

Community Protection and Wildfire Resilience Act

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Summary

Background

As our country grapples with the climate crisis, catastrophic wildfires have become an existential threat to the safety of our communities. Over the past two decades, wildfires in California have increasingly grown in size and severity, with five of the six largest fires in the state's history occurring in 2020 alone. The federal government has a responsibility to treat these wildfires with the same level of seriousness as hurricanes and other natural disasters while empowering communities to implement science-based methods for mitigating wildfire damage and defending life and property.

While we cannot stop the threat of wildfires entirely, we can prepare our communities for worst-case scenarios while working to address the structural issues that have caused these fires to burn more quickly and intensely than ever before. This responsibility should not fall on any one individual but should instead be shared among entire communities, with the understanding that a threat to any one home is a threat to every neighbor.

Summary

The bipartisan *Community Protection and Wildfire Resilience Act* will invest \$1 billion per year to:

- Establish guidelines for communities to conceptualize new Community Protection and Wildfire Resilience Plans (CPWRP) that are developed in coordination with community members, first responders, and relevant state agencies. CPWRPs will focus on implementing strategies and activities relating to:
 - Improving early detection technology, public outreach and education, alerts and warnings, evacuation planning, evacuation execution, and access for first responders
 - Addressing vulnerable populations, including the elderly and those with disabilities
 - Hardening critical infrastructure and homes
 - Applying community-scale defensible space across contiguous areas
 - Building local capacity to implement and oversee the plan
 - Deploying distributed energy resources like microgrids with battery storage
 - Implementing strategic land use planning
 - Educating community members
 - Coordinating with existing wildfire plans like a Community Wildfire Protection Plan.
- Provide grants of up to \$250,000 to develop a CPWRP and grants of up to \$10 million to implement a CPWRP
 - Grants will be prioritized for low-income communities that are at high risk for fire or wildfire and communities recently impacted by a major wildfire.
- Complete a report on all federal authorities and programs to protect communities from wildfires.
- Study how a CPWRP could be used as certification for insurance companies assessing community resilience.
- Continuously update wildfire hazard maps.
- Assess impediments to emergency radio communications across departments and agencies.
- Allow for structure hardening to be covered under existing community wildfire protection programs.

The *Community Protection and Wildfire Resilience Act* is endorsed by Earthjustice, Sierra Club, League of Conservation Voters, Silvix Resources, Defenders of Wildlife, Trust for Public Land, Natural Resources Defense Council, John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute, Wild Heritage, Unite the Parks, Alliance for the Wild Rockies, Feather River Action!, Forests Forever, Climate Communications Coalition, Heartwood, Tahoe Forests Matter, Eco-Integrity Alliance, Friends of the Clearwater, and Sonoma County Climate Activist Network (SoCoCAN!, a network of 50+ Sonoma County climate groups and over 300 individuals).