



To: RCRC Board of Directors

From: Cyndi Hillery, Legislative Advocate
Staci Heaton, Regulatory Affairs Advocate
Justin Caporusso, Public Affairs Specialist

Date: August 12, 2014

Re: Wildfire Strategy

Summary

This memo outlines a request for RCRC member counties to engage state and federal officials by passing county resolutions regarding the inadequate forest management and wildfire prevention activities on federal lands within California. This is a preliminary step to a broader, more comprehensive strategic plan on these issues which will be rolled out at the September Board Meeting in Placer County.

Background

RCRC has long advocated for a common sense approach toward reducing the effects and severity of wildfires that have plagued California and the nation over the last decade. Current forest management law, at both the state and the federal level, makes it a continuous challenge for RCRC to engage state and federal officials in order to improve forest management and fire prevention activities on public lands. Selective fuel reduction work, along with other forest management tools, must be done on private, state, and federal forestland in order to protect people, homes, businesses, and natural resources.

Over the years, RCRC has pursued numerous avenues, including meetings between RCRC Officers and key state and federal elected and agency officials, a resolution drive similar to the effort requested by this memo during the tenure of the previous Governor, the negotiation and passage of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between RCRC, CSAC, the Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Forest Service, and engaging the Legislature to hold hearings specific to the issues of wildfires.

For example, in May 2008 RCRC encouraged members to pass county resolutions regarding the issue of wildfire in each county in order to utilize in advocacy efforts with state and federal officials at that time. 17 of 31 member counties and 2 non-member counties participated in the previous resolution effort.

This year, RCRC has been actively advocating for increasing the pace and scale of forest management on public lands in several different venues, including the strategic creation and facilitation of the California Forest Watershed Alliance (CAFWA), active participation in the federal lobbying efforts for the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act (WDFDA),

advocating for the use of AB 32 cap and trade revenues to fund forest management projects, and elevating the issue in the public forum through a sharp ramp up of communications efforts in both traditional and social media platforms.

Issue

Since the state Administration has changed, and many key positions have been filled by new individuals since the original effort, a new resolution campaign may prove to be useful to help spur action at both the state and federal level. Due to the immediate interest in the idea of utilizing county-passed resolutions as part of an advocacy and messaging effort highlighting the threat of wildfire to our rural communities, RCRC staff is including this component at the August meeting rather than in September with the rest of the Strategic Plan. Member counties can immediately start working towards passing resolutions highlighting key messaging on this issue.

In order to have the greatest impact, and because the issue of wildfire is a statewide (even nationwide) issue, we urge our member counties to consider utilizing the attached sample resolution as a template for individual county resolutions. A broader more consistent message is important to achieving the overall goal of increasing the pace and scale of forest management throughout the state.

RCRC staff will be rolling out an updated comprehensive advocacy approach on this issue at the September Board Meeting. The confluence of events including the Rim Fire, movement at the federal level regarding the funding of wildfire disasters, the acknowledgement that forest fires are a contributing factor to climate change, the need to push this Governor to be more engaged on the issue of forest management, and new science emerging regarding the importance of forest management to water quality and quantity in this unprecedented drought situation, as well as new opportunities presented by non-traditional new partners and innovative new media forums, make this an opportune time for RCRC to launch a refocused wildfire advocacy strategy.

Staff Recommendations

RCRC staff encourages member counties to pass resolutions utilizing the attached sample resolution.

Attachments

- Sample Resolution