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

Ms. Edith Hannigan,

As the size, frequency and intensity of wildfires across California increase, so too does the loss of life and property. As these losses continue to mount it has become clear that public and private partners need the ability to implement wide-ranging fire prevention programs in their communities. 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 a statewide programmatic environmental impact report (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 losses of lives, homes and infrastructure. This precipitous increase of costs goes beyond jurisdictional boundaries and therefore requires a statewide strategy. A statewide PEIR for a vegetation management program 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. Vegetation management conducted under the VTP EIR would be part of a landscape-level strategy to reduce fire risk in California. It is level of planning and vegetation management that the state is currently in need of.

The VTP PEIR provides a much-needed avenue for communities to engage in fire prevention projects. The ability for implementation of fuel reduction work has diminished in recent years, leaving communities in the wildland-urban interface vulnerable to wildfire. By opening a new path to CEQA compliance, the VTP PEIR provides a framework for communities to plan and implement fuel reduction and ecosystem resiliency projects to protect their landscapes from wildfire. I would like to lend my support to the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection in the development of the VTP EIR.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian Dahle".

BRIAN DAHLE
Assembly Republican Leader
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