



California Forest Pest Council

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Dedicated to protecting California's forests since 1951

www.caforestpestcouncil.org

November 24, 2009

Mr. Del Walters, Director
California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection
P.O. Box 944246
Sacramento, CA 94244-2460

Re: CAL FIRE NURSERY PROGRAM BUDGET CUTS

Dear Director Walters:

At the 58th Annual Meeting of The California Forest Pest Council (CFPC) on November 18, 2009 the membership overwhelmingly approved a motion to express our concern with CAL FIRE's recent announcement to significantly reduce the state's nursery program by closing the Magalia Reforestation Center (MRC).

The CFPC was founded in 1951 and is a non-profit educational organization of over 800 public and private forest managers, foresters, silviculturists, entomologists, pathologists, biologists, and others interested in the health of California's forests. The CFPC's objective is to establish, maintain, and improve communication among individuals — managers, administrators, and researchers — who are concerned with the health of California's forests. With the current threat to forest health from catastrophic wildfire and insect and disease outbreaks it is critically important to increase, and not decrease, opportunities for successful reforestation on non industrial private forestlands. Losses from wildfire, insects and diseases will be exasperated if climate change impacts occur as predicted. It is ironic that while California's citizens are making significant "investments" in additional business costs and massive tax payer supported State programs to reduce global warming, California's policy makers increasingly discourage one of the most cost effective, long term solutions to global warming, i.e. investment in sustainable, healthy forests.

In order to maintain healthy native forests into the future, it is imperative that private, non industrial forest landowners, who own more than half of the private forest land in California, have access to the following:

1. **Availability of quality seed from a diversity of native tree species that are locally adapted and elevationally appropriate.** Considering the combinations of numerous seed zones, elevation bands and native species in California, a seed bank needs to comprise an extremely large number of individual seedlots. Although most large industrial forest landowners maintain extensive seed banks that cover seed needs in case a wildfire and/or insect outbreak damages a portion of their forest, it is impractical for small non industrial forest landowners to invest in collecting and maintaining their own individual seed bank that would be needed to respond to catastrophic loss. CAL FIRE's seed collection, processing, storage and inventory program at L.A. Moran Reforestation Center (LAMRC) in Davis attempts to serve this vitally important purpose for more than half of the total private forestlands in California (i.e. those owned by small non-industrial forestland owners). Currently LAMRC is underfunded to provide this service as there are many seedlots (i.e. combinations of specific species, seed zones and elevation bands) that are not represented in storage. Since LAMRC provides much of the seed for MRC, CFPC is very concerned that the closing of MRC will lead to further reductions of funding for LAMRC's very vital service.

2. **Availability at reasonable prices, high quality seedlings of native forest species** that are grown from locally adapted seed from good phenotypes. MRC is the last of the State managed forest nurseries and provides seedlings to small timberland owners, and other state or local governments. It is the primary source for small landowners to re-establish their forests after wildfire and/or severe insect attacks. Until CAL FIRE, in consultation with the California State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (BOF), prepares a comprehensive State Nursery Plan to address all of the forest landowner needs that are currently being met by MRC and LAMRC, the MRC facility should not be closed. "Mothballing" MRC while a Plan is being developed is not an option as the loss of infrastructure and expertise involved in temporarily "mothballing" a nursery facility like MRC will cause irrevocable problems should the state later desire to re-open the facility. A comprehensive State Nursery Plan should be fully vetted particularly with input from non industrial forest landowners and professional reforestation experts in a public forum. Among CFPC membership are some of the most experienced, knowledgeable and successful reforestation professionals in California who are willing to participate with CAL FIRE and the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection in the development of a comprehensive State Nursery Plan.
3. **Availability of professional, state-of-the-art reforestation planning advice and services.** Successful reforestation includes preparing and implementing a site specific project plan that includes good site preparation, seed, seedlings and planting practices and control of competing vegetation. These are all critical factors to successful reforestation in California's Mediterranean climate (cool wet winters and hot, dry summers). Again without a comprehensive State Nursery Plan in place, the closing of MRC will result in the loss of valuable professional advice available to small forest landowners to prepare and implement such project plans.

While we are all aware of the budget problems affecting the State and understand the difficulty in balancing limited budgets, *we are concerned about the impacts this cut will have on California's forests and forestland owners.* The CFPC suggests that you consider other changes to meet the \$3 million cut such as requesting permission to spread the cut over all program areas; not just Resource Management that has already taken a 25% General Fund cut in the past five years. We feel strongly that it is critical for the future health of California's forests that CAL FIRE not only maintains, but enhances a viable forest nursery program, including the *critical* seed bank.

Sincerely,



Bob Rynearson
Chairman, California Forest Pest Council

Cc (via email or FAX): California Board of Forestry & Fire Protection
Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
Resources Agency Secretary Mike Chrisman
State Senator Sam Aanestad
State Senator Lois Wolk
State Assemblyman Dan Logue