



March 15, 2021

The Honorable Jim Frazier
Member, California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 3091
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Assembly Bill 1431 – SPONSOR
As Introduced February 19, 2021**

Dear Assembly Member Frazier:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), I am pleased to sponsor your Assembly Bill 1431, which would codify various sections of the California Forest Carbon Plan (Plan), finalized by a number of state, federal, and local agencies in 2018. RCRC is an association of thirty-seven rural California counties, and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from each member county.

RCRC member counties contain much of California's forested lands, including more than 70 percent of the State's national forest lands. While rural communities have historically borne the majority of destruction caused by high severity wildfires, wildfire risk has now become a statewide public safety concern as the wildland urban interface spreads over larger areas of the State due to climate change and impacts of renewed drought conditions in California. Wildfires are also a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions and compromise the quality and quantity of much of the State's water supply. The health and resilience of our forests and wildlands impacts every Californian.

California's Fourth Climate Change Assessment, released in 2018, estimated a 78 percent increase in acreage burned in California by wildfire by the end of the century.¹ However, the state's record-breaking 2020 wildfire season already produced that level of increase over the course of a few years. Recent fires also resulted in some of the worst air quality in the world for Northern California residents, with studies showing that up to

¹ Governor's Office of Planning and Research, et al. (2018) California's Fourth Climate Change Assessment. Retrieved from https://www.energy.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2019-11/Statewide_Reports-SUM-CCCA4-2018-013_Statewide_Summary_Report_ADA.pdf

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half of all small-particle air pollution in the Western U.S. resulting from wildfire smoke in recent years.²

In 2018, a broad representation of local, state, and federal agencies that comprised the Forest Climate Action Team finalized the Plan to set goals for the treatment of California's forests to prevent and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from high severity wildfires while promoting carbon sequestration in forests and wildlands. The Plan is the result of several years of careful collaboration and includes vegetation management and fuels treatment strategies such as prescribed fire, mechanical thinning, and woody biomass utilization, all of which have been widely scientifically recognized to reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with high severity wildfires. RCRC was a proud participant in the Forest Climate Action Team and believes that the goals, targets, and strategies set forth in the Plan are vital to the future of the resilience of California's forests and wildlands. However, without statutory support, the Plan has become simply another set of guidelines with no real accountability.

By codifying various goals included in the Plan, including targets for forest management, biomass utilization, forest restoration, and conservation easements, AB 1431 lends accountability to the Plan that currently does not exist. AB 1431 also requires the California Natural Resources Agency and the California Environmental Protection Agency to report annually to the Legislature on the progress of those goals to further the accountability of meeting the state's greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals through the actions established in the Plan, while furthering California's forest management and wildfire prevention needs.

For these reasons, RCRC is proud to sponsor your AB 1431.

Sincerely,



STACI HEATON
Senior Regulatory Affairs Advocate

cc: Members of the Assembly Natural Resources Committee
Consultant, Assembly Natural Resources Committee

² M. Burke, et al. "The changing risk and burden of wildfire in the United States." Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, January 12, 2021.