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## California State Senate

SENATOR  
**ROBERT M. HERTZBERG**  
EIGHTEENTH SENATE DISTRICT  
REPRESENTING LOS ANGELES COUNTY



COMMITTEES  
NATURAL RESOURCES  
AND WATER  
CHAIR  
ELECTIONS AND  
CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS  
ENERGY, UTILITIES  
AND COMMUNICATIONS  
GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE  
JUDICIARY

August 18, 2017

The Honorable Kevin de León  
Senate President Pro Tempore  
California State Capitol, Room 205

The Honorable Robert Wieckowski  
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 2  
California State Capitol, Room 4085

**RE: Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund – Fires and Forest Health  
(with attached letter)**

Dear Pro Tem de León and Senator Weickowski,

I respectfully request that Budget Subcommittee No. 2 use the opportunity presented by the extension of the cap-and-trade program (Assembly Bill 398) and the administration's announced commitment to backfill the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's (CalFIRE) loss of fee revenue from the now-suspended state responsibility area fire fee to accomplish two things:

- 1) Allocate funding that would be available this fall for 4-6 pilot prescribed burns under controlled conditions when moisture and weather conditions are appropriate.
- 2) Allocate funding to improve the air quality monitoring to improve the predictability of health impacts of both wildfires and prescribed burns.

The Senate and Assembly policy committee staffs have participated in a series of meetings with CalFIRE and air quality experts, and there is general agreement that California should escalate its commitment both to prescribed fires and improved monitoring.

This request is also generally supported by Assemblymember Christina Garcia, Chair of the Assembly Natural Resources Committee; I have attached our joint letter to CalFIRE and Air Resources Board from July. Also note that the Assembly Budget Subcommittee (Sub 3) attempted to add \$10 M for prescribed fire in the budget, which was not successful.

My request is that a minimum of \$15 million be allocated for these two purposes. My expectation is that one-third of these funds would be available for purchase of monitoring and forecasting systems, and the balance to coordinate the pilot prescribed burns.

I would also request control language that requires close coordination in advance and during these burns between the CalFIRE, local fire agencies, state conservancies, local nonprofits and fire safe councils, local air districts, the U.S. Forest Service, and other appropriate entities to ensure that these burns are conducted successfully.

The devastating 2013 Rim Fire is the catastrophic result we must avoid in the future. That fire exposed 1.2 million people to smoke, with an estimate \$600 million in health impacts. Had that area been treated with prescribed fire, scientists estimate those emissions could have been reduced by half. The wildfires in California are turning our largest potential carbon sink into a net greenhouse gas emitter. We must start this year to reverse this trend.

Engaging in active fire safety and improving monitoring capability will lead to greater cooperation between air districts, CARB, and the department, and will significantly help reduce future emissions.

If you have any questions, please contact my chief consultant, Bill Craven, at 651-4116.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rob M. Hertzberg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

ROBERT M. HERTZBERG  
Chair, Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Water

CC: Dan Reeves  
Kip Lipper  
Derek Chernow