

BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION

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News Release

Fresno County Tree Mortality Task Force and Long-Time Fire Fighter Receive Awards for Outstanding Contributions to California Forestry

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SACRAMENTO—The Fresno County Tree Mortality Task Force (TMTF) and Darin Quigley are co-recipients of this year’s prestigious “Francis H. Raymond Award for Outstanding Contributions to California Forestry.” The California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (Board) acknowledged the TMTF for its leadership role in helping to safeguard Fresno County through collaborative wildfire prevention and protection work. Darin Quigley is being recognized for 39 years of exceptional service as a firefighter and fire coordinator.

“The Board is very pleased to honor the Fresno County Tree Mortality Task Force and Darin Quigley this year for their work in helping to make California a safer place in the face of climate change and wildfire threats to lives, communities, and critical infrastructure. As California faces longer fire seasons and drier conditions, putting communities at increased risk, these recipients serve as models for others looking to move the needle on wildfire issues in meaningful ways,” said Board Chair Keith Gilles.

The TMTF was established in 2015 in response to widespread bark beetle-related tree mortality throughout the county. It was comprised of a core group of agencies and cooperators who were committed to ensuring public safety and community protection, ingress and egress routes for threatened communities, and protection of critical infrastructure (e.g., power, water, schools, fire stations) if a wildfire was to occur given the heightened tree mortality levels. With priorities in place, dead and dying trees within 200 ft of county highways, community public and private roads, and evacuation routes were removed. Community-wide fuel breaks were put in place that tied into cleared access roads, and tree removal work along threatened powerlines was coordinated with fuel break and road work. Meetings were also held to inform the public on the status of the tree mortality as well as to provide education on fire prevention, evacuation procedures, powerline safety, fuels reduction programs, and grant opportunities.

The proactive work of the TMTF and its collaborators was challenged with the 2020 Creek Fire. Thanks to the preventative measures and education and outreach conducted, impacts from the fire were less than they otherwise would have been. Ingress and egress routes remained open for evacuation and responders, power outages were minimal, fire suppression and structure protection were enhanced, fire progress was limited in treated areas, and emergency response efforts were bolstered.

The TMTF recently transitioned to the Fresno County Forest Health Task Force (FHTF). The FHTF will carry forth the cooperative working relationships of the TMTF and will continue to ensure public and community

safety as well as promote long-term actions that will improve forest health, public outreach and education, and cooperative planning.

Darin Quigley has been a firefighter for 39 years. Over the course of his career, he has worked for Cal Fire, the US Forest Service (USFS), local government, and College of the Siskiyous. In his current positions, Darin is the Fire Coordinator for the Northern California Fire Co-op and works as a Wildfire Mitigation Specialist, developing wildfire mitigation plans for private property owners in Northern California. Darin works collaboratively with forest owner representatives and agencies to protect millions of acres in Northern California.

Previously Darin was a Fire Chief, Battalion Chief, Fire Captain, Fire Apparatus Engineer, and firefighter. He also started the Fire Academy at the College of the Siskiyous and served as their Fire Coordinator for nearly 20 years. He is a qualified Type 1 Operations Section Chief and served on Cal Fire and USFS Incident Management Teams for 20 years as a Safety Officer, Division Supervisor, Branch Director, and Operation Section Chief. Darin was recognized by Cal Fire as the “2014 Firefighter of the Year.” More recently, Darin worked on the 2021 Dixie Fire, helping to steer the fire away from the town of Chester. Darin’s experience, relatability, compassion, and driven nature help to make him an effective firefighter, leader, and collaborator.

The “Francis H. Raymond Award for Outstanding Contributions to California Forestry” is named for Francis H. Raymond, Director of Cal Fire from 1953 to 1970. Mr. Raymond was one of the primary advocates for the passage of the Professional Foresters Law in 1973. Since 1987 the award has been given to groups or individuals who have achieved excellence in forestry in California.

For more information on the Fresno County Tree Mortality Task Force or Darin Quigley, contact Katie Harrell at (916) 698-1035.

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