



RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES
OF CALIFORNIA

March 23, 2017

The Honorable Cecilia Aguiar-Curry
Member, California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 5144
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Assembly Bill 1066 – CONCERNS

Dear Assembly Member Aguiar-Curry:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), I am writing to express our concerns with your Assembly Bill 1066, which would revise the definition of the term “demolition” as it relates to public works to include tree removal for the purposes of payment of prevailing wages. RCRC is an association of thirty-five rural California counties, and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from those member counties.

As you are aware, California’s forested counties are currently suffering myriad impacts from prolonged drought conditions, including the tree mortality disaster which has claimed 102 million dead trees thus far across the Southern and Central Sierras. Even in counties where mortality has yet to have its full impact, such as Lake County, dry conditions have exacerbated wildfire risk and led to increased instances of high severity wildfires such as the 2015 Valley Fire and the 2016 Clayton Fire. And while we have had high levels of precipitation this year, it can take several years for forests to recover from severe drought conditions like what we have seen in California, especially when we have no guarantee from year-to-year that drought conditions won’t return due to our changing climate.

While we appreciate your desire to stimulate rural economies and increase local employment opportunities, it is our concern that AB 1066 will have the opposite impact on counties when tree removal services are needed for wildfire cleanup or tree mortality mitigation. Counties in tree mortality areas are struggling to meet the match requirements to receive California Disaster Assistance Act funding, and most forested counties where tree removal services are often needed for wildfire prevention, cleanup, and mitigation are among the State’s most socioeconomically disadvantaged. Tree removal contractors are also currently in high demand because of the sheer volume of dead and dying trees needing attention in the forests, and there may not always be sufficient local contractors

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to meet the needs in a particular area. We fear that requiring prevailing wage for tree removal services will impede emergency mitigation and cleanup in areas where the need is greatest.

RCRC looks forward to working with you and your staff to resolve our issues surrounding AB 1066, and we appreciate your taking the time to meet with us and consideration of our concerns. We welcome the opportunity to continue discussing possible alternatives to this proposal that will both boost local employment and help local governments negotiate the various emergencies related to forested lands. Please do not hesitate to contact me at sheaton@rcrcnet.org or (916) 447-4806 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Staci Heaton", written in a cursive style.

STACI HEATON
Regulatory Affairs Advocate

cc: Members of the Assembly Labor and Employment Committee
Consultant, Assembly Labor and Employment Committee