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INDIAN FEE TO TRUST REFORM

REQUESTED ACTION: Congress should fix long-standing deficiencies in the Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) fee-to-trust process as part of any legislation that addresses the U.S. Supreme Court's *Carcieri v. Salazar* decision. In doing so, the respective roles of Congress and the executive branch in trust land decisions must be better defined; clear and specific congressional trust acquisition standards established; and, a more transparent process put into place. Specific legislative reforms must include the following:

Notice and Transparency – As part of the trust application process, local governments should be given immediate notice when a partial or complete application is filed and should receive a complete description of the proposed trust land acquisition purposes. This level of disclosure should be commensurate with the public information required for planning, zoning, and permitting at the local level.

Consultation – The process should provide sufficient opportunity for public comment and consultation. Under current Part 151 fee-to-trust regulations, BIA does not provide notice to or invite comments from non-jurisdictional parties, even though nearby governments and private parties may experience major negative impacts as a result of tribal development. BIA only invites comments from the affected state and the local governments with legal jurisdiction over the land and, from those parties, only on the narrow question of tax revenue loss and regulatory jurisdictional conflicts. As a result, trust acquisition requests are reviewed under a very one-sided and incomplete record that does not provide real consultation or an adequate representation of the consequences of the decision. Consultation should be encouraged to take place before an application is submitted, and efforts should be made to include counties in the NEPA process as "cooperating agencies."

Enforceable Intergovernmental Agreements – Legislation should provide an incentive for tribes to enter into enforceable agreements with counties addressing all adverse impacts associated with a proposed tribal development project, including economic and environmental impacts. In cases in which tribes and counties have not entered into enforceable agreements, legislation must require the Secretary of the Interior to certify – prior to issuing a final decision to approve a trust land acquisition – that all anticipated off-reservation impacts have been sufficiently mitigated.

BACKGROUND: On February 24, 2009, the U.S. Supreme Court issued its landmark decision on Indian trust lands in *Carcieri v. Salazar*. The decision held that the Secretary of the Interior lacks authority to take land into trust on behalf of Indian tribes that were not "under federal jurisdiction" upon enactment of the 1934 *Indian Reorganization Act*. In the wake of this significant court decision, many tribes have urged Congress to overturn the Supreme Court's ruling. It should be noted that for the first time since the *Carcieri* decision, fee-to-trust reform legislation (S 1879) was introduced in the 114th Congress. CSAC, while strongly supportive of a number of the bill's features, has developed a package of legislative amendments that, if included in S 1879, would create a trust land system that balances the legitimate interests of both tribes and local governments.

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PAYMENTS-IN-LIEU-OF-TAXES

REQUESTED ACTION: Support a long-term reauthorization of mandatory entitlement funding for the Payments-in-Lieu-of-Taxes (PILT) program. In the absence of a long-term reauthorization, Congress should provide full funding for PILT via the fiscal year 2017 appropriations process.

BACKGROUND: PILT payments to counties help offset losses in tax revenues due to the presence of tax-exempt federal land in their jurisdictions. The funding allows counties to provide numerous public services on these lands, including education, solid waste disposal, law enforcement, search and rescue operations, health care, environmental compliance, firefighting, parks and recreation, and other important community services.

As federal land is not taxable by local governments, public lands counties have struggled historically to provide adequate services to the public in light of the annual losses in tax revenue. A fully funded PILT program, however, helps to offset the loss of these important revenues and fulfills the federal government's obligation to local communities that have large amounts of federal land.

In 2008, Congress passed the *Emergency Economic Stabilization Act*, which included a provision that provided fully authorized funding for PILT through fiscal year 2012. Congress subsequently extended mandatory PILT funding for fiscal year 2013 as part of the nation's surface transportation law (MAP-21), and for an additional year (through fiscal year 2014) as part of the FARM Bill. For fiscal years 2015 and 2016, Congress approved $442 million and $452 million, respectively, in discretionary spending for PILT.

While the latest funding extension will ensure that counties receive their annual PILT payments this summer, there is no guarantee that the program will be funded beyond the current fiscal year. Therefore, Congress should approve a multi-year renewal of this critically important program to provide public lands counties with long-term certainty. In the absence of a long-term agreement, Congress should provide full funding ($480 million) for PILT in fiscal year 2017.

Finally, it should be noted that the interaction between PILT and the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program is such that a cut in SRS could also significantly reduce the annual PILT allocation to certain counties. Therefore, if SRS is not extended this year and PILT is underfunded in fiscal year 2017, a number of California counties will experience an overall decline in their federal lands payments.

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REAUTHORIZATION OF THE SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS ACT

REQUESTED ACTION: Approve a long-term reauthorization of the *Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act* (SRS) to provide forested counties with a stable and predictable source of funding. In the absence of a long-term solution, seek approval of a short-term extension of SRS funding.

BACKGROUND: In 1908, Congress passed legislation – the *Twenty-Five Percent Fund Act* – that created a funding mechanism to offset the effects of removing National Forest System lands from economic development. The Act specified that 25 percent of all revenues generated from the multiple-use management of the National Forests be shared with counties to support public roads and schools.

The initial revenue sharing mechanism worked well from 1908 to about 1986. After 1986, however, the multiple-use management of the National Forests sharply dropped, followed by a commensurate decline in revenues. Largely as a result of county and school officials banding together, Congress approved in 2000 the *Secure Rural Schools and Self-Determination Act*. The law stabilized the share of forest receipts for counties by allowing jurisdictions to collect 25 percent of the current year's receipts or the average of the highest three years since 1986, whichever was greater.

The SRS program expired at the end of fiscal year 2013; however, Congress provided a two-year extension (through fiscal year 2015) as part of legislation (PL 114-10) that permanently corrected the Medicare program's physician payment formula (known as the "doc fix"). Such short-term extensions have helped forested counties and schools avert major budgetary crises that otherwise would have resulted in massive cuts to education programs and huge reductions in various county services. Unfortunately, the program has once again expired, and final SRS payments will soon be distributed to eligible counties.

California's forested counties – which received nearly $31 million in SRS funding last year – rely on the program to maintain local roads and other public infrastructure, operate search and rescue missions, and provide many other essential local services. If Congress does not act to reauthorize SRS, counties may soon be forced to lay off employees, cancel contracts, and reduce services.

Therefore, CSAC urges lawmakers to work in a bipartisan manner to reauthorize SRS, either through a long-term extension of program funding or by implementing responsible forest management reforms. In the absence of a long-term solution, Congress should provide a short-term extension of funding.

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STATE CRIMINAL ALIEN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

REQUESTED ACTION: Congress should significantly increase funding for the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP), as well as address several key SCAAP-related issues, which are identified below.

BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR INCREASED FUNDING: The SCAAP program, first authorized by the *Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986* and subsequently modified by the *1994 Crime Act*, provides partial reimbursement to States and local governments for costs associated with incarcerating undocumented criminals. Specifically, SCAAP provides federal payments to jurisdictions that incurred correctional officer salary costs for housing undocumented individuals who have at least one felony or two misdemeanor convictions for violations of State or local law and were incarcerated for at least four consecutive days during the reporting period.

Since 2000, the SCAAP program's funding has been reduced by roughly 70 percent - not accounting for inflation - while state and local detention costs, as well as the number of jurisdictions applying for the program, have significantly increased. All told, the State of California and its counties are estimated to incur over $1 billion in SCAAP-eligible expenses annually; nevertheless, the total ***nationwide*** appropriation for SCAAP is only $210 million.

The federal government's failure to protect the nation's borders places an enormous, ongoing financial burden on California's counties. It is therefore the responsibility of Congress to provide adequate reimbursement to jurisdictions for the growing costs of incarcerating undocumented criminals.

PROGRAM REAUTHORIZATION: Although Congress has continued to provide funding for SCAAP, the program technically expired in fiscal year 2011. CSAC supports a long-term reauthorization of SCAAP at increased funding levels as embodied in pending Senate legislation (S 2395).

REIMBURSEMENT CRITERIA CHANGE: Current law limits SCAAP reimbursement to those cases in which an undocumented inmate is *convicted* of a felony or two or more misdemeanors. Congress should approve legislation that would reimburse jurisdictions for the costs of detaining inmates who are *charged with* such crimes. This commonsense change, which is included in S 2395, would correct a long-standing flaw in federal statute that disadvantages county governments, which incur considerable costs housing pretrial offenders who may not ultimately be convicted of the crimes for which they are charged.

"UNKNOWN" INMATES: "Unknown" inmates are classified as such because they have not had prior contact with federal immigration authorities and therefore are not included in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) database. Under current law, counties only receive partial reimbursement credit for this category of inmates. Because counties should not be penalized for the federal government's inability to verify the status of undocumented prisoners, Congress should require the Department of Justice (DOJ) to *fully* compensate jurisdictions for the costs of incarcerating unknown inmates, as proposed in S 2395.

DOJ REPROGRAMMING AUTHORITY: During the last several fiscal years, DOJ has utilized statutory discretion to transfer 10 percent of SCAAP funds – the maximum amount allowable – to other justice activities. This reprogramming, which has slashed the amount of SCAAP funds available to jurisdictions by tens of millions of dollars, should be eliminated or significantly limited.

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VICTIMS OF CRIME ACT FUNDING

REQUESTED ACTION: Maintain or increase the funding available for distribution through the *Victims of Crime Act* (VOCA) fund as part of the fiscal year 2017 budget.

BACKGROUND: The 1984 *Victims of Crime Act* established a special fund that provides federal support for state and local programs that assist victims of crime. The VOCA Fund is derived entirely from fines and penalties paid by offenders at the federal level, not taxpayer revenue, and is largely distributed to the states through a formula grant.

Local agencies throughout the nation depend on VOCA assistance grants to serve over 3.8 million crime victims each year. In California, VOCA grants provide funding for a number of victim services programs, including; crisis intervention; domestic violence shelters; services for victims of human trafficking; counseling; transportation; services for elder victims and victims with disabilities; translation services; needs assessments; and, other important support services that help victims deal with the trauma and aftermath of a crime.

When the VOCA fund was first authorized in 1984, a cap was placed on how much could be deposited into the fund for the first eight years. The cap was lifted in 1993, which allowed for the deposit of all criminal fines, special assessments, and forfeited bail bonds to support crime victim program activities. In response to large fluctuations in deposits, Congress in 2000 placed a cap on the amount of funds available for distribution. These annual caps were intended to maintain the fund as a stable source of support for future victim services. From 2000 to 2014, the amount of the annual cap varied from $500 million to $745 million. In fiscal year 2015, however, the cap was raised to $2.36 billion – a massive 217 percent increase. Congress further raised the cap in fiscal year 2016, to $3.04 billion.

With regard to fiscal year 2017, the Obama administration's budget request would lower the VOCA cap to $2 billion. In addition, the administration's budget would designate $481 million for various programs that are *not* authorized under the VOCA statute and estimates $85 million for Office of Justice Programs management and administrative costs, effectively leaving only $1.4 billion for VOCA programs.

Finally, legislation pending in the Senate (S 1495) would require that the amount made available from the VOCA fund be no less than the average amount deposited into the fund over the previous three fiscal years. The legislation, entitled the *Fairness for Crime Victims Act of 2015*, was approved by the Budget Committee and is awaiting potential floor action.

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WATER RESOURCES

REQUESTED ACTION:

- Support a balanced solution to California's water crisis, including investments in key programs and projects designed to increase water supplies.
- Support amending Section 404 of the *Clean Water Act* (CWA) to provide a narrow permitting exemption for maintenance removal of sediment, debris, and vegetation from flood control channels and basins.
- Support provisions of the *Federal Water Quality Protection Act* (S 1140) that would require the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to revise the definition of the term "Waters of the U.S." (WOTUS).

BACKGROUND: California's historic drought necessitates action at all levels of government, including prudent long-term planning and investment in key water infrastructure projects. At the federal level, projects to store additional water in reservoirs and create new water through recycling and desalination should be a top priority for any potential drought-relief legislation.

Programs such as the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, WaterSMART grants, Title XVI Water Reclamation and Reuse grants, and a newly proposed Reclamation Infrastructure Financing and Innovation Act (RIFIA) are all potential sources of funding for important water supply projects.

With regard to the CWA, Section 404 of the Act exempts certain activities from the law's permitting requirements, including activities performed "for the purpose of maintenance of currently serviceable structures." The Corps, however, has interpreted that the exemption does *not* apply to routine maintenance removal of accumulated sediment, debris, and vegetation from flood protection facilities and basins. This narrow interpretation of the law increases the Corps' workload, causing a significant backlog in permit processing that thwarts local agencies' efforts to perform their maintenance in a timely and responsive manner.

It should be noted that failure to perform essential maintenance activities results in undue liability on local flood protection agencies and reduces available water storage (exacerbating drought conditions). Further, the processing time – normally one to three years – and compensatory mitigation required to obtain Section 404 permits have become an impediment for local entities to provide critical flood protection.

Finally, CSAC supports the *Federal Water Quality Protection Act* (S 1140), which would require EPA and the Corps to issue a revised WOTUS rule. Under the legislation, the agencies would need to adhere to certain key principles and take specified actions in the interest of more clearly defining CWA jurisdiction. It should be noted that although the Obama administration's final WOTUS rule – which was released on June 29th of last year – was much improved over earlier iterations of the regulation, the final rule still lacks explicit clarity and therefore needs to be further amended in order to avoid misinterpretation and continued legal challenges.

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CHILD WELFARE FINANCING REFORM

REQUESTED ACTION: Support congressional and administrative proposals to provide federal funding to keep at-risk children with their families or relatives instead of being placed in foster care.

BACKGROUND: Most federal child welfare funding is available to help pay for the costs of children once they are placed in foster care. In California, the federal government matches those Title IV-E costs dollar-for-dollar as an entitlement program. While there are some federal programs targeted at serving families to prevent such placements, funding for prevention is far less and is mainly discretionary in nature.

California's counties have a tremendous financial and policy stake in this area, given that they rely on Title IV-E funds to support the majority of children in the foster care system. Moreover, California's counties finance the entire non-federal share of foster care with local funds. California's counties are responsible for protecting abused, neglected, and at-risk children, and are committed to finding ways to keep children with their families when it is safe and in the best interest of the child.

A bipartisan bill to reform child welfare is being drafted by Senate Finance Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Ranking Minority Ron Wyden (D-OR). Entitled the *Family First Act*, the measure would provide a long-sought federal financial match for services provided to families to maintain the child in the home and to provide post-permanency services for those children who have left foster care. The draft bill also includes a provision to reduce the use of congregate care/group homes similar to the law (AB 403) that was enacted in California last year. CSAC recognizes the intent of the State law and the Hatch/Wyden proposal and is aware of the challenges associated with implementing the policies in a timely fashion, especially since some youth require care in an intensive congregate care setting, including probation youth who may need supervision for a variety of reasons.

The Obama administration's fiscal year 2017 budget proposes new child welfare initiatives designed to improve permanency services so children are less likely to need foster care placements. Specifically, the administration has requested $616 million over 10 years in federal matching funds for permanency and post-permanency services included as part of a child's case plan. Additionally, for the third year in a row, the administration is requesting funding to support a demonstration project with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and child welfare agencies to address the over-prescription of psychotropic medications to children in foster care. The budget proposal includes $250 million in mandatory funding over five years for child welfare, paired with $500 million over five years in new performance-based incentive funds to better track and lessen psychotropic drug use.

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AFFORDABLE CARE ACT EXCISE TAX

REQUESTED ACTION: Closely consult with California counties regarding proposals to reform the *Affordable Care Act's* (ACA) 40 percent excise tax on higher cost health plans.

BACKGROUND: The ACA imposes a 40 percent excise tax on the costs of high-value health plans. The current statutory thresholds are $10,200 for individuals and $27,500 for families. The excise tax is based on the total cost of the employer and employee contribution to the plan, as well as any savings account arrangements, such as health reimbursement arrangements and flexible spending accounts.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has released Notices of Proposed Rulemaking regarding the application and administration of this tax, and CSAC has submitted comments detailing California county concerns, including the possible benefit reductions for employees, the disparity of health care costs in different geographic regions and the pass-down of the cost associated with the tax. The potential fiscal implications of this provision would likely be very significant for public employers in the state.

The tax on amounts exceeding the thresholds has attracted bipartisan and bicameral opposition. Late last year, Congress passed a provision in the *Consolidated Appropriations Act* (PL 114-113) that delays by two years – to 2020 – the implementation of the tax.

A House bill repealing the tax entirely, entitled the *Middle Class Health Benefits Tax Repeal Act of 2015* (HR 2050, Representative Joe Courtney (D-CT), has 185 cosponsors, including 37 members from California. In the upper chamber, Senators Dean Heller (R-NV) and Martin Heinrich (D-NM) introduced a companion measure (S 2045) to HR 2050. Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) has introduced a similar bill (S 2075), which is co-sponsored by Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA).

For its part, the White House opposes the excise tax repeal measures. However, the Obama administration's fiscal year 2017 budget proposes a modification of the tax, which would lessen the impact on some employers. Specifically, the budget proposes to account for regional differences in the price of plans by allowing employers to offer more generous health benefits in states at the "gold" level coverage without being subject to the tax. Gold-level plans are the second-most generous plans available on the health exchanges.

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TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES REAUTHORIZATION

REQUESTED ACTION: Support a reauthorization of the Temporary Assistance Program for Needy Families (TANF) that restores state and local flexibility and maintains the focus on work activities.

BACKGROUND: The TANF program has operated on short-term extensions since September 30, 2010. Last summer, the House Ways and Means Committee released a discussion draft, with committee leaders signaling their intent to further refine the draft and eventually mark it up in committee. While a number of hearings were conducted on TANF and poverty, no further legislative action occurred after the draft bill was circulated.

Among other provisions, the draft measure would make several positive modifications to the types and duration of activities that would qualify as work participation under TANF. At the same time, the draft would make it more difficult for states to meet federal work participation mandates by eliminating the ability to count as part of their TANF efforts certain programs, including California's WINS benefit program. The WINS program provides a small CalWORKS grant to persons on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (CalFresh) in order to help the state meet federal work requirements.

Other positive changes in the draft bill include doubling the length of allowable time in vocational education for CalWORKS participants from 12 to 24 months, and re-directing federal funding to subsidized employment programs, which have been successful in many California counties.

Ways and Means Committee staff are currently working with the members of the committee to determine whether there will be further discussion and/or possible action on TANF this year. Across Capitol Hill, the Finance Committee will likely wait until the House acts before it considers a reauthorization bill.

With regard to the Obama administration's fiscal year 2017 budget, the proposal includes a number of initiatives designed to strengthen the TANF program, including a request to increase - for the first time since the law's enactment - family assistance grants by $8 billion over a five-year period. The current block grant is funded at $16.5 billion. Additionally, the administration has again proposed to re-target existing TANF funds and create a Pathways to Jobs initiative of $473 million to support state and county efforts to provide work opportunities to low-income families through subsidized employment.

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REMOTE SALES TAX LEGISLATION

REQUESTED ACTION: Congress should approve legislation – such as the *Marketplace Fairness Act* (S 698) or the *Remote Transaction Parity Act* (HR 2775) – that would provide states with the authority to require remote sellers to collect and remit sales and use taxes.

BACKGROUND: The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1992 (*Quill Corp. v. North Dakota*) that online retailers were exempt from collecting sales taxes in states where they have no physical presence, or nexus, because requiring these companies to comply with various sales tax rules would place an undue burden on interstate commerce. In its decision, the Court also noted that Congress has the ultimate power to resolve the question surrounding the physical presence standard and determine whether undue burdens on interstate commerce have been eliminated.

While the Court did release out-of-state remote sellers from the burden of collecting sales and use taxes on purchases, it did not exempt the consumer. What most buyers don't realize is that the tax burden actually falls to them. So, when a purchase is made from an out-of-state remote seller, the consumer is still responsible for calculating the use tax and remitting the payment to the relevant jurisdiction(s).

It should be noted that consumer compliance with the aforementioned requirements is extremely low – less than one percent. Consequently, millions of purchases each day are not properly taxed, resulting in the loss of billions of dollars in uncollected state and local sales tax revenue every year. This long-term erosion of the sales tax base threatens state and county funding obligations such as education, transportation, and public safety.

The *Marketplace Fairness Act* (MFA) and the *Remote Transaction Parity Act* (RTPA) would both give states the ability to collect sales taxes from out-of-state Internet retailers, with the tax based on the final *destination* of the purchase. RTPA also includes significant audit protections for small businesses that are not included in MFA. Another key difference is that RTPA would exempt more small businesses from tax collection requirements in the first few years after enactment. It also would require states to provide remote sellers with the software needed to collect and remit the taxes owed.

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PROPERTY ASSESSED CLEAN ENERGY PROGRAM

REQUESTED ACTION: Urge the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) to withdraw its objections to residential Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) programs. Support legislation that would prevent federal housing regulators from adopting policies that contravene established state and local PACE laws.

BACKGROUND: PACE is a cost-effective program that enables local governments to finance renewable energy and energy-efficiency projects on privately owned residential and commercial property. Under PACE, property owners can elect to have up to 100 percent of the cost of clean energy improvements added to their property tax bill as an assessment or special tax. The assessment is secured by a lien on the property and is not an obligation of the individual property owner. Rather, the assessment remains with the property until it is paid. It should be noted that participation in these programs is purely voluntary.

PACE programs have been proven to generate tremendous economic benefits without federal tax subsidies, mandates, or expansion of any federal programs. In fact, $10 million in private capital market spending, on average, creates 150 new jobs, generates $25 million in gross economic output, and produces $2.5 million in combined federal, state, and local tax revenue.

Despite the program's clear environmental and economic benefits, FHFA – which oversees Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac – issued orders in 2010 that effectively shut down residential PACE programs across the country. In halting implementation of PACE, FHFA expressed a series of concerns with the program. In the Agency's view, first liens established by PACE assessments pose risk management challenges for existing mortgage lenders.

In an effort to address FHFA's concerns, the state of California in 2014 established a loan loss reserve fund that can be drawn on to ensure that PACE assessments are paid off in the event of a mortgage default. PACE programs enrolling in the reserve fund are also required to meet basic structural criteria, comply with certain underwriting standards, and pay an annual premium. While these thoughtful reforms have effectively minimized the financial risk to Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, FHFA continues to have concerns.

In a positive development, the Obama administration last year unveiled a proposal to expand financing options for residential PACE programs. The Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Federal Housing Administration (FHA) – which provides mortgage insurance for more than 7.6 million households nationwide – will issue guidance this year allowing borrowers to use FHA financing for properties with existing PACE liens. These new guidelines could set the stage for FHFA to make a similar move.

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TREE MORTALITY CRISIS

REQUESTED ACTION: Provide federal assistance through the Department of Agriculture (USDA) to help California address its tree mortality crisis.

BACKGROUND: Several consecutive years of drought in California has precipitated a large outbreak of insects that have attacked and killed large areas of conifer and hardwood trees in the Central and Southern Sierra Nevada Mountains, as well as along the coastal range in both Northern and Southern California. According to estimates from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), over 22 million trees are dead as a result of the outbreak and tens of millions more are likely to die by the end of 2016. This die-off is of such scale that it worsens wildfire risk across large regions of the state and presents life-safety risks from falling trees in many of our forested communities.

In October 2015, Governor Brown proclaimed a state of emergency and articulated the need to protect life and property by mitigating the risk from falling trees and increased fire hazard by removing trees in the vicinity of critical infrastructure. In addition, the governor has requested assistance from the federal government and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to help California address "the worst epidemic of tree mortality in modern history." Specifically, the governor has requested USDA to: provide Farm Bill matching funds to help combat insect and disease in designated areas; deploy more technical assistance and program support for the Natural Resources Conservation Service to assist private landowners overwhelmed by the number of dead and dying trees on their property; redirect USFS funding for the removal of trees on federal lands adjacent to communities; and, expedite federal approvals of emergency actions on or nearby federal lands.

The Brown administration subsequently established a special Tree Mortality Task Force to address this issue. Appointed members of the task force include all relevant state and federal regulatory agencies, utilities, local government representatives – including CSAC and the Rural County Representatives of California – and environmental stakeholders. The task force has been charged with mitigating health and safety impacts from dead and dying trees, coordinating emergency protective actions, and monitoring ongoing events. The task force meets monthly and has formed eight subgroups to address the objectives identified by the governor's State of Emergency Proclamation.

In addition, the governor has proposed in his fiscal year 2016-2017 budget a total of $150 million through his cap and trade allocation for carbon sequestration to support forest health programs. Funds would be designated for programs that reduce greenhouse gas emissions through fuels reduction, reforestation projects, pest and diseased tree removal, and long-term protection of forested lands.

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