



Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) Forestry Assistance Resources Available for Private Landowners

California is a large and diverse state, ranging from coastal redwoods in the north to chaparral in the south. Small nonindustrial landowners manage approximately 20 percent of California's forested land and are a critical part of the state's overall wildfire resilience effort. CAL FIRE and our partner organizations operate a number of programs to assist small landowners across the state with the management and stewardship of their land. This document provides basic information about those forestry assistance programs, and distinguishes between the programs that are operated solely by CAL FIRE and those that are done in partnership with other organizations.

CAL FIRE PROGRAMS

CALIFORNIA FOREST IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The California Forest Improvement Program (CFIP) was established by the California Forest Improvement Act of 1978 and is the state's primary assistance program for nonindustrial private forest owners. CFIP provides eligible landowners with technical and financial assistance for planning, reforestation, and resource management investments that improve the health and resilience of forestland. The program provides substantial cost share grants to landowners for forest management plans, reforestation and restoration, fuel hazard reduction, and forest thinning projects.

CFIP is intended for private landowners whose parcels are between 20 and 5,000 acres of forestland, which is defined as land having at least 10% tree cover. Since its establishment, CFIP has helped with forest improvement activities on over 1 million acres. The average cost of a forest management plan, which recommends and sets out a program of technical assistance and forest treatment, but does not include on the ground work, is approximately \$200 per acre. In Fiscal Year 2019-20, \$6 million was available for this program which allowed CAL FIRE to cover approximately 23,000 acres. As this program expands, CFIP is poised to deliver technical and financial assistance to landowners across the 6.3 million acres of nonindustrial private forestland in the state.

CFIP ALLOWABLE ACTIVITIES

- Preparation of a Forest Management Plan by a Registered Professional Forester (RPF)
- Project Reimbursement and RPF Supervision of the following:
 - Reforestation
 - Site preparation
 - Tree purchase and planting
 - Tree shelters
 - Stand Improvement
 - Pre-commercial thinning or release
 - Pruning
 - Follow-up treatments (including mechanical, herbicide and/or slash disposal)
 - Forestland conservation practices / fish and wildlife habitat improvement
 - Forest fuels management and treatments



CFIP reimburses landowners from 75% to 90% of their costs for allowable activities. Up to 90% cost share is common on projects where forestland has been damaged by a catastrophic event, such as wildfire, or for properties under 500 acres. During Fiscal Years 2015-2020 CAL FIRE established 450 cost-share agreements, totaling \$20.6 million. Acreage impacted by this funding includes long-term forest management planning on 90,758 acres, reforestation of 7,176 acres, and 7,034 acres of forest health treatments. Total on-the-ground forest practices over this period covered 14,210 acres with an average cost of \$1,449 per acre.

WILDFIRE RESILIENCE PROGRAM GRANTS

In 2020, CAL FIRE created the Wildfire Resilience Block Grant with funds allocated from Proposition 68. The Block Grant program provides financial and technical forestry assistance to nonindustrial forest landowners with smaller parcels (5 acres or more) through grants to third party cooperators, making it an excellent alternative to CFIP. The grant recipient serves as the lead on forest management projects and provides services including forest management education, technical, and financial assistance directly to landowners so they can achieve a greater level of wildfire resilience on their forested property. This grant opportunity is open when funding allows and is crafted to be flexible for meeting the emerging needs of private landowners. Projects that received funding in 2020 are now in progress.

Successful projects aim to:

- Provide funding through agreements with landowners to pay for forest improvement and wildfire resilience practices; and
- Provide technical assistance to promote information sharing and education on the full range of effective forest management practices, forest management education and management planning.



LEWIS A. MORAN REFORESTATION CENTER

For over 100 years, CAL FIRE's L.A. Moran Reforestation Center in Davis, CA has provided private landowners and public forests in California with a reliable source of quality tree seedlings and seed stock. The demand for tree growing operations have expanded dramatically over the last few years due to California's drought, tree mortality, and devastating wildfires sweeping through the state. In order to meet the state's reforestation needs, the Center operates a Nursery and a State Seed Bank.

THE NURSERY

The Nursery grows tree seedlings for small, nonindustrial private landowners, which is a natural niche where commercial nurseries do not compete due to the lack of scale and volume. Because growing from seed can take an entire year, the Nursery forecasts demand for future seasons based on anticipated need. The demand for quality seedlings is only growing and is especially important following catastrophic fires. The Reforestation Center also maintains close relationships with other nurseries and helps facilitate making resources available for landowners with a wider scope of restoration projects.

THE STATE SEED BANK

The State Seed Bank is a long-term seed repository that contains over 30,000 pounds of seed and provides a wide variety of native tree species from a range of areas and elevations throughout the state. These seeds help restore native lands exposed to shifting climates and rising uncertainties in the forest ecosystem. The Seed Bank acts as protection against the threat of state-wide extinction for native trees, striving to preserve species for current and future generations of Californians.

CAL FIRE is expanding operations of the Seed Bank to meet the changing needs of the state's forested communities, and, as part of the Reforestation Center, maintains the Department's role as experts on climate science in reforestation. CAL FIRE partners with researchers to update its tools for matching landowners' planting sites with seed that is specially adapted to those locations so trees stand the best possible chance of becoming healthy, productive forests under a rapidly changing climate.



FOREST STEWARDSHIP

The California Forest Stewardship Program provides technical information and assistance to landowners to help promote sound forest management while assisting communities in solving forest-related issues.

A quarterly newsletter, *The Forestland Steward*, is free upon request and provides information on a broad range of forestry-related topics. The program also helps landowners secure financial and technical assistance, initiates forestry demonstration projects, and offers a landowner training curriculum. The Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee, made up of representatives of diverse interests, provides direction for the Forest Stewardship Program. A full listing of past and current editions of *The Forestland Steward* can be found at the Placer County Resource Conservation District website.

CULTURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION PROGRAM

The Cultural Resources Protection Program identifies and manages archaeological, historical, and tribal cultural resources located within project areas under CAL FIRE jurisdiction and develops methods to protect these resources from project-related impacts. This is accomplished through regulations, policies, and procedures requiring cultural resource surveys of project areas, evaluation of potential impacts, and the incorporation of protection measures before project approval. This program provides cultural resource surveys, technical assistance, project review, and training to CAL FIRE staff and other resource professionals.



VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The Vegetation Management Program (VMP) is a cost-sharing program that focuses on the use of prescribed fire and some mechanical thinning to address wildland fire fuel hazards and other resource management issues on State Responsibility Area (SRA) lands. The targeted use of prescribed fire mimics natural fuel modification processes, restores fire to its historic role in California's wildland ecosystems, and provides significant fire hazard reduction benefits that enhance public and firefighter safety. The VMP allows private landowners to enter into a contract with CAL FIRE to use prescribed fire to accomplish a combination of fire protection and resource management goals on private land. The VMP was created in 1982 and has been responsible for the treatment of roughly 25,000 acres per year since its inception.

Collaborative Efforts

MY SIERRA WOODS

CAL FIRE awarded a \$9.03 million California Climate Initiative (CCI) grant to the American Forest Foundation in 2017 for the development of My Sierra Woods, a collaboration of conservation groups, Registered Professional Foresters and forest market partners to provide funding and technical support to nonindustrial family forest landowners throughout Butte, Lassen, Modoc, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Tehama, Trinity and Yuba counties. Under this program, cost-share funding is available for RPF consultation services, transportation of forest byproducts to biomass facilities, and reforestation for single and multi-landowner community projects. The important work of the My Sierra Woods program is achieved through a partnership between CAL FIRE and the American Forest Foundation.



RESOURCE CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM: SIERRA NEVADA TREE MORTALITY

The Resource Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) provides technical assistance to nonindustrial private forest landowners in Placer, El Dorado, Amador, Calaveras, Tuolumne, Mariposa, Madera, Fresno, Tulare, and Kern counties. RCPP assistance is provided for the development of forest management and conservation plans, and eligible plans have the option to enter into contract with the federal Natural Resource Conservation Program for incentive payments, which average about half the cost of implementing the conservation practices. CAL FIRE provided program funding to the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts for their response to the tree mortality crisis. The work of the RCPP is accomplished by a partnership between CAL FIRE and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service.

Websites Referenced in this Article

Resource Conservation Partnership Program:
<https://carcd.org/our-work/project/rcpp-tree-mortality-in-the-central-sierra/>

Forestland Steward Newsletters:
<https://placerrcd.org/sample-page-2/forestland-steward-newsletters/>

My Sierra Woods:
<https://www.mysierrawoods.org/>

CAL FIRE's Forest Stewardship Assistance:
<https://www.fire.ca.gov/programs/resource-management/resource-protection-improvement/landowner-assistance/forest-stewardship/technical-and-financial-assistance/>