

“Cones as Goods”

Cone Procurement Program for Vendors



Program Guidelines Version 2.0

Reforestation Services Program, CAL FIRE

Introduction:

Recent wildfires have challenged foresters and landowners to sustain healthy forests. The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection’s (“**CAL FIRE**”) Reforestation Services Program (“**RSP**”) supports post-fire recovery by supplying private industrial and non-industrial landowners with seeds and seedlings for reforestation.

The RSP’s Seed Bank has quantified the volume of cone and seeds needed to reforest up to 25% of State and private timberlands in the case of catastrophic wildfire and the loss of the forest’s natural ability to re-seed and regenerate. To meet this need, the RSP and its partners are scaling up capacity for surveying, monitoring, and collecting cone crops, including training tree climbers to responsibly harvest conifer cones.

To support cone collection by independent parties the RSP welcomes proposals through “Cones as Goods”, a cone collection program wherein Vendors can collect their own cones and sell them directly to CAL FIRE. This document outlines what Vendors need to know and do to participate in the program. The following procedures will ensure prompt communication with RSP staff and landowners, accurate data collection, and the delivery of high-quality cones and seeds.

For more information about the Reforestation Services Program or supplemental materials for cone surveying, monitoring, and collecting please visit the [RSP website](#).

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Section 1: Workflow Overview and Vendor Registration

Cones as Goods Workflow Overview

Through “Cones as Goods”, CAL FIRE seeks to purchase conifer cones from private individuals and companies registered as vendors with the agency. Ideal vendors will be tree climbers and cone collectors with the knowledge and expertise to survey, monitor, sample, and collect their own cone crops. Vendors are responsible for managing their own business operations and their own relationships with landowners.

Vendors are independent – they are not contractors or employees of CAL FIRE. Each Vendor is solely responsible for their own actions and liabilities. Vendors may not be contractors for, nor currently involved in any other financial agreements (contracts, grants, etc.) with CAL FIRE for the collection or sale of cones or seeds.

The nature of this work is speculative. CAL FIRE cannot guarantee a return on pre-collection work like surveying and monitoring. Vendors should weigh that risk and run their business accordingly.

Each Vendor can set their own bushel rates. The RSP suggests considering factors such as time for travel, coordination, planning, overnight stays, per diem expenses, and labor. All bushel rates will be agreed upon before cone collections are executed.

The program’s Point of Sale is the Seed Lot, defined as a collection of cone/ seed from specific species in a specific place in a specific year. More details on seed lots and purchase limitations can be found in sections 3 and 5.

The following are the core steps of Cones as Goods:

1. Vendor Registration
2. Landowner Outreach and Registration
3. Cone Surveying and Monitoring
4. Pre-collection planning and pre-collection inspection
5. Collection
6. Delivery and Payment

Vendor Registration Overview

Participation in the Cones as Goods program requires Vendors to register themselves or their business with the Reforestation Services Program to confirm they are a legal business entity and possess the relevant knowledge and experience to be a successful cone collector.

At the time of application, Vendors will need to submit:

1. FI\$CAL vendor ID number
2. Seller's Permit from the CA Dept of Tax and Fee Administration
3. Proof of Coverage for your business' liability insurance policy
4. Any relevant professional qualifications and certificates you may hold
5. Contact information for you and/or your business
6. Contact information for any Registered Professional Foresters working on this project

FI\$CAL Registration

FI\$CAL is the financial management system for the State of California. This is how we can pay YOU!

Vendors must register with the Reforestation Services Program. FI\$CAL registration is required before a Work Order Proposal can be approved. Vendors are encouraged to complete registration as soon as possible.

Vendors can register with the FI\$CAL system using [Standard Form 204—Payee Data Record](#).

Please fill out this form and send it to clarisse.goetzen@fire.ca.gov with the subject line *“Attention: Cones as Goods FI\$CAL Registration”*.

FI\$CAL registration only needs to be completed once.

If you are already registered within FI\$CAL, please provide your nine-digit FI\$CAL ID number when submitting your Work Order Proposal.

Seller's Permit Registration

A Seller's permit is issued by the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration and is required for all businesses who sell commercial wares or goods.

In California, the Seller is required to collect, report, and remit sales tax to the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration (CDTFA). Standard practice passes the cost of the tax onto the buyer; in this case, CAL FIRE.

All cone purchased through this program will be legally sold at the L.A. Moran Reforestation Center and the sales tax rate for Yolo County will therefore apply to all sales. The sales tax

rate for Yolo County in 2026 is 9.25%. This will be paid to the Vendor on top of their quoted bushel rate but should be held and remitted to CDTFA.

The RSP encourages Vendors to consult the CDTFA's ["Tax Guide for New Permit and License Holders"](#) to ensure their business practices follow applicable laws and regulations.

To register for a Seller's permit, visit the [CDTFA's online services site](#) and select, "Register for a Permit, License, or Account" under the "Registration" section.

Liability Insurance: The Reforestation Services Program requires all vendors to submit proof of insurance covering their activities as a climbing arborist or cone collector. A general life insurance policy will not suffice.

Vendor Registration

Use the following QR code or link to submit a registration survey. RSP staff will review your application and reach out with questions or concerns. If approved, Vendors will be issued a Vendor ID Number. Keep track of this number – it will later be used to associate Landowners and Work Orders to your account.

2026 Vendor Registration Survey

Please use either the link or QR code provided below to access the survey.

[Direct link to Vendor Registration Survey](#)



Section 2: ArcGIS Online, Landowner Registration, & Cone Surveys

ArcGIS Online

Following approval of a Vendor's registration application, they should prepare to register landowners and submit a Work Order Proposal for cone collection.

These tasks are accomplished through two different ArcGIS surveys. To maintain user privacy, access to these surveys and their data is protected. CAL FIRE will establish ArcGIS Community Hub accounts for registered Vendors to access the surveys.

Your account will be created using the contact information from your registration – make sure your email is current and accessible. Once your account is created it will be added to the specific CAG Vendor group in the AGOL Community Hub and you will have access to the Landowner Registration and Work Order Proposal surveys.

Landowner Registration

Vendors are encouraged to use their personal and professional connections in their community or target survey areas to meet private landowners and access timberland.

Vendor's relationships with landowners are proprietary. CAL FIRE will never pursue a relationship with a Vendor's registered landowner for the purpose of cone collection without the Vendor's involvement. If a Vendor seeks to pursue a landowner registered with CAL FIRE's Reforestation Because of You program, the decision of who to work with is the landowners.

To register landowners as being associated with a given Vendor, Vendors must use the Landowner Registration Survey. This survey is simple and requires only basic information on the Landowner, including location and program agreement status.

To verify the landowner has granted the Vendor permission to access their parcels, CAL FIRE requires Vendors to submit a *"Vendor Cone Crop Verification Access Agreement"* for each landowner they plan to work with. This document is pre-signed by CAL FIRE and must be signed by both the landowner and climber and returned to CAL FIRE.

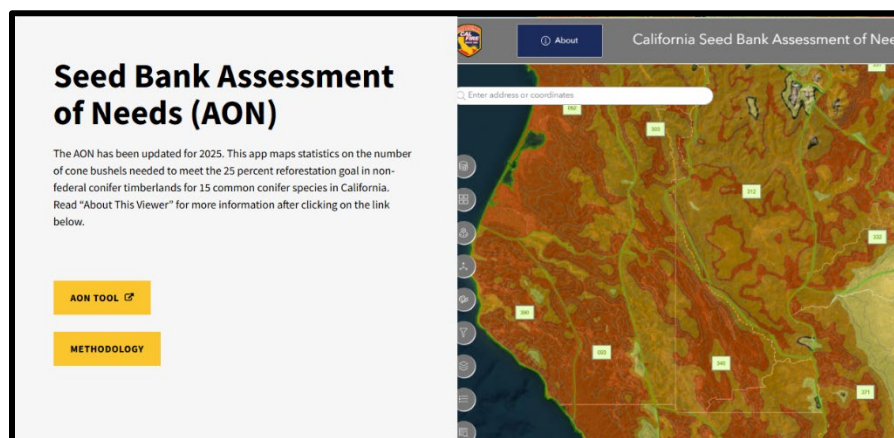
The Vendor Cone Crop Verification Access Agreement serves three important functions:

- a) **Establishes the Landowner's Seed Banking Benefit with the State Seed Bank.** Under this program, any landowner who allows a Vendor onto their property to collect cones or seeds will receive the lesser of 5lbs or 10% of the clean seed derived from each seed lot collected on their property. These will be held for free at the State Seed Bank for a period of three years as described in the Access Agreement.
- b) **Verifies Landowner permission has been granted to the Vendor to access the property and conduct cone surveying, monitoring, and collection activities.**
- c) **Establishes CAL FIRE's right to inspect cone crops reported by the Vendor.** CAL FIRE reserves the right to contact the landowner and schedule a site visit to inspect the conifer cone crops reported by the Vendor. If the Landowner denies CAL FIRE personnel access to their property for the purpose of inspecting cone crops approval for the collection will be withdrawn and CAL FIRE will not issue payment for the cones.

Cone Surveying, Sampling, and Monitoring

Vendors choose their own methods for surveying and monitoring cone crops. Whatever approach you use, the RSP encourages safety, consistency, and good data management.

When collecting cones for CAL FIRE, please use the RSP's [Seed Bank Assessment of Need \(AON\)](#) web app to identify CAL FIRE's cone crop priorities in their region.



The AON is an annual report issued by the State Seed Bank which indicates the seed deficit of the seed bank as a “need” for cones bushels of specific species in specific places.

Species and bushel need is broken down by seed zone and 500ft elevation bands and is based on calculations of the volume of seed needed to meet the goal of reforesting at least 25 percent of State and private timberlands.

Step-by-step guidance on how to use the AON can be found [in this video](#).

Submitting Cone Survey Results

Please use the 2026 *CA Cone Observation Survey* to submit cone survey data for review. Vendors should only submit results for crops they plan to monitor and collect. **A Work Order Proposal will not be approved until paired survey results have been submitted.**

[Direct link for the 2026 CA Cone Observation Survey](#)

The CA Cone Observation Survey is hosted by American Forests through the [California Reforestation Partnership Pipeline \(RPP\)](#). The RPP is a state-wide collaborative effort led by American Forests, CAL FIRE, and the US Forest Service with involvement and assistance from many community, Tribal, and university stakeholders.

View public survey data: To view public survey data and view emerging trends in cone crop location and abundance use the RPP’s [Public Survey Dashboard](#).

View your own survey data: To view your own survey results, you can [request to join an affiliation-specific data viewing group](#) via an ArcGIS Online account.

For more information about how to survey for cones, see [Additional Resource and Training Opportunities](#) on the Reforestation Services Program’s website. The RSP recommends that collectors take [Cone Hunting 101](#) and attend a [Cone Camp](#) before trying to work as a cone vendor. For additional information consult the [Cone Hunter’s Pocket Guide](#).

Cone Monitoring and Sampling

Vendors should return to their target cone crops as frequently as they deem reasonable to monitor seed development and cone maturity. The frequency of these visits may depend on the weather, elevation, latitude, seasonality, or nearby outbreaks of insects. The Vendor should take it upon themselves to gauge the crop ripeness, factors affecting the crop, and the cost of inspection to their business; aiming to balance information and efficiency.

CAL FIRE **does not require samples** to be submitted to the RSP as a condition of proposal approval.

However, the RSP does reserve the right to reject cones crops that do not meet the level of quality and volume communicated by the Vendor. This rejection can be made at any time.

It is highly recommended that Vendors climb and collect samples within their target stand to improve their own assessment of cone and seed quality and ripeness.

Vendors are welcome to submit photos of samples or physical samples to the RSP's Seed Lab for a professional opinion on ripeness. The Vendor incurs all costs associated with shipping or delivery.

Section 3: Submit a Work Order Proposal

The Work Order Proposal (“**WOP**”) is the Vendor’s sales proposition to CAL FIRE. The WOP form compiles essential details including Vendor ID, Landowner ID, site location, cost estimate, and the scale of the collection.

See Section 2 (ArcGIS Online) for information about how to access the Work Order Proposal survey and submit survey data.

The Vendor must submit a unique WOP for each collection site where they will work.

The collection site should be at the scale of the Landowner’s property. Not at the scale of the parcel, target tree, or target stand.

If a Landowner owns ten parcels, but the Vendor is only collecting on three parcels, do not submit a WOP for each parcel. Submit one WOP for all proposed collections, across all species, on the whole property.

If you are a large landowner or are working with a large landowner like a land trust or timber company where ownership is contiguous but widespread break WOPs logically based on general region or forest type.

Please adhere to the standards for delineating “target stands” set forth in Section 4.

Cone crops from different target stands should be included on the same WOP if they are on the same property, even if they are the same species. This may be the case if a property is very large or has distinct topographic features such as a significant ridge or ravine which divides the forest across different slopes and aspects.

Examples

Scenario	Same Property?	Same Species?	Same Seed Zone-Elevation Band?	Same WOP?	Same Payment Limit?
Two stands, two properties	No	Yes	Yes	No	No – each has its own \$9,999 limit.
Two stands, one property.	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No – treated as different lots. Each has its own \$9,999 limit.
Two stands, one property.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes – combined \$9,999 limit.
Two stands, one property.	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No – each has its own \$9,999 limit.

When preparing to submit your WOP, thoroughly evaluate cone crops and site features to accurately determine the scope and scale of your collection and set your per bushel rates for the collection.

Prior to submitting their WOP, the Vendor should survey and sample the cone crop for their own cone quality evaluation process. It is the responsibility of the Vendor to identify cone crops that meet the Seed Bank's quality standards. As such, survey and sampling work is speculative and the cost to the Vendor should be incorporated into the per bushel rate for the collection.

Each WOP undergoes assessment by an RSP panel. Approval is based on RSP seed needs at the time of submission, crop quality and scale, and bushel pricing. Approved Work Order Proposals will be assigned a Work Order Number to be used for invoicing.

Section 4: Site Layout, Inspection, and Collection

Stand, Tree, and Cone Standards

- Vendors should aim to identify a **minimum** of 5 collectable trees at a site. The aggregation of these 5 trees, within a 500' elevation band, will be referred to as a "stand."
- The entire stand should be edaphically similar. E.g. same slope, same side of a major watercourse.

- Collection sites should be $\geq$ 5 ac. Smaller is okay if within a matrix of other timberlands.
- Collectable trees should be dominant or co-dominant (in terms of **crown position**, **not** leading stems) in the stand, disease-free, at least 12" DBH, with good stem and crown form, no split tops or co-dominant leaders.
- Seed trees shall be widely spaced and well distributed, generally not closer than 200' apart.
- Viable cone crop volume (2+ bushels in the top third of the canopy). Note: a dry bushel is equivalent to 8 US dry gallons. If the total volumes of cones in the top third of the tree canopy is roughly equivalent to three 5-gallon buckets, it is a worthwhile climb.
- Cones and seeds must be relatively free of insects. Cones of *Pinus* shall have at least 75% sound, filled seeds per cut surface; for all other species the minimum is 50% per cut surface.
- Embryo length shall be at least 90% of the embryonic cavity for all species.
- Megagametophyte shall be opaque, not translucent, and with a firm, nut-like texture.
- Seed wings shall be separate from the scale and slightly brittle (like parchment paper).

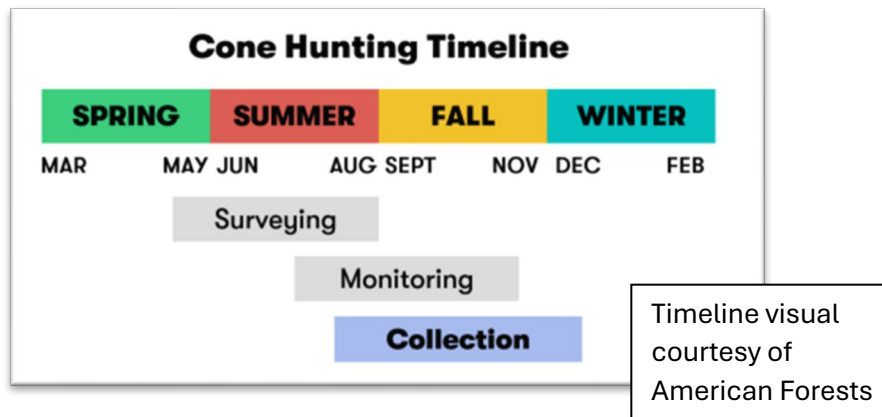
Site Layout

Vendors should record the location and crop volume of each target tree from which they want to collect. There are many technologies available for this task including Avenza, Gaia Maps, ESRI Field Maps, and more. Whichever system is used, be sure you can use it consistently and accurately.

Prior to inspection and collection all target trees should be flagged or obviously marked. A naming convention can be utilized to stay organized while moving between stands and trees.

Pre-collection Inspection

Vendors should prepare for cone collection following successive monitoring visits and final determination of cone crop quality and volume.



The RSP will conduct a pre-collection inspection for every Vendor with an approved Work Order Proposal prior to collection. This is mandatory. During the inspection, please plan to visit your proposed collection site and collect some sample cones. During the inspection RSP personnel will be checking the following:

- Work Order Proposal specifications
 - Species
 - Stand dimensions
 - Crop estimate
 - Crop quality
 - Provenance
- Land/ landowner access
- Vendor collection plan and stand layout

RSP personnel will help the Vendor improve the layout and assess their stand if needed and advise on next steps. In the case of a major issue, such as extreme insect damage or a blown crop, the collection may be cancelled.

RSP personnel will reach out to the Vendor to schedule inspection prior to harvest.

Please email spencer.lachman@fire.ca.gov with questions about this process.

Cone Collection

Vendors should consider collecting Douglas-fir, white fir, red fir, incense cedar, Giant Sequoia, and Coast Redwood cones by bagging them in the tree so as not to drop seeds from the canopy. These cones are small or break apart upon collection.

The peduncle shall be removed from redwood cone and sugar pine cones before bagging.

Only current year cones are acceptable – cones must contain viable seed.

In general trees should be climbed with ladders, ropes, or other methods that are not damaging. Spurs should NOT be used on white pines or thin-barked species.

Cone bushels shall contain at least 95% seed bearing cones by volume. Unacceptable material includes branches, large twigs and tufts of needles, rocks, cones of the wrong species, spent cones or other foreign debris.

Only one bushel (8 US dry gallons) of cones per sack allowed and secured at the top to allow for cone expansion. Fill line is clearly marked on CAL FIRE sacks.

Store cones in well-ventilated mesh or burlap bushel bags, avoid impermeable plastic bags to prevent suffocation and mold growth.

Cone Bags

CAL FIRE encourages all vendors to obtain their own cone bags and tags. With a valid Seller's Permit and a Resell Certificate from the CDTFA all materials which accompany the unit of cones at the time of sale such as bags, tags, and zip ties or twine can be purchased by the Vendor's business tax free.

CAL FIRE can lend cone bags to Vendors with the expectation that all materials will be returned to the RSP before the Vendors last planned collection. The vendor will be charged a fee of \$15 for each bag not returned to the department. This will be deducted from the value of their last collection. Please reach out to coordinate cone bag pick up or shipping.

CAL FIRE cone bushel bags are **NOT** meant to be used to bag cones in the canopy and they should not be punctured or modified to accommodate this purpose. CAL FIRE cone bags should only be used to bag cones on the ground.

Cone Tags

CAL FIRE can provide tags to Vendors if needed. Bushel bag tags should be filled out using waterproof ink, and should include the following information:

- Vendor Name
- Species
- Seed Zone
- Elevation (exact)
- Township, Range, Section
- GPS coordinates (decimal degrees)
- Collection Date

One cone bushel tag should be included inside the bag, and one should be fastened by zip tie around the mouth of the bag.

Communication and Transportation

Pre-Collection Communications

The vendor should contact RSP staff before delivering cones to the L.A. Moran Reforestation Center.

Please email erika.teach@fire.ca.gov AND spencer.lachman@fire.ca.gov with the subject line “*ATTENTION: Collection and Transportation Plan – Work Order Number.*”

The Collection and Transportation plan should detail the:

- i. Work Order Number
- ii. Estimated volume of cones to be dropped off.
- iii. Estimated time and date for drop off at:

LA Moran Reforestation Center

5800 Chiles Road, Davis, CA 95618

- iv. Name(s) and contact information for the individual(s) delivering the cones.

Post-Collection Communications

All cones must be transported to LA Moran Reforestation Center within 48-72 hours of collection. Sooner is always better – this window is meant to account for weekends and long drives, not to be used as a buffer.

Transport all cones and samples in a properly ventilated trailer or truck. Avoid transporting bushels in an enclosed vehicle, as this can cause warm, humid conditions conducive to molding.

Vendors may drop off cones and samples during regular business hours. These are, generally, **M-F, 7am-3pm**, but the Vendor should always communicate with RSP staff before dropping off cones to ensure a CAL FIRE representative will be available to receive and inspect the crop.

When cones or seeds are dropped off or delivered and the work order is fulfilled, the collector will receive a Work Order Receipt confirming the final volume of bushels purchased and the agreed sale price. Submit this with your invoice.

Section 5: Terms and Conditions, Invoicing, and Reserved Rights

Invoicing for Goods

- Goods have a single purchase limit of up to \$9,999 per seed lot.
- Invoice must include all costs (travel, labor, materials, etc.) incorporated into the per-unit (i.e. per bushel) rate, not as separate line items.
- Acceptable line items include:

- a. Bulk cones: bushels of whole conifer cones collected from wild or planted stands of known origin.

Submitting Invoices

All vendors must submit an invoice for the goods sold to CAL FIRE either in-person at the L.A. Moran Reforestation Center or by emailing clarisse.goetzen@fire.ca.gov, and erika.teach@fire.ca.gov with the subject line “ATTENTION: Cones as Goods Invoice: (insert Work Order Number)” no later than 30 days after goods are sold.

Vendor invoices may not contain terms that conflict with or are in addition to the terms in these guidelines.

- All invoices **must** include an invoice number, an outline of the purchase costs, and a Remit To address.
- Vendors must also submit a copy of their Work Order Receipt with their invoice. The Work Order Number must be clearly printed.

Payment Timeline

Payment is made on Net 45 after an invoice is received but may take longer (up to Net 75) during peak Fire Season. Additional resources related to payments, including the Prompt Payment Act FAQ can be found [here](#).

Reserved Rights

The RSP reserves the right to reject or close a Work Order Proposal at any time, including survey results or sample quality.

The Reforestation Services Program also reserves the right to perform an in-person collection site inspection to verify cone crop location, vigor, and quality. If inspection occurs, RSP staff will work with the Vendor and the Landowner to secure permission for site access.