

Governing Wildfire Risk Reduction in California: Priorities for a 'Policy, People and Places' approach

POLICY

Develop a whole-of-government approach to wildfire risk reduction, based on a systemic understanding of underlying risk drivers and cascading impacts exacerbated by climate change.

1.1 Prioritize spending on mitigation, risk reduction and adaptation. Every dollar invested in mitigation saves six. Mobilize philanthropy to go beyond silos and commit multi-year direct funding to communities at risk, and still recovering, from recent wildfires.

1.2 Address the accountability gap. Create a citizen-led Wildfire Risk Reduction Task Force to regularly review state-funded programs, impacts and outcomes. Create regular opportunities for community-based grantees to provide feedback on policy focus areas, funding priorities and program outcomes.

1.3 Invest in disaster-resilient infrastructure. Build smarter - where and how matters. Weatherize building codes to account for increasing smoke impacts. Enforce zoning and building codes. Embed wildfire risk in development costs. Invest in micro-grids.

1.4 Strengthen local governance to enable community-centered wildfire risk reduction. Facilitate peer learning and mutual aid networks. Share best practices, including the process of developing Community Wildfire Protection Plans. Enable inclusive community-wide evacuation drills.

PEOPLE

Adopt a person-centered approach to public health and well-being, informed by an intersectional understanding of people's unique experiences, needs and capacities for wildfire risk reduction.

2.1 Develop diverse capacities. Create an inclusive workforce for wildfire risk reduction. Train and certify more forestry staff each year. Develop robust indigenous partnerships. Design opportunities for co-learning wildfire risk reduction with people from diverse asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant backgrounds.

2.2 Prioritize funding for outreach, mitigation and risk reduction work with people who are generally left out of community mitigation efforts, including people with disabilities, older adults, people who live on low-income, on the streets, and in rural and remote areas.

2.3 Empower community-based organizations and social services working to reduce food insecurity, housing instability and racial injustice to understand people's experiences, needs and capacities for wildfire risk reduction.

2.4 Integrate wildfire awareness and preparedness in school curriculum and project-based learning at par with the 'Drop, Cover and Hold on' campaign for earthquake safety.

PLACES

Implement a place-based approach to wildfire risk reduction, steeped in a historical understanding and informed by a longitudinal monitoring of how habitats are changing across California.

3.1 Facilitate the implementation of a state-wide prescribed burning program for private forest and landowners. Enable private forest owners to conduct safe, effective and regular prescribed burns at scale. Learn from indigenous knowledge and develop robust partnerships.

3.2 Restore forests and watersheds by enabling community-centered stewardship practices and partnerships. Land use planning must look beyond structural mitigation in the 'WUI', to also protect and restore ecosystem services, especially for rural and resource-dependent communities.

3.3 Provide a framework to enable networks of universities and community-based groups to develop citizen-science initiatives for the longitudinal monitoring of habitat health, including air, soil and water quality.

3.4 Expand current outreach initiatives to also include youth-centered stewardship campaigns, such as, 'Adopt an acre' and 'Good fire' to concretely outline how youth can care for country and contribute to state conservation and restoration goals by 2030.



Wonder Labs

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