BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION MEETING MINUTES

SACRAMENTO, CA

May 14, 2025

**BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION MEMBERS**

**Present:**

* Terrence O’Brien, Chair
* Elizabeth Forsburg-Pardi, Vice Chair
* J. Lopez
* Rich Wade
* Dawn Blake
* Elicia Goldsworthy
* Ryan Hilburn

**Absent:**

* Katie Delbar

**BOARD STAFF PRESENT:**

* Dan Stapleton, Asst. Executive Officer, Foresters Registration
* Jeff Slaton, Senior Board Counsel
* Robert Roth, Board Counsel
* Dan Craig, Regulations Program Manager
* Jane Van Susteren, Regulations Coordinator
* Andrew Lawhorn, Forestry Assistant II
* Kristina Wolf, Senior Environmental Scientist
* Alexandra La Plante, Administrative Unit Manager
* Katie Harrell, Joint Institute for Wood Products Innovation, Board Staff
* Alex Vest, Wildfire Planning Specialist
* Mazonika Kemp, Records Administrator
* Anna Castro, Executive Assistant

**DEPARTMENTAL STAFF PRESENT:**

* John Melvin, Assistant Deputy Director Resource Protection and Improvement, CAL FIRE

**Board Members Roll Call:**

Member Lopez Present

Member Wade Present

Member Blake Present

Member Delbar Absent

Member Forsburg-Pardi Present

Member Goldsworthy Present

Member Hilburn Present

Chairman O’Brien Present

*Quorum established*

**Announcement of Action(s) Taken in Executive Session:**

Jeff Slaton, Senior Counsel for the Board, reported that the Board took no reportable action with respect to both items noted on the agenda.

**Consent Calendar Items:**

**05-14-01 Chairman O’Brien moves to accept items on the Consent Calendar as presented. Member Lopez seconds the motion.**

**Roll Call:**

**Lopez: Aye**

**Wade: Aye**

**Blake: Aye**

**Delbar: Absent**

**Forsburg-Pardi: Aye**

**Goldsworthy: Aye**

**Hilburn: Aye**

**O’Brien: Aye**

**Motion passed.**

**Report of the Chairman, Terrence O’Brien:**

Chairman O’Brien shared that the Ember Resistant Zone Zero Rulemaking held an in-person workshop which also included online participation. Chairman shared that the Vegetation treatment program P.E.I.R. (Program Environmental Impact Report) is moving forward but that there are challenges in the near future regarding adequate funding. The work that is being done is in response to the Governor’s Executive order. The Board is working on Zone Zero and the Vegetation Treatment Program which the scope of the work will be expanded to cover a larger geographical area of California. Chairman also announced the appointment of Board Member Ryan Hilburn as co-chair to the Effectiveness Monitoring Committee.

**Report of the Director, John Melvin, Assistant Deputy Director, Resource Protection and Improvement, CAL FIRE:**

**Natural Resource Management**

Forest Practice Program

* The public meeting for the subsequent Hearst Program Timberland Environmental Impact Reports (PTEIR) occurred in the week of April 28, 2025. There were no public attendees, and one state agency was in attendance. Wide public notice was provided prior to the meeting around the community of McCloud.

Watershed Protection Program

* Staff officially started monitoring on FORPRIEM 2- Forest Practice Rules implementation and Effectiveness Monitoring. Crews have initiated the three-year plan on data collection on approximately 90 green tree Timber Harvest Plans.

Casper Creek

* The Caspar Creek Experimental Watersheds 44th annual meeting will be held May 20-22, 2025. The meeting will include two half-day technical webinars on recent Caspar Creek results, with a field tour on May 22, 2025.

Forest Practice Administration

* Work is continuing to bring CalTREES to an online cloud platform. The transition to the cloud has now been pushed back to fall from the earlier summer projection.

Resource Protection and Improvement Programs

Urban and Community Forestry

* The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) and the US Forest Service (USFS) are proud to announce a new interactive mapping tool to visualize urban tree canopy across California. This tool displays 2022 high-resolution (60cm) urban tree canopy for all 2020 Census designated urban areas in the state of California, as well as canopy-related change between 2018 and 2022. A webinar is scheduled for May 22, 2025, from 3:00 – 4:00 pm and will introduce the new California Urban Tree Canopy Viewer and Change Analysis, which include a brief demonstration and overview of potential uses for the tool.

Forest Entomology and Pathology Program

* Funding (a portion of the annual federal allocation) is being distributed to the Tolowa Tribe in Del Norte County to help control the European strain of Sudden Oak Death disease and do other work on their traditional lands.
* The summer field trip on the California Forest Pest Control Council Insect and Disease Committees will be examining giant sequoia pest issues and the overall decline of red firs. The meeting will be on June 17, 2025. The tour will begin in Calaveras Big Trees State Park.

Forest Biometrics Program

* The Department’s Mensuration/Growth and Yield class is underway May 12-16, 2025, with the capacity of 32 students.

Demonstration State Forests

Jackson

* The next Jackson Advisory Group (JAG) meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 24, 2025. The current plan is to hold the meeting in the fields, starting at Camp One and then reviewing completed research and planned management projects.
* Staff have been meeting regularly with the Clifton Environmental consulting team to prepare the Draft Forest Management Plan. Staff are tentatively planning for a public release of a draft plan in early July 2025.

Mountain Home

* 25,400 seedlings from the L.A. Moran Reforestation Center were delivered to the Sequioa National Forest tree cooler on April 22, 2025. They were subsequently planted by Red Mountain Resources.

Soquel

* The Santa Cruz Mountain Trail Stewardship (SCMTS) has conducted volunteer trail work on Corral Road and Corral Trail that have remained closed since Sulphur THP and forest health treatment operations from 2024. This is one of the final steps to restore public access.

Prescribed Fire and Environmental Protection Program

Prescribed Fire Program

* The Prescribed Fire Claims Fund has 119 projects with 14,826 acres enrolled in the pilot program. New liability insurance opportunities are available for prescribed fire practitioners in California. Staff continue to look for ways to expand and improve the program to increase the pace and scale of prescribed fire.

Vegetation Management Program (VMP)

* The new Statewide Fuels Reduction Environmental Protection Plan (EPP) from The California Natural Resources Agency and California Environmental Protection Agency are now available for submissions.

Wildfire Resilience Programs

Reforestation Services

* Excess seedlings from the 2024 production year are now available for free on a first come, first served basis. Requests for these select seed lots can be made using the 2025 Overrun Seedling Request Form. Seedling requests for 2026 production year can be made through August 2025 using the 2026 Seedling Request Form.

California Forest Improvement Program (CFIP)

* The April 2025 funding batch for CFIP had 14 grant applications, however, the program was only able to fund 10 new agreements due to having limited funding available. The 10 selected applications will result in 758 acres under management plan and 740 acres of forest treatments for a total award amount of $2,097,954.06.

Forest Legacy Program (FLP)

* The Forest Legacy Program and the Joint Forestry Committee are evaluating the FLP Assessment of Need for the 5-year review of the information in the State Forest Action Plan (SFAP) to assess whether amendments or updates are necessary for this federally required plan.

Climate and Energy Programs

Wood Products & Bioenergy

* The grant application deadline was April 25, 2025. We Received 102 applications for a combined request of $86 million, which is the largest response to any of the seven applications held for this area of programming. There is $5 million available to award.

Forest Health

* The Forest Health Program is in the final stages of grant application review for FY 24-25. Award announcements are expected as soon as mid-May 2025.

Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force

* Task Force 2025 Meeting Dates:
	+ June 6: Sacramento, 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
	+ September 4-5: Regional Meeting, Inland Empire
	+ December 12: Sacramento, 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP)

Forest & Monitoring

* 101 proposals were received in the FY 24-25 Forest Health Research Grants solicitation. 30 applicants have been invited back to submit full proposals by March 14, 2025. FRAP science staff are completing a review of full proposals and anticipate making award decisions by the middle of May.

Forest and Rangeland Assessment

* The FRAP Assessment continues to move towards a final product. All but one of thirteen chapters have now been drafted and in different stages of review. We anticipate completing and releasing by September 2025.

Fire Protection

Fire Protection Program

* The Hired Equipment Participation Manual has been updated and published with new rates for 2025.

Law Enforcement/Civil Cost Recovery

* Through April 2025, Law Enforcement officers have made 35 Arson arrests.

Fire Protection Operations

* CAL FIRE Incident Management Teams are expanding personnel to include a Tribal Liaison Officer and an additional Public Information Officer.

Aviation Management Unit (AMU/Tactical Air Operations (TAO)

* The second of seven C-130 (T-121) Retardant Delivery System Installation and operational checks are completed, making the air tanker operational. The third C-130 is undergoing modifications and is expected to be operational later in the summer.

Cooperative Fire Protection

Local Government Program

* The FY 25-26 Budget Plans process is in the development process. The exercise aims to prepare FY 25-26 Local Government Agreement Budgets for FISCAL identifying associated personnel needs and operating expense costs from executed or upcoming renewal LG agreements.

Hand Crew Program

* Hand Crew Strength: As of April 9, 2025, CAL FIRE can staff 138 of the 236 Hand Crews available for statewide response. The number of Hand Crews available significantly impacts wildland fire suppression, conservation work, prescribed fire activities, and fuels reduction work. Hand Crew numbers may fluctuate due to staffing periods and crew typing certifications. The current staffing includes the following four models under the Hand Crew Program:
	+ 71 of 152 authorized California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation incarcerated Persons crews
	+ 26 of 32 California Conservation Corps crews
	+ 13 of 14 California Military Department Joint Taskforce Rattlesnake crews
	+ 28 of 38 CAL FIRE Firefighter I (FFI) crews
* As we continue to move into drier periods of the fire year, fire preparedness exercises have begun across the State for all hand crews. The largest exercise will be held in the Tehama Glenn Unit near Paynes Creek, CA. Ishi Conservation Camp hosted the event from May 9-12. It is commonly known as the Ishi Fire Preparedness Exercise.

Safety Program

* The Annual Focus on Safety documents is under development. Topics will include fire line safety, weather, Valley Fever, heat illness, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) protection, and ATV/UTV driving among others.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Program

* On May 20, 2025, the San Luis Obispo Unit will be the first to transition to the Advanced Life Support version of the Department’s electronic patient care reporting system (CALEPCR). Several more Units will be transitioning in the next few months.

Office of the State Marshal

Wildfire Risk Reduction

Defensible Space

* Units are in the process of hiring back their returning seasonal and or new inspectors.
* New inspectors will receive a week-long program introduction training at the Natomas Training Center in the following subject matter:
	+ Public Resource Code 4291 – Defensible Space, Zone O, I, and 2
	+ Home Hardening – Recognition of ember intrusion vulnerabilities and mitigation
	+ Public Resource Code 4292 and 4293 – Vegetation clearance around powerlines, poles, and hardware recognition
	+ Damage Inspection Specialist – Conducting All Risk Damage Inspection
* Inspection Totals
	+ FY24-25
		- 201,537
	+ Year to Date
		- 50,767
* Home Hardening
	+ The California Wildfire Mitigation Program participated in site tours to observe defensible space and home hardening retrofits conducted in Shasta County.

Wildfire Preparedness

* Burn Permits processing is running smoothly with the 2024 permits expiring
* Updates to the application process for approving LE-5/7 burn projects will allow more control at the unit level to approve or deny the request
	+ Total Permits Requested – 95,330
	+ Total Permits Issues – 89,246
	+ Cultural Burning Permits Issued – 2,521

Wildfire Planning and Statistics

* Currently reviewing Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) and Bear Valley Electric Services (BVES) 2026-2028 Wildfire Mitigation Plan (WMP) submission.

Community wildfire Mitigation Assistance

Land Use Planning

* National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Firewise USA
	+ Celebrated 1000th NFPA Firewise Community in good standing in California on May 6, 2025, Table Mountain Rancheria in Fresno County
	+ Currently 1199 communities in California
	+ Several new applications in review
* Wildfire Prevention Grants
	+ Preparing for the next open solicitation later this month.

Communications

Wildfire Preparedness Week May 4-10, 2025

* The CAL FIRE Communications Program hosted five events over four days during Wildfire Preparedness Week. With the theme Building a Fire-Ready Future. Strengthening Our Defenses, Together, this year’s Wildfire Preparedness Week focused on what the individuals and communities can do and what CAL FIRE and our partners are doing to become more wildfire resilient.

Statistics

Year to Date Wildfire Statistics (State and Federal)

* Updated May 5, 2025:
	+ 2025 Combined YTD (CALFIRE & Federal):
		- 1,083 fires
		- 61,205 acres
	+ 2024 Combined YTD (CALFIRE & Federal):
		- 766 fires
		- 1,132 acres
	+ 5-Year Average (same interval)
		- 1,215 fires
		- 4,978 acres

Tribal Affairs Program

Tribal Wildfire Resilience

* The Tribal Wildfire Resilience review panel has started to evaluate grant proposals. This solicitation received 44 applications requesting a total of approximately $50 million in funding. There is approximately $5 million available to award.

**Executive Officer Report, Dan Stapleton, Assistant Executive Officer:**

Dan Stapleton, Assistant Executive Officer for the Board updated the Board on the following proposed regulations:

* The Fire Reduction Community List Amendments 2025 a regulatory product has been withdrawn and will be bringing it before the Board again at the June 2025 Board meeting with changes to the regulatory text and requesting approval for 15-day notice period. This withdrawal is a result of a full OAL review and needing to strike some issues specifically adding an opening date for the application period to meet clarity standards.
* The second regulation the local responsibility Fire Hazard Severity Zone rulemaking was withdrawn as OAL determined that the Board lacks the authority to require GIS maps. They alluded that the Office of State Fire Marsal does have that authority, as a result we withdrew the rulemaking.
* The Board may consider the resolution under 14 CCR §1573.5 for authorizing the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding Travis Forest Conservation Easement under the Forest Legacy Program.

**Resolution authorizing CAL FIRE regarding Travis Forest Conservation Easement under the Forest Legacy Program:**

**05-14-02 Chairman O’Brien move to approve Board Resolution No. 2025-01 regarding the Travis Ranch Conservation Easement Forest Legacy Project, as described in the Resolution. Member Wade seconds the motion.**

**Roll Call:**

**Lopez: Aye**

**Wade: Aye**

**Blake: Aye**

**Delbar: Absent**

**Forsburg-Pardi: Aye**

**Goldsworthy: Aye**

**Hilburn: Aye**

**O’Brien: Aye**

**Motion passed.**

**Report of the Standing Committees:**

**Forest Practice Committee, Rich Wade, Chair**

The Forest Practice Committee met yesterday and have an actionable item to bring in front of the Board today. The Committee discussed the following 3 items from the agenda:

* Discussed the Permanent Rulemaking for the Forest Resilience Exemption and the remaining topics that were discussed included the requirement that RPF consult with the Department about letting trees that are dead, dying or diseased over the 30” limit that the law prescribed for harvesting. Discussed residual canopy standards. The committee opted to retain canopy limits that we had previously discussed.
* Discussed the issue of the metric for tree harvesting.
* Discussed the geographically overlapping harvest documents and specifically exemptions that overlap timber harvest plants and other plans.
* The committee considered and issue that had been brought forth by CAL FIRE in a letter to the Board last September.

**Management Committee, Liz Forsburg-Pardi, Chair**

The Management Committee had the following two items on the agenda:

* A presentation on Alternative Meadow Restoration related to EMC-2018-003. Also, there was important information for the committee as we had a lot of discussion in previous years about how we define Meadow Restoration and terms that we use. It was very much appreciated.
* Discussion on Less than Three-acre Conversion Exemptions. This rule was brought forward last year and there is a small technical change that we are proposing to discuss and will be brought back to the committee to look at again next month.
* Continued discussion on Permanent Rulemaking for the Oak Woodland Exemption.
* Discussed Noticing Processes within the Forest Practice Rules. Staff is looking at all the different processes of how we noticed Timber Operations.
* Discussed the CFIP Proposed Rate Increase and information on all the rates are included in the material that has been provided to the Board and the Management Committee meeting yesterday. Chair proposed adopting accepting that proposal.

**Management Committee. CAL FIRE California Forest Improvement Program Cap Rates for 2025:**

**05-14-03 Member Forsburg-Pardi move to approve the CAL FIRE California Forest Improvement Program Cap Rates for 2025. Member Blake seconds the motion.**

**Roll Call:**

**Lopez: Aye**

**Wade: Aye**

**Blake: Aye**

**Delbar: Absent**

**Forsburg-Pardi: Aye**

**Goldsworthy: Aye**

**Hilburn: Aye**

**O’Brien: Aye**

**Motion passed.**

**Resource Protection Committee, J. Lopez, Chair**

The Resource Protection Committee discussed the following:

* Land Use Planning Program gave their update to the committee. They continue to engage in various local jurisdictions throughout the State.
* The committee reviewed four safety elements for the City of Los Angeles, City of Escondido, County of Orange and County of San Luis Obispo.
* Currently there are 1,199 Firewise sites.

**Report of the Board’s Advisory Committees:**

**Zone Zero Regulation Advisory Committee, Terrence O’Brien, Chair**

The Committee held a workshop on Monday which had useful and excellent presentations that provided additional background information for the committee. The public raised concerns regarding the regulations that are being proposed and how it will impact their communities. The goal of the committee is to put out revisions to the current rule plea as quickly as possible to be able to present it at the June meeting.

**Effectiveness Monitoring Committee (EMC), Liz Forsburg-Pardi, Co-Chair**

Kristina Wolf, Senior Environmentalist Scientist, Board of Forestry updated the Board on the following:

* The EMC meet on April 30, 2025, a quorum was not attained at that meeting so there are three items that are pending votes prior to them being forwarded to the Board for its review. The EMC’s Annual Report and Work Plan and two completed research assessments for EMC’s supported projects. The morning business meeting was followed by a field tour at the San Vicente Redwoods. The tour was led by EMC Project PI and RPF Natia Hamey.
* Initial concept proposals for the EMC Grant Program, which funds research into the effectiveness of the forest practice rules and related regulations are due May 19, 2025. Grant guidelines and instructions are available on the EMC’s webpage.
* The EMC is seeking nominees to fill up to five seats on the committee. One representing Effectiveness Monitoring community, one from CAL FIRE, and one from each of three federal agencies, the US Forest Service, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries. EMC is also seeking to fill the second co-chair seat from its current membership.
* The next EMC meeting will be June 16, at 9:30 am in Sacramento and the registration link for that meeting will be posted on the EMC’s web page by the end this week.

**Range Management Advisory Committee (RMAC), Dr. Marc Horney, Chair**

Dr. Marc Horney Chair of the Range Management Advisory Committee updated the Board on the following three items:

* The RMAC is presently seeking one new nominee to the committee. This person needs to be nominated by an organization that represents range landowners.
* The RMAC is in the process of implementing the task assigned to it under Senate Bill 675. Dr. Stephanie Larson, Vice-Chair of the Range Management Advisory Committee is leading the effort to develop local and regional grazing guidance around the use of prescribed grazing for fuels management.
* The update to the 2015 RMAC Prescribed Herbivory White Paper is in the final stages of revision and hope to bring it before the Board at an upcoming summer meeting.

**PRESENTATIONS:**

**SB 675 Implementation: Local/Regional Grazing Guidance,** Dr. Stephanie Larson, Range Management Advisory Committee Vice-Chair and U.C. Cooperative Extension emeritus

**CONCLUSION**

**Public Forum**

**Public Comments:**

* Larry Aguilera asked if the size of the tree that is being cut has been determined.
* Richard Gienger, Forest Forever, shared his views on the State Forests conditions and how it is being handled.

**Adjournment**

Respectfully submitted,

ATTEST:



Dan Stapleton Terrence O’Brien

Assistant Executive Officer Chairman