# Introduction

The California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (Board), as the lead agency and in cooperation with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), prepared this final environmental impact report (EIR) in accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the State CEQA Guidelines (Section 15132). This Final EIR presents comments received on the Draft Program EIR (PEIR) for the proposed California Vegetation Treatment Program (CalVTP), responses to those comments, and revisions to the Draft PEIR resulting from comments.

## Summary of the CalVTP

The Board is mandated to regulate forestry activities within the State Responsibility Area and develop policies and regulations that contribute to fire prevention and recovery efforts (Public Resources Code Section 740). The Board’s proposed discretionary action needing CEQA compliance is approval of the CalVTP. After approval, implementation of the CalVTP would consist of vegetation treatment activities carried out by CAL FIRE on private or public land, by public agencies and organizations funded by CAL FIRE grants, and by public agencies that own and/or manage land within the treatable landscape.

The CalVTP PEIR addresses the following topics:

* Expansion of CAL FIRE’s vegetation treatment activities to reach a total treatment acreage target of approximately 250,000 acres per year to contribute to the achievement of the 500,000 annual acres of treatment on nonfederal lands expressed in Executive Order B-52-18, signed by former Governor Jerry Brown in May 2018. The expanded target would be a substantial increase compared both to current activity (recently averaging approximately 33,000 acres per year) and to the level proposed in the 2017 CalVTP Draft PEIR (i.e., 60,000 acres per year).
* A project-specific implementation approach for streamlining CEQA review of later site-specific vegetation treatment projects consistent with the CalVTP and the PEIR, in accordance with procedures described in State CEQA Guidelines Section 15168. The streamlined CEQA review approach would document how a project’s environmental effects are covered and which feasible mitigation measures from the CalVTP PEIR are incorporated. This would include evaluation of whether later activities and impacts of site-specific vegetation treatment projects are within the scope of the CalVTP and the PEIR. A “within the scope” finding for later activities would facilitate an increase in the pace and scale of project approvals in a manner that includes environmental protections in compliance with CEQA. Where later vegetation treatment projects do not qualify for a “within the scope” finding, additional CEQA documentation would be prepared, relying to the degree applicable on environmental information in the PEIR and adding to it as needed.

## Purpose of Responses to Comments

CEQA requires a lead agency that has prepared a Draft EIR to consult with and obtain comments from responsible and trustee agencies that have jurisdiction by law with respect to the project and to provide the public with an opportunity to comment on the Draft EIR (State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15086 and 15087). The Final EIR is the mechanism for responding to these comments. This Final EIR for the proposed CalVTP comprises two volumes:

* Volume I: Responses to Comments Received on the Draft Program EIR, which includes responses to all comments received on the Draft PEIR
* Volume II: Final Program EIR, which presents a complete reproduction of the Draft PEIR with text corrections, revisions, and other clarifications made in response to comments received during the public review period.

Sections 15088(a) and (c) of the State CEQA Guidelines state that the lead agency shall evaluate comments on environmental issues received from persons who reviewed the Draft EIR and shall prepare written responses to comments raising significant environmental issues. Responses are not required for comments regarding merits of the proposed project or regarding issues not related to the project’s environmental impacts. Several of the comments on the Draft PEIR state the commenter’s preference about whether the CalVTP should be approved or provide general statements concerning the content of the Draft PEIR. Detailed responses may not be possible or warranted for comments that do not address the environmental issues related to the proposed CalVTP and whether they were properly addressed in the Draft PEIR. Such instances are noted in the responses. The Board will review all comments, including those that do not warrant a response under CEQA, before considering certification of the Final EIR or approval of the proposed CalVTP.

## Environmental Review Process

Acting as lead agency under CEQA, the Board distributed a notice of preparation (NOP) for the Draft PEIR on January 30, 2019, to responsible agencies, trustee agencies, interested parties and organizations, and individuals that could have interest in the program, including public agency landowners owning 1,000 acres or more within the treatable landscape. The NOP was available online at <https://bof.fire.ca.gov/projects-and-programs/calvtp/>. The Board held public scoping meetings on February 11 and 19 and on March 18, 2019, to provide information on the proposed CalVTP and solicit public input on the scope and content of the PEIR. Because of the statewide scale of the CalVTP, the scoping meetings were held in three locations throughout the state: Redding, Sacramento, and Ontario. All comments on environmental issues received during the NOP public comment period and at the scoping meetings were considered and addressed in the Draft PEIR.

The Board circulated the Draft PEIR for public review and comment for a period of 45 days, from June 24, 2019, through August 9, 2019. Written comments on the Draft PEIR were received from state, regional, and local agencies, as well as elected officials, nongovernmental organizations, and members of the public. Chapter 2, “Responses to Comments,” of Volume I of this Final EIR identifies the entities that commented, presents their respective comments, and provides responses to these comments.

Before adopting the CalVTP, the Board as the lead agency, is required to certify that the EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA, that the decision-making body reviewed and considered the information in the EIR, and that the EIR reflects the independent judgment of the lead agency.

## Summary of Revisions to the Draft Program EIR

Volume II of this Final EIR reproduces the Draft PEIR in its entirety with revisions to the text made to respond to comments or to amplify, clarify, or make minor modifications or corrections to PEIR contents. Changes in the text are signified by strikeouts (~~strikeouts~~) where text is removed and by underline (underline) where text is added. None of the information added to the PEIR because of comments received constitutes “significant new information” by CEQA standards (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5); therefore, recirculation of the Draft PEIR is not warranted.

The following Draft PEIR chapters, sections, and appendices contain text revisions. Refer to Volume II of this Final EIR to review the text revisions to these elements of the Draft PEIR:

* Executive Summary;
* Chapter 2, “Program Description”;
* Section 3.2, “Aesthetics and Visual Resources”;
* Section 3.4, “Air Quality”;
* Section 3.5, “Archeological, Historical, and Tribal Cultural Resources”;
* Section 3.6, “Biological Resources”;
* Section 3.7, “Geology, Soils, Paleontology, and Mineral Resources”;
* Section 3.8, “Greenhouse Gas Emissions”;
* Section 3.10, “Hazardous Materials, Public Health and Safety”;
* Section 3.11, “Hydrology and Water Quality”;
* Section 3.12, “Land Use and Planning, Population and Housing”;
* Chapter 4, “Cumulative Effects Analysis”;
* Chapter 5, “Significant Effects and Growth Inducing Impacts”;
* Chapter 6, “Alternatives”;
* Chapter 8, “References”;
* Appendix PD-2, “Example Burn Plan/Smoke Management Plan”; and
* Appendix PD-3, “Project-Specific Analysis.”

## Organizational Structure of the Response to Comments Document

Volume I of the Final EIR is organized as follows:

* **Chapter 1, “Introduction,”** describes the purpose of the Final EIR, summarizes the proposed CalVTP project, provides an overview of the CEQA public review process, and describes the content of this Final EIR.
* **Chapter 2, “Responses to Comments,”** contains a list of all the commenters who submitted written comments on the Draft PEIR, reproductions of all the comments received on the Draft PEIR, and written responses to each comment received. The chapter begins with a set of master responses that were prepared to respond comprehensively to multiple comments that raised similar issues. A reference to the master response is provided, where relevant, in responses to individual comments.
* **Chapter 3, “References,”** identifies the sources of information cited in this document.

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