

Date: April 22, 2009

To: Members of the Assembly Natural Resources Committee

From: California Fire Safe Council
California Forestry Association
Personal Insurance Federation of California
Regional Council of Rural Counties
The Wilderness Society

Re: AB 1300 (Fletcher) – Fire protection: vegetation management
SCHEDULED FOR HEARING APRIL 27, 2009
SUPPORT

The above organizations support AB 1300 (Fletcher), a bill that would require the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to create and implement a vegetation management pilot program.

Specifically, this bill would allow the Department (CAL FIRE) to choose up to 10 communities to participate in the pilot program if they meet specified criteria. The program would provide eligible communities with incentives to pursue fire prevention and mitigation efforts by making the vegetation removed worth more to biomass facilities--thereby offsetting the cost of removing and transporting the materials.

Biomass-based energy is a renewable power source and an ecologically-sound and fire-preventive way of disposing of forest or chaparral materials removed during vegetation management projects for fire prevention. Unfortunately, the costs of transporting the materials from the project site to the biomass facility often are too high to make this a feasible option. Due to the lack of good options for materials disposal, much fuels management work is being left undone. By attempting to mitigate some of the costs of transporting these materials to the biomass plant, AB 1300 would increase vegetation management around communities and has the additional benefit of being a fuel source for renewable power.

We believe it is important to approach fire prevention on a regional basis, as well as at the individual homeowner level. A regional approach to fire prevention is necessary because wildfires are becoming hotter, larger, and more dangerous, and, as a result, more difficult to suppress.

This pilot program would help reduce the risk of wildfires in high risk communities by encouraging the creation of defensible space, not only

around homes, but around the entire community, as well as other possible fuels management-type mitigation efforts.

For the reasons stated above, we respectfully ask for your “aye” vote when this bill comes before you in committee. If you have any questions regarding our position, please do not hesitate to contact any of the coalition members.

cc: Honorable Nathan Fletcher
Dan Chia, Assembly Natural Resources
John Kennedy, Assembly Republican Caucus
Mike Proso, Legislative Secretary for the Governor