



P.O. Box 545  
Escondido, CA 92033

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Contact: Richard W. Halsey, Director, (760) 822-0029, [rwh@californiachaparral.org](mailto:rwh@californiachaparral.org)

## **More Than 70 Groups Reject Proposed Wildfire Budget Favoring Timber/Habitat Clearance Interests Over Communities at Risk**

**Only 5% of the proposed \$1 billion budget will fund proven strategies to protect lives and homes**

On the eve of negotiations over Governor Newsom's proposed wildfire budget, a wide range of northern and southern California environmental groups sent a comprehensive list of recommendations to the California State Legislature that challenge the governor's assumptions.

The administration claims its wildfire risk reduction strategy is "**not either, but both**" in relation to protecting communities and forest/habitat clearance projects. The budget says otherwise.

**Nearly all the proposed \$1 billion wildfire budget** will fund ineffective and damaging habitat clearance projects that repeat the same mistakes we have suffered over the past century - mistakes that have caused many of our recent wildfires to be more destructive.

The administration's stated goal is to log, clear, or burn 500,000 acres of habitat per year, potentially causing environmental damage on a level California hasn't experienced since the 1800s when old-growth forests were clear cut and thousands of acres of native habitat were overgrazed by livestock. **Most of these projects will be far from communities most at risk.**

**The science is clear.** The most effective way to save lives and property in the most devastating, wind-driven wildfires is to harden homes and communities (e.g., ember-resistant vents, exterior sprinklers, etc.). Nine out of the 16,909 fires in California during 2017 and 2018 caused 95% of the damage. All nine fires occurred under extreme, wind-driven conditions where vegetation clearance projects proved ineffective. The proposed budget is ignoring these facts.

The groups' recommendations to the state legislature are available here:

[https://rest.edit.site/filestorage-api-service/0693aabab853e5b678ff613a5ac70a10/wildfire-budget\\_lives-and-homes-first.pdf?dl=1](https://rest.edit.site/filestorage-api-service/0693aabab853e5b678ff613a5ac70a10/wildfire-budget_lives-and-homes-first.pdf?dl=1)

**The three recommendations in brief:**

**1. Require 50% of proposed funds be used within 100 feet of homes** to help vulnerable communities (especially low-income) retrofit flammable structures, install fire suppression systems, and create appropriate defensible space. Funds should also be made available to

identify the most at-risk neighborhoods and standardize home wildfire safety inspections that include both home's structure and its surrounding environment.

**2. Require 25% of proposed funds be used to develop regional wildfire risk reduction plans** that reflect the complex diversity of California's natural environment. Vegetation management for the purpose of fire risk reduction should focus thinning vegetation along evacuation routes, within 100 feet of structures, and removing flammable invasive species to reduce ignitions, especially along roadsides where many fires start. Restoration efforts should focus on removing flammable invasives, reducing fire return intervals in native shrublands, and allow fires that do not threaten communities to burn in forested ecosystems.

**3. Require 25% of proposed funds be used to support local fire departments and districts** to upgrade equipment, solve chronic coordination/communication problems, improve warning systems, develop functional evacuation plans, and form a connected network of local fire, conservation, and resource entities to oversee and coordinate the expenditure of wildfire risk reduction funds. This network needs to be independent of Cal Fire in order to facilitate creative solutions.