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From: Hannah W <hannah.e.walchak@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 4, 2019 3:45 PM
To: Public Comments@BOF; Office of the Secretary CNRA
Subject: 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 Gilless and Members of the Board:

I manage 3,000 acres of conservation open space in semi-rural North San Diego County. The Vegetation Treatment Program (VTP) is an “emperor with no clothes.” This emperor seeks to wastefully spend billions of dollars in taxpayer money. I ask you to get this gentleman into some proper attire

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.

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.

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,

Hannah Walchak

Conservation Land Manager

Escondido Creek Conservancy