

February 26, 2019

The Honorable Governor Gavin Newsom
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Effective Wildfire Policy

Dear Governor Newsom,

The safety of our families and communities depends on your leadership.

You have an opportunity to be the first governor to inspire a successful wildfire policy based on science, not one dependent on a bygone era – an era during which we did not have to confront the challenges of climate change and an increasing population living near wildland areas.

However, Cal Fire will resist. They will say we need to take a “dual” approach in addressing wildfire – clear habitat and log now, *then* figure out a plan to harden homes against fire. What they mean is that they want to do more of what they have always done. This is the same approach that has failed to address the actual cause of loss of life and property since the 2003 Cedar Fire.

Cal Fire is in the fire suppression business, not the fire safe community business. As a result, they emphasize the misguided notion that they can control Nature by clearing habitat or logging forests far from where most Californians are at risk. Meanwhile, thousands of homes burn and lives are lost during wind-driven wildfires that ignite our communities miles ahead of the fire front, fires that Cal Fire will never be able to control.

We need to focus on making our communities fire safe now. The science is clear on this point. Communities have already proven that fire safe retrofits can be efficiently and quickly installed. The decision is not as complicated as some claim, it just requires the courage to question the status quo.

Every dollar spent logging forests far from where the majority of people at risk live and continuing what Cal Fire has always done, is a dollar less for fire safe communities. Such an approach will not only fail to protect the majority of Californians from wildfire, fail to meet our carbon sequestration goals, and fail to protect vital natural resources, but will in many cases **make the landscape more flammable.**

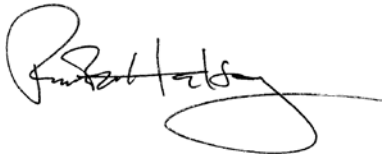
Cal Fire will say that their fuel treatment projects will allow them to control 95% of the fires they confront. This is equivalent to only preparing for the 95th percentile of earthquakes, or what we would feel as a result of a magnitude 2.5. Until Cal Fire starts addressing the fires that cause nearly all the destruction, the wind-driven fires that ignore fuel treatments and defensible space, communities will continue to be lost.

The only way to address those wind-driven fires is to direct Cal Fire to think outside the box and start accepting the fact that **we are facing a home ignition problem, not a fire suppression problem.**

The first step in that direction would be to reject the current approach Cal Fire and the California Board of Forestry is taking with their proposed Vegetation Treatment Program. We urge you to study the 24 recommendations we have provided in our analysis of the program at the link below.

Please, for our families and communities, take the courageous step and question Cal Fire's outdated paradigm.

Sincerely,



Richard W. Halsey
Director
California Chaparral Institute

The following individuals and documents can offer you the fresh ideas necessary to create a successful wildfire policy based on the future, not the past:

Kate Dargan - former California State Fire Marshal
Chief Brian Fennessy, Orange County Fire Authority
Dr. Jack Cohen (USFS retired)
Dr. Alex Syphard, USGS

Our analysis of Cal Fire's/Board of Forestry's proposed Vegetation Treatment Program:
http://www.californiachaparral.com/images/VTP_Notice_of_Prep_2019_FINAL_w_AP.pdf

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area CWPP
https://www.nps.gov/samo/learn/management/upload/SMM_CWPP_02MAY2012_FINAL_v3.pdf

SMMNRA Fire Management Plant EIR
https://www.nps.gov/samo/learn/management/upload/NPS_Final_Fire_EIS_complete_2005.pdf