



February 27, 2018

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Mark Ghilarducci
Director, Office of Emergency Services
3650 Schriever Ave.
Mather, CA 95655

VIA EMAIL AND MAIL

RE: State Budget and Policy Requests for Fire Impacted Counties

Dear Governor Brown and Director Ghilarducci,

In October 2017, the Counties of Butte, Nevada, and Yuba were part of the larger northern California emergency that was defined by the worst firestorms the state has ever seen. We remain grateful for the support and dedication you and your offices demonstrated to our jurisdictions in response to those fire events, especially during the difficult recovery process. In addition, we appreciate the Fire Recovery Summit and Roundtable convened in December. This letter provides follow-up information requested at that meeting.

In Butte County, wind-driven fires rapidly burned over 6,000 acres, putting considerable strain on emergency response resources. Over 70 structures were destroyed, as the fires sent many residents fleeing from their homes. The October blaze was the most recent in a series of fires that struck that county in 2017, prolonging the already long and difficult recovery efforts.

In Nevada County, over 8,000 residents were evacuated from their homes. Only the determination of tenacious fire crews – aided by winds that eventually blew the fire back on itself – stopped the forward progress of the blaze at the edge of a 3,000 home community. Twenty-eight families lost their homes, while the rest of the community was shaken by what very easily could have been an exponentially more devastating event.

In Yuba County, the foothills areas faced a tremendous crisis, as the wind-whipped fires damaged almost 10,000 acres and destroyed property and vegetation. Nearly 200 structures including residential homes and outbuildings were destroyed, leaving a great number of displaced residents to seek shelter. The devastating impact resulted in four fatalities and the loss of numerous pets and livestock. Watersheds suffered long term impacts, damaged infrastructure must be repaired or replaced, and the tightknit community is still reeling. Recovery from the structural and emotional scarring effects of the fire is expected to take years.

We are appreciative of your careful approach in State expenditures — which has guided the State to a stronger financial position — but we also believe the State can only remain strong if local communities

devastated by the fires are supported in their recovery. Therefore, we are writing to ask that the 2018-19 State Budget include crucial appropriations to help our counties, constituent cities and other recently fire-ravaged local governments rebound in the most effective, comprehensive, and sustainable way possible.

Our specific requests, which include public policy changes that we strongly believe merit consideration by you and the Legislature in 2018, are attached.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We would like to meet with you and your staff soon to discuss ways that state and local government can work together to help our communities not only rebuild but also thrive moving forward.

Sincerely,

Butte County Board of Supervisors

Nevada County Board of Supervisors

Steve Lambert, Chair

Ed Scofield, Chair

Yuba County Board of Supervisors

Andy Vasquez, Chair

Attachments

cc: Governor Jerry Brown
Nancy McFadden, Chief of Staff to Governor Brown
Michael Cohen, Director of Finance
Keely Bosler, Cabinet Secretary, Governor's Office
Diane Cummins, Special Advisor, Department of Finance
State Legislative Delegations and Staff
Matt Cate, California State Association of Counties

Fiscal Fire-Related Legislative Requests

Proposal
Backfill the loss of property taxes (to the 2017 assessment level prior to fires), transient occupancy taxes, and sales taxes.
Backfill the amount that lost homes would have contributed in property taxes to the debt service of local schools and districts at their 2017 assessed values.
Backfill the loss of permit fees waived for uninsured or underinsured homeowners.
Provide funding to assist local agencies to collect, manage and submit to the State insurance reimbursements for the California Consolidated Debris Removal Program.
Waive mandated local matches related to recovery and / or resiliency. Amend Government Code 8686 (B) to include, "(15) The wildfires that occurred in the counties of Butte, Nevada, and Yuba commencing October 8, 2017, as specified in agreements between this state and the United States for federal financial assistance."
Fund watershed protection, for it is an eligible project. Amend Government Code 8686 (B) as noted above.
Fund road repair, for it is an eligible project. Amend Government Code 8686 (B) as noted above.
Prioritize SB 2 funds currently retained by the California Department of Housing and Community Development for affordable housing investments in fire-impacted counties and cities.
Designate Cap and Trade monies for environmental restoration activities and low energy / net-zero energy building subsidies in fire-impacted counties and cities.
Expedite payments for county-provided services, whenever possible using estimates (and allowing for eventual true ups) rather than exact costs to help address cash flow problems, e.g. in the areas of mental health, social services, etc.
Make bond funding available to fire impacted local governments for watershed remediation, species protection and drinking water supply projects.
Fund the development of long-term (5-10 year) comprehensive regional recovery plans that focus on fire prevention, sustainability and resiliency.
Provide funding to incentivize rebuilding that meets fire resistant standards.
Fund the work of volunteers / non-governmental organizations.
Provide funding for county emergency operations center staff training, development, and capacity building.
Provide funding for small water districts that must rebuild affected infrastructure.
Provide funding for the removal of burned trees that serve not only as a hazard in creek beds and present future fire hazards but are also a hindrance to recovery and future economic growth of fire-ravaged communities given the massive destruction visible from many roadways and other public areas.

Policy Fire-Related Legislative Requests

Proposal
Extend the currently established burn zone California Environmental Quality Act exemptions to all fire impacted counties until a specific period of time or goals is met (i.e. 7 years, until x number of units have been built, or 200% of Regional Housing Needs Assessment).
Provide administrative and legislative relief to expedite local projects typically involving State Fish & Game, Water Board, etc.
Legislate that public health emergency declaration renewals may be every 30 days rather than 14 days.
Provide increased technical assistance with disaster preparedness (including hazard mitigation), response, and recovery training.
Ease housing element regulations for fire impacted jurisdictions as currently a certified housing element is required for Community Development Block Grants.
Amend Government Code 65584.01 (G) to read, "The loss of units during a Governor declared emergency that have not been rebuilt or replaced at the time of the data request."
Through legislation, allocate funding to make Community Conservation Corps available to implement defensible space standards.
Amend state law on increasing the standards and requirements for maintaining fire prevention measures in state parks.
Amend State law so that Cal Recycle Debris Cleanup is not contingent on a local health emergency being declared.
Include removal of burned vehicles/motor homes/cargo containers/etc. in the all recovery assistance from the State.

