



April 16, 2024

The Honorable Ben Allen
Chair, Senate Environmental Quality Committee
1021 O Street, Room 3230
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Senate Bill 945 (Alvarado-Gil) – SUPPORT
As Amended March 21, 2024**

Dear Senator Allen,

On behalf of the California Forest Watershed Alliance (CAFWA), we support Senate Bill 945 (Alvarado-Gil), the Wildfire Smoke and Health Outcomes Data Act. SB 945 would facilitate the much-needed development and maintenance of an integrated wildfire smoke and health data platform.

CAFWA is a unique coalition of diverse interests including organizations that represent water, environment, local government, timber, and agricultural interests all dedicated to finding solutions to California's every-growing forest health and wildfire problem. The members of CAFWA are:

- Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA);
- California Farm Bureau (CAFB);
- California Forestry Association (Calforests);
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC); and
- Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC).

Since its founding in 2014, CAFWA members have been working together to seek new ways to promote proactive, science-based, and ecologically sound forest management practices that will reduce the risk of destructive megafires. Our goal is to protect our forests, watersheds and related natural resources, as well as our local economies and communities by accelerating the pace and scale of forest restoration.

Over the past five years, the scale of climate change driven wildfire in California and the corresponding smoke from wildfire have had dramatic impacts across the state. Wildfires have burned so hot that all habitat is lost, and reforestation can prove to be challenging.



The California Forest Watershed Alliance (CAFWA) is an urban-rural coalition representing water interests, local governments, the conservation community, agriculture, and the forestry sector, created to promote the restoration and improvement of California's forested watersheds. For more information, visit www.caforestsandwatersheds.org.

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Because of the scope and size of these wildfires, the state's watersheds face increased sediment deposits, increasing the costs of water management and delivery while decreasing surface storage capacity. Rural communities closest to the fires have been either burned to the ground or shrouded in thick smoke for weeks on end. Urban communities have been spared from some of the direct impact from fire, but not from smoke which is obviously transitory and fills cities like San Francisco and Los Angeles with smoke from wildfires that burn hundreds of miles away.

The state of California has made significant investments to reduce wildfire fuels, which must be maintained even during difficult budget constraints, in order directly change the way forest health and resiliency is accomplished across the state. There is a lack of understanding about how these wildfire fuels reduction investments impact health outcomes for rural and urban communities. As discussed in a 2023 report from the California Council on Science and Technology, this missing data leaves policy holders with incomplete information about the true costs of these massive fires, and the direct human health benefits and health cost controls that come from investing in wildfire fuels mitigation.

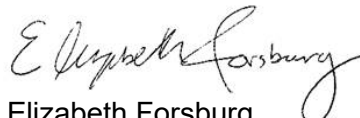
SB 945 will empower policy makers and stakeholders with data to fully understand the value of those investments, and that is vital for continuing to address how the state's strategies to restore resiliency to the state's landscapes through fuels mitigation also improves the quality of life for all Californians impacted by these smoke events.

Because of these reasons, our organizations are pleased to support SB 945 and urge your aye vote.

Sincerely,



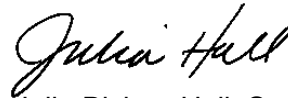
Staci Heaton, Senior Policy Advocate
Rural County Representatives of California



Elizabeth Forsburg
California Policy Director
The Nature Conservancy



Matt Dias, President
California Forestry Association



Julia Bishop Hall, Senior Legislative Advocate
Association of California Water Agencies



Peter Ansel, Governmental Affairs Advocate
California Farm Bureau Federation

cc: The Honorable Marie Alvarado-Gil, California State Senate
Members of the Senate Environmental Quality Committee