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 - Yuba Water Agency (YWA)

Affiliate Members

- City of Folsom
- Rancho Murieta Community Services District

May 14, 2020

The Honorable Holly J. Mitchell
Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review
State Capitol, Room 5050
Sacramento, California 95814

The Honorable Phil Ting,
Chair, Assembly Committee on Budget
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, California 95814

Re: 2020-21 State Budget: Wildfire Prevention

Dear Senator Mitchell and Assemblymember Ting:

I am writing on behalf of Mountain Counties Water Resources Association (MCWRA) to express support for the funding levels proposed by Governor Newsom in its January Budget proposal for Wildfire Prevention efforts in the state. The State Budget proposed in January included:

- ▶ **\$120 million** General Fund (\$150 million ongoing) and 677 positions, phased in over five years, to provide the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) operational flexibility through peak fire season and beyond based on fire conditions.
- ▶ **\$110.1 million** (\$26.8 General Fund) to implement the Wildfire Mitigation Financial Assistance Program, which encourages structural hardening (residential, commercial, and public buildings) and facilitates vegetation management and defensible space activities.

- ▶ **\$9 million** (\$8.8 million General Fund) and 22 positions across Cal OES, CalFire, the Military Department, and the Public Utilities Commission to begin implementation of the Wildfire Forecast Center, which will derive information from multiple sources to build accurate, comprehensive, and timely weather impact information for the purpose of improving the state’s emergency response and recovery efforts.

While California’s response efforts to the COVID-19 pandemic have depleted the state’s resources and the 2020-21 state budget will undoubtedly have to be adjusted to the realities of the economic impact this emergency had on our State, we commend you for including in the Assembly’s April 6, 2020 COVID19 Update wildfire prevention among those areas that are still being considered funding priorities in this year’s state budget, along with COVID-19 related costs and homeless funding.

Forests in California are increasingly vulnerable to major wildfires and droughts that threaten the benefits they provide. Improving the health of headwater forests in the Sierra, in particular—where most of the state’s surface water supplies originate—will provide an array of social, economic, and environmental benefits across multiple sectors and geographies. The broad base of beneficiaries of headwater forest management includes rural communities in the headwater region, regions that are vulnerable to smoke impacts from major wildfires, and major urban areas and agricultural regions that receive water and hydropower from headwater forests. According to the Public Policy Institute, research by forest ecologists and wildfire behavior experts finds that the best way to realize these benefits is to reestablish and maintain lower densities of trees, which will help make these forests more resilient to fire, drought, and pests. This will require vastly expanding forest management efforts. Management efforts that must be persistent and durable to ensure long-term benefits.

MCWRA respectfully requests that funding for forest management continue to be a high priority in the 2020-21 state budget.

Sincerely,



John Kingsbury
Executive Director
Mountain Counties Water Resources Association

Cc: Members and Consultant, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review
Members and Consultant, Assembly Committee on Budget
Senate Republican Fiscal and Policy Office
Assembly Republican Office of Policy
Office of the Governor
Board of Directors, Mountain Counties Water Resources Association
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