

California Native Plant Society ▪ *California Wilderness Coalition*
Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center ▪ *Defenders of Wildlife* ▪ *The Fire Restoration Group*
The Nature Conservancy, CA Chapter ▪ *Sierra Business Council*
Sierra Forest Legacy ▪ *The Watershed Center*

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Statement on Forest Management

California forest conditions

- Well managed forests provide many critical benefits for nature and people including clean air, clean water, wildlife habitat, carbon storage, recreation and more.
- Current conditions in many fire-prone forests of the Sierra Nevada and elsewhere in California are degraded and not healthy due to past logging practices, fire suppression, drought, and climate change. From the perspective of forest health and resilience, there are too few large trees, too many small trees, and an excess of “surface and ladder fuels” that significantly increase the risk of high-severity wildfire.
- California is experiencing high-severity wildfire in larger landscapes and at larger scales than is desirable from an ecological perspective.
- Threats to forest communities from high-severity wildfire are increasing and need to be addressed.
- There is an urgent need to restore more natural forest structure and reintroduce beneficial fire so that forests continue to provide important ecosystem services and pose less of a threat to life and property.

An integrated solution: communities and landscapes

- We support an integrated strategy to reduce the risk of high-severity wildfire near communities and across the forest landscape, including public and private lands.
- The strategy needs to utilize all tools in the toolbox: ecologically based forest thinning, prescribed fire, managed fire, cultural burning, working forest conservation easements, defensible space, home hardening, and emergency response.
- Different actions and priorities are appropriate across the landscape: 1) near communities, the primary goal should be protecting lives and property through steps like defensible space, structure hardening, emergency response, improved ingress/egress, and reducing unplanned human ignitions; 2) in the mixed forest landscape, we should work to increase forest resilience and mature forest structure using actions like ecological forest thinning and prescribed and managed fire while reducing unplanned human ignitions and hardening infrastructure; 3) in roadless and wilderness areas, the primary management tools should be cultural burning as well as prescribed and managed fire.
- There is a need for an all-lands approach, including public-private and tribal partnerships, to achieve these goals.
- We support the commercial use of woody material removed from forests (e.g., saw logs, mass timber manufacturing, woody biomass for heat and electrical generation, and added value wood products development) where the goal is increasing forest health and resilience and as long as species and ecosystems needs are met.

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Glossary

Fire suppression: The act of putting out a fire using a variety of tactics, including heavy equipment (bulldozers), hand created fuel breaks, aerial fire retardant or water drops, and lighting intentional fire to burn into a wildfire to consume fuels ahead of the fire.

High severity fire: Fire that results in greater than 75 percent of the biomass or vegetation being killed.

Ladder fuels: Live or dead vegetation that allows a fire to climb from the forest floor into the tree canopy. Common ladder fuels include tall grasses, shrubs, small trees, and tree branches both living and dead. Pruning and thinning can remove ladder fuels.

Managed fire: Fire ignited by an unplanned ignition, e.g., lightning, managed for ecological and social benefits.

Mass timber: Large structural panels, posts, and beams glued under pressure or nailed together in layers, with the wood's grain stacked perpendicular for extra strength. Mass timber is an innovative building material, superior to concrete and steel in many ways, and sequesters carbon within the building material itself.

Mixed forest landscape: Forested region between developed communities and roadless areas. Includes recreation facilities, hydroelectric and other utility infrastructure, and areas with roads.

Prescribed fire: Intentionally lit fire managed under specific conditions or prescriptions for social and ecological benefits.

Surface fuels: Woody and leafy materials on the surface of the ground. They include needles, leaves, twigs, branches, logs and stumps.