



RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES
OF CALIFORNIA

February 16, 2016

The Honorable Richard Bloom
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee
No. 3 on Resources & Transportation
State Capitol, Room 2003
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Cap-and-Trade Expenditure Plan

Dear Assembly Member Bloom:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), I offer our support for specific allocations in the Cap-and-Trade Expenditure Plan included in the Governor's 2016-17 State Budget proposal. Specifically, RCRC would like to offer our strong support for the proposed allocations to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) and the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF), which would fund programs of great importance to California's rural communities that also impact Californians statewide. RCRC is an association of thirty-five rural California counties and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of an elected supervisor from each of the member counties.

RCRC member counties contain much of California's forested lands including more than 70 percent of the State's national forest lands. Drought, invasive pests and a need for increased pace and scale of the management of our state's forests have caused a dramatic increase in forest fires in California both in terms of acreage and intensity in recent years. In 2015 alone, California saw three major wildfire events — the Rough Fire, the Butte Fire, and the Valley Fire — that burned nearly 300,000 acres of forest land and destroyed more than 1,800 homes combined. With recent drought conditions and the resulting tree die-off from invasive pests, the State should expect to see an even more intense fire season in 2016 which will not only result in increased greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, but destroy vital carbon sequestration capacity in the State's forested lands and impact the State's water supply, wildlife habitat, and public health and safety of those living in forested communities.

RCRC believes that the Governor's proposed \$150 million GGRF allocation to CAL FIRE is a vital piece in meeting California's GHG emissions reductions goals. Wildfires

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are a significant source of GHG emissions, and studies predict that wildfire emissions will increase by as much as 24 percent over 1961-1990 levels in the next thirty years.¹ The 2013 Rim Fire alone burned 257,000 acres and is estimated to have generated 11.3 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions in the span of two months. This is equivalent to the annual emissions from 2.3 million cars.² The California Air Resources Board (ARB) estimates that wildfires contribute more than half of California's annual black carbon emissions, a number that will continue to increase as the State's forests continue to burn.³

The Governor's proposed GGRF funding to CAL FIRE is even more vital in light of current drought conditions, where pest infestation has resulted in massive tree die-off in some of California's most vital forested areas. The tree mortality problem is so urgent that Governor Brown issued an Emergency Proclamation in October 2015 to implement actions to mitigate the impacts of the pest infestation. At that time, the USDA Forest Service estimated that 22 million trees in California were already dead, with tens of millions of additional trees in danger of succumbing to the infestation. We are already losing vital carbon sequestration capacity in these forests. If not treated with the urgency it deserves including the much-needed GGRF funding proposed by the Governor, the unprecedented tree die-off we are seeing in the State will result in a dramatic increase in high severity wildfires and a substantial increase in GHG emissions.

RCRC also fully supports the Governor's proposed \$100 million GGRF funding allocation to CalRecycle for waste diversion programs as outlined in the Cap-and-Trade Expenditure Plan. Reducing methane emissions from landfills has been the subject of GHG emission reductions since ARB's Landfill Methane Control Measure, which was an early action measure from Assembly Bill 32. More recently, with the adoption of Assembly Bill 1826 (Chesbro, 2014), a commitment has been made to divert commercial organics from landfills beginning in 2016 and phasing implementation through 2019, with the goal of reaching 50 percent organic diversion from landfills in 2020. However, the infrastructure capacity to process this amount of organics currently does not exist.

CalRecycle estimates it will require an additional 100 facilities to process the diverted organics from AB 1826. It will be challenging enough to build the necessary facilities due to not only the constraints of the permitting process and the public's perception of undesirable land uses and their ability to delay or halt progress through the

¹ Matthew D. Hurteau, Anthony L. Westerling, Christine Wiedinmyer, and Benjamin P. Bryant, "Projected Effects of Climate and Development on California Wildfire Emissions through 2100," *Environmental Science & Technology* 2014, 48, 2298-2304 DOI: dx.doi.org/10.1021/es4050133

² Sierra Nevada Conservancy. (2014). The Rim Fire: Why investing in forest health equals investing in the health of California [Fact Sheet]. Retrieved from <http://www.sierranevada.ca.gov/factsheets/10.31rimfirefactsheet.pdf>.

³ California Air Resources Board. (2015) Draft Short-Lived Climate Pollutant Reduction Strategy, Appendix A: California SLCP Emissions. Retrieved from <http://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/shortlived/2015appendixa.pdf>.

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required environmental review process, but due to the cost of such facilities. With the additional costs associated with the State Water Resources Control Board new General Waste Discharge Requirements for Composting Operations, building new facilities and retrofitting old ones makes it even more costly to build and operate new compost facilities. Grant and incentive money needs to be made available to assist the development of these new costly facilities if the State expects to meet its 2020 goal.

Additionally, current global market conditions have contributed to a steady decline in recyclable materials commodity prices and have already negatively impacted recycling in California. The environmental merits of recycling are well accepted by the public, but when oil and other commodities are cheap, recycling doesn't always make economic sense. The GGRF money for CalRecycle will be imperative to stave off a sharp decline in recycling rates in California.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you should have any questions or concerns regarding RCRC's support of this item.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Staci Heaton", written in a cursive style.

STACI HEATON
Regulatory Affairs Advocate

cc: Members of the Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 3 on Resources &
Transportation