

NEWS RELEASE



CONTACT: Heather Williams
Information Officer
(916) 651-FIRE
(3473)
[@CALFIRE_PIO](#)

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Board of Forestry and Fire Protection and CAL FIRE Working to Increase Pace and Scale of Wildfire Prevention Activities

SACRAMENTO – The Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (Board) and CAL FIRE express their deepest condolences to all the families affected by the ongoing wildfires in southern California, as well as those who endured losses in northern California during the month of October. With over 1.3 million acres burned and over 10,000 structures destroyed, the impacts from wildfires across the state during this fire season are devastating. CAL FIRE and the Board recognize the changing conditions of the State’s fire season. California now often experiences a year-round fire season, with an increase in both the number and the intensity of large, damaging wildfires over the last decade. This is the “new normal” of the State’s wildfire environment.

In addition to having a strong response model, these “new normal” conditions require the State to continue to engage in wildfire prevention to protect lives and property

“The citizens of this state should understand that the 2017 fire season does not preclude people from living in reasonable safety within the California environment. All aspects of pre-fire planning, including fire prevention activities, building codes and land-use planning are equally important to assist the state in managing the costs and economic losses associated with these wildfires,” states Dr. Keith Gillless, Chair of the Board.

The “new normal” has swiftly escalated the challenges faced by firefighters and resource management professionals. The Board and CAL FIRE recognize that aggressive fire prevention and forest health programs can help address the factors influencing the occurrence of large, damaging wildfires.

“CAL FIRE is focused on increasing the pace and scale of fire prevention activities, including vegetation management, across the state,” said Chief Ken Pimlott, CAL FIRE Director and California’s state forester. “These activities play a critical role in helping reduce the impacts large, damaging wildfires have on our communities.”

In response to the clear need for increased fire prevention activities, the Board has developed a Statewide Programmatic Environmental Impact Report titled “California Statewide Vegetation Treatment Program,” known as the VTP PEIR. The project will provide California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance for CAL FIRE and other public agencies’ vegetation management projects. This VTP PEIR is intended for vegetation management activities that lower the risk of catastrophic wildfires on nonfederal lands by managing vegetation to modify/reduce hazardous fuels.

“CAL FIRE, working in collaboration with other public, private and academic organizations, is looking forward to implementing even higher levels of prevention activities under the VTP PEIR across California to assist communities in reducing risks of wildfire impacts by being more defensible during suppression efforts,” stated Chief Pimlott.

The Board has been very deliberate in its efforts in preparing the VTP PEIR, taking into consideration the complex concerns expressed by the public.

“We have worked hard at preparing a project that balances the concerns expressed by the public, while supporting an increased level of vegetation management activities as a means of wildfire prevention within the state,” stated Dr. Gilliss.

The Board recently published a draft of the VTP PEIR for full recirculation under CEQA for public comment. The comment period closes at 5 pm on January 12, 2018. A copy of the project can be located on the [Board's website](#).

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Media Notes:

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[Vegetation Treatment Program Programmatic Environmental Impact Report](#)