Hello Forest Management Task Force Partners!

I am Jennifer Montgomery and I have the great honor to step in the shoes of Terry O’Brien as the newly appointed Director of the Governor’s Forest Management Task Force (FMTF).

As a native Californian committed to public service, I cannot adequately express my enthusiasm on joining the FMTF team that each of you have worked so hard to create. It is my hope that my 10-plus years’ experience as a County Supervisor representing communities throughout fire prone areas will serve as an asset to this team. Not only have I been directly involved in drought, tree mortality, and overall forest health issues, but I have served as a volunteer fire fighter and support my husband’s efforts in his role as the Fire Captain at North Tahoe Fire Protection District. Being raised in the San Francisco Bay Area, but having spent the past 30 years on Donner Summit in the Wildland Urban Interface, I truly understand the importance of headwater-to-tap discussions and our commitment to accelerating forest health efforts.

Recently, Governor Newsom issued an Emergency Proclamation in advance of the coming fire season. The Governor directed his administration to expedite and implement the 35 CAL FIRE forest management projects designed to protect 200 of California’s most wildfire vulnerable communities. The Governor stated, “The increasing wildfire risks we face as a state, means we simply can’t wait until a fire starts in order to deploy emergency resources.” Governor Newsom went on to stress that, “California needs sustained focus and immediate action in order to better protect our communities.”

The Governor’s focus reminds me of the Ponderosa Way firebreak project from 1935, an effort of the CCCs to create defensible space along the Sierra Nevada range and into the Cascades - totaling 800 miles. It was intended to be a permanent defensive line between the lower foothill regions and the higher elevation National Forest lands - protecting the wildland from fires that started in developed areas and vice versa. Unfortunately, road maintenance funding was never prioritized and today, the Ponderosa Way exists only in scattered fragments and has lost much of its usefulness as a firebreak. However, in contrast to past projects, I am
certain our new Governor will prioritize maintenance as well as personnel, equipment and projects.

It is my hope that together we, as the various public and private partners of the FMTF, can work together creatively to identify, fund and construct locally supported, culturally sensitive, and environmentally sound forest projects throughout the wildlands and in our developed communities. Further, it is my expectation that we will all work collaboratively to convince local, state, and federal elected representatives to fully fund ongoing maintenance costs for these critical projects once completed.

The philosopher George Santayana said, "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it." My goal for the FMTF is that we will remember the past, learn from it, and apply the much-needed lessons to succeed in restoring our forests for recreation, natural resources, reduced fire impacts, and all the other key ecosystem services that our healthy forests provide. The Governor’s call for immediate action must be heeded and it is my intention to work closely with each of you to compliment this effort.

Respectfully,

Jennifer Montgomery
HIGHLIGHTS

- On March 22, Governor Newsom executed an Emergency Proclamation to expedite 35 specific emergency wildfire safety project recommended in CALFIRE’s recent 45-day Report.
- Governor Newsom has appointed Jennifer Montgomery director of the Forest Management Task Force. Jennifer began her work with the Task Force on April 2. For more information on the Governor’s appointments, see Partner Updates below.

Webinar of February’s Forest Management Task Force is available

The Task Force met on March 11, 2018. Secretary of Natural Resources Agency Wade Crowfoot introduced Jennifer Montgomery and provided opening comments stating his “priority, at the direction of Governor Newsom, is to focus on forest management and wildfire prevention and to ensure that the Natural Resources Agency can be helpful, not only to CALFIRE, but the entire effort across government on these topics.” The recorded webinar and supporting materials are available on the Forest Management Task Force website.

UPCOMING MEETINGS and WORKSHOPS

Dates and location for upcoming Forest Management Task Force meetings:

2019’s Forest Management Task Force meetings will be held on the second Monday of the month (but for November, which will be held on the third Monday, 11/18). Click here to register for the webinar for all events in 2019.

The next meeting will be held from 1-3:30 PM on April 8, 2019 in the Coastal Room of CalEPA, 1001 I St, Sacramento.

Dates for upcoming FMTF Working Group meetings: Visit Forest Management Task Force website for dates, locations, and call-in information.

Other upcoming meetings and workshops

- April 25, 2019 -- Forest Biomass & the Bioeconomy, Vancouver, WA
- May 8, 2019 -- Biochar & Biomass Field Day, Arnold, CA
- May 17-28, 2019 -- Prescribed Fire on Private Lands, Georgetown, CA
- May 30-31, 2019 – Spring 2019 SCALE Meeting, Jackson, CA
WORKING GROUP REPORTS

Forest Management and Restoration  Co-leads: Stewart McMorrow & Isabel Baer

The Forest Management and Restoration (FMR) Working Group’s March 25 meeting included updates from the Mapping sub-group and Regulations Working Group. The Roadside Fuel Breaks and Treatments sub-group discussed their efforts to formulate a work plan to create fuel breaks along California roads and highways. The FMR Working Group will continue to track progress on this subject and hopes to help prioritize treatment areas once a more robust work plan is developed. At least three major roads are included in the CAL FIRE 45-day report that highlighted 35 projects across the state that are deemed the highest priority for treatment. The Roadside Fuel Break group will be closely tracking progress of those projects to use as pilots for future treatments.

FMR also discussed the development of a recommendation memo centered around actions that can be taken to build local capacity by promoting and expanding regional forestry collaboratives (Goal #6 of the Working Group). This set of recommendations will be presented to the Task Force following further consideration from the Working Group. FMR intends to start focusing on one of the other working group goals following submission of this recommendation memo.

Regulations  Co-leads: Eric Huff & Loretta Moreno

At the Regulations Working Group (RWG)’s March 25 meeting, Lisa Worthington and Joe Sherlock updated the group on the status of the proposed Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) agreement between Caltrans and the U.S. Forest Service Region 5. Eric Hedge from the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection reported that an updated “Dead Tree/Fuel Hazard Permitting Matrix” will soon be posted on the Board of Forestry’s website. The matrix identifies the conditions and constraints for several timber harvest permitting options available for use on private and state lands.

RWG continued discussion of WG goal #4: Making non-confidential cultural and biological resources data readily accessible online to accelerate the implementation and environmental review of fuels reduction projects. At their April 22 meeting, the RWG will review a draft recommendation to address accessibility of cultural resources information and barriers related to project review. RWG also discussed a proposal to allow sharing of a single subscription for the CDFW California Natural Diversity Database by small landowner groups. This proposal will also be discussed at the April 22 meeting.

Co-Chair Loretta Moreno presented the comments received on the draft “Vegetation Management Regulations and Permitting Landscape” diagram. The diagram is intended to inform the group’s deliberations on RWG Goal #1: Identification of statutory and regulatory barriers to fuels reduction projects, and Goal #2: Facilitation of permitting across all vegetation types and landowner scales. Review of the diagram led to the suggestion from Clint Snyder of the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board that the group consider working toward a “new business model” in which new permitting options, beyond what is currently available, could be developed. A subgroup may be appointed to further explore this idea.
**Prescribed Fire**  \textit{Co-leads: Jamie Sammut & Dar Mims}

The Prescribed Fire Working Group (RxWG) met on March 14 and will continue to meet from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. on the second Thursday of each month. This month we received an update from CAL FIRE’s Chief Mathew Reischman on the recently released 45-Day Report. Specifically, the focus was on prescribed fire projects locations, timing and resources available. We also heard from the recently formed subgroups (Prioritize Landscapes, Capacity Building, Social License, and Prescribed Fire Clearing House) about deliverables and timeline expected. Heather Williams gave a great informational update on the development of the communication plan and in the process for adding input. Larry Greene from the California Air Pollution Control Officers Association followed with an excellent update on the monitoring plan being developed. Lastly, Craig Thomas from the Fire MOU group provided information concerning the upcoming meeting at McClellan on April 5.

**Tree Mortality**  \textit{Co-leads: Brittany Dyer & Peter Crase}

At the Tree Mortality Working Group’s March 11 meeting, Sierra Nevada Conservancy’s Assistant Executive Officer Bob Kingman discussed several Sierra-wide initiatives, including the $26 million of grants recently approved by SNC’s board. The group also heard from Chris Anthony and Karen Vyverberg of the Sierra/Eastside Regional Prioritization Group which represents the 10 high priority counties. NRCS representatives shared about their intention to contract tree removal work and asked for County templates for such contracts. BLM representatives detailed the agency’s Programmatic Environmental Assessment. Finally, CAL FIRE discussed the new high-hazard definitions as they extend to include fire scar areas between 2012 and now.

Per CalOES, as of March 19, a total of $13,319,126 had been reimbursed under the California Disaster Assistance Act for tree mortality. That amount is 75% of the total $17,758,834 project costs, and covers the removal of 32,704 problem trees at an average cost per tree of $543. Per CAL FIRE, as of February 28, 2019, tree mortality partners had felled 1,540,844 hazard trees.

**Landowner Education and Outreach**  \textit{Co-leads: Susie Kocher & Martin Twer}

The Landowner Outreach and Education Work Group (LEOWG) met on Friday March 8 to continue strategizing on the management goal of providing educational programs and outreach to private landowners and other interested parties on forest restoration, fuels reduction project development, and permitting.

One hurdle for landowners endeavoring to manage their forests is the potential for high costs to associated with planning processes and a shortage of RPFs to assist. One potential solution is to identify the sections of forest plans that can be completed by landowners themselves and focus educational outreach on helping them. The committee heard from the BOF’s Dan Stapleton about RPF licensing law and discussed the potential for landowners to develop sections of their own plans.

This approach has been incorporated into the proposed strategy for landowner education developed by co-chair Martin Twer collaboratively with the committee. The proposed Stewardship Workshop Program for Forest Landowners involves workshops around the state...
that includes two days of instruction, followed by a week in which participants inventory their own forest property, then another day during which instructors work with landowners to develop their plans. Co-chair Martin Twer presented the committee’s proposal to the larger Forest Management Task Force on March 11. The LEOWG will continue to look at potential sources of funding to implement the proposed workshop program.

**Rural Economic Development/Wood Utilization**  
*Co-leads: Debbie Franco & Matt Henigan*

At the last meeting of the Removing Barriers Work Group the group discussed developing a work plan with the following priorities: build local capacity and sustainability; feedstock contracts; local perceptions of the BioMAT program; expand and connect financing to opportunity; and connect businesses with projects recruiting contractors.

Resources highlighted at this meeting included:
1. Sierra Institute Information on collaboratives
3. Blue Forest Conservation’s Forest Resilience Bonds

The next meeting will be April 8, in the GovOps Conference room (915 Capitol Mall, Suite 200) from 10 to 11:30 AM. The call-in number is 866.640.4044 x 622 248. The focus will be on the work plan for the Innovations Work Group.

**REGIONAL PRIORITIZATION GROUP REPORTS**

**Northern Region**  
*Co-leads: Gabe Schultz, Shannon Johnson & Tom Hall*

The Northern Regional Prioritization Group (NRPG) held their conference call on March 14 and will continue to meet from 8:30 to 10 a.m. on the second Thursday of each month. This month’s call included an update on the NRPG Workshop, scheduled for March 27, and focused on prioritization and planning of regional projects. CAL FIRE’s Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP) gave a presentation on existing tools to aid in the prioritization and assessment of forest management projects. The March 27 in-person meeting/workshop was held at the Gaia Hotel in Anderson. An update on the workshop will be in next month’s update.

**Sierra and Eastside**  
*Co-leads: Danelle D. Harrison & Chris Anthony*

The Sierra and Eastside Regional Prioritization Group (SERPG) met on Friday, March 8 at the California NRCS in Davis, CA. The meeting began with FMTF updates from Chris Anthony. He notified the group of the Task Force’s new leader, Jennifer Montgomery, as well as submission statistics for some of the recent CAL FIRE grant programs. Notably, half of the Forest Health and Forest Legacy applications were for projects located within the SERPG region. Jamie Sammut and Dar Mims of the Prescribed Fire Working Group spoke to the group about their efforts to increase prescribed fire opportunities on the ground and create a clearing house for all prescribed fire activity. Significant discussion followed with the SERPG members around
the issue of managing prescribed fire smoke and communication with the public. Stacy Corless and Staci Heaton provided an update on their participation in the National Association of Counties’ 2019 Legislative Conference. The French Meadows project, located in the Sierra and Eastside Region, was highlighted at the conference as an example of collaborative landscape management. The Sierra Nevada Conservancy reviewed their Watershed Improvement Program, as its geographical footprint largely mirrors the SERPG footprint, and common goals exist between the groups. Discussion followed on potential areas of collaboration. A brief overview of the recent grants and agreements workshop hosted by USFS Region 5 was provided by Karen Vyverberg; workshop materials will be publicly available in the next month. Finally, the group heard a presentation from Peter Stine on the PSW-GTR-220 technical document. The ecosystem management strategy presented in the report is in wide use today in the SERPG region and members were very interested in the development of the strategy and how its implementation is evolving as landscape management needs change.

Coastal Region  Co-leads: Angela Bernheisel & Tony Martinez

The CRPG met by conference call on March 13th. There were 26 participants on the call. Bernheisel gave a brief overview on the foundation of the recent developments over the past year including the California Forest Carbon Plan, Executive Order B-52-18, the establishment of the FMTF, Executive Order N-05-19, the 45 Day Report, the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program and SB 901. Eric Huff of the Regulations Working Group and Eric Hedge of the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection gave updates on the recent changes and upcoming topics regarding new regulations and agency coordination. Jamie Sammut and Dar Mims of the Prescribed Fire Working Group reported on the work of their group and solicited information from participants about upcoming prescribed burns planned in the region for 2019. Tom Gandesbery of the Coastal Conservancy gave background about the role of the Coastal Conservancy in the region and the upcoming funding for capacity building and regional prioritization. Lisa Lurie of the Santa Cruz County RCD reported on the upcoming grant funding for a Watershed Coordinator for San Mateo, Santa Cruz, Monterey and Upper Salinas-Las Tablas. Members of the group provided some brief input about the survey and also asked questions about the viewpoint of the group to include chaparral and grasslands. Subsequent communication from FMTF leadership conveyed that the work of the FMTF, especially in Coastal and Southern Regional Groups and also the Prescribed Fire Working Group does encompass those areas as the lands under consideration for prioritization are Natural and Working Lands.

Southern Region   (Henry Herrera/ Marc Stamer/ Glenn Barley)

The Southern Region Prioritization Group (SRPG) continues to make progress on identifying additional groups members, including Native American tribes. At their last meeting, the group discussed a list of fire prevention and forest health issues that was compiled from the prioritization survey. An in-person meeting is being considered for April or early May in San Bernardino.
PARTNER UPDATES

Governor Newsom’s Emergency Proclamation

On March 22, Governor Newsom signed an Emergency Proclamation to expedite 35 specific emergency wildfire safety projects identified in CAL FIRE’s recent 45-Day Report. The emergency proclamation provides the Secretary of Natural Resources and the Secretary of CalEPA discretion to suspend state environmental permitting requirements on a case-by-case basis so that these projects can get underway immediately, including suspending requirements to prepare CEQA documents. For each project, CAL FIRE will follow Best Management Practices to avoid impacting any environmentally and culturally sensitive areas within these 35 project areas, including identifying and avoiding sensitive areas. CAL FIRE will also reach out to regional units of the Department of Fish and Wildlife and Regional Water Quality Control Boards to apprise them of projects in their areas, potential permit waivers, and request input they have regarding sensitive resources. It is important to note that federal permitting requirements cannot be waived under the Governor’s directive.

Governor Newsom appoints a new director for the FMTF

Jennifer Montgomery has been appointed director of the Governor’s Forest Management Task Force. Montgomery has served as the 5th District Supervisor on the Placer County Board of Supervisors since 2009. In Secretary Crowfoot’s welcome message, he stated, “Jennifer has been a strong leader championing local/state/federal partnerships to reduce wildfire risks and manage wildlands across the Sierra Nevada. Her proactive, constructive, and creative leadership will guide our Task Force advancing this important work.”

Governor Newsom has also appointed Amanda Hansen as Deputy Secretary for Climate and Energy at the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), a position previously held by Keali‘i Bright. Hansen was most recently the director of the Community Reconstruction Program in New York Governor Andrew Cuomo’s Office of Storm Recovery. Finally, Newsom appointed Jessica Morse as Deputy Secretary of Forest Resources Management at the CNRA, a position previously held by Russ Henly. Morse was a candidate for California’s 4th Congressional District in 2018. She was a budget analyst with the U.S. Agency for International Development from 2012 to 2015. For more about these appointees, please see the Governor’s press release.

Natural Resources Agency and Department of Conservation Announce Awards for the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program

On March 12, the California Natural Resources Agency and Department of Conservation announced awarding $20 million in block grants for local and regional projects to improve forest health and increase fire resiliency.

Funded by Cap-and-Trade revenues through California Climate Investments, the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program aims to help communities prioritize, develop, and implement projects to strengthen fire resiliency, increase carbon sequestration, and facilitate greenhouse gas reductions.
Six regional and two state-wide block grants recipients were selected based on their history of implementing related projects, demonstrated capacity to work across regional partners, and ability to serve as fiscal administrators for the program.

- North Coast: The North Coast Resource Partnership ($4.25 million)
- Central California: California State Coastal Conservancy ($4.25 million)
- Southern California: Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, Inland Empire Resource Conservation District, & Greater San Diego Resource Conservation District ($1.5 million each)
- Sierra and Klamath-Cascade: Sierra Nevada Conservancy ($2 million) & Assembly Bill 2551 implementations (awardees to be determined) ($2 million)
- Statewide: Watershed Research and Training Center in partnership with the California Fire Safe Council ($3 million)

**Department of Conservation Announces Watershed Coordinator Awards**

Eight organizations have received $1.85 million in grants to hire watershed coordinators who will build local capacity to improve forest health, the Department of Conservation (DOC) announced today. “Healthy forests are essential to reduce catastrophic wildfires, supply clean water, and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions,” DOC Director David Bunn said. “Watershed coordinators can play a major role in ensuring the health of our forests by promoting collaboration, integrating watershed management efforts, and supporting local activities that restore resilience to forest lands.” See the press release for details on each of the successful grant applicants.

**CAL FIRE Announces Awards $63 Million for Forest Health Grants**

CAL FIRE has awarded over $63 million in grants for 16 landscape-scale, regionally-based projects aimed at promoting healthy and resilient forests that protect and enhance forest carbon sequestration. The grants were awarded by CAL FIRE’s Forest Health Program to affect private, state, and federal forestlands in 13 California counties. See the March 27 press release and the program website for details on the successful grant applicants.

**CivicSpark is now accepting applications for the 2019-20 Service Year**

The CivicSpark Fellows program is an opportunity that could provide capacity and support for the local governments and special districts that are engaged in the work of the Forest Management Task Force. The deadline for applications is May 3, 2019. CivicSpark is a Governor’s Initiative AmeriCorps program dedicated to building capacity for local public agencies to address community resilience to emerging environmental and socioeconomic challenges such as: climate change, water resource management, affordable housing, and mobility. CivicSpark is managed by the Local Government Commission in partnership with the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research. Each year, CivicSpark recruits 90 Fellows who are hosted by local public agencies, NGOs, or state agencies throughout the state for 11 months. In collaboration with the host organization, CivicSpark Fellows implement a needed sustainability and resilience project, while also building long-term capacity for local public agencies to ensure the work is sustained after their service year is completed.
Public agencies, state agencies, or NGOs who want to host a Fellow receive dedicated project support from enthusiastic emerging professionals who receive specialized professional development and sector training. Local benefits include: direct support for specific resiliency project needs with defined outcomes; increased capacity for sustainable communities and response community resilience needs; a pipeline for future resiliency efforts; stronger state-local partnerships for information and expertise exchange; a workforce with local expertise in climate change, energy, water, or social issues; access to affordable resources resulting in increased capacity and hands-on training; and increased volunteerism at the local level. For more information, visit CivicSpark’s website or contact Program Director Kif Scheuer.

Call for papers: Effects of Fire on California’s Natural Resources

The California Fish and game Journal (CFG) is CA Department of Fish and Wildlife’s (DFW) quarterly, peer-reviewed, scientific journal. CFG is seeking manuscripts for a special issue on the effects of fire on California’s natural resources. Manuscript submission deadline is December 31, 2019. More information can be found on DFW’s website.

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Board awards over $26 million for forest health

In March, SNC’s Governing Board authorized over $26 million in funds for 35 projects that will reduce wildfire risk, protect water supply, and restore forest and watershed health in the Sierra Nevada region. The projects awarded support the goals and objectives of the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP). Funding for these projects come from Proposition 1, The Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014; Proposition 68, The California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018; the Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration Fund; Fire Settlement Funds; and the California Climate Investments program. View the press release for more details.

Sierra Nevada Conservancy offers grant writing workshops

are available to help build the capacity of organizations that serve the Sierra Nevada Region. If you are interested in organizing or attending a workshop, contact your Area Representative. Upcoming workshops are scheduled in Shasta and Amador counties, and additional workshops can be scheduled upon request.

Tree Mortality Data Network

The Tree Mortality Data Network held their annual meeting on March 14th at the Wildfire Training Center in McClellan, CA. At the meeting we shared data and results from the 2018 field season on live and dead trees, bark beetle attacks, regeneration, and fuels and discussed lessons learned from response to the tree mortality outbreak. All the presentations from the workshop are now posted on the project web page: http://ucanr.edu/treemortalitynetwork.