
CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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FIRST-OF-THEIR-KIND TRIBAL WILDFIRE RESILIENCE GRANTS SUPPORT CALIFORNIA NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES IN MANAGING ANCESTRAL LANDS

Grants promote Traditional Ecological Knowledges to create wildfire safety in tribal communities

Sacramento – This month the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) announced \$19 million in Tribal Wildfire Resilience Grant funding. In total, 13 projects across the state were offered funding to support California Native American tribes in managing ancestral lands, implementing, and promoting Traditional Ecological Knowledges in wildfire resilience and establishing wildfire safety for tribal communities.

“Engaging California Native American tribes is essential in reaching the state’s wildfire resiliency goals,” said CAL FIRE Director and Chief, Joe Tyler. “These projects will help make California safer while embracing Traditional Ecological Knowledge and serving California Native American tribes and their members.”

The development of the Tribal Wildfire Resilience Grant program included statewide tribal consultations and roundtable sessions to work with tribal leaders and ensure the grant program would meet the needs of their tribal governments and communities. Awards were granted for both planning and implementation projects and will support the shared wildfire resiliency goals for all of California.

“This is a huge step forward to support tribal leadership to protect and heal our environment,” said California Natural Resources Secretary Wade Crowfoot. “Tribal wildfire management practices have protected communities and landscapes for thousands of years. This first-of-its-kind funding will help restore and expand these tribal practices, which we are learning from and expanding upon within our state agencies.”

Implementation projects, which make up the majority of awarded projects, include supporting ongoing fuels reduction projects on tribal lands, recruitment and training of tribal youth and conservation staff, and the improvement of access to and quality of traditional food and basketry materials. Projects also utilize tribal expertise, science, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Western sciences to achieve the objectives of building capacity and improving wildfire resilience on throughout tribe’s ancestral lands.

The Cahuilla Band of Indians Wildfire Resiliency Project in Riverside County includes multiple activities that educate, engage, and protect the community. Their grant will establish the Tribal Youth Conservation Corps whose members will learn about how to conduct fuels reduction activities that create wildfire resilience, including cultural and prescribed burns that help restore

native plants and cultural traditions. The Tribe will also educate and engage the community about their Community Wildfire Mitigation Plan and the Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan.

“On behalf of the Cahuilla Band of Indians, I extend our deep gratitude to Governor Newsom and the State of California for recognizing and supporting our commitment to wildfire resiliency,” said Daniel Salgado, Tribal Council Chairman Cahuilla Band of Indians. “This Tribal Wildfire Resilience grant will empower our community to enhance safety, preserve our cherished traditions, and promote sustainable growth. Together, we will not only fortify our lands against the dangers of wildfires but will also foster community engagement, safeguard our cultural heritage, and pave the way for the next generation with the establishment of the Cahuilla Tribal Youth Conservation Corp. Our shared vision for a safer, more resilient community begins today, and we are honored to walk this path alongside the great State of California.”

"The Esselen Tribe of Monterey County's Tribal Wildfire Resilience project is being funded by CAL FIRE at a critical time in our Tribe's journey to regain sovereignty and stewardship of our ancestral territory," said Tom Little Bear Nason, Chairman, Esselen Tribe of Monterey County. “We are honored to be recognized with a grant award that will allow us to demonstrate and educate members of our Tribe and the public in our traditional ways of stewarding the land that are inherently climate and wildfire resilient, and good for all of the living things that call this dramatic landscape home.”

One planning grant goes to the Tule River Indian Tribe who will utilize the Tribal Wildfire Resilience Planning Grant to map and prioritize areas for future wildfire resilience and burned area recovery, NEPA compliance costs, and to provide on-the-job training for Tribal forestry crews related to prescribed fire and cultural burning, heavy equipment operation, and drone-based mapping.

[Tribal Wildfire Resilience Grants](#) are administered by [CAL FIRE's Forest Health Program](#) which funds active restoration and reforestation activities aimed at providing for more resilient and sustained forests to ensure future existence of forests in California while also mitigating climate change, protecting communities from fire risk, strengthening rural economies, and improving California's water and air.

Additional funding is available for subsequent rounds of Tribal Wildfire Resilience Grants. Solicitations are expected to open in December 2023 with another round of funding expected in 2024.

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