

Board of Forestry and Fire Protection

NOTICE OF PROPOSED ACTION

“Meadows and Wet Areas, and Cutover Land Amendments”

**Board of Forestry and Fire Protection
Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations
Division 1.5, Chapter 4,
Subchapters 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7**

[Notice Published in the Notice Register March 4, 2022]

NATURE OF PROCEEDING

Notice is hereby given that the California State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (Board) is proposing to take the action described in the Informative Digest.

PUBLIC HEARING

The Board will hold a public hearing on May 4, 2022, at its regularly scheduled meeting commencing at 9:00 a.m., via the virtual meeting platform of GoToWebinar. At the hearing, any person may present statements or arguments, orally or in writing, relevant to the proposed action. The Board requests, but does not require, that persons who make oral comments at the hearing also submit a written summary of their statements. Additionally, pursuant to Government Code (GOV) § 11125.1(b), writings that are public records pursuant to GOV § 11125.1(a) and that are distributed to members of the state body prior to or during a meeting, pertaining to any item to be considered during the meeting, shall be made available for public inspection at the meeting if prepared by the state body or a member of the state body, or after the meeting if prepared by some other person.

Attendees may participate via GoToWebinar online meeting platform or telephone conferencing. To participate via GoToWebinar online meeting platform please email PublicComments@bof.ca.gov by 4:30 p.m. on May 3, 2022, to request a link to the meeting. A link to the meeting will also be posted under the “Webinar Information” heading on the front page of the Board website, no later than 8:00 a.m. the morning of the hearing.

WRITTEN COMMENT PERIOD

Any person, or authorized representative, may submit written comments relevant to the proposed regulatory action to the Board. The written comment period ends on at the conclusion of the public hearing on May 4, 2022.

The Board will consider only written comments received at the Board office by that time and those written comments received at the public hearing, including written comments submitted in connection with oral testimony at the public hearing. The Board requests, but does not require, that persons who submit written comments to the Board reference the title of the rulemaking proposal in their comments to facilitate review.

Written comments shall be submitted to the following address:

Board of Forestry and Fire Protection
Attn: Jane Van Susteren
Regulations Coordinator
P.O. Box 944246
Sacramento, CA 94244-2460

Written comments can also be hand delivered to the contact person listed in this notice at the following address:

Board of Forestry and Fire Protection
715 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Written comments may also be sent to the Board via facsimile at the following phone number:

(916) 653-0989

Written comments may also be delivered via e-mail at the following address:

PublicComments@BOF.ca.gov

AUTHORITY AND REFERENCE (pursuant to GOV § 11346.5(a)(2) and 1 CCR § 14)

Authority cited: Sections 4551, 4551.5, 4552, and 4553, Public Resources Code

INFORMATIVE DIGEST/POLICY STATEMENT OVERVIEW (pursuant to GOV 11346.5(a)(3)(A)-(D))

Pursuant to the Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act (Act) of 1973, PRC § 4511, *et seq.* (FPA) the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (Board) is authorized to construct a system of forest practice regulations applicable to timber management on state and private timberlands.

PRC § 4551 requires the Board to "...adopt district forest practice rules... to ensure the continuous growing and harvesting of commercial forest tree species and to protect the soil, air, fish, wildlife, and water resources..." and PRC § 4553 requires the Board to continuously review the rules in consultation with other interests and make appropriate revisions.

Furthermore, PRC § 4551.5 requires that these regulations adopted by the Board "...apply to the conduct of timber operations and shall include, but shall not be limited to, measures for fire prevention and control, for soil erosion control, for site preparation that involves disturbance of soil or burning of vegetation following timber harvesting activities, for water quality and watershed control, for flood control, for stocking, for protection against timber operations that unnecessarily destroy young timber growth or timber productivity of the soil, for prevention and control of damage by forest insects, pests, and disease..."

Timber Operations are further defined within PRC § 4527 as "...the cutting or removal, or both, of timber or other solid wood forest products...from Timberlands for commercial purposes, together

with all the incidental work, including, but not limited to, construction and maintenance of roads, fuel breaks, firebreaks, stream crossings, Landings, skid trails, and beds for the falling of trees, fire hazard abatement, and site preparation that involves disturbance of soil or burning of vegetation following timber harvesting activities...”.

Prior to 2012, the term “Cutover Land” was defined within the Forest Practice Act as “...land which has borne a crop of commercial timber from which at least 70 percent of the merchantable original growth timber stand has been removed by logging or destroyed by fire, insects, or tree diseases and which is now supporting, or capable of growing, a crop of commercial timber or other forest products, and which has not been converted to other commercial or agricultural use.” This definition was repealed by statutory amendment in 2011 (Chapter 584, AB 1414) and the references to the repealed statute (PRC § 4522.5) were generally repealed from the Forest Practice Rules in 2017. However, the use of the term “Cutover Land” persists in various provisions of the rules, which now lack clarity in the application of that term.

Within 14 CCR § 895.1, the term “Cutover Land” is used within the definition for “Wet Meadows and Other Wet Areas” to exclude those cutover Timberlands from those natural areas which are both moist on the surface throughout most of the year and support aquatic vegetation, grasses and forbs as their principal vegetative cover. The term “Meadows and Wet Areas” is similar but refers to area which are either moist on the surface throughout most of the year and/or support aquatic vegetation, grasses, and forbs as their principal vegetative cover; this broader definition includes dry meadows. However, there are currently two existing identical definitions for “Meadows and Wet Areas”, one for the Northern Forest District, and one for the Southern Forest District. The Coast Forest District does not have an existing definition for “Meadows and Wet Areas”, which makes the application of the Special Prescription for Aspen, meadow and wet area restoration as described in 14 CCR § 913.4 (933.4,953.4) unclear.

In order to address the above circumstances, the Board amended 14 CCR §§ 895.1, 906, 912.7 (932.7, 952.7), 912.9 (932.9, 952.9), 913.4 (933.4, 953.4), 916.3 (936.3, 956.3), 921.4 (961.4), 923.1 (943.1, 963.1), 923.4 (943.4, 963.4), 927.10 (953.7 953.12), 1027.1, 1034, 1038.4, 1051, 1051.4, 1072.4, 1090.5, 1092.09, 1094.6, and 1094.8 in accordance with the provisions of the abovementioned statutes.

The purpose of the proposed action is to remove references to “Cutover Land” from the Rules and combine the definitions for “Meadows and Wet Areas” for the Northern and Southern Forest Districts and extend that definition to cover all forest districts in California, as well as to improve clarity using defined terms within “Aspen, Meadows and Wet Areas Restoration” special prescription, and within rules specific to the High Use Subdistrict.

The effect of the proposed action is to align the terms used in the Rules with existing definitions and promote clarity and consistent application of the rules throughout the state.

The benefit of the proposed action is regulations that are clearer, more consistent, and accurately reflect the terms defined by the Rules.

There is no comparable Federal regulation or statute.

Board staff conducted an evaluation on whether the proposed action is inconsistent or incompatible with existing State regulations pursuant to **GOV § 11346.5(a)(3)(D)**. State regulations related to the proposed action were, in fact, relied upon in the development of the proposed action to ensure the consistency and compatibility of the proposed action with existing State regulations. Otherwise, Board staff evaluated the balance of existing State regulations related to the treatment of fuels resulting from timber operations within State regulations that met the same purpose as the proposed action. Based on this evaluation and effort, the Board has determined that the proposed regulations are neither inconsistent nor incompatible with existing State regulations. The proposed regulation is entirely consistent and compatible with existing Board rules.

Statute to which the proposed action was compared: Sections 4512, 4513, 4527, 4551, 4551.5, and 4554, Public Resources Code. Sections 13000, 13050, 13146, and 13247.

Regulations to which the proposed action was compared: Article 4, Subchapters 4, 5, & 6, Chapter 4, Division 1.5, Title 14, California Code of Regulations. Divisions 3, 4, and 5, Title 23, California Code of Regulations.

MANDATED BY FEDERAL LAW OR REGULATIONS

The proposed action is not mandated by Federal law or regulations.

The proposed action neither conflicts with, nor duplicates, Federal regulations.

There are no comparable Federal regulations related to management plans for the non-industrial harvesting of timber. No existing Federal regulations meeting the same purpose as the proposed action were identified.

OTHER STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS (pursuant to GOV § 11346.5(a)(4))

There are no other matters as are prescribed by statute applicable to the specific State agency or to any specific regulation or class of regulations.

LOCAL MANDATE (pursuant to GOV § 11346.5(a)(5)).

The proposed action does not impose a mandate on local agencies or school districts.

FISCAL IMPACT (pursuant to GOV § 11346.5(a)(6))

There is no cost to any local agency or school district that is required to be reimbursed under Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4 of the Government Code.

A local agency or school district has the authority to levy service charges, fees, or assessments sufficient to pay for the program or level of service mandated by the act, within the meaning of Section 17556 of the Government Code.

The proposed action will not result in the imposition of other non-discretionary costs or savings to local agencies.

The proposed action will not result in costs or savings in Federal funding to the State.

The proposed action will not result in costs to any State agency. The proposed action represents a continuation of existing forest practice regulations related to the conduct of timber operations and will not result in any direct or indirect costs or savings to any state agency.

HOUSING COSTS (pursuant to GOV § 11346.5(a)(12))

The proposed action will not significantly affect housing costs.

SIGNIFICANT STATEWIDE ADVERSE ECONOMIC IMPACT DIRECTLY AFFECTING BUSINESS, INCLUDING ABILITY TO COMPETE (pursuant to GOV §§ 11346.3(a), 11346.5(a)(7) and 11346.5(a)(8))

The proposed action will not have a significant statewide adverse economic impact directly affecting business, including the ability of California businesses to compete with businesses in other states (by making it costlier to produce goods or services in California).

FACTS, EVIDENCE, DOCUMENTS, TESTIMONY, OR OTHER EVIDENCE RELIED UPON TO SUPPORT INITIAL DETERMINATION IN THE NOTICE THAT THE PROPOSED ACTION WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE ECONOMIC IMPACT ON BUSINESS (pursuant to GOV § 11346.2(b)(5) and GOV § 11346.5(a)(8))

Contemplation by the Board of the economic impact of the provisions of the proposed action through the lens of the decades of contemplating forest practice in California that the Board brings to bear on regulatory development.

STATEMENTS OF THE RESULTS OF THE ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

The results of the economic impact assessment are provided below pursuant to **GOV § 11346.5(a)(10)** and prepared pursuant to **GOV § 11346.3(b)(1)(A)-(D)**. The proposed action:

- Will not create jobs within California (GOV § 11346.3(b)(1)(A));
- Will not eliminate jobs within California (GOV § 11346.3(b)(1)(A));
- Will not create new businesses (GOV § 11346.3(b)(1)(B));
- Will not eliminate existing businesses within California (GOV § 11346.3(b)(1)(B));
- Will not affect the expansion or contraction of businesses currently doing business within California (GOV § 11346.3(b)(1)(C));
- Will yield nonmonetary benefits (GOV § 11346.3(b)(1)(D)). For additional information on the benefits of the proposed regulation, please see anticipated benefits found under the Informative Digest/Policy Statement Overview.

COST IMPACTS ON REPRESENTATIVE PERSON OR BUSINESS (pursuant to GOV § 11346.5(a)(9))

The agency is not aware of any cost impacts that a representative private person or business would necessarily incur in reasonable compliance with the proposed action. No adverse impacts are to be expected.

BUSINESS REPORT (pursuant to GOV §§ 11346.5(a)(11) and 11346.3(d))

The proposed action does not impose a business reporting requirement.

SMALL BUSINESS (defined in GOV 11342.610)

Small businesses, within the meaning of GOV § 11342.610, are not expected to be significantly affected by the proposed action.

Small business, pursuant to 1 CCR § 4(a):

- (1) Is legally required to comply with the regulation;
- (2) Is not legally required to enforce the regulation;
- (3) Does not derive a benefit from the enforcement of the regulation;
- (4) May incur a detriment from the enforcement of the regulation if they do not comply with the regulation.

ALTERNATIVES INFORMATION

In accordance with **GOV § 11346.5(a)(13)**, the Board must determine that no reasonable alternative it considers, or that has otherwise been identified and brought to the attention of the Board, would be more effective in carrying out the purpose for which the action is proposed, or would be as effective and less burdensome to affected private persons than the proposed action, or would be more cost-effective to affected private persons and equally effective in implementing the statutory policy or other provision of law.

CONTACT PERSON

Requests for copies of the proposed text of the regulations, the Initial Statement of Reasons, modified text of the regulations and any questions regarding the substance of the proposed action may be directed to:

Board of Forestry and Fire Protection
Attn: Jane Van Susteren
Regulations Coordinator
P.O. Box 944246
Sacramento, CA 94244-2460
Telephone: (916) 619-9796

The designated backup person in the event Ms. Van Susteren is not available is Eric Hedge, Regulations Program Manager for the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection. Mr. Hedge may be contacted at the above address or phone.

AVAILABILITY STATEMENTS (pursuant to GOV § 11346.5(a) (16), (18))

All of the following are available from the contact person:

1. Express terms of the proposed action using UNDERLINE to indicate an addition to the California Code of Regulations and ~~STRIKETHROUGH~~ to indicate a deletion.
2. Initial Statement of Reasons, which includes a statement of the specific purpose of each adoption, amendment, or repeal, the problem the Board is addressing, and the rationale for the determination by the Board that each adoption, amendment, or repeal is reasonably necessary to carry out the purpose and address the problem for which it is proposed.
3. The information upon which the proposed action is based (pursuant to **GOV § 11346.5(b)**).
4. Changed or modified text. After holding the hearing and considering all timely and relevant comments received, the Board may adopt the proposed regulations substantially

as described in this notice. If the Board makes modifications which are sufficiently related to the originally proposed text, it will make the modified text—with the changes clearly indicated—available to the public for at least 15 days before the Board adopts the regulations as revised. Notice of the comment period on changed regulations, and the full text as modified, will be sent to any person who testified at the hearings, submitted comments during the public comment period, including written and oral comments received at the public hearing, or requested notification of the availability of such changes from the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection. The Board will accept written comments on the modified regulations for 15 days after the date on which they are made available.

FINAL STATEMENT OF REASONS

When the Final Statement of Reasons (FSOR) has been prepared, the FSOR will be available from the contact person on request.

INTERNET ACCESS

All of the material referenced in the Availability Statements is also available on the Board web site at:

<https://bof.fire.ca.gov/regulations/proposed-rule-packages/>