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January 9, 2018

Board of Forestry and Fire Protection
ATTN: Edith Hannigan, Board Analyst
VTP Draft PEIR Comments
PO Box 944246
Sacramento, CA 94244-2460

RE: Support for the Vegetation Treatment Program Programmatic Environmental Impact Report

Dear Ms. Edith Hannigan:

Extreme wildfire risk is becoming the new norm in California. Last year, the Thomas Fire was the largest recorded fire in California history, and the fire season is becoming a year round problem. These wildfires cause significant damage to life and property. Wildfires also cause serious air quality problems and jeopardize California's ability to meet its climate goals. Many of the areas burned will be permanently damaged. California could end up with many of its forests becoming weeds and grasses because of these intense fires. California needs to increase the management of its lands to prevent forest fires and build resiliency in the landscape. The Vegetation Treatment Program Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (VTP PEIR) would create a streamlined process for communities to engage in prevention projects that would reduce hazardous vegetative fuel conditions and restore ecosystem resiliency. The ability to tier the environmental analysis for these projects off the VTP PEIR would substantially reduce costs to communities and allow them to timely address hazardous vegetative fuel and potentially reduce catastrophic losses.

A combination of manmade and natural factors has resulted in drastic increases in economic losses, resulting from not only wildfire suppression, but also lost lives, homes and infrastructure. This crisis requires a statewide strategy. A statewide VTP PEIR will help jurisdictions implement projects that benefit communities regardless of geographical boundaries and will place these individual projects within the larger context of fuel reduction work in California.

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The VTP PEIR provides a much-needed avenue for communities to engage in fire prevention projects. Fuel reduction work, including prescribed fires, has been inadequate to protect communities from wildfire. The VTP PEIR provides a framework for communities to plan and implement fuel reduction and ecosystem resiliency projects to protect their landscapes from wildfire. Therefore, I support the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection's development of the VTP EIR and urge its swift adoption.

Sincerely,



CRISTINA GARCIA, Chair
Assembly Committee on Natural Resources