Evolving National and State Fire Policies: Meeting Today’s Needs and Opportunities

NICK GOULETTE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WATERSHED RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTER, STEERING COMMITTEE CHAIR, NORTHERN CA PRESCRIBED FIRE COUNCIL
Federal policy developments

- USFS “life first” focus
  - Not ostensibly about increasing beneficial fire, but…
- Spatial fire management planning and qualitative risk assessment
  - Potentially game-changing in Forest Plans
  - Collaboration and public engagement will be key
- The all-lands focus
  - Programs and authorities
  - Will it endure? How will it evolve?
The “exceptional events” rule
- Applicable, but complicated and expensive

The 2018 Farm Bill
- Help make EQIP work for Rx fire in CA?
- State Rx Fire Teams?
- Other priorities in the forestry title?

Current call for EPA regulatory reforms
- Due by May 15th!
State policy developments

- Tree mortality emergency and improving partnerships
  - Burn day availability (air quality... and now fuels availability)
- MOU partnership
  - Cooperative training – CalTREX
  - Air quality monitoring and smoke management – new investments
  - Increasing dialogue and cooperation opening doors
- New internal Rx Fire Working Group at CAL FIRE
  - Training and quals, priorities, policy interpretation and direction
- New direction for exploring cooperation on permitted (non-VMP) burns
State policy development cont.

- **New Assembly Bills**
  - AB 771 (“committee” bill) – “Public purpose” definition
  - AB 1712 (Quirk) – Chesbro’s 2465 re-introduced – uniform burn plan template and website upgrade

- **Other ideas/issues circulating**
  - Indemnification from civil cost recovery when qualified (certified burner?) and for public purpose?
  - Creation of a state-backed insurance pool for private burners?
  - Rx fire funding in May budget revise/trailer bill
  - What’s missing!?