



RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES
OF CALIFORNIA

March 25, 2024

The Honorable Vince Fong
Member, California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Room 4630
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Assembly Bill 1951 – SUPPORT
As Amended March 21, 2024**

Dear Assembly Member Fong:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), we are pleased to support your Assembly Bill 1951. This measure creates a statutory California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exemption for wildfire risk reduction projects. RCRC is an association of forty rural California counties and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from each of those counties.

Assembly Bill 1951 statutorily exempts from CEQA fuels reduction projects, including removal of trees and brush within 50' of either side of a roadway. AB 1951 fills gaps where such work would not qualify for existing statutory or categorical CEQA exemptions and is not covered by CalFire's Vegetation Treatment Program (VTP) Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

Mitigation of wildfire risk is of paramount importance to communities in the wildland-urban interface. Beyond the immediate benefits to those communities, benefits from fuels management accrue statewide through reducing fire intensity; mitigating emissions; and avoiding smoke exposure over broad swaths of the state. CalFire's new Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps present 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. Those trends continue to highlight the urgent need to expedite wildfire risk mitigation at the community and parcel level.

State and local agencies have used several existing statutory and categorical exemptions for roadside fuel reduction work, including the Class 1 (Existing Facility) and Class 4 (Minor Alterations to Land) categorical exemptions. These existing exemptions are helpful, but may not cover all situations or provide the durability that comes with a

1215 K Street, Suite 1650, Sacramento, CA 95814 | www.rcrcnet.org | 916.447.4806 | Fax: 916.448.3154

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statutory exemption. While CalFire's VTP EIR serves as a programmatic EIR for many types of fuel reduction activities, individual projects may need to prepare supplemental environmental documents that address activities not covered by the VTP EIR. These documents take time and money – which are both often in short supply for many of these types of projects. Importantly, the March 21 amendments clarify that AB 1951 is additive to those existing exemptions and so should be viewed as a gap filler for these types of situations than a replacement for what others have traditionally relied upon.

For the above reasons, RCRC supports your AB 1951. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at jkennedy@rcrcnet.org.

Sincerely,



JOHN KENNEDY
Senior Policy Advocate

cc: The Honorable Megan Dahle, California State Assembly
The Honorable Isaac Bryan, Chair, Assembly Natural Resources Committee
Members of the Assembly Natural Resources Committee
Paige Brokaw, Consultant, Assembly Natural Resources Committee
Casey Dunn, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus