



April 5, 2021

The Honorable Luz Rivas
Chair, Assembly Natural Resources Committee
State Capitol, Room 3126
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: AB 9 (Wood) Fire safety: wildfires: fire adapted communities
As Amended April 5, 2021 – SUPPORT
Set for Hearing on April 14, 2021 – Assembly Natural Resources Committee**

Dear Assembly Member Rivas:

On behalf of the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), and Urban Counties of California (UCC), we write in support of AB 9 (Wood), a bill that seeks to codify the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity (RFFC) program, which creates a new regional approach to collaboratively planned strategies for wildfire risk reduction project development.

Local governments are on the front lines of dealing with and responding to California's increasingly devastating climate driven mega-fires. Seventeen of the 20 largest wildfires in California history have occurred since 2000, and six of the seven largest wildfires occurred in 2020 alone. California must develop more tools and strategies to prevent these devastating fires. Regional approaches are the best way to bring diverse interests together with local government and state agencies, to address the unique challenges faced throughout California.

California continues to experience devastating impacts of catastrophic wildfires that are increasing in intensity and frequency and breaking records almost every year in terms of acreage burned and buildings destroyed. California's wildfire crisis is complex as wildfire is a natural part of the state's ecology meaning we cannot eliminate fire, but instead must develop a series of solutions to create fire-adapted communities. Developing fire-adapted communities throughout the state will require a decentralized approach, as California's various regions face unique factors that drive wildfire risk in the region. Accordingly, the solutions to decrease wildfire risk need to be tailored to each region.

To achieve these regionally focused strategies, communities need networks of experts to develop regional projects that reduce local fire risk. Many communities and regions lack the financial and personnel capacity to develop a coordinated strategy of projects that are planned, permitted and funded and the result has been a scattershot of projects that provide some reduction of wildfire risk but are not interconnected. The Regional Forest and Fire Capacity program is helping to fill the existing capacity gaps by granting funds to regional entities to work with local, state, and federal partners to develop Regional Priority Plans.

Recognizing the need to increase regional collaboration to address the state's wildfire crisis, the state appropriated \$20 million through the 2018-19 state budget to the California Natural Resources Agency

(CNRA) to develop regional approaches that improve forest health and fire resiliency. The result of this appropriation is the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program, administered by the Department of Conservation (DOC) on behalf of CNRA, which is designed to increase regional capacity, support the development and implementation of regional priority plans, and prioritize, develop, and implement projects.

AB 9 seeks to codify the RFFC and support DOC in creating new regional entities and sustaining the regional entities funded to date. AB 9 will provide statutory guidance to DOC in expanding the focus of RFFC to examine project development within communities in addition to projects on the landscape. The RFFC is creating an additional pathway for achieving wildfire resilience and AB 9 will push RFFC to additional success.

We are pleased to support AB 9 for these reasons, and we are grateful to Assemblymember Wood for his leadership in authoring the bill. We respectfully request your support of AB 9.

Sincerely,



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