

Hannigan, Edith@BOF

From: Rebecca Schoenenberger <rebecca@calnativescapes.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 4, 2019 11:09 AM
To: Public Comments@BOF; Office of the Secretary CNRA
Subject: RE: Item 9, December 11, 2019, California Vegetation Treatment Program (CalVTP) - Opposition to VTP boondoggle

Warning: this message is from an external user and should be treated with caution.

Dear Chairperson Gillless and Members of the Board:

The VTP would remove native vegetation across a vastly over-scaled 250,000-acre footprint each year, at massive financial and ecological cost. You may be under the impression that its purpose is to protect Californians from the devastating wind-driven fires that ravaged Paradise, Santa Rosa, Ventura, and so many other places. You may think it will save some of the billions of dollars now spent by the state and federal governments fighting these fires. But it will do none of these things - in fact it will have an opposite effect. These massive clearing projects are the result of fear mongering by leaders who have no knowledge of fire science.

CalFire now admits that the program would be ineffective for the fires that cause the vast majority of loss of life and property damage, which are the ones being driven by wind. Faced with this fact, CalFire proposes to enact the very same program for fires not being driven by wind, although these typically come under control and are not the fires of concern. Indeed, in many parts of the state, the VTP will not only do no good, but will be counterproductive by promoting highly flammable weeds. Invasive non-native weeds will only increase fire danger, while destroying our precious California habitats. In addition to opening the door for invasive species, which are often more flammable than the Native habitat, massive clearing will only open the door to landslides or other harmful impacts.

Truly, the VTP needs a ground-up, scientific and cost-benefit assessment. We ask you to have the courage to recognize a vastly over-scaled boondoggle when you see it. Please direct the Natural Resources Agency and CalFire to stop pause on the VTP and confer with fire ecologists, fire managers and stakeholders about how and where vegetation treatments can actually achieve benefit.

Keeping new development out of harm's way, hardening of existing structures, enforcing defensible space, highly strategic fuel breaks, and improving early warning and evacuation systems all make sense and are advised by fire scientists. But the grandiose VTP – by CalFire's own admission – does not even address the urgent problem of catastrophic wind-driven fires.

Please bring scientific and budgetary accountability to CalFire.

Sincerely,

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