



**DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION
OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL
STATE FIRE TRAINING**

P.O. Box 944246
SACRAMENTO, CA 94244-2460
(916) 902-9738
Website: www.fire.ca.gov



Date: July 14, 2023

To: Statewide Training and Education Advisory Committee
State Board of Fire Services

From: Chris Fowler, Deputy State Fire Marshal III, Supervisor

SUBJECT/AGENDA ACTION ITEM:
Prescribed Fire Training Program

Recommended Actions:
Information Only

Background Information:

The Prescribed Fire Training Center (PFTC) proposal is presented in compliance with the directives of AB642 (Friedman) 2021. The Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5) of the US Forest Service (USFS), in its 2011 (revised 2015) Leadership Intent for Ecological Restoration, recognized the need to increase the pace-and-scale of vegetation management on national Forest System lands (about 20% of CA lands) to 500,000 acres/year. Subsequently, California was hit by severe drought, tree mortality, and several years of large-scale fires, beginning with the Rim Fire (2013). To achieve landscape resiliency that limits the size and severity of uncharacteristic wildfire, California stakeholders recognized the need to work together across boundaries. Collaborative groups increased across the state and Governor Brown established the Tree Mortality Task Force, focused on the southern Sierra, followed by the state-wide Forest Management Task Force. In 2015, Region 5, CAL FIRE, the National Park Service (NPS), two prescribed fire councils, and five environmental groups signed an MOU to advance the use of fire in CA; this Fire MOU Partnership now has 35 signatories. The State joined the Region in 2020 in our MOU for shared stewardship, doubling the vegetation management commitment to one million acres/year on all lands. In January 2021, Governor Newsom issued the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force (WFRTF) Action Plan, a compilation of desired federal, state, and local actions, one being the PFTC. In January 2022, the USFS released *Confronting the Wildfire Crisis: A Strategy for Protecting Communities and Improving Resilience in America's Forests*. This 10-year strategy calls for up to 50 million acres of additional vegetation management. In March 2022, the WFRTF released the

Office of the State Fire Marshal Centennial 1923-2023

"100 years of service to the people who live, work and play in California, and our continued resolve to protect our communities for centuries to come."

California Strategic Plan for Expanding the use of Beneficial Fire. These collaborative efforts seek to ensure that efforts to regain forest resilience and maintain beneficial landscape treatments will be successful.

The Prescribed Fire Training Center Committee was formed in 2021 and meets bimonthly. Its membership is a diverse cross-section of our local, state, federal, and tribal partners. There are workgroups within this committee that have researched and proposed the content provided in this report. .

Bill Language

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220AB642

Analysis/Summary of Issue:

Prescribed Fire Training Center Program (PFTC) Work to Date:

1. The Curriculum Development Work Group is focused on delivering training experiences to meet the needs of varied interests across the State, from Federal National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG), CAL FIRE state certification, Tribal cultural burning, and private landowners seeking to apply beneficial fire for fire prevention and ecological benefits. This curriculum design is driven by existing laws and regulations under federal and state certification but also considers the varied needs and interests of the Native American community and private landowners seeking experience building opportunities (not necessarily certification) to apply fire safely and effectively on their own lands. In addition to the training requirements already in existence, we are defining two unique opportunities to address fire restoration in recent burns to reduce existing post-fire fuel loads and unique training to reintroduce fire in early-seral conditions (post-fire restoration) in young conifer age classes, consistent with the fire regime and on-going maintenance needs. This training requires seasonal availability and timing to safely conduct reburns in these unique conditions, in our new climate reality.

2) Communication and Outreach Work Group –is an outward facing collaboration consisting of existing CAL FIRE, Region 5, CA Air Resources Board (CARB) local air pollution control districts, NPS and multiple non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who work on fire and smoke communication. Our task is to support science-based information to news outlets, policy makers, public health officials, and fire safe councils. The group also aids in the development of community college curriculum and seeks to build public understanding and community engagement through outreach and sharing information about beneficial fire.

This work group can also provide fire and smoke communication training to prescribed fire trainees as needed for their internal workshops and training sessions.

3) The Locations Work Group—PFTC List Serv

The List Serv model is being developed to benefit those seeking training opportunities across California and those partners who can offer a range of diverse locations and curricula where that training can occur. Our intention is to house this outreach effort within the WFRTF web domain where partners can seek opportunities considering diverse landscapes, vegetation types, and topography; seasonality; cultural burning interests; and institutional requirements. We have engaged the National Interagency Prescribed Fire Training Center (NIPFTC) and they have joined the PFTC Steering Committee. During our many discussions with key staff they have discouraged a “brick and mortar” approach and

instead have offered a mobile training delivery opportunity to optimize efforts throughout the range of locations we are proposing in California that would support the four pillars of prescribed fire. This mobile training delivery opportunity does not preclude construction of facilities when needed and desired by local interests.

The PFTC Steering committee wants to support everything from individual training needs up to large landscape fire restoration efforts. This training model has proven successful in many parts of the country and will provide centralized information for students, instructors, and leaders of beneficial fire from the four pillars of what we envision in delivering meaningful training. Those four pillars are the USFS, State, Private Landowners, and Tribal/Cultural Burners or practitioners. This model builds on the capacity of the State and connects training to the people that are seeking it in the diverse landscapes of California. The Locations group has compiled over 25 locations where prescribed fire training occurs and are willing to partner with the groups to provide training locations and potential instructors. A few examples of locations that are already providing some training that could be utilized more include:

Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve (7835 acres) example:

<https://today.csuchico.edu/federal-state-agencies-to-participate-in-prescribed-fire-training-on-universitys-big-chico-creek-ecological-reserve/>

TREX training opportunities example:

<file:///E:/Fire%20Restoration%20Group/Rx%20Fire%20Training%20Center/TREX%20Intro%20for%20CA%20PFTC%20Steering%20Commitee.pdf>

SoCal Edison Forestry—Fire Program example:

<https://energized.edison.com/stories/sce-uses-fire-to-fight-wildfires>

4) The Fundraising Work Group continues their effort to address the funding options for the proposal. While there are currently no appropriated funds for a PFTC, the group is currently working to define a needs assessment for the identified locations and can seek support from other federal, state, and private foundation partners.

5) Moving Forward: We plan to have needs assessments completed on 4-5 location hubs in California and will be including a proposal for expanding CAL TREX (Training Exchange) and collaborative prescribed burn efforts with Private Burn Associations throughout California.

A key action is creation of a collaboratively designed List Serv housed on the WFRTF web domain to document site location availability and requests for training in a match-up for varied needs across California. Since September 2022, we have concentrated on sorting, assessing, and prioritizing funding needs, existing partnerships, and stakeholder engagement to establish a permanent PFTC Program. This will include coordinating staff and longer-term operations plans for expanding and maintaining training efforts within federal and state agencies, for Tribal partners, and for private land managers. Our plan considers the diversity of California by increasing the opportunities and access for the four pillars of Beneficial fire. This increase in training will aim to achieve and maintain effective vegetation treatments on one million acres through collaborative opportunities to create a more resilient California.