Fire MOU partnership. Branham stated, “Significantly increasing our efforts to restore the health and resilience of Sierra Nevada watersheds is critical to protecting our communities and ensuring the reliability of [California’s water supply and water quality](#). Strategic use of fire as a primary restoration tool is essential given the scale of the problem and the complexities associated with our watersheds.”

The intent of this new partnership is to grow the membership to all interested parties who support increasing the use of fire for public and natural resource benefits in California.

Background:

- [California Strategic Fire Plan](#)
- [Tree Mortality State of Emergency Proclamation](#)
- [The Cohesive Strategy](#)
- [The FS Ecological Restoration Initiative](#)
- [Supporting Research](#)
- [Copy of MOU](#)