

MARCH 6, 2019

Overview of Wildfire Budget and Technology Proposals

PRESENTED TO:

Assembly Committee on Governmental Organization
Hon. Adam Gray, Chair

Senate Committee on Governmental Organization
Hon. Bill Dodd, Chair



LEGISLATIVE ANALYST'S OFFICE

State Agency Roles Related to Wildfire Response

Office of Emergency Services (OES). Coordinates and supports state and local disaster planning activities. Monitors and coordinates disaster response and recovery activities, including tasking other agencies with carrying out specific activities and coordinating mutual aid. Serves as a conduit for federal disaster assistance to state and local governments.

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire). Main state entity involved in fire response. (Local and federal fire agencies also participate in fire response.) Primarily responsible for protecting state responsibility areas, which cover about one-third of the state's acreage and include primarily privately owned timberlands, rangelands, and watersheds.

Other Agencies. The California Military Department provides support—such as aircraft and other military equipment—to assist with combatting large fires and responding to other disasters. Other state agencies are involved in the recovery and clean-up from wildfires, including the Department of Toxic Substances Control, California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery, and the California Department of Social Services.



Major Wildfire-Related Legislative Actions in 2018

2018-19 Budget Provided About \$670 Million in Budget Augmentations.

This included (1) \$266 million to implement elements of the Forest Carbon Plan and conduct other forest health and fire prevention activities; (2) \$245 million for firefighting resources, such as helicopters; and (3) \$163 million for fire recovery.

Legislature Adopted Major Wildfire Package

- ***Chapter 626 of 2018 (SB 901, Dodd).*** The result of the wildfire legislative conference committee and provides various changes to address wildfires, including expanding requirements for utilities to develop wildfire mitigation plans and requiring a \$200 million annual appropriation for forest health and fire prevention programs.
- ***Chapter 624 of 2018 (SB 1260, Jackson).*** Creates a “burn boss” certification and requires enhanced smoke monitoring from prescribed fires.
- ***Chapter 635 of 2018 (AB 2126, Eggman).*** Requires the California Conservation Corps to establish a forestry corps program.
- ***Chapter 637 of 2018 (AB 2518, Aguiar-Curry).*** Requires the Forest Health Task Force to develop recommendations to find sites for wood product manufacturing facilities.
- ***Chapter 641 of 2018 (AB 2911, Friedman).*** Requires the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection to engage in certain land use planning activities for subdivisions at high risk of wildfire.



Governor's 2019-20 CalFire Wildfire Response Proposals

Calfire's 2019-20 Proposals to Enhance Fire Response Capacity <i>(Dollars in Millions)</i>		
Proposal	Funding	Positions
13 year-round fire engines	\$40.3	131
5 CCC dedicated fire crews	13.6	30
Air tankers	13.1	6
Equipment operator staffing	10.6	34
Employee wellness	6.6	14
Fire detection cameras	5.2	—
Situational awareness staffing	4.5	13
Mobile equipment replacement	3.0	—
Totals	\$96.9	228
CalFire = California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and CCC = California Conservation Corps		

- **Almost \$100 Million in New Budget Proposals.** The Governor's budget includes \$96.9 million, almost entirely from the General Fund, for various proposals for CalFire to enhance its fire response capacity.
- **Fire Detection Cameras.** The 2019-20 budget includes \$5.2 million from the General Fund to join an existing network of wildfire detection cameras and to expand the network by 100 additional cameras in locations determined by CalFire. Specifically, funding will support a contract between CalFire and ALERTWildfire—a consortium of the University of Nevada, Reno; the University of California, San Diego; and the University of Oregon.



Issues for Legislative Consideration

LAO Recommended Assessment. In order to guide potential future decisions on increasing wildfire response resources, we recommend that the Legislature require CalFire, in coordination with OES, to provide an assessment of existing state, mutual aid, and federal fire response capacity; gaps in capacity; and where additional resources would be most beneficial. Such an assessment should evaluate all types of fire response resources; consider the cost-effectiveness; and identify appropriate funding sources, goals, and outcomes in a prioritized manner.

Consider How Technologies Fit Into Assessment. If the Legislature adopts our recommendation to require an assessment, it may wish to consider how emerging technologies would fit into such an assessment. For example, the Legislature could require the assessment to include specific emerging technologies that it thinks merit an evaluation.

