



Wildfire & Forest Resilience

While California is no stranger to natural disasters, the most persistent and devastating in recent years have been wildfires. A changing climate has lengthened the fire season in California—it has increased by 75 days across the Sierras—and 2018 brought the most destructive fires in the state’s history, including the Camp Fire in Paradise. In 2020, 9,000 wildfires consumed over four million acres, more than the 2017 and 2018 fire seasons combined and more than any year in the state’s history. Additionally, millions of residents across the state have been subject to a series of power shutoffs in order to reduce the risk of power-line-caused wildfires, and the Newsom administration issued \$50 million in grants to communities to mitigate these shutoffs in March 2021.

The drought is estimated to have moved up the start of fire season by approximately one month in 2021, and more than 25 million acres of state’s wildlands are classified as under very high or extreme fire threat, and high housing costs in more developed parts of the state have pushed more residents into high risk areas. As the state works to address these risks, their ability to adequately prevent and respond to forest fires is complicated by the fact that the state only owns 3% of the 33 million acres of forestland across the state. The primary agency in the state tasked with wildfire response, preparedness, and forest resilience is the **California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire)**.

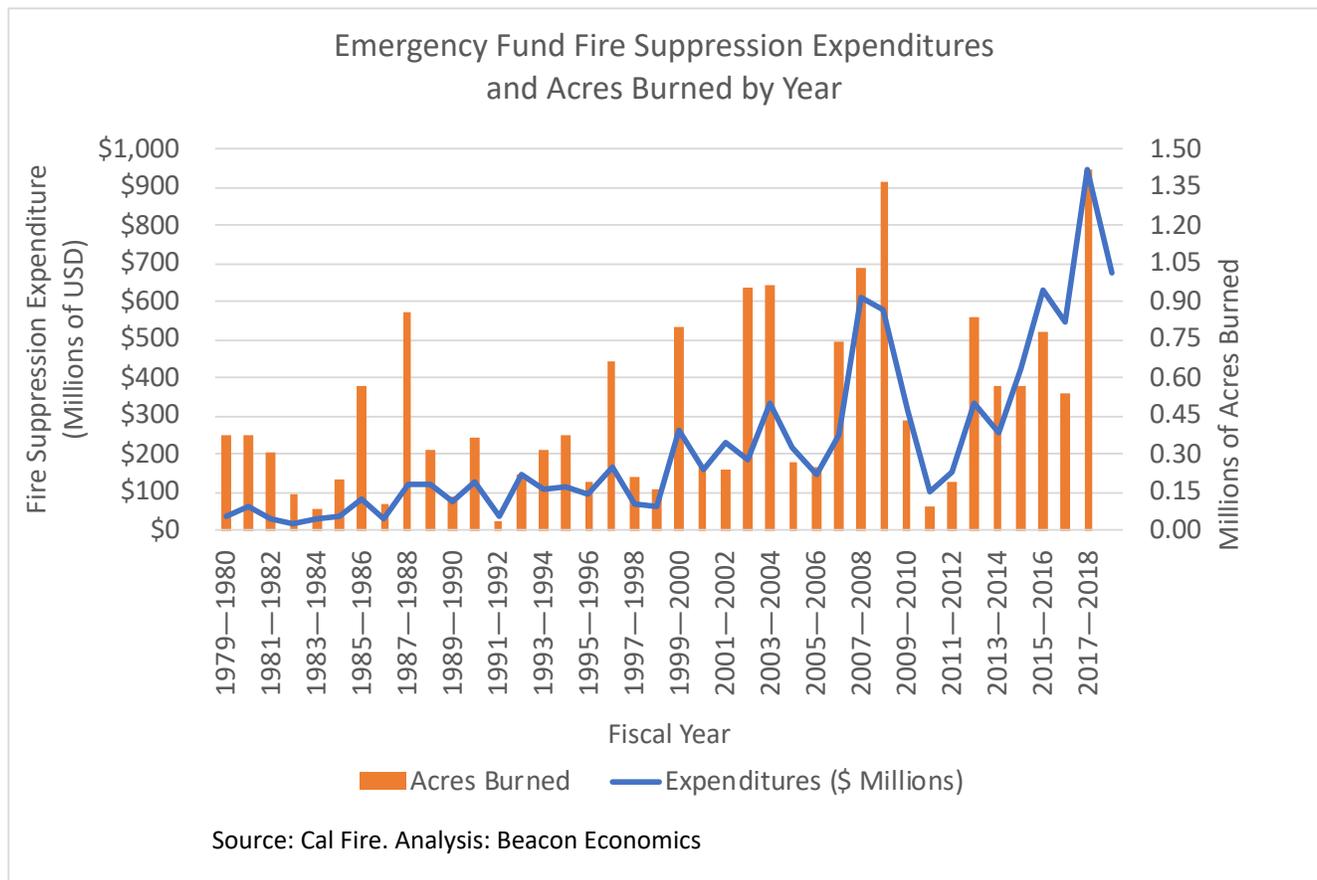


Chart from Next 10's 2019 California Green Innovation Index



WHAT'S IN THE 2021-22 MAY REVISION & FINAL BUDGET

The Governor's May Revision builds on investments passed in the spring of 2021 with new proposals including:

- ▶ **\$708 million** to enhance wildfire and forest resilience across the state by thinning forests, replanting trees, prescribed burns, and other forest resilience measures
- ▶ **\$250 million** to develop and implement a "Prepare California" initiative modeled after a successful FEMA program to build disaster-resistant communities through public-private partnerships
- ▶ **\$39 million** to support three additional National Guard fire crews for a total of 13 fire crews from July through December, and continue staffing 8 additional fire crews that began in April 2021
- ▶ **\$48.4 million** to phase in additional Blackhawk helicopters and large tankers used to fight wildfires

The final budget also augments the \$536 million provided in April with an additional \$458 million (\$258 million General Fund and \$200 million cap-and-trade funds) in 2021-22 and \$500 million General Fund in 2022-23 to increase the pace and scale of forest health activities and decrease fire risk.

The Legislature passed [AB 79](#) in April 2021, which directed \$536 million (\$125 million cap-and-trade funds and \$411 million General Fund) to address wildfire prevention and resilience issues. The current drought has compounded existing conditions that favor wildfires. Officials reported in April that the Sierra snowpack was only at 59% of the average for early spring and, as of June 29, 2021, the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#) showed that 94.7% of California is experiencing severe, extreme, or exceptional drought conditions. As a result, [experts predict](#) that 2021 will likely be a disastrous wildfire season.

WILDFIRE & FOREST RESILIENCE KEY FACTS

- ➔ **Wildfire Risk:** Five of the six largest wildfires in California's recorded history occurred in 2020
 - ▶ More than 2.7 million Californians live in very high-fire risk zones, from the northernmost part of the state down to San Diego County
 - ▶ Approximately 11.2 million Californians live in areas considered at risk of wildfire
- ➔ **Cost:** It is estimated that the 2020 wildfires in California resulted in more than \$20 billion in direct costs
 - ▶ From 1964 to 1990, the insurance industry paid out an average of \$100 million per year in fire insurance claims in California—that figure increased to \$4 billion per year from 2011 to 2018
 - ▶ Insurers paid out approximately \$26 billion to homeowners following the 2017 and 2018 fire seasons
- ➔ **Cal Fire:** Provides resource management and wildland fire protection services covering 31 million acres through 234 state fire stations (and staff 568 local stations that are funded by local governments)
 - ▶ Cal Fire employs over 6,100 full-time fire professionals, foresters, and administrators; 2,600 seasonal firefighters; 2,750 local government volunteer firefighters; 600 Volunteers in Prevention
 - ▶ Governor Newsom [announced](#) he was setting aside over \$80 million for an additional 1,400 Cal Fire firefighters in March 2021 in preparation for the 2021 wildfire season
- ➔ **Fire Camps:** Cal Fire, in cooperation with the Department of Corrections, operates 35 conservation camps, commonly known as fire camps, across 27 counties that support state, local, and federal government agencies as they respond to natural disasters
 - ▶ Inmates must volunteer for the fire camp program and Cal Fire also employs 2,600 seasonal firefighters
 - ▶ There are currently 1,300 inmates working at fire camps, a decrease from recent years

*Data from the 2021-22 May Revision & final budget, LAO, and [Next 10](#) unless otherwise specified.