

Working Draft

# Joint Strategy for Sustainable Recreation

*August 15, 2022*



## **SUSTAINABLE RECREATION CALREC Vision KEY WORKING GROUP**





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## STRENGTHEN SUSTAINABLE OUTDOOR RECREATION IN CALIFORNIA

California’s existing recreational infrastructure needs to be retooled and new facilities designed such that resiliency and adaptation to climate change are core functions, while still providing a positive user experience that connects recreational users with the natural world. Through education and awareness, recreational users will become stewards who contribute to and protect the natural resources located across California’s public lands and waters. Wildfire prevention and response, as well as forest health efforts, must anticipate the safety, hazards, and infrastructure and programming needs of our recreation communities, and simultaneously recognize our communities’ strengths. By ensuring healthy lands and waters, recreational users feel connected to nature in places and communities that are socially, economically, and environmentally rich and resilient.

Goal 1: California and its federal partners will promote wildfire resilience and healthy ecosystems by developing and maintaining a sustainable outdoor recreation system that connects recreational users to the benefits and the wonders of the natural world throughout the state.

### Key Actions

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#### *Communication & Visitor Management*

- 1.1 **Maintain Public Access as the Climate Changes:** Develop climate-smart best practices for programs that enhance public access to recreation on public lands and waters. Best practices may include implementing resilience measures, communicating in real time with visitors about current conditions, and transitioning to adaptive management. Recreation sites may require increased capacity to anticipate and respond to shifting seasonal recreation patterns. Land managers will monitor use, mitigate over-use in high use areas, and provide transportation alternatives to reduce congestion.
- 1.2 **Develop Educational Materials Targeted at Human Causes of Ignition:** Create and distribute educational materials in multiple languages targeted at human causes of ignition, such as fireworks, smoking, shooting, campfires, debris burning, and dragging chains.
- 1.3 **Provide Communications Staffing and Information During Wildfires:** Provide staffing and information during wildfires to help guide visitor use patterns. Partner with Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), chambers of commerce, recreation and stewardship groups, and local media to communicate in multiple languages with residents and visitors regarding closures, restrictions, and open facilities.
- 1.4 **Protect Recreational Facilities During Active Fires:** Coordinate with CalFire and federal land managers to facilitate fire response on public lands to protect vital recreation assets during fires.



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- 1.5 **Develop Post-Fire Recreation Education Materials:** Create and distribute educational materials in multiple languages on how to recreate in areas that have been burned and are under active restoration.

*Partnerships*

- 1.6 **Incorporate Sustainable Outdoor Recreation into the Regional Forest Fire Capacity (RFFC) Program:** Incorporate recreation into the RFFC Program, Regional Forums, and Regional Priority Plans being developed by RFFC Program Regional Block Grantees.
- 1.7 **Engage Recreation Groups to Identify Priority Assets:** Engage recreation groups in forest health and wildfire planning to identify key recreational infrastructure priorities and to plan for protecting those priority assets during wildfires.
- 1.8 **Strengthen Partnerships between Resource Conservation Districts and Land Managers:** Resource Conservation Districts will enter into partnerships with recreation land managers to support permitting for recreational facilities and trails, and grazing to reduce fire fuels around communities (including fencing, water sources, etc.).

*Recreation Infrastructure*

- 1.9 **Implement Multi-Benefit Projects in or Adjacent to the Wildland Urban Interface:** Identify projects in or adjacent to Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas that have wildfire prevention and recreation benefits, such as trails and campgrounds that can be used during fires as personnel and equipment staging areas. Create demonstration and interpretive areas where people can recreate and learn about the benefits of prescribed fire and vegetation management.
- 1.10 **Design Recreation Infrastructure to Adapt to Climate Change and Wildfire Vulnerabilities:** Incorporate climate change and wildfire risk considerations when designing, constructing, maintaining, and renovating recreation facilities. Where needed, relocate facilities away from expanded floodplains, landslide areas, avalanche paths, or high-risk fire areas. Install signage in multiple languages identifying emergency egress and shelter-in-place protocols, and develop additional access and evacuation points. During planning, consider that the use seasons for recreational infrastructure will likely shift over time due to the effects of climate change. Design trails, bridges, and recreation infrastructure to be fire resistant, and resilient to other disasters including floods and debris flows. Where feasible, consider nature-based solutions that improve infrastructure resilience and address climate change.
- 1.11 **Develop Permanent Firebreaks Adjacent to Recreational Trails:** Strategically develop permanent firebreaks along or adjacent to recreational trails that cut across jurisdictional boundaries to achieve multiple wildfire prevention and response benefits. Where there are existing recreational trails, locate firebreaks near trails to provide access for prescribed fires



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and fire suppression, as trails provide an ideal fire line for controlled burns and smaller scale fires.

- 1.12 **Use GIS Data to Prioritize Wildfire Prevention Treatments in Recreational Areas:** Assess recreation asset vulnerability through the use of GIS data, and develop priorities for treatment around existing infrastructure based on susceptibility to the potential impact of wildfire. In particular, focus prioritization of treatments adjacent to campgrounds, trails, and trailheads, where fire may be more likely to start or evacuation may be more complex. Where feasible, use felled timber for fencing and barriers, and remove hazardous trees and vegetation to improve trail user experience and enhance safety.
- 1.13 **Conduct Wildfire Prevention in the Wildland Urban Interface:** Prioritize wildfire prevention projects in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) and adjacent recreation areas where wildfires are more prevalent. Specifically, to protect recreation infrastructure and facilities vulnerable to wildfire damage, conduct thinning, prescribed burns, and vegetation clearing around recreational structures to make them more resilient to wildfire and to create defensible space for fire suppression. Where appropriate, create interpretive opportunities in recreational areas to demonstrate the benefits of wildfire prevention.



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## INSPIRE INCLUSION AND ACCESS FOR ALL THROUGHOUT CALIFORNIA

California and its partners must build upon and expand an inclusionary culture of sustainable outdoor recreation, promoting equitable access across California’s public lands and waters that reflects the diversity of all peoples and the legacy of our Native American history, culture, and use. Inspired by the California Natural Resources Agency’s Outdoors for All initiative, our work will strive to address long-standing environmental, social and economic inequities in our society that have resulted in physical and societal barriers to outdoor recreation access for underserved and underrepresented residents. Improvements to outdoor recreation access, including both programming and infrastructure, will be co-created with communities, forest health, and wildfire response partners, and designed around community values to be resilient to increasingly frequent wildfires and natural disasters. Ensuring equitable access will require a high level of engagement with underserved and underrepresented populations to prioritize and implement integrated recreation access and wildfire prevention, resiliency, and recovery actions that provide respite for these communities year-round and especially during times of disaster.

Goal 2: California and its partners will protect and enhance recreation opportunities to achieve inclusive and equitable access for all Californians.

### Key Actions

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#### Partnerships

- 2.1 **Partner with Tribes to Protect Ecological and Cultural Assets and Maintain Access to Recreation Lands and Waters:** Facilitate partnerships between California Native American tribes and land managers to protect ecological and cultural resources, sacred sites, and tribal rights to access lands and waters for cultural, stewardship, subsistence, and ceremonial purposes. Deepen engagement with tribes to ensure that tribal needs are met in conserved areas, including facilities, operations and maintenance, physical and language access, safety, programming, and transportation options to sites.
- 2.2 **Partner with Underserved and Underrepresented Communities:** Federal, state, and local agencies will partner with community-based organizations to connect public lands and waters with historically underrepresented communities and co-create solutions that achieve increased access for those communities. Ensure that the needs of underserved and underrepresented communities are met in conserved areas, considering infrastructure, workforce, physical and language access, safety, programming, and transportation options to recreation sites.

#### Recreation Infrastructure

- 2.3 **Reopen Individual Recreation Sites As Soon As Possible After Wildfire:** Identify and seek to implement the reopening of recreation sites and recreation-based businesses as soon as it is



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safe to do so. This may involve integrating outdoor recreation infrastructure evaluations into Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) Team, Watershed Emergency Response Team (WERT), and Burned Area Rehabilitation Program (BAR) protocols, establishing agreements and plans for volunteer groups to be involved with restoration, communicating with the public about accessible and closed sites, and including recreation in Community Emergency Response Action Plans. Engage with tourism, visitor, and community groups to ensure that recreation destinations begin recovery more rapidly.

- 2.4 **Engage and Coordinate with Local Communities During Fire Recovery:** After fires, coordinate and engage with local communities on wildfire recovery plans and the restoration activities of state and federal government and local land management agencies. Leverage the strengths of local communities to assist agencies during wildfire recovery. Within burned areas, prioritize forest health, hazard tree and vegetation removal near trails, slope stabilization around trails, and to replace park and recreation facilities lost in wildfires. Utilize local workers, volunteers, California Conservation Corps, or Tribal Conservation Corps to assist in post-fire restoration of recreational facilities.



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## PROVIDE DIVERSITY OF RECREATION EXPERIENCES

California and its partners will develop, maintain, and support outdoor recreation opportunities across California’s lands and waters that welcome all people and provide a diversity of recreational pursuits. By investing in a diversity of recreational opportunities, California will be better prepared to address the direct and indirect impacts to recreation resulting from climate change and the wildfire crisis, including shifting use patterns, post-disaster restoration efforts, and other effects. Success is demonstrated by providing new and improved outdoor recreation opportunities that match the desires of communities balanced with natural resource management and disaster resilience.

Goal 3: California and its partners will provide a diversity of recreation experiences, reimagine our existing infrastructure, and provide for outdoor recreation opportunities that match the desires of communities in balance with the needs of natural resource management and disaster resilience.

### Key Actions

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#### *Communication & Visitor Management*

- 3.1 **Create an Online Recreational Opportunities Resource:** Create a one-stop online resource for visitors to research local, regional, and state recreation opportunities based on interest and need. The online resource will have information on how to prepare for visits to recreational areas, and will also serve as a communication tool, in multiple language, to identify recreational facilities that are closed due to natural disasters and/or emergencies.
- 3.2 **Manage Recreation Areas During Wildfires and Other Disasters:** To address the impacts of wildfire on recreation resources and users, agencies will develop systems to identify and communicate substitute locations to manage recreational use and user overflow during wildfire events, improve reservation flexibility and transfer options, develop communication plans and partnerships to manage visitor expectations, and rotate recreation sites to minimize degradation in high use areas.
- 3.3 **Add Public Education to Forest Health Projects:** Forest health projects will include a component to educate the public about the project’s purpose and techniques. Communication may involve trail hosts or onsite and online signage in multiple languages to describe treatment areas, treatment types, before and after photographs, and suggest alternative recreation sites to be used during ongoing restoration work. The education will serve to promote public safety, minimize impacts to recreational user groups, and develop public support for the value of forest health projects.
- 3.4 **Create a Toolkit of Destination Guides and Marketing Materials to Manage Visitation After a Wildfire:** Land management agencies will partner with DMOs and other visitor serving



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entities to create destination guides and marketing materials in multiple languages to encourage visitors to return to communities when it is safe to do so. Marketing materials may include media toolkits, maps depicting open and closed areas, and information guides to help users engage in responsible recreation.



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### PROMOTE THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF ALL CALIFORNIANS

California and its partners are committed to providing outdoor recreation opportunities that nurture the mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional health and safety of all people while protecting our natural resources. Sustainable outdoor recreation provides a sense of community for all Californians and is an essential component of our overall well-being. To keep our residents and visitors safe, we will prioritize the development of recreational opportunities that can be enjoyed when existing recreational facilities are closed or inaccessible due to wildfire, smoke impacts, or other natural disasters. Recreational user safety is a priority, and the development of safe places to recreate, that have multiple ingress/egress points in the event of a disaster, is vitally important in ensuring safe access for all.

Goal 4: California and its partners will ensure that recreational opportunities that promote the health and well-being of all peoples are available and accessible to all communities, especially during wildfires or other disasters.

#### Key Actions

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##### *Communication & Visitor Management*

- 4.1 **Develop Smoke Advisory Communication:** Develop multi-language smoke advisory notices and education for residents and visitors in existing communication toolkits, such as the California Smoke Spotter application (app). In partnership with county public health agencies, launch community campaigns to improve awareness of the Smoke Spotter app and other resources, especially among those most likely to be exposed to smoke, such as outdoor recreation workers. Work with the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA) to develop guidelines and regulations for employees and employers when there is smoke in an area. Partner with healthcare providers and community health workers to educate patients on the health impacts of smoke and what patients can do to reduce their exposure. Improve existing and develop new smoke prediction models and tools to help workers and visitors plan in advance to minimize their smoke exposure. When air quality is unhealthy, advise users of preventative measures, including sheltering in place, masking effectively, and utilizing community clean air shelters.
- 4.2 **Enhance Public Information Sources about Current Conditions During Fire Events:** To educate the public during fire events, develop online information, including remote cameras, to convey conditions about wildfires, especially near visitor destinations. Provide information in multiple languages on fire location, smoke, visibility, and public lands that are accessible, including alternative recreation options to accommodate overflow from closed areas.
- 4.3 **Train First Responders, Community Planners, and Outdoor Recreation Staff in Mental Health First Aid:** Create a state program to train all first responders, community planners, and



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recreation field staff in mental health first aid to support communities during and after fires and other natural disasters.

### Partnerships

- 4.4 **Expand Outdoor Prescription Programs:** Through partnerships among healthcare networks, county public health agencies, community organizations, and public land managers, promote preventative healthcare through outdoor recreation prescriptions. Program elements may include trail and activity recommendations, free transportation to recreation areas, guided excursions and activities, responsible recreation education, and information in multiple languages at clinics and trailheads that highlight the health benefits of outdoor recreation.
- 4.5 **Build Partnerships between the Health and Outdoor Recreation Sectors:** Pursue the environmental elements of the *Health in All Policies* approaches of the California Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention by incentivizing the creation and maintenance of partnerships between public health entities and the outdoor recreation sector. Partnerships will identify and seek to implement projects with co-benefits for health and outdoor recreation, such as community-based planning of desirable park features or research to support the beneficial health impacts of local outdoor recreation projects. Partnerships will share best practices and lessons learned with public health and outdoor recreation professional forums.

### Recreation Infrastructure

- 4.6 **Increase Opportunities for Indoor Recreation:** Develop indoor recreation spaces that can support recreation when smoke and wildfire affect the safety of outdoor recreation. These spaces can also be used as Local Assistance Centers or shelters during emergencies. For each community, consider developing programs, building new or renovating existing facilities, allowing multiple uses, and supporting recreation and event programming managed by government agencies, nonprofits, and local community groups.



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## SUPPORT ECONOMIES THAT ENHANCE SUSTAINABLE RECREATION

Communities and their sustainable outdoor recreation economies enhance the physical, social and economic vitality of California, and by nature of their dependence on public lands and waters, often play a critical role ensuring that public lands and waters are maintained and resilient to climate change and wildfires. These communities are well positioned to ensure safe, equitable and inclusive access to recreation opportunities. Direct recreation spending, jobs, and tourism revenue contribute prominently to these forest and gateway communities. As has been increasingly demonstrated during the past decade, climate change and massive wildfires are having a devastating impact on our communities and their recreation economies. More can and should be done to ensure that our recreation-based communities impacted by wildfires and other natural disasters can respond, rebuild and restore their communities to ensure community resilience, economic vitality, and living wage jobs.

Goal 5: Support robust and diversified economies that will enhance sustainable recreation while investing in the resilience necessary to withstand the impact of climate change, wildfires, and other disasters.

### Key Actions

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#### *Communication & Visitor Management*

- 5.1 **Develop Integrated Communications and Messaging Systems:** Develop integrated communications and messaging systems to ensure that information is consistent among federal, state, regional, and local organizations (inclusive of government, community-based organizations, and businesses). Establish methods for communicating information to affected communities regarding how businesses will operate and communicate during planned power outages and fire events to reduce disruptions in local services. Develop messaging and communication methods tailored to specific audiences including visitors, tourists, residents, and speakers of languages other than English. Utilize existing community groups and DMOs to develop specific educational, stewardship, and safety information, and where available, leverage the communication ability of local organizations that have existing communications channels for disseminating information to local communities, including social media campaigns.
- 5.2 **Create Post-Fire Marketing Plans:** Develop and support post-fire marketing plans to facilitate image recovery and the return of visitors to local communities affected by wildfire and other disasters.

#### *Partnerships & Planning*

- 5.3 **Utilize Go-Biz to Assist in Building Recreation-based Economies:** Incorporate Go-Biz's work on the Office of Planning and Research Community Economic Resilience Fund (CERF), the Department of Conservation's (DOC) RFFC Program, and CalRec Vision to help communities
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transition to recreation-based economies. Develop permanent workforces for resource protection, conservation, and sustainable outdoor recreation.

- 5.4 **Increase Outreach to Community Groups:** Create communication systems between public land managers and community organizations in each RFFC Program region to inform community groups about wildfire prevention, forest health projects, ongoing wildfire response, and outdoor recreation closures and opportunities before, during, and after a wildfire. Community organizations, such as schools, DMOs, chambers of commerce, and cultural groups, will serve as liaisons to their specific audiences, adding context and interpretation to basic wildfire and planning information. After a wildfire, engage with community organizations to envision the recovery and re-establishment of burned areas.
- 5.5 **Engage Communities Regarding Emergency Response and Land Management Planning:** Engage Chambers of Commerce, DMOs, and City and Town Councils in recreation-based economies with land managers in emergency response planning and the creation of Community Wildfire Protection Plans. Ensure that federal and state emergency responders have access to these plans during and post-fire.

### *Disaster Recovery*

- 5.6 **Provide Technical Assistance to Local Businesses:** Provide technical assistance to local businesses following fire and other disasters in rural and low-income recreation economies to help navigate and access disaster assistance programs.
- 5.7 **Conduct Post-Fire Economic Study:** Conduct economic studies in communities that have experienced wildfire, including analyses of lost revenue and tourism-related income based on local data gathered before, during, and after wildfire events.
- 5.8 **Develop Post-Fire Insurance Program for the Recreation Economy:** Ensure recreation-based businesses are included in the development and administration of post-fire insurance programs.

### *Recreation Infrastructure*

- 5.9 **Evaluate Existing Telecommunications Infrastructure and Perform Upgrades:** Conduct an inventory/review of existing telecommunications infrastructure on public lands and prioritize upgrades and/or replacements to ensure that communications in affected communities remain active and accessible during a wildfire.

### *Funding Mechanisms*

- 5.10 **Develop Post-Fire Housing Assistance:** Create partnerships to address housing and homelessness in areas that have experienced wildfires and natural disasters.