

Executive Department

State of California

EXECUTIVE ORDER B-52-18

WHEREAS California's 33 million acres of forestland and 1,256 square miles of urban forest canopy capture and clean our water supply, provide rich biodiversity, support local economies, provide recreational and educational opportunities, and serve as spiritual and cultural centers for indigenous and local communities across the state; and

WHEREAS forested lands are the largest land-based carbon sink in California with trees and shrubs drawing carbon from the atmosphere and storing it in their cellulosic structure and in forest soils; and

WHEREAS consistent with California's greenhouse gas emissions goals the state's forests should be maintained as a net sink rather than a source of greenhouse gas and black carbon emissions; and

WHEREAS long-term human intervention, including the practice of excluding fire in fire-dependent ecosystems, has resulted in a deterioration of forest health statewide and, in some cases, loss of forest cover; and

WHEREAS these conditions, coupled with drought and the stressors associated with a warming climate, have dramatically increased the size and intensity of wildfires, exposed millions of urban and rural residents to unhealthy air, and led to more than 129 million dead and dying trees since 2010, primarily in the Sierra Nevada; and

WHEREAS recent wildfires have been the largest, deadliest, most destructive and costliest in state history; and

WHEREAS water supply for the State Water Project and other municipal and agricultural systems has been impacted by increased sediment and accelerated snow melt caused by wildfire and tree mortality; and

WHEREAS the current pace and scale of prescribed fire, fuel reduction, and thinning of overly dense forests average approximately 250,000 acres per year and are far below levels needed to restore and maintain forest health; and

WHEREAS the diversity of California's forests and tree species and unique climates require regionalized strategies to identify the areas that pose the greatest threat to forest health and offer the best solutions; and

WHEREAS there is a need to incentivize innovation in the California forest product and building industries in order to improve the ecological and economic sustainability of California forests; and

WHEREAS the Forest Carbon Plan has been developed by state agencies to provide consensus forest practices that will achieve resilient forests that can withstand and adapt to wildfire, drought and a changing climate, safeguard the state's water supply, and ensure the state's forests operate as a carbon sink.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, EDMUND G. BROWN JR., Governor of the State of California, in accordance with the authority vested in me by the Constitution and statutes of the State of California, do hereby issue the following orders to become effective immediately:

Improving Forest Management and Restoration

1. The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection shall work with all relevant federal, state and local agencies, California Native American tribes, and other affected parties to implement the forest practices called for in the Forest Carbon Plan.

2. The Natural Resources Agency shall take all necessary steps to double the total statewide rate of forest treatments within 5 years to at least 500,000 acres per year. To accomplish this goal the Agency will work with the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the State Water Resources Control Board, State Conservancies, and all other relevant agencies.

3. The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection shall increase new landowner agreements and memoranda of understanding, such as Good Neighbor Authority agreements, to accelerate forest restoration thinning and prescribed fire projects across jurisdictions, and shall integrate fire prevention activities into landscape forest restoration efforts in and near Wildland Urban Interface areas.

4. The Department of Fish and Wildlife shall integrate the goals of this Executive Order in its restoration programs, mitigation-related land conservation, and conservation planning.

Providing Regulatory Relief

5. The Natural Resources Agency, the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, the State and Regional Water Boards, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the California State Air Resources Board shall reduce barriers to entry for forest health and fuels reduction projects, including working with the California Coastal Commission to facilitate permitting in the coastal zone, reducing liability exposure for landowners, and providing financial and permitting assistance for landowners of under 5,000 acres.

6. The Natural Resources Agency, the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, State and Regional Water Boards, and the Department of Conservation shall have in operation by October 1, 2018 a new online timber harvest permitting system, and shall synchronize and expedite the regulatory review of permits under the Forest Practice Act and related timber harvest permitting processes.

7. All relevant state agencies shall make cultural and biological resources data readily accessible online to accelerate the implementation and environmental review of fuels reduction projects.

Reducing Barriers for Prescribed Fire

8. The California Air Resources Board with assistance from local air districts and the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection shall increase the opportunities for prescribed fire projects through coordinating staff and equipment availability, accelerate prescribed fire projects that are permit-ready, identify weather conditions suitable for prescribed fire, and institute a real-time air quality and smoke monitoring program for prescribed and wildland fires.

9. The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and the California Air Resources Board shall develop a publicly available online clearinghouse for permitting of prescribed fire projects on all non-federal lands, which shall include an automated system for prescribed fire project permit submission and approval.

Boosting Education and Outreach to Landowners

10. The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection shall provide educational programs and outreach to private landowners and other interested parties on forest restoration, fuels reduction project development, and permitting.

11. The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection shall develop a training program to educate and certify government, tribal, academic, and non-government organization staff to increase the number of qualified individuals available to implement prescribed fire projects.

12. The Labor and Workforce Development Agency shall work with relevant state agencies and local workforce development boards to develop pilot training programs in forest thinning and biomass processing in areas where there is inadequate labor capacity to support such activities.

Supporting Wood Products Innovation

13. The Office of the State Fire Marshal, the Department of Housing and Community Development, the Division of the State Architect, the California Building Standards Commission, and the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development shall review the approved Tall Wood Building Proposal of the International Code Council's Ad Hoc Committee on Tall Wood Buildings and shall consider proposing its adoption into the California Building Standards Code in the subsequent intervening code cycle.

14. The Department of General Services, in collaboration with other state agencies, shall identify at least three building projects in which to utilize manufactured wood products as both structural and aesthetic components.

15. The Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, working with the University of California and California State University, shall establish a Joint Institute for Wood Products Innovation to perform wood products research, development, and testing; and shall accelerate research, development and adoption of advanced forest management and wood products manufacturing.

16. The California Public Utilities Commission is requested to review and update its procurement programs for small bioenergy renewable generators to ensure long-term programmatic certainty for investor-owned utilities and project developers, as well as benefits to ratepayers.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that agencies under my direct executive authority cooperate in the implementation of this Order, and it is requested that entities of State government not under my direct executive authority assist in its implementation as necessary.

This Executive Order is not intended to, and does not, create any rights or benefits, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity, against the State of California, its agencies, departments, entities, officers, employees, or any other person.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of California to be affixed this 10th day of May 2018.


EDMUND G. BROWN JR.
Governor of California

ATTEST:

ALEX PADILLA
Secretary of State