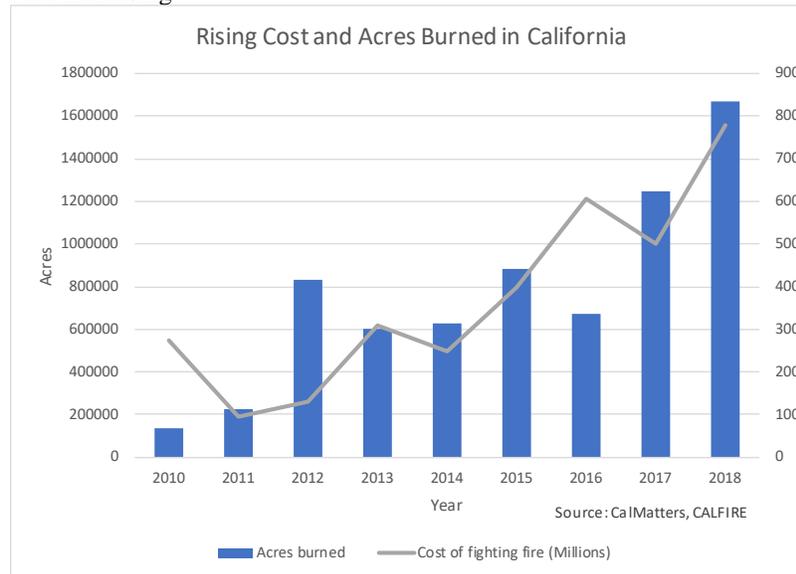


California on Fire

The Problem

Fire is a natural phenomenon in California, but fires have become increasingly more disastrous. Over the last decade:

- Deaths from wildfires increased
- Costs associated with wildfires increased
- Acres burned are increasing



- California has too much vegetation in chaparral, oak woodlands, and conifer forests.
- Changing climate has produced hotter temperatures, lower humidity, and changes in wind patterns.

Too much vegetation and changing climate

– a recipe for disaster.

Why a Solution Matters

Public safety demands an answer - people have died and firefighters are at risk.

Public health demands an answer – smoke from fires impacts lung and heart disease.

California’s climate goals demand an answer – during large wildfire events, such as the ones in the last two years, two days of a wildfire can create as much particulate matter as all of California’s vehicles do in a year.

Healthy forests are key to a solution.



California Needs to take Action

Some will argue that we should let nature take its course and all that we need to do is retrofit communities in wildlands to give them greater protection.

A century of land management practices, aggressive fire suppression, and forest preservation helped create the current problem. Doing nothing supports the status quo. Actions must be taken to impact the problem.

As the entity that represents forest land managers, the California Forestry Association has identified the following actions as steps to address the problem. We acknowledge that, just as it has taken decades to create this problem, it will take significant time to fully address the problem. Some actions are more immediate, and others will take time. Regardless, we must begin now.

Fuel Breaks and Defensible Space

Fuel breaks are thinned or cleared areas where vegetation has been reduced or removed. Fuel breaks most importantly provide a place where firefighters can more safely stage to fight a fire. Fuel breaks also reduce the risk of fire and the spread of fire. Fuel breaks are best placed along roadways and utility corridors, around communities at the wildland-urban interface, and along ridge lines.

Actions:

- The California Legislature should adopt a Fuel Break exemption to expedite the creation of fuel breaks.
- CalFire should identify priority areas for the placement of fuel breaks.
- Local Fire Safe Councils should be engaged in developing community consensus for fuel break placement and the creation of defensible space around structures and communities.

Thinning

Reducing fuel load is critical – California has a vegetation management problem. Whether it be in chaparral, oak woodland, or conifer forests, the excess vegetation provides tinder for fire. Small scale and large scale fuel reduction projects over several years will be necessary to address this issue.

Actions:

- The Board of Forestry should adopt the Vegetation Management Programmatic Environmental Impact Report.
- The current forest fire prevention exemption should be expanded by the Legislature.
- The \$200 million identified for forest management in SB901 needs to be annually allocated as intended by the Legislature.

Biomass Energy

Currently the only beneficial use for waste material from thinning projects is to turn it into biomass energy. The economics of biomass energy have led to the closure of facilities. Many of the remaining biomass facilities are in danger of closing due to material supply issues or lack of long-term utility contracts. The generation of biomass energy is cleaner than pile burning or a wildfire.

Actions:

- The definition of material that qualifies as “high hazard” fuel should be expanded.
- The Legislature should allocate funding for transportation subsidies in order to reduce the cost of material collection.
- The Legislature and the Administration should require the PUC to develop long-term utility purchase contracts for biomass energy.
- Communities that want to initiate small, local biomass energy activity should be assisted by the PUC.

Prescribed Fire

Another tool for the reduction of fuel load is to introduce fire in a controlled and managed manner. Prescribed fire is especially beneficial in reducing ground level undergrowth.

Actions:

- The Legislature should address liability issues so that private landowners are encouraged to utilize prescribed fire as a tool.
- Liability language from AB1492 needs to be adjusted in light of judgement in the Flat Fire case.

Cross Laminated Timber

Mass timber, including Cross Laminated Timber (CLT) is one of several new wood products. Mass timber is created by taking layers of wood and bonding them in alternating directions with structural adhesives. Mass timber can utilize large wood products to produce structural support and beams. It can also utilize smaller wood products to generate panels for walls and ceilings.

Actions:

- The Building Standards Commission should adopt the new International Building Codes for wood construction in taller buildings.
- The Legislature should create a tax incentive to support the creation of Mass timber facilities through retrofitting or new construction.

Watershed Level Projects

Watershed level approaches to forest management will increase the pace and scale of fire prevention activities. Watersheds are critical for water supply and quality, wildlife habitat, and carbon sequestration.

Actions:

- CalFire should utilize SB 901 grants to fund collaboratives that propose watershed level treatments and Master Stewardship Agreements and Good Neighbor Authority with the federal government.
- The Legislature should extend the life span of Sustained Yield Plans.

Infrastructure

The timber industry in California reduced its footprint over the past decades in response to restrictive timber harvest rules and the decrease in federal timber sales. Sawmills in California are currently operating at or near capacity with current timber supply. New sawmill investment is dependent upon long-term guarantees of material supply and markets.

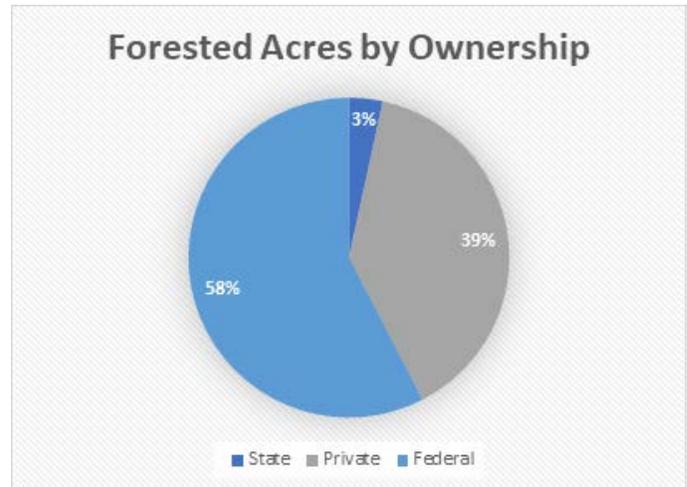
Actions:

- The Governor's Office should work with the federal government to develop long-term supply contracts from federal timber harvest.
- The Legislature should create incentives for the purchase of lumber produced in California.

Forestry by the Numbers

Forested Acres in California

There are approximately 32 million acres of forestland in California. The state owns 1.1 million acres or 3.4%. 12.4 million acres are in the hands of private landowners or 39% (13% timberland owners and 26% small landowners), and the remaining 18.4 million acres or 57.6% are owned by the federal government. (2018 report from Forest Inventory Analysis, Pacific Northwest Research Station covering 2006-2015)



Sawmill Infrastructure

There were 117 sawmills in California in 1990, but by 2016 there were 27 (Calforests mill census). Today there are 24.

Biomass Infrastructure

There were approximately 60 biomass facilities in California in 1993 providing over 1,000 megawatts of baseload renewable energy (data compiled from The Environmental Costs and Benefits of Biomass Energy Use in California). Today there are 23 biomass facilities providing approximately 555 megawatts of energy.

Trees Per Acre

The state's determination historically to squelch fires quickly has left forests choked with trees. One researcher in the Sierra Nevada range found records from 1911 showing 19 trees per acre in one section of the giant Stanislaus National Forest, compared to 260 trees per acre a century later (data from NBC News report by James Rainey December 2, 2018).

Wildfire Emissions

A [USA Today](#) article from October 12, 2017, stated that "In just the past two days, fires in California's wine country are thought to have produced as much small particulate matter as all the vehicles in the state produce in a year."

Amount of Carbon Stored in Trees

Forests' power to store carbon dioxide through tree growth is staggering: one tree can store an average of 48 pounds of carbon dioxide in one year (data from Arbor Environmental Alliance). If the 129 million dead trees in California were instead healthy trees, we would be sequestering an additional three million tons of carbon per year.

How Much Water Can Healthy Forests Save?

Thinning out trees reduces the water used by plants providing more rainfall to flow into rivers and accumulate in groundwater. Using data from the U.S. Geological Survey, researchers found that over the period 1990-2008, fire-thinned forests saved 3.7 billion gallons of water annually in the Kings River Basin and 17 billion gallons of water annually in the American River Basin. This water would otherwise have been lost through evapotranspiration.

What Healthy Forests Can Do

- Reduce our risk of catastrophic wildfires
- Increase supply and quality of water
- Improve air quality
- Resist drought, disease, and pests
- Provide recreational opportunities
- Increase our carbon storage
- Help California meet Greenhouse Gas goals
- Assure habitat for multiple species
- Create good paying, rural jobs



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