



**Forest Landowners
OF CALIFORNIA**

April 25, 2025

The Honorable Mike McGuire
President Pro-Tempore
California State Senate

The Honorable Robert Rivas
Speaker of the Assembly
California State Assembly

The Honorable Scott Weiner
Chair, Senate Budget Committee
California State Senate

The Honorable Jesse Gabriel
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
California State Assembly

The Honorable Ben Allen
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee 2
California State Senate

The Honorable Steve Bennett
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee 4
California State Assembly

Re: Protect Staff Funded by Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration Fund

Dear President Pro-Tempore McGuire, Speaker Rivas, Senator Weiner, Senator Allen, and Assemblymember Gabriel, and Assemblymember Bennett:

Pacific Forest Trust, the California Forestry Association (Calforests), and Forest Landowners of California write to express our concern about the proposed elimination of agency staff positions that are supported by the Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration Fund (TRFRF). This fund is supported by a 1% assessment on the sale of lumber products in California, and this assessment was created explicitly to support and stabilize the funding for the timber harvest review team agencies. Cutting staff that are supported by the Fund does not relieve pressure on the General Fund but will harm the ability to efficiently review forest management permitting including state efforts to expedite fire risk reduction projects.

Through Budget Letters BL-24-20¹ and BL-24-24², the Administration has notified the Legislature that vacant positions are slated for elimination and state agencies are directed to cut budgets by 8%, which has in turn resulted in further positions being eliminated. We are deeply concerned that this significant loss in positions will undermine the ability of the state to

¹ <https://dof.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/352/2024/07/BL-24-20-Vacancy-Savings-and-Position-Elimination.pdf>

² <https://dof.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/352/2024/08/BL-24-24.pdf>

efficiently and effectively permit forest management, which was one of the core goals of the TRFRF. Given the Administration and Legislature's shared commitment to accelerating forest management actions for fire risk reduction, forcing staff reductions that are supported by special funds like the TRFRF is unwarranted and counter-productive.

Cutting positions funded by non-General Fund sources will not provide any kind of meaningful savings to the state budget. We urge the Legislature to examine closely the open position reductions and reject any position reductions funded through non-General Fund money and any position reductions that will compromise the delivery of timber harvest review and related forest restoration and environmental protection programs that can be funded by the TRFRF.

The TRFRF is meant to support core oversight staff, improve efficiencies in permitting, drive ecological oversight, and provide ecological restoration grants to ensure California's forests are resilient to wildfire. Staff positions supported by the fund are tasked with responsibilities including: 1) timber harvest review; 2) policy and oversight functions including regulation development, and enforcement; 3) transparency and efficiencies through monitoring and online permit innovations; and 4) forest and watercourse restoration.

We understand the state is facing pressure on the General Fund, but eliminating positions funded by special taxes will not help alleviate that. Further, those paying the tax on lumber products are doing so with the understanding that those dollars will be spent to support staff, permits and forest conservation, as outlined in the legislation that created the Fund (Chapter 289, Statutes of 2012; AB 1492). We ask that these positions not be eliminated.

Warmly,

Paul Mason
V.P., Policy & Incentives
Pacific Forest Trust

Joe Smailes
President
Forest Landowners of California

Matt Dias
President/CEO
Calforests