

**BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION**

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January 30, 2019

Adam Loera

You are receiving this **Notice of Preparation** from the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (Board) for the California Vegetation Treatment Program Program Environmental Impact because you have commented on similar past projects initiated by the Board.

The public comment period for the Notice of Preparation of the Draft Environmental Impact Report is set from January 30, 2019 to March 1, 2019.

If you have questions or need more information please contact Edith Hannigan at (916) 862-0120 or [CalVTP@bof.ca.gov](mailto:CalVTP@bof.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

Matt Dias  
Executive Officer  
California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection

Date removed from posting: 3/11/19

risk. This NOP is issued to solicit comments on the scope and content of a new PEIR that will analyze the impacts of the proposed CalVTP. Additional information regarding the necessity, scope, and design of the proposed CalVTP is included below.

### **Discretionary Action and Proposed Implementation Activities:**

The Board is mandated to regulate forestry activities throughout the state and to develop policies and regulations that contribute to fire prevention and recovery efforts (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 740). The Board is also charged with identifying State Responsibility Area (SRA) land and developing rules and regulations that enable CAL FIRE to prevent, respond to, and control fire events in those regions (PRC Sections 4130 and 4137). The Board's proposed discretionary action is approval of the CalVTP. After approval, implementation of the CalVTP will involve a proposed array of vegetation treatment activities carried out by CAL FIRE.

The CalVTP Draft PEIR, for which this NOP is being issued, will address the following:

- Expansion and modification of CAL FIRE's activities to implement the CalVTP, as described below. The proposed total treatment acreage target is 250,000 acres of nonfederal land per year to contribute to the achievement of EO B-52-18, which is a substantial increase compared to the 2017 VTP Draft PEIR.
- Development and use of a project-specific approach for a streamlined CEQA review of site-specific, later vegetation treatment projects. The streamlined CEQA review approach will document how a project's environmental effects are covered and which feasible mitigation measures from the CalVTP PEIR are incorporated. This will include evaluation of whether later activities and impacts of site-specific vegetation treatment projects are within the scope of the CalVTP and the PEIR. A "within the scope" finding for later activities would facilitate an increase in the pace and scale of project approvals in a manner that includes environmental protections. Where later activities do not qualify for a "within the scope" finding, site-specific mitigated negative declarations or EIRs will be prepared.

### **Program Necessity:**

Wildfires are a significant threat in California, particularly in recent years as the landscape responds to climate change and decades of fire suppression. Over 75 percent of forested areas and other woody vegetation types are burning less frequently than historic averages, and fire sizes have increased significantly over the last 17 years.<sup>1</sup> Drought conditions, low snow pack accumulation, and extreme temperature highs have also been prevalent in the last decade and are expected to worsen as climate change continues to alter landscapes and local climates.<sup>2,3</sup>

These conditions have resulted in the largest, most destructive, and deadliest wildfires on record in California history, all occurring in 2018. Fifteen of the state's 20 largest wildfires have occurred since 2002. The 2018 Mendocino Complex, the state's largest wildfire, burned 1.5 times as many acres as the next largest fire.<sup>4</sup> Fourteen of the state's 20 most destructive wildfires have occurred since 2003; the 2018 Camp Fire destroyed more than three times as many structures as the next most destructive fire.<sup>5</sup> Ten of

<sup>1</sup> California's Forests and Rangelands: 2017 Assessment. Report. Fire Resource and Assessment Program (FRAP), California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

<http://frap.fire.ca.gov/assessment2017/FinalAssessment2017/Assessment2017.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information, State of the Climate: National Climate Report for June 2018, published online July 2018, retrieved on December 6, 2018 from <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/national/201806>.

<sup>3</sup> Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5 Degrees Celcius. Report no. 2018. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. [https://report.ipcc.ch/sr15/pdf/sr15\\_spm\\_final.pdf](https://report.ipcc.ch/sr15/pdf/sr15_spm_final.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> "Top 20 Largest California Wildfires." Chart. California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Incident Information. [http://www.fire.ca.gov/communications/downloads/fact\\_sheets/Top20\\_Acres.pdf](http://www.fire.ca.gov/communications/downloads/fact_sheets/Top20_Acres.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> "Top 20 Most Destructive California Wildfires." Chart. California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

### **Program Area:**

CAL FIRE has financial responsibility for fire protection and prevention in the SRA and would implement the CalVTP. The CalVTP would comprehensively direct the treatment of fire fuel to prevent wildfire in the SRA, which consists of more than 31 million acres of private and public land throughout the state. However, not all areas within the SRA are suitable for treatments. The portion of the SRA considered suitable for vegetation treatments under the CalVTP consists of 20.3 million acres referred to as the "treatable landscape." The treatable landscape is illustrated in Figure 1. WUI protection is a high priority for CAL FIRE, particularly following events such as the Tubbs Fire (2017), which began in wildlands and grew to burn much of suburban Santa Rosa, ultimately destroying 5,636 structures; the Carr Fire (2018), which traveled from wildlands into the developed neighborhoods of Redding; and the Camp Fire (2018), which destroyed most of the Town of Paradise. All three of these recent fires, and several others, have reinforced the importance of fuels management and fire prevention to reduce wildfire risk in and adjacent to the WUI. Much of the land surrounding the WUI falls in SRA, demonstrating the urgent need for the proposed CalVTP.

### **Probable Environmental Effects:**

The PEIR for the CalVTP will present an analysis of the potential environmental impacts of the proposed CalVTP, including direct, indirect, and cumulative effects. The PEIR will identify potentially feasible alternatives to the proposed CalVTP and provide a comparative analysis of their potential impacts. The PEIR will also identify mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant impacts to the extent feasible. The EIR will address all the environmental topic areas identified in Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines. These topic areas will include, but may not be limited to:

- Aesthetics and Visual resources
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Archeological, Historic, and Tribal Cultural Resources
- Biological Resources
- Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Energy Resources
- Hazardous Materials, Public Health and Safety
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning, Population and Housing
- Noise
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Public Services, Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire

Potential environmental effects may be probable in any of these topic areas. The PEIR will address all the topics. The Board is not yet able to determine with specificity the individualized effects within these environmental topic areas, or whether such effects will be less than significant, less than significant with mitigation, or significant and unavoidable.

### **CEQA Scoping:**

**Public and Agency Scoping Meetings:** Because the proposed CalVTP is a project of statewide, regional, or areawide significance, the Board will hold scoping meetings, in accordance with PRC Section 21083.9(b)(2) and CEQA Guidelines Section 15206. Invitees include the following: responsible agencies; "public agencies with jurisdiction by law with respect to the project" (including trustee agencies); any "public agency, organization or individual who has filed a written request for the notice;" and potentially affected cities and counties.



Source: Data received from the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection in 2019

1/14/2019

Treatable Landscape

Figure 1