

September 24, 2014

Board of Forestry and Fire Protection  
Attn: Kevin Conway, Staff Forester  
P.O. Box 944246  
Sacramento, CA 94244-2460

RE: Comments on "Forest Fire Prevention Pilot Project Exemption" – Proposed Revisions to Slash Treatment Requirements

Dear Chair Gillless and Board Members:

The California Forestry Association (Calforests) strongly support the proposed revisions to the slash treatment requirements for the "Forest Fire Prevention Pilot Project Exemption" (Pilot Project Exemption) as noticed by the Board on September 12. This proposed revision would increase the maximum allowed post-logging slash height from 9 inches to 18 inches, and would modify the timing of slash treatments for operations that occur later in the season. We urge the Board to adopt these proposed revisions.

Calforests believes this revision is important for a number of reasons:

- As pointed out in the previous Calforests comment letter, the authors of AB 744, Assembly Members Dahle and Gordon, have written the Board in the past requesting that the Board be flexible in the design of slash treatment standards. Both Assembly members recognize the issues with the current LaMalfa Exemption, including its restricting slash-treatment standards, and have urged the Board for a more reasonable approach. We believe adopting an 18-inch slash standard is reasonable.
- The Pilot Project Exemption is intended to remove smaller diameter trees and fuel ladders. The vast majority of this material will be removed and piled at landings. Where biomass markets are not available, this slash material will be decked at an enormous cost to the landowner and/or logger. Imposing the additional standard to lop remaining slash to a 9-inch depth would be a burden to many landowners that may dissuade them from utilizing this Pilot Project Exemption.
- Current Hazard Reduction standards written in the Forest Practice Rules require a 30-inch slash height. Given this is a thinning operation, operational slash will be discontinuous and 18-inch slash is sufficient to meet hazard reduction goals.
- The Pilot Project Exemption, pursuant to the passage of AB 744, is indeed a pilot project to examine the efficacy of fire prevention standards. AB 744 was passed with the intent to increase the utilization of the current LaMalfa Exemption, which has not been widely used because of its restrictive provisions. With the passage of AB 744, the Board now has the opportunity to both

increase the utilization of the Pilot Project Exemption and to evaluate the effects of various slash treatment options. We believe the 18-inch standard will reduce overall slash consistent with the goals of AB 744 and treatment costs to the point where this exemption will be used more frequently.

Calforests also supports the other major proposed provisions in the Pilot Project Exemption that will allow slash piles created after September 1 to be burned by April 1 of the second year following creation. Calforests believes this flexibility is important for operations that occur late in the season.

We also encourage the Board to adopt the change to the rule that includes the coastal counties as authorized in AB 2142.

The Board's over-arching goal should be to make this Pilot Project Exemption as functional and attractive to landowners as possible. The vast majority of California's private forestlands are in desperate need of fire fuel treatment, and a functional—yet usable—fire fuel exemption will be one important element of this critical fuel-reduction effort. Given California's dire catastrophic wildfire status, we believe the Board needs to be pro-actively encouraging wide-spread forest fuel-reduction projects. We believe this exemption will be an important tool in meeting this goal. Therefore, we encourage the Board to adopt the proposed revisions to the Pilot Project Exemption that have been noticed in the 15-day Notice and to request CAL FIRE provide annual reports on its effectiveness.

Thank you for the opportunity to once again comment on this important matter.

Sincerely,



David A. Bischel,  
President

cc: [board.public.comments@fire.ca.gov](mailto:board.public.comments@fire.ca.gov)