



RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES
OF CALIFORNIA

June 15, 2023

The Honorable Dave Min
Chair, Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 3220
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Assembly Bill 297 – SUPPORT
As Introduced January 26, 2023**

Dear Senator Min:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), we support Assembly Bill 297 (Fong), which extends the CAL FIRE's ability to offer advance payments of up to 25 percent of the total grant reward from its Wildfire Prevention Grants program to January 1, 2034. RCRC is an association of forty rural California counties, and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from each member county.

Mitigation of wildfire risk is of paramount importance to communities in the wildland-urban interface statewide. CAL FIRE's recently-updated, draft Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps indicate a 14.6 percent increase in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ) acreage in the state responsibility area (SRA) alone since 2007, most of which was shifted from land that was designated as Moderate Fire Hazard Severity fifteen years ago.¹ The maps represent a sobering view of how dramatically the state's wildfire patterns and potential impacts have been exacerbated by climate change and inattention to fuels treatment. The new maps are just another indicator of California's ever-worsening fire hazard conditions and the urgent need to expedite wildfire risk mitigation at the community and parcel level.

AB 297 would ensure that projects funded by CAL FIRE's Wildfire Prevention Grants program can continue to receive advance payments through January 1, 2034. This will help expedite wildfire mitigation programs such as fuels reduction, community

¹ *Fire Hazard Severity Zones in State Responsibility Area (November 21, 2022) (2022) California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.* Available at: <https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/media/ujtbj2zg/fhsz-in-sra-acreage-change.pdf> (Accessed: February 1, 2023).

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fuel breaks and home hardening education, particularly in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities that need funding assistance the most.

For these reasons, RCRC respectfully requests your “Aye” vote when this measure is heard before your committee. Please do not hesitate to contact me at sheaton@rcrcnet.org with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Staci Heaton", with a stylized flourish at the end.

STACI HEATON
Senior Policy Advocate

cc: The Honorable Vince Fong, Member of the California State Assembly
Members of the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee
Katharine Moore, Chief Consultant, Senate Natural Resources and Water
Committee
Todd Moffitt, Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus