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Assembly California Legislature



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Board of Forestry and Fire Protection
 ATTN: Edith Hannigan, Board Analyst
 VTP Draft PEIR Comments
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Ms. Edith Hannigan,

I am writing today in support of the proposed Vegetation Treatment Program Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (VTP PEIR). Last year, in my district, we lost over 6,000 homes and 31 lives to the wildfires that devastated the North Bay in October. Unfortunately this was not an isolated incident. Across our state, bigger, more frequent and more intense wildfires are having significant health impacts and destroying our communities at an alarming rate. As these losses continue to mount it has become clear that public and private partners need more tools to implement wide-ranging fire prevention programs in their communities. The VTP PEIR would create a streamlined process for communities to engage in prevention projects that reduce hazardous vegetative fuel conditions and restore ecosystem resiliency.

Our current approach to wildland management in combination with our changing climate has turned our natural landscape, an asset that should be our best weapon against climate change, into an untenable liability. The thousands of acres that burn across our state every year cost us billions of dollars in firefighting costs and property losses, while simultaneously undermining the hard fought carbon reductions we have achieved in California. This dynamic has reached a critical tipping point and the proposed VTP EIR adds an important tool to our toolbox.

As the fires both in Southern California and in the North Bay so clearly demonstrated, these emergencies do not follow jurisdictional boundaries. 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.

The VTP PEIR provides an essential 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,

JIM WOOD
 ASSEMBLYMEMBER, DISTRICT 2

