Full letters are posted on the Board's website at
http://bofdata.fire.ca.gov/board_committees/resource_protection_committee/current_projects/vegetation_treatment_program_environmental_impact_report_(vtpeir)/

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A23	Fege	Anne	Community Forest Advisory Board, City of San Diego	Project level analysis. The purpose of a programmatic EIR is to provide sufficient detail about a "program" (a group of related actions) such that CEQA analysis does not need to be done for each project. Yet the DPEIR defers to managers at the individual project level, to provide rationale and evidence for a checklist that extends to 18 pages and could require 100 pages to write for each project. The Standard Project Requirements are extensive, yet most are vague and there is no supporting evidence that they are feasible and effective. Impacts are well established for WUI defensible space and suppression-related fuel breaks—type conversion will occur in chaparral. These impacts need to be declared and dealt with, in the DPEIR. It is reasonable to expect that detailed project-level analysis is needed for treatments conducted for ecological restoration. The purpose and outcomes of consultations with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) need to be specified.	CEQA - Tiering
O2	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	The most concerning issue, however, relates to the failure of the document to provide a key component of a programmatic EIR - providing a more exhaustive consideration of effects and cumulative impacts than could be accomplished at the project level (14 CCR § 15168). Instead, volumes of repetitive text are punctuated with the unsupported claim that determining impacts is impossible, pushing it off to project managers to determine with a checklist and standard project requirements that depend on subjective judgments. How does the DPEIR justify ignoring a thorough examination of impacts as required by CEQA? The document vacillates between claiming the Program is too large and complex to analyze, or the treatment areas are too small to have an impact.	CEQA - tiering
O8	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	1. Circumventing CEQA - Failure to Determine Impacts The lack of detail in the DPEIR is a clear violation of the California Environmental Quality Act's requirements for a programmatic EIR. Throughout the document, the DPEIR completely ignores the necessary detail needed to determine if the Program will have significant impacts. Instead, it defers to managers at the individual project level because the Program is either too "large and complex" to consider the true environmental impacts within the DPEIR (4-116 among others), or too small because the projects average 260 acres (5-44 among others). By using the "Fallacy of Authority," the DPEIR claims without providing supporting evidence, *Because of the amount of acreage eligible but not receiving treatment under the VTP, the proposed Program would likely result in a less than significant cumulative effect on biological resources at the bioregional scale. (5-27)* The DPEIR frequently follows up these claims, again without supporting evidence, with the suggestion that the Program may actually provide a net environmental gain because it may "decrease the frequency, extent, or severity of wildfire." (5-32) Such rationales have no merit. There is a rich source of literature describing the potential impacts, both local and cumulative, of "fuel treatments" as well as the ecological benefits of high-severity fires in crown fire ecosystems. The DPEIR should adhere to the requirements of CEQA and determine the overall environmental impact of the Program, not pass the responsibility on to individual project managers via a checklist based on subjective opinions.	CEQA - tiering
O55	Maxwell	Cynthia	Cold Creek Community Council	The Cold Creek Community Council is concerned that your current Programmatic EIR for California's proposed Vegetation Treatment Program does not meet the CEQA requirements. The lack of detail in the EIR and the passing on of responsibility for potential impact to project managers has us deeply worried.	CEQA - tiering

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O83	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	II. The DEIR Fails to Comply With CEQA. A. The DEIR's Justifications For Failing to Provide a More Detailed Analysis of the VTP's Environmental Impacts Are Groundless. Among the DEIR's most notable deficiencies is the lack of a detailed accounting of the VTP's environmental impacts. The DEIR attempts to defend its vague analysis by suggesting that the document serves as a first-tier document for later CEQA review of individual projects included in the Program and that further environmental review will likely be undertaken as each project is implemented. This justification is unavail ing. Not only does the DEIR improperly defer analysis of ascertainable environmental impacts to a future process, but that future process lacks any workable means for analyzing and mitigating the impacts of individual projects, and effectively shuts out public participation. Under CEQA, the "programmatic" nature of this DEIR is no excuse for its lack of detailed analysis. The DEIR grossly misconstrues both the meaning and requirements of a "program" EIR by suggesting that the broad scope of the VTP plays an important role in determining the appropriate level of detail to include in the DEIR. See DEIR at 4-116 ("Effects of fuel reduction on wildlife depend on the specific ecological requirements of individual species and thus are difficult to generalize, especially in a treatment area as large and complex as that considered here."). This approach is flawed, at the outset, because CEQA mandates that a program EIR provide an in-depth analysis of a large- scale project, looking at effects "as specifically and comprehensively as possible. ' Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15168(a), (c)(5); (hereafter "CEQA Guidelines"). Indeed, because it is designed to look at the "big picture," a program EIR must (1) provide "more exhaustive consideration" of effects and alternatives than can be accommodated by an EIR for an individual action, and (2) consider "'cumulative impacts that might be slighted in a case-by-case analysis." CEQA Guidelines § 15168(b)(l)-(2).	CEQA - tiering
O84	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	Furthermore, whether a lead agency prepares a "program" EIR or a "project- specific" EIR under CEQA, the requirements for an adequate EIR remain the same. CEQA Guidelines § 15160. "Designating an EIR as a program EIR also does not by itself decrease the level of analysis otherwise required in the EIR." Friends of Mammoth v. Town of Mammoth Lakes Redevelopment Agency (2000) 82 Cal.App.4th 511, 533. Even a program-level EIR must contain "extensive, detailed evaluations" of a plan's effects on the existing environment. Envt 'IPlanning and Info. Council v. Cnty. of El Dorado (1982) 131 Cal.App.3d 350, 358. See Kings County Farm Bureau v. City of Hanford (1990) 221 Cal.App.3d 692, 723-24 (where the record before an agency contains information relevant to environmental impacts, it is both reasonable and practical to include that information in an EIR). The "extensive, detailed evaluations" required by CEQA are absent from the DEIR. The DEIR's reliance on future, project-level environmental review is also misplaced. Again, CEQA's policy favoring early identification of environmental impacts does not allow agencies to defer analysis of a plan's impacts to some future EIR for specific projects contemplated by that plan. See Bozung v. local Agency Formation Com. (1975) I 3 Cal.3d 263, 282-84; Christward Ministry v. Superior Court (1986) 184 Cal.App.3d 180, 194 (I 986); City of Redlands v. Cnty. of San Bernardino (2002) 96 Cal.App.4th 398, 409 (2002). As CEQA Guidelines section l 5l 52(b) explicitly warns, "[t]iering does not excuse the lead agency from adequately analyzing reasonably foreseeable significant environmental effects of the project and does not justify deferring such analysis to a later tier EIR or negative declaration .	CEQA - tiering

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O85	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	Moreover, as discussed below, there is no guarantee in this case that such future, detailed environmental review will happen or, if it does, that environmental impacts will be identified or mitigated. Under these circumstances, a detailed environmental impact analysis must be performed now, prior to the VTP's approval. As the Court of Appeal explained in Stanislaus Natural Heritage Project v. Cnty. of Stanislaus (1996) 48 Cal.App. 4th I 82, 196 (I 996), CEQA requires that this environmental review take place before project approval. In Stanislaus. the court rejected the argument that a programmatic EIR for a specific plan and general plan amendment could ignore site- specific environmental review because future phases of the development project would include environmental review, stating that tiering "is not a device for deferring the identification of significant environmental impacts that the adoption of a specific plan can be expected to cause." Id. at 199. Because the Board intends to allow unspecified project-level approvals in reliance on this DEIR, and because there is no indication that any meaningful future environmental review will take place, the DEIR must include a detailed, project-level analysis of the impacts that could arise from the implementation of all aspects of the VTP, as well as a meaningful discussion of alternatives and mitigation measures, so the Board and the public can understand the consequences of the VTP before considering wither it should be approved.	CEQA - tiering
O90	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	Perhaps the most problematic component of the DEIR's Project Description though pertains to the Program' s approach to the "Implementation" and "Subsequent Review" processes. We understand that the VTP is meant to provide an overview of the comprehensive wildfire risk reduction program, but the DEIR must still provide sufficient information to be able to determine how the VTP would be implemented and how it will affect environmental resources. The document suggests that "subsequent review" would occur at the project level, but this EIR and the approvals it informs are the only opportunity for the public to understand and weigh in on the big-picture questions that will determine the magnitude of ecological devastation that would accompany this broad Program. The DEIR asserts that the VTP includes a built-in mechanism to evaluate the environmental impacts at the project-specific phase. Yet, there are so many loopholes in the VTP's suggested mechanism, that it is almost impossible to envision that a comprehensive evaluation of the VTP's environmental impacts would ever be undertaken.	CEQA - tiering
O91	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	First, the sheer number of projects that are envisioned to be implemented on a yearly basis and the geographic scope of each project alone would suggest that determining each project's environmental impacts would not be subject to a sufficient level of scrutiny. In other words, the multi-step project implementation process -of which the determination of environmental impacts is only one part-would be extraordinarily cumbersome, to put it mildly. The Board contemplates implementing 231 projects every year at an average project size of 260 acres. DEIR at 2-35. That is about one project for every work day of the year. For each such project, CAL FIRE would have to: (a) prepare a Project Scale Analysis ("PSA"); (b) hold a public workshop; (c) submit the PSA for three levels of review (county, regional and state); and (d) send the final determination to the Sacramento CEQA Coordinator. Does CAL FIRE even have sufficient staff to undertake this process for each of the 231 projects that are proposed for implementation every year? The DEIR does not say, but common sense tells us that meaningful review under these conditions is implausible.	CEQA - tiering
O92	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	Second, the specific process by which CAL FIRE would determine whether further environmental review would be necessary is also highly problematic. The DEIR explains that a CEQA Coordinator would make a final determination as to whether the project is consistent with the Program EIR. If it is determined that the project falls within the scope of the Program EIR, then "no additional CEQA documentation would be required." DEIR at 2-47 (emphasis added). Thus, it would appear that a project need only be included in the scope of the Program EIR to escape further environmental review. Given the excessively broad scope of the VTP and the fact that the DEIR discusses the potential environmental impacts from all projects that could be implemented over a 22 million acre area, it is almost impossible to imagine the Coordinator making a determination that a project is outside the scope of the Program EIR. Given the absence of any specific environmental analysis in the Program EIR, the process is effectively designed so that such analysis will never occur.	CEQA - tiering

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O93	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	Third, even assuming that the Coordinator intends to undertake an actual evaluation of a project's environmental impacts-and there is no assurance that this separate study would ever occur-there is still no indication that this evaluation would result in a project-level environmental review pursuant to CEQA. In fact, the DEIR includes numerous statements indicating that this DEIR satisfactorily evaluates the environmental impacts that would occur from the VTP•s projects. For example, it states: (a) the VTP would result in beneficial environmental impacts ; (b) the specific projects would be "designed to avoid significant effects; "and (c) the Coordinator will ensure that the SPR measures reduce impacts to levels that are less than significant." DEIR at 4-117; 4-121; 4-124; 4-132; 4-156. Statements such as these give the distinct impression that the Board and CAL FIRE have pre-determined that any environmental impacts will be effectively addressed by the measures in the DEIR and that no further environmental review need be undertaken. Moreover, there is no indication that the Coordinator has the necessary expertise to evaluate all of the projects' potential environmental consequences -much less to do so at the rate of a project a day. The CEQA Coordinator may have sufficient experience to manage environmental review, but it is highly unlikely that this person has the expertise to evaluate the effect that a treatment project would have on, for example, a rare, threatened or endangered species, or any of the other myriad impacts that could occur from individual projects throughout the state. In light of these procedural uncertainties, the DEIR's assurance that future projects would undergo further environmental review is meaningless, misleading, and disingenuous.	CEQA - tiering
O101	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	(c) The DEIR Inappropriately Defers its Analysis of Impacts. Contrary to CEQA's requirements, analysis of the Plan's impacts on biological resources is left until after project approval. Under CEQA, such deferred analysis and mitigation of these important impacts are unlawful. See Gently v. City of Murrieta (1995) 36 Cal.App.4th 1359, 1396; Sundstrom v. Cnty. of Mendocino (1988} 202 Cal.App.3d 296, 306-30. As the California Supreme Court has explained, environmental review must happen before a project is approved if an EIR is to be anything more than a "post hoc rationalization of a decision already made." No Oil, Inc. v. City of Los Angeles (1974) 13 Cal.3d 68, 81 (internal quotation marks omitted). CEQA also requires that an EIR be detailed, complete, and reflect a good faith effort at full disclosure. CEQA Guidelines § 15151. The document should provide a sufficient degree of analysis to inform the public about the proposed project's adverse environmental impacts and to allow decision-makers to make intelligent judgments. Id. Consistent with this requirement, the information regarding the project's impacts must be 'painstakingly ferreted out." Envt 'l Planning and Info. Council, supra, 131 Cal.App.3d 350, 357 (finding an EIR for a general plan amendment inadequate where the document did not make clear the effect on the physical environment). Here, the DEIR provides no analysis of impacts to vegetation communities and only the most superficial analysis of impacts to wildlife.	CEQA - tiering

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O120	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	1. With respect to CEQA, we noticed numerous procedural lapses and irregularities: 1.A. Why is the DEIR written with such lack of detail? It certainly is not because it is a PEIR. According to CEQA, all EIRs, whether programmatic or not, need to contain a detailed analysis, and PEIRs are supposed to analyze impacts " as specifically and comprehensively as possible."3 Indeed, the role of a PEIR is two-fold: it includes “more exhaustive consideration" of impacts, mitigation, and alternatives than an individual project EIR could include, and it considers cumulative impacts4. Projects are supposed to "tier" off the PEIR, depending on and supplementing its analysis only, not doing the work that it was supposed to contain. CEQA further notes that “[t]iering does not excuse the lead agency from adequately analyzing reasonably foreseeable significant environmental effects of the project and does not justify deferring such analysis to a later tier EIR or negative declaration."5 Also, “[d]esignating an EIR as a program EIR also does not by itself decrease the level of analysis otherwise required in the EIR.”6 Programmatic EIRs must contain “extensive, detailed evaluations" of a plan’s impacts on the existing environment. The DEIR’s reliance on future, project-level environmental review is contrary to CEQA’s policy of favoring early identification of environmental impacts. CEQA does not allow agencies to defer analysis of a plan’s impacts to some future EIR for specific projects contemplated by that plan. Finally, as we understand it (we are not lawyers) the courts have ruled that environmental review must take place before project approval, and specifically that, in an programmatic EIR, tiering" is not a device for deferring identification of significant environmental impacts that the adoption of a specific plan can be expected to cause."7 Given that the DEIR does exactly the opposite of what CEQA policy states and courts support, why was it written that way? Would it not have been better to follow CEQA and relevant case law? 1 Myers, N., Mittermeier, R. A., Mittermeier, C. G., da Fonseca, G. A. B., and J. Kent. (2000). Biodiversity hotspots for conservation priorities. Nature, 403(6772), 853-858. 2 City of San Diego (2015). Carmel Mountain/Del Mar Mesa Natural Resources Management Plan and Trail System.. 3 CEQA Guidelines, 15168(a), (c)(5) 4 CEQA Guidelines, 15168(b)(1)-(2). 5 CEQA Guidelines 15152(b) 6 CEQA Guidelines 15160.	CEQA - tiering
O125	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	1.E. Why does the DEIR defer analysis of so many impacts and creation of mitigations until after it is approved? CEQA requires EIRs to be detailed, complete, and contain a sufficient degree of analysis to let the public and decision-makers understand the proposed project's adverse environmental impacts, so that corrections can be made and an informed decision can ultimately be undertaken.12 As we understand it, the courts repeatedly have ruled against deferring analysis until after the EIR is approved.13 Similarly, EIRs are generally not allowed to defer evaluation of mitigations.14 Why does the VTP DEIR resort to these tactics so often? 12 CEQA Guidelines § 15151. 13 No Oil, Inc. v. City of Los Angeles (1974), Sundstrom v. County of Mendocino (1988), Gentry v. City of Murrieta (1995). 14 CEQA Guidelines § 15126.4(a)(1)(B)	CEQA - tiering
O156	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	• Front-load the analysis into the PEIR, rather than pushing it down to projects. This is what CEQA requires. CNPS agrees with the BoF that we need to treat at least some vegetation within 300 feet of homes. We also agree that, in some parts of the state (like some pine forests in the Sierra Nevada), we need more controlled burns. Were the VTP limited to projects that have broad-based support, it would be in place right now. Unfortunately, none of this analysis or consensus seeking went into the VTP or its DEIR. If it had, many of the problems we identify would not exist.	CEQA - tiering

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O186	Watt	Jean	Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks	The most concerning issue, however,relates to the failure of the document to provide a key component of a programmatic EIR - providing a more exhaustive consideration of effects and cumulative impacts than could be accomplished at the project level (14 CCR § 15168). Instead, volumes of repetitive text are punctuated with the unsupported claim that determining impacts is impossible, deferring to project managers to determine with a checklist and standard project requirements that depend on subjective judgments.	CEQA - tiering
O192	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	I. The DEIR Provides an Inadequate Analysis of the Program's Environmental Impacts The DEIR provides an impermissibly vague and cursory analysis of the VTP's environmental impacts, which is a fatal flaw that permeates the entire document. The DEIR attempts to justify the lack of detailed analysis by labeling itself a programmatic EIR and suggesting that there will be a future opportunity for environmental review when each project is implemented. DEIR at E-5. CEQA, however, does not allow an agency to defer analysis simply by labeling its EIR a "program EIR." CEQA recognizes that a program EIR "can provide an occasion for a more exhaustive consideration of effects and alternatives" than a project-specific EIR. Guidelines § 15168(b)(1) (emphasis added). In addition, program EIRs must "deal[] with the effects of the program as specifically and comprehensively as possible" and consider "cumulative impacts that might be slighted in a case-by-case analysis." Id. § 15168(b)(2), (c)(5). As the Court summarized in Friends of Mammoth v. Town of Mammoth Lakes Redevelopment Agency, 82 Cal.App.4th 511, 533 (2000)("[d]esignating an EIR as a program EIR also does not by itself decrease the level of analysis otherwise required in the EIR." The California Supreme Court also recently cautioned, "'[t]iering does not excuse the lead agency from adequately analyzing reasonably foreseeable significant environmental effects of the project and does not justify deferring such analysis to a later tier EIR or negative declaration."); Vineyard Area Citizens for Responsible Growth v. City of Rancho Cordova, 40 Cal.4th 412, 431 (2007)(quoting Guidelines § 15152(b)). Here, the DEIR fails as an informational document because it does not provide decision- makers and the public with adequate information about the impacts of the overall program. Moreover, the vague, cursory, deferred analysis in the program DEIR is not sufficient to support any later project-level decision-making. There is no process in the program DEIR that guarantees that a future, detailed environmental review will occur, or that environmental impacts will be disclosed, analyzed, and mitigated.	CEQA - tiering
O261	Spencer	Wayne	Conservation Biology Insitute	Insufficient Project Description. The project description is still so vague that the environmental impacts cannot be meaningfully analyzed. The PEIR provides broad categories of vegetation treatments and WUI-based land zones where they may apply, but fails to explain how these would actually be used in the project planning process. For example, the PEIR states that the number and type of vegetation treatments would be selected based on "a number of parameters"—starting with, "the potential for significant adverse impacts"—but it never specifies how the various parameters, criteria, and principles would actually be applied to project planning. It also fails to define key terms, such as "high value asset," "old growth," and "forest health," which are used as loopholes in the already vague principles. Impact findings based on such a loosely described project can be nothing more than simplistic speculations. Consequently, the PEIR defers the analysis of impacts and mitigation to be determined project-by-project in the future. Basically, the program seems to boil down to: We'll determine the impacts of projects as they happen and then figure out mitigation if need be. But it is the purpose of a PEIR to fully analyze and disclose the individual and cumulative impacts of projects it would cover and to prescribe adequate mitigation actions for impacts of those projects. This draft does not do that.	CEQA - tiering

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O276	Whitestone	Karen	California Native Plant Society, East Bay Chapter	Briefly, the reasons for these failures include: 1. Circumventing CEQA - impacts determined to be less than significant by the "Fallacy of Authority" (our conclusions are true because we say so – no evidence provided) - lack of detail as required within a programmatic EIR - passing on responsibility to project managers to determine potential impacts - inadequate mitigation measures - Significance Criteria to determine impact to biological resources dismissed without support	CEQA - tiering
U10	Rothstein	Steve	University of California, Santa Barbara	I have looked at the state's Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Report for the Vegetation Treatment Program and also the review that the California Chaparral Institute has done of this program. I agree with the California Chaparral Institute that the DPEIR contains significant deficiencies and that the report needs major modifications before the process proceeds.	CEQA compliance
O3	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	Briefly, the reasons for these failures include: 1. Circumventing CEQA - impacts determined to be less than significant by the "Fallacy of Authority" (our conclusions are true because we say so – no evidence provided) - lack of detail as required within a programmatic EIR - passing on responsibility to project managers to determine potential impacts - inadequate mitigation measures - Significance Criteria to determine impact to biological resources dismissed without support	CEQA compliance
O75	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	After carefully reviewing the VTP DEIR, we have concluded that it fails to comply with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA"), Public Resources Code section 21000 et seq. ("CEQA"). As described below, the DEIR violates CEQA because it: (1) fails to adequately describe the VTP; (2) fails to properly analyze the Program' s environmental impacts, especially its impacts to biological resources; (3) relies on ineffective and unenforceable mitigation to conclude that the VTP's impacts would be reduced to levels that are less than significant; and (4) fails to undertake a legally sufficient study of alternatives to the Program. Such fundamental errors undermine the integrity of the DEIR. While this letter focuses predominantly on the VTP's impacts on biological resources, it is important to acknowledge that the Program would also have other extensive impacts including but not limited to increased greenhouse gas and criteria air pollutant emissions, degraded water quality, and ironically, an increased risk of wildland fires.	CEQA compliance
O116	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	III. Conclusion For the reasons set forth above, we respectfully request that the Board revise its VTP in a manner that provides a far more specific process and set of governing criteria for determining how, where and whether a specific project should be implemented, based on up-to-date scientific research. We also request that no further consideration be given to the VTP until the Board has prepared an EIR for the revised Program that provides meaningful environmental analysis in full compliance with CEQA.	CEQA compliance
O158	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	• Follow CEQA exactly, and get the environmental analysts involved at the design stage, not at the end. The point is to identify critical problems and avoid them through design changes, rather than solidifying the design and being left with a mess to mitigate. Environmental analysts earn their pay because they are, on an per-hour basis, substantially cheaper than lawyers, and sometimes even cheaper than firefighters. Their best role is helping people spot and avoid predictable problems, rather than in covering up issues. Many southern California developers have learned this advice, and their projects get built without drama. We suggest that state agencies might find it useful as well.	CEQA compliance

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O191	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	Based on our review, we find that the DEIR fails to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA"), Public Resources Code § 21000 et seq., and the CEQA Guidelines, title 14, California Administrative Code, § 15000 et seq. The DEIR violates CEQA on numerous counts, including the following key deficiencies discussed further below: (1) the DEIR provides an inadequate analysis of the Program's environmental impacts; (2) Standard Project Requirements are actually mitigation measures and must be treated as such; (3) the DEIR fails to provide an accurate, stable, and finite project description; (4) the DEIR does not consider a reasonable range of alternatives; (5) the DEIR's justification for the VTP is not based on substantial evidence; (6) key objectives of the VTP are not based on substantial evidence; (7) the DEIR fails to adequately disclose, analyze, assess the significance of, and propose mitigation for impacts to biological resources caused by the Program; (8) the DEIR fails to meet CEQA's requirements with regard to the analysis of greenhouse gas ("GHG") emissions. While these comments focus on the deficiencies in the DEIR's analysis of impacts on biological resources and greenhouse gas emissions, significant and unlawful deficiencies pervade the remaining environmental impacts analyses as well. In short, the proposed VTP will result in a wide range of harmful environmental impacts that are not adequately disclosed, analyzed, or mitigated in the DEIR. The California State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection cannot lawfully approve the VTP based on this EIR.	CEQA compliance
O240	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	IX. Conclusion In sum, the DEIR fails to comply with CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines. Cal Fire cannot approve the VTP on the basis of this DEIR. Rather, Cal Fire must revise both the DEIR and the VTP to comply with the requirements of law and to reflect the physical and ecological realities of California's forests.	CEQA compliance
O273	Whitestone	Karen	California Native Plant Society, East Bay Chapter	It is with a deep sense of disappointment to find that the current Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (DPEIR) for the state's proposed Vegetation Treatment Program contains many of the same errors (some with the exact wording), contradictions, and failures to identify environmental impacts that were pointed out in previous versions. Many of the productive suggestions provided to the Board of Forestry on how they could improve the draft DPEIR were ignored, including those from the California Legislature's required review by the California Fire Science Consortium, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, fire scientists, and environmental groups. Potential impacts are dismissed by the DPEIR without support, mitigations of impacts are unenforceable and unmeasurable, the treatment of northern chaparral is justified by non sequitur reasoning, and the research of several scientists continues to be misrepresented (despite corrections being submitted). The lack of transparency remains a significant issue – using a local newspaper to inform the public about projects is no longer adequate. One of the most egregious examples of the DPEIR's failure is the continued use of outdated and inadequate spatial data that provides the foundation for the entire Program. Although updated data is available from Cal Fire itself, the DPEIR ignores this rich resource and depends instead on questionable information from decades ago. As a consequence, the current DPEIR fails to meet the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The DPEIR also reveals a significant number of inconsistencies as the document initially references current science to only qualify or ignore it later in order to support the Program's objectives. By using contradictory statements, undefined terms, and legally inadequate mitigation processes, the document is a testament in ambiguity. It appears to be a program in search of confirming data rather than one developed from examining the actual problem.	CEQA compliance

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
P42	Riber	Minna		Please consider the facts before burning our open space. There are many departments that have been involved with fires whose recommendations are not being considered. We need a consensus of ideas and they must be from all involved departments. Your report does not meet CEQA standards, it does not address the Environmental Impact and it misrepresents scientific research done by specialists. Basically, it is not clear and not in the best interests of Californians. It is time for all involved to be on the same page now.	CEQA compliance
P60	Wallace	Elizabeth		The DPEIR fails to meet the requirements of CEQA because the proposed program has a significant impact on the environment. In the latest draft, the environmental impacts of clearance operations are dismissed without support.	CEQA compliance
U1	Pratt	R. Brandon	California State University, Bakersfield	I recently had a chance to read the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (DPEIR) and want to express concerns about some of the management approaches. In particular, the approach of fuels treatment (mastication, spraying with herbicide, clearing) in chaparral should be generally abandoned throughout the state. Such treatments transform these ecosystems and diminish the many important services that they provide (e.g. carbon storage among others), as well as their significant biodiversity. Another common phenomenon is that once these stands are altered annuals (many non-native and invasive) become more abundant. This makes these landscapes more prone to frequent fires, and thus more dangerous, because these annuals are dry for much of the year and thus able to carry a fire. A focus on providing defensible space around structures is a strategy that is more effective in limiting loss than the fuels manipulations that are commonly employed. Also, wise development strategies that build-in defensible space around new developments along the urban-wildlands interface will prove more effective in the long term.	Program Effectiveness
U2	Pratt	R. Brandon	California State University, Bakersfield	I have studied fire and chaparral for many years and spent much time in the field and traveling around the state in chaparral systems, thus I have extensive experience on this topic. I have also engaged land managers in similar systems in Western Australia, central Chile, South Africa, and the Mediterranean Basin and discussed shrubland management in the context of fire. As a California state and federal tax payer I find the notion of funding a destructive and degrading fuels management approach to wildfire management distressing. I teach about these topics to both undergraduate and master's students and they too find this situation distressing. The risk (fuels manipulations may make a system more likely to frequently burn) and dubious cost to benefit of this management approach should weigh heavily in decisions to manage fuels in chaparral systems. If this is done I am confident that it will save tax payer dollars and help preserve the states most extensive, diverse, and uniquely Californian ecosystem type.	Program Effectiveness

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
U6	Dudley	Tom	Marine Science Institute, University of California Santa Barbara	Of particular concern is the promotion of the obsolete approach of clearing large areas of native shrubland vegetation, whether by mastication or by prescribed fire, with the intent of altering fire severity and proximity. As the BoF should be fully aware, the most serious wildfire impacts in shrublands (chaparral ecosystems) are during 'fire weather', when vegetation volume is of relatively little significance in determing fire intensity and spread rates. Thus, massive clearing does not have a substantial impact to fire return intervals nor the risk fires pose to communities. Instead, these disruptive measures tend to promote proliferation of non-native, fire-prone ruderal plants, as we have outlined in a recent publication in the plant science journal Madroño (Lambert, A.M., C.M. D'Antonio and T.L. Dudley. 2011. Invasive species and fire in California ecosystems. Madroño 38:29-36). Intact vegetation assemblages are destroyed, particularly by repeated use of these vegetation management methods, and are replaced by weeds that increase probability of fire ignitions. Attempts to manage fire severity have the perverse effect of leading to more ignitions, particularly when conducted along access routes that are where human activity, and thus likelihood of ignition sources, are concentrated. For example, we have observed adajcent to our community at the WUI, a fire that started along a ridge route presumably by ciagarette or sparks from a passing vehicle, that burned the approx. 200 feet of adjacent vegetation that had been managed for 'fuel reduction' and then stopped cold at the edge of the undistrubed, mature chaparral vegetation. It bears repeating, vegetation removal promotes weed proliferation, which inturn increases likelihood for ignitions and does little to prevent either fire spread (embers or firebrands cross 100's of meters easily during 'fire weather' conditions when the risks of fire are most severe.	Program Effectiveness
U9	Dudley	Tom	Marine Science Institute, University of California Santa Barbara	So, my cursory analysis of the draft PIER document leaves me very concerned that it represents an incomplete, and rather obsolete, assessment of best practices for managing wildfire risk for the future. In particular, there is abundant emphasis on costly and often counter-productive vegetation removal approaches, especially in shrubland environments such as California chaparral ecosystems. The document largely ignores current scientific understanding and policy recommendations that would be at the same time be more cost-effective, less damaging to natural ecosystems and native biodiversity, and finally, a safer and more realistic approach to managing wildfire risks in California. Management efforts should be more carefully targeted at the real wildfire concerns in the interest of best protecting lives, property, and the natural environment through an integrative and comprehensive approach focused on the at-risk human communities and immediate surroundings, rather than an unfocused effort to fundamentally alter the natural communities adapted to function in the context of fire. The planning effort should truly be focused instead on fuel modifications within and directly around communities at risk, on ignition sources and potential points of wildfire ignition including the role of flammable non-native plants, on protection of structures via better flammability inhibition, and on comprehensive community and regional planning to improve communication and planning among all stakeholders. This PIER process requires an unbiased and scientifically justifiable re-consideration, with greater attention of input from independent fire researchers and the conservation community…which has NOT been the case to-date.	Program Effectiveness

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A11	Osterholm	Lesa	Range Management Advisory Committee	The Range Management Advisory Committee has reviewed the Draft Vegetation Treatment Program Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (VTP EIR) and would like to provide comments to improve the practical value and utility of this program, especially regarding the utilization of prescribed herbivory for fuels reduction and ecological management. The use of animals to reduce fuel loads has grown in acceptance for its low impact, and especially to maintain projects once initial treatments are completed. The purpose of the VTP EIR is to provide a framework that can facilitate projects undertaken to manage wildland fuels in WUIs and similarly critical areas statewide. The Committee recognizes the need for this program, and unequivocally supports the ambition of it. An RMAC report titled "Status and Recommendations Regarding the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Vegetation Management Program" was submitted on June 22, 2005 and outlined the committee's views on implementing a statewide vegetation treatment program. RMAC submitted a public comment letter on February 25, 2013 that expanded on the themes from that report and directly linked those concerns to the VTP as proposed at that time. RMAC believes many of those overall themes remain relevant to the ongoing fuels issue in California and barriers to implementing vegetation management projects, and provides the following comments on the 2016 Draft VTP EIR to support fuels management and ecological health throughout California.	Program Effectiveness
A19	Fege	Anne	Community Forest Advisory Board, City of San Diego	Protection of lives and property. Whereas the DPEIR identifies the wildland-urban interface (WUI) as a primary vegetation treatment objective, it fails to address the overriding influence of structure ignitability to wildfire risk reduction. As the emphasis of the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) shifts more to "fire protection" than "forestry," it is astounding that protection of lives and property is not the focus of this document. At the very least, a clearly articulated and analyzed alternative needs to be presented, that features structure- and community-based actions to reduce wildfire actions. Scientific research and decades of experience of wildland firefighters have shown that the most effective way to prevent the loss of life and property from wildland fires is to work from the house out, to reduce home flammability with non-flammable materials and features, ember- resistant vents, removal of debris from roofs and adjacent to the structure, and more. Properly maintained defensible space (within 100 feet of structure) is the other important half of the fire risk reduction equation. Wildland fuel treatments (beyond the defensible space zone) offer the least effective strategy to protect communities from wildfire.	Program Effectiveness
A21	Fege	Anne	Community Forest Advisory Board, City of San Diego	Program description. Although the vegetation treatments are described in greater detail than in earlier drafts, there is limited and inadequate scientific basis for their effectiveness, and many claims are made without references. The series of case studies, although interesting to read, do not provide the scientific evidence for the applicability and outcome of the vegetation treatments. Recent modeling of the effects of fuel reduction and other factors on wildlife ignition, suppression, and spread are extensive and still have not been incorporated into the program description. Alex Syphard and others have analyzed the CalFire databases and other spatial data to assess the effectiveness of structure location, fuel reduction volume and distance, predicted fire behavior, firefighter access, and other wildfire conditions. These analyses show that strategic fuel modification helps to stop fires in "fire weather" if fire suppression forces can quickly and safely access them. Remote fuel breaks have not significantly reduced total annual area burned in southern California. As a minimum, these two references need to be incorporated and cited: Syphard, A.D., Brennan T.J., Keeley J.E. (2014) The role of defensible space for residential structure protection during wildfires. International Journal of Wildland Fire 23, 1165–1175. Syphard, A.D., Keeley, J.E., Brennan, T.J. 2011. Comparing the role of fuel breaks across southern California national forests. Forest Ecology and Management 26: 2038-2048.	Program Effectiveness

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A28	Fege	Anne	Community Forest Advisory Board, City of San Diego	Closing. I have participated in meetings, submitted letters, read letters that others have submitted, reread some of the scientific literature, browsed the level of spatial data available, and refered to the strategic plan and other CalFire documents about wildfire property risk reduction. And it is now frustrating to read this DPEIR that has addressed and corrected only some of the recommendations that experts and the public have made in those meetings and letters. Fuel treatments are important but insufficient tools to reduce property risks in the WUI, to provide for ecological restoration in selected ecosystems, and to establish and maintain strategic fuel breaks for fire suppression. The programmatic DPEIR is a valid approach, but needs to provide far more evidence for the program description and the location of treatments in the 30 million acres of land and hundreds of communities. Thank you for this opportunity to comment on documents relating to the DPEIR for the Vegetation Treatment Program.	Program Effectiveness
A29	Blatt	Fred	North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board	We fully support the primary goal and purpose of the proposed Vegetation Treatment Program (VTP), which is to reduce costs and losses to human and environmental resources associated with wildfires. We believe the VTPEIR Proposed Program, with the incorporation of our accompanying recommendations, can accomplish this goal. Additionally, we have reviewed and support the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board's comments on the VTPEIR.	Program Effectiveness
A89	Szymanski	David	Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area	The NPS shares concerns articulated by our partner, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, namely anticipated loss of habitat, resulting loss of diversity within the habitat, and the apparent inability of the proposed VTP to protect lives, property, and natural environment from wildland fire.	Program Effectiveness
A90	Szymanski	David	Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area	Specifically, the NPS has serious concerns with several areas of controversy listed in the DPEIR (p. E-12): • Cumulative impacts to chaparral communities from program treatments and wildfires. • Impacts to water quality, biological resources, and human health. • Ability to address the ecological and social complexities of the state in a single Program. The revised VTPEIR is disappointing in that it has proposed a set of general vegetation treatment objectives of unsupported etlectiveness (p.E2-E3) instead of goals based on current science to reduce wildfire threats related to structure loss, habitat loss, type conversion and reduced carbon storage. Not all vegetation treatments reduce fire risk. Research funded by the Department of the Interior has demonstrated that defensible space is effective. Strategic fuel breaks have proved ineffective and may increase fire risk by encouraging conversion to fine fuel (see Syphard et al, 2012).	Program Effectiveness
A91	Szymanski	David	Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area	Wildfire management must be nimble and able to adapt to new or unpredicted circumstances based on sound science. In the Santa Monica Mountains we have seen unprecedented changes in the last five years. Our first ever major spring season wildfire burned 24,000 acres in May 2013. Extended drought for the past four years has inhibited nonnative post fire vegetation recovery and caused major shrub dieback in unburned areas. Shrub dieback has opened closed canopies and allowed herbaceous fuel growth in the understory in 2016. creating potentially increased wildfire risk for this year. Even with environmental conditions remaining status quo, the VTPEIR does not offer appropriate solutions to known wildfire problems for our region; in a rapidly changing environment it does not address new and emerging wildfire threats and how the proposed treatment program may exacerbate them (Enright et al, 2015; Pratt et al, 2014: Pausas et al, 2015).	Program Effectiveness
A92	Szymanski	David	Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area	The VTPEIR will be one the most important wildland fire management document in California, one that will guide the activities of our partners - communities, local governments, and state agencies - for the next decade. We hope that the VTPEIR can be modified through a collaborative process to better address the wide range of wildfire solutions needed in the state and to build in adaptation mechanisms as more is learned about the most effective management strategies for fire safety and ecosystem resilience.	Program Effectiveness

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A100	Taylor	Robert	Coast Mediterranean Network, National Park Service, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area	I wonder if the CalFire veg clearance folks might get very excited about your suggested large scale program of removing dead and dying trees in the service of a biofuel program? That could be a real win-win project that would get them off their current problematic track, help get us off their case, and allow them to achieve a number of truly appealing things that lots of stakeholders could support: • Those at CalFire who just really really want to keep cutting woody vegetation on large areas of land get to keep doing that. • Biologists become CalFire's friends and allies rather than "obstacles to fuel treatment" when biologists are helping them identify vast acreages of dead and dying trees that biologists want them to remove. • CalFire fuel treatment people get to claim an honest, clear, and demonstrable ecological benefit for their projects that biologists will affirm. No more need to justify projects with defensive, weasel-wordy hand waving about creating vague hypothetical "habitat value" for undefined species. • CalFire fuel treatment people can keep calling their work "hazard fuel removal," and count the acres as such if they want to. It is not a stretch to characterize a large stand of Sudden Oak Death (SOD)-killed woodland as some kind of fire hazard. They get to claim a fire safety benefit for their projects, so multiple objectives are met. Woo hoo! • But wait, there's more! If they really help take a lot of diseased, fire prone biomass off the landscape before it burns, and run it through newly constructed biofuel facilities to make something that replaces a fossil fuel, and they also help prepare SOD-killed woodlands for a speedier return to healthy, carbon-sequestering native plant cover, then we avoid some of the current shady carbon accounting and it becomes easier to demonstrate honest benefits for CA's carbon footprint. (If all those trucks and chainsaws don't blow our carbon budget)	Program Effectiveness
A101	Taylor	Robert	Coast Mediterranean Network, National Park Service, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area	• One could honestly call it a proactive natural resource management program addressing expected climate change effects on CA landscapes. This would be especially true if any aids to revegetation on the backside of a treatment are sensitive to expected changes in future habitat suitability for dominant species. Biologists will need to help advise them on that part too. • New biofuel facilities can be characterized honestly as centers of rural job creation. • New biofuel facilities can be characterized honestly as renewable energy development. • Some new biofuel facilities can probably also become sources of certified sterile, pathogen-free compost and other soil amendments. (Let the thermophilic fungi cook the pathogens out of the biomass in big temperature-controlled composting barns or something?) Plug them in with organizations like Ecology Action in Willits and let a thousand gardens bloom. • Those at CalFire who really really want to keep modeling fire hazard for project planning purposes could keep doing that. Some SOD-killed areas that need treating will also fall near human communities or adjacent to existing anchor points for fire suppression. CalFire could still prioritize some SOD-killed areas that they figure will create new tactical advantages to wildland firefighters and claim some arguable fire safety benefits for their projects in addition to all the other benefits. Why not? • If the primary objective is removing disease-killed biomass (=dead hazard fuels) to stimulate vegetation recovery (replacement with less hazardous, live fuels), then it will not be necessary to treat an area over and over again to achieve their objectives. So they'll be able to treat a lot more acres in the long run than if they were just making fuelbreaks requiring annual treatment from now until forever. Woot!	Program Effectiveness
A102	Taylor	Robert	Coast Mediterranean Network, National Park Service, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area	One of the scary things about SOD and other impending woodland epidemics is the vast spatial scale of the damage. And CalFire's VTP is a vast, potentially damaging project in search of a legitimate mission. So give it a good one and everyone is happy. If sensitively directed and implemented, CalFire's VTP could actually be a really helpful service to our state. Its huge proposed scope would actually be appropriate to tackling a huge problem like epidemics of woodland dieback. In fact, CalFire is one of the only entities capable of undertaking coordinated work on such a large scale. CalFire management might really love this new mission once they got their heads around it.	Program Effectiveness

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A103	Taylor	Robert	Coast Mediterranean Network, National Park Service, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area	I think now would be a terrific time to get a cabal of subject matter experts together to develop this general idea into a more specific proposal. The first thing to prove would be the specific technical feasibility and economic viability of the proposed biofuel facilities.The fact that the VTP does not need to pay for itself will probably be one of the keys to making the whole thing break even. I expect the cost of cost effectively transporting all the biomass (instead of masticating and leaving it onsite) frmo project sites to biofuel facilities without spreading fungal pathogens will be a challenge. So what do folks think about this? Does this general notion even pass the laugh test? Did anyone else have an "Aha!" moment thinking about this?	Program Effectiveness
O7	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	Our Hope Having worked on the Vegetation Treatment Program since 2005, our experience with this process allows us to offer a uniquely informed evaluation of the DPEIR. Despite addressing the same problems over and over again, after all the well-informed feedback, all the legal battles, and all the delays caused by failures to meet requirements of environmental compliance, we remain hopeful that a quality Vegetation Treatment Program will emerge in a collaborative manner. For a quality Program to develop, however, the process must focus on “How do we protect lives and property from wildfire?” rather than the current priority, “How do we manage fuel?” These are different questions with very different solutions.	Program Effectiveness
O33	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	Conclusion As we have in the past, we urge the Board of Forestry and Cal Fire to produce a document that starts by responding to the following question, “How do we protect lives and property from wildfire?” instead of “How do we manage fuel?” These are two different questions resulting in two different answers. Such a powerful approach will challenge everyone to leverage their own experiences, be willing to consider new paradigms, and honestly collaborate with others, especially with those who have different perspectives. Otherwise, we will continue practices that have brought us to this point – increased loss of homes, increased loss of habitat, and increasing levels of carbon in our atmosphere. It was suggested to us after our testimony to the Board on August 26, 2015, that, “scientists used to believe a lot of things that we've learned were wrong. So we can't just wait around for science to find the correct answer. We need to move forward.” We do need to move forward, but we need to do so by utilizing all the information available to us today, not depend on outdated models, poor research, and incorrect assumptions. Therefore, we urge the Board to prepare a revised DPEIR by addressing and incorporating the suggested improvements above. We owe it to ourselves and future generations to get it right this time, especially because the changing climate will not be forgiving if we squander the opportunity.	Program Effectiveness
O56	Maxwell	Cynthia	Cold Creek Community Council	Our community is surrounded entirely by chaparral and is entirely within the borders of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. It is clear to us that this proposed program will cause significant and irreversible impacts to natural resources in the SMMNRA, while producing few, if any, fire-safety benefits.	Program Effectiveness

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O66	Kutcher	Celia	California Native Plant Society - Orange County Chapter	The Orange County Chapter of the California Native Plant Society has long been concerned that efforts to pre-emptively control wildfire, via “pre-fire” manipulation of the vegetation, do more harm than good to the native vegetation that we work to preserve and enhance. Study of the 2016 version of the proposed Vegetation Treatment Program indicates that it, too, may well do more harm than good to native vegetation in State Responsibility Areas, in Orange County and in the rest of California.	Program Effectiveness
O76	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	I. Introduction The proposed VTP is a plan to burn, treat with herbicides, and otherwise modify the vegetative landscape of California on a massive and unprecedented scale. The Board of Forestry and Fire Protection's ("Board") Program requires the implementation of fuel management activities that would affect an area of about 22 million acres. DEIR at E-1 and E-6. That is an area greater than that of South Carolina and Delaware combined. The premise upon which the VTP rests-the Board's view that a substantial part of this vast amount of land must be "treated" to prevent wildfire-is not only grandiose but, for California's extensive shrub vegetation communities, entirely lacking in scientific basis. For this very large and vital component of the VTP, we can find no evidence in the DEIR that the VTP would even achieve the Board's mission of safeguarding the people and protecting the property and resources of California from the hazards associated with wildfire. Indeed, we are unaware of any other state that threatens the elimination of populations of sensitive wildlife and vegetation to prevent wildfires.	Program Effectiveness
O114	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	3. There are Valid Alternatives to the VTP That Are Far Less Environmentally Damaging. Given that each of the DEIR's alternatives include identical vegetation treatment strategies, it is clear that the Board believes that the VTP is the only valid approach to prevent wildfires. However, there are far more effective methods to minimizing wildfire, that would be less environmentally harmful, yet these are completely ignored in the DEIR. The most effective way to protect lives, property, and the natural environmental from wildfire is through a comprehensive approach that focuses on fuel modifications within and directly around communities at risk, ignitability of structures and effective land use planning. To this end, EHL has developed an alternative that would achieve these goals without the severe environmental impacts that would accompany the VTP. This alternative is described in Wayne Spencer's May 31, 2016 report. Given the truly enormous impacts that the VTP would have on the environment, and to remedy the DEIR's faulty alternatives analysis, the Board must consider alternatives that actually lessen the VTP's significant environmental impacts. Without this opportunity the public is merely asked to take on '"blind trust" that the proposed VTP is the best alternative. Asking for this sort of faith is not only unfair to the people of California, it is unlawful "in light of CEQA's fundamental goal that the public be fully informed as to the consequences of action by their public officials." Laurel Heights, supra, 47 Cal.3d 376, 494. Because the EHL Alternative is reasonable and viable, and because it would lessen the Program's impacts, the Board must examine it in the revised DEIR.	Program Effectiveness
O117	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	We strongly agree that fire and invasive species are critical issues that must be actively managed. However, westrongly recommends that this DEIR NOT be certified, due to lack of substantial evidence to support contentions and conclusions made throughout the document, due to substantial procedural lapses and irregularities, as well as the other issues we list below. We further contend that it cannot serve the purpose it was apparently designed for, and propose possibly more workable solutions for the Board's consideration.	Program Effectiveness

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O128	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	1. H. Why are the Objectives so badly defined? • Aren't Objectives 2, 3, and 4 subsets of Objective 1? Objective 1, "Modify wildland fire behavior to help reduce losses to life, property, and natural resources,"(p. E-3) includes objectives 2-4 so one can argue that 2-4 are redundant. These objectives perhaps refer instead to the three treatment activities respectively deal with fire in the wildland urban interface ("WUI"), fire breaks, and "ecological restoration," although not only are they not named as such. In any case, they are, at best, sub-goals of #1. Why separate them out? • Can the VTP accomplish Objectives 2 and 3? Objective 2 (p. E-2) states: "[i]ncrease the opportunities for altering or influencing the size, intensity, shape, and direction of wildfires within the wildland urban interface," and Objective 3 (p. E-3) states: "Reduce the potential size and total associated suppression costs of individual wildland fires by altering the continuity of wildland fuels." If the average VTP project is 260 acres, less the half a square mile, and embers can travel up to 12 miles (see section 4 below), then are VTP projects at the right scale to make any meaningful difference? The VTP needs to make clear what kinds of fires it envisions protecting against, because these two objectives seem to be scaled too small to control the wind-driven fires that cause a vast majority of destruction in California. • What is meant by Objective 4? Objective 4 (p. E-3) is to "[r]educe the potential for high severity fires by restoring and maintaining a range of native, fire-adapted plant communities through periodic low intensity treatments within the appropriate vegetation types." While this might make sense in, for instance, ponderosa pine forests that have become overgrown with saplings due to fire suppression, it appears that the majority of controlled burns are aimed at shrub-dominated vegetation, e.g. chaparral (p. 4-427). As both the California Chaparral Institute and CNPSSD have argued repeatedly, there is too much fire in chaparral, especially in southern California. The simplest way to improve this fire return interval is to not burn in chaparral for the next century or so. Both Objective 4 and the VTP itself need to become consistent and transparent about what they intend to burn, where, and why. CNPSSD does not disagree that some plant communities, such as some ponderosa pine stands in the Sierra Nevada, could benefit from controlled burns. These need to be called out so that the impacts of treating them can be analyzed. Why were they not identified in this DEIR?	Program Effectiveness
O151	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	Alternatives to the current VTP and DEIR When reading the DEIR, one comes away with the overwhelming impression that this is a document written by people who want stuff done without thinking about the consequences. While we understand that impulse, we do not sympathize with it. The problem is that the VTP, if implemented as written, would be the single biggest igniter of wildland fires in California, igniting over 100 every year. While all of these are supposed to be controlled burns, the sheer number of ignitions means that some, eventually, will go out of control and cause damage through simple bad luck. Moreover, the VTP will be the single biggest vegetation-clearer. If the biological SPRs are implemented as written, VTP employees and contractors will become the single biggest danger to sensitive plants in the state. If scientists turn out to be right about fire behavior, most VTP activities will have little or no effect on saving lives or property from wildfires, while spending hundreds of millions of dollars. This is why we care about consequences. The proposed VTP is far too hulking a program to run it impulsively and not analyze its predictable consequences.	Program Effectiveness
O152	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	We also care because the VTP simply doesn't add up as written. If 22,000,000 acres are " appropriate for treatment" and 60,000 acres are treated every year, it would take almost 367 years for each appropriate acre to get treated once. That's simply pointless. Old growth chaparral can re-establish itself in well under 367 years. The State of California is less than half that age. If the VTP's goal is truly treat WUI areas, that takes repeated visits every few years. In any case, the VTP can only include a small fraction of those 22,000,000 acres. There's no utility in making the program area unworkably large, and there's especially no point in using the scale of acres appropriate for treatment as a way to evaluate alternatives. Most of the land is untreatable anyway.	Program Effectiveness

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O155	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	• Create a program that implements those objectives and strategies, again using science. This is common sense, although some may not see it that way. For example, the DEIR notes that "cost and time to meet environmental review requirements, surveying for and mitigating treatment effects to threatened and endangered species" are major impediments to treating 120,000 acres per year under the existing Vegetation Management Program ("VMP", p. 1- 15). Oddly enough, agencies like the National Park Service somehow manage to get programs done within the constraint of environmental review requirements. Is the problem in the requirements, or within BoF's system for meeting them? This is an awkward, but critical question. If the problem isn't with the environmental review requirements, then the VTP is based on a fundamentally wrong assumption, and BoF needs to look at other options for accomplishing its objectives.	Program Effectiveness
O180	Dodson	Snowdy	California Native Plant Society - Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains	17.) The current VTP PEIR is not complete and is insufficient for achieving its stated mission and goals.	Program Effectiveness
O181	Dodson	Snowdy	California Native Plant Society - Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains	CDFFP and Cal-Fire must face the challenges of the 21st century with a new program capable of dealing with large populations of people, erosion of watersheds and loss of groundwater, new plant diseases and non-native plant invasions, changing climate, very erratic weather patterns, rising ocean levels and still preserve one of the world's greatest centers of biodiversity: California.	Program Effectiveness
O200	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	V. The DEIR's Justification for the VTP Is Not Based on Substantial Evidence The DEIR's justification for the VTP is predicated on assertions that are either unsupported by the best-available science or highly uncertain. The DEIR states that the purpose of the VTP is "lowering the risk of damaging wildfire in the SRA by managing wildland fuels through the use of environmentally appropriate vegetation treatments." DEIR at E-2. The DEIR asserts that "[i]n some forested portions of California fire suppression has created an uninterrupted accumulation of wildland fuels with resultant increases in fire hazard" (DEIR at E- 1)3 and that "climate change suggests a continuing and even accelerated risk from wildfire," including large-scale mortality from insects. DEIR at E-2. However, the DEIR fails to provide supporting scientific evidence to show that wildfire in California's forests is burning at unnatural or unusual levels or severities and therefore should be reduced. The DEIR similarly presents no evidence showing that fire suppression and bark beetle outbreaks have led to increased fire activity in California. The DEIR further ignores the extensive body of scientific studies examining current effects of climate change on wildfire activity which indicates that fire severity and amount have not increased in California's forests. In addition, studies projecting the influence of climate change on future fire activity indicate that fire severity in California forests is likely to stay the same or decrease, and that climate change effects on future fire activity are highly uncertain. The DEIR makes no effort to address this evidence.	Program Effectiveness

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O201	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	In contrast to the DEIR's unsupported assertions, the best-available science detailed below indicates that (1) wildfire is a natural and necessary component of California forests, California's mixed-conifer and ponderosa pine forests have been historically characterized by mixed-severity fire including significant amounts of high-severity fire, and high-severity fire creates biodiverse, ecologically important, and unique habitat; (2) California forests are experiencing a deficit of fire compared with historical conditions; (3) California's forests are not burning at higher severity or amount, nor are the most long-unburned forests burning at higher severity; (4) the projected effects of climate change on fire activity in California are highly uncertain; (5) bark beetle outbreaks have not increased annual area burned or fire severity; (6) trees killed by drought and beetles do not increase fire intensity or extent; and (7) vegetation management within the defensible space immediately surrounding homes effectively protects homes from wildland fire. As a result, the DEIR is out of touch with the best-available science on wildfire activity in California and fails to provide a defensible justification for the VTP. Of added concern, the body of science detailed below demonstrates that treatment activities to reduce wildfire pursuant to the DEIR are likely to cause significant environmental harm to California's ecosystems. While these comments focus on the DEIR's deficiencies related to forests, the DEIR is also scientifically unsupported in its discussion and analysis of shrublands, particularly chaparral, and grasslands, as detailed by other commentators. See comments submitted 24 May 2016 and 27 May 2106 by the California Chaparral Institute (incorporated by reference). 3 Similarly, the DEIR states: "catastrophic high severity wildfire; which in most cases in California is the inevitable eventual consequence of lack of fuel reduction coupled with fire suppression." DEIR at 4-117.	Program Effectiveness

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O216	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	H. Vegetation management within the defensible space immediately surrounding homes effectively protects homes from wildland fire. Vegetation management within the defensible space in the 40 meters [about 131 feet] surrounding individual homes effectively protects homes from wildland fire, even intense fire. However, forest management beyond the defensible space is not effectively protecting homes, and is unnecessarily putting firefighters at risk by focusing on remote wildlands. Cohen 2000: The home and its surrounding 40 meters determine home ignitability.51 Cohen and Stratton 2008: The vast majority of homes burned in wildland fires are burned by low-moving, low-intensity fire, and defensible space within 100-200 feet of individual homes [reducing brush and small trees, and limbing up larger trees, while also reducing the combustibility of the home itself] effectively protects homes from fires, even when they are more intense.52 Gibbons et al. 2012: Defensible space work within 40 meters [about 131 feet] of individual homes effectively protects homes from wildland fire, even intense fire. The authors concluded that the current management practice of thinning broad zones in wildland areas hundreds, or thousands, of meters away from homes is ineffective and diverts resources away from actual home protection, which must be focused immediately adjacent to individual structures in order to protect them.53 Scott et al. 2016: This study investigated the degree to which fuel management practices on USFS land can reduce wildfire exposure to human communities on a landscape encompassing the Sierra National Forest in California. The study found that treating defensible space near homes was by far the most efficient at reducing WUI exposure, including exposure transmitted from USFS lands. Treating USFS land did little to reduce overall WUI exposure across the landscape.54 51 Cohen, J.D. 2000. Preventing disaster: home ignitability in the Wildland-Urban Interface. Journal of Forestry 98: 15-21. 52 Cohen, J.D., and R.D. Stratton. 2008. Home destruction examination: Grass Valley Fire. U.S. Forest Service Technical Paper R5-TP-026b. 53 Gibbons, P. et al. 2012. Land management practices associated with house loss in wildfires. PLoS ONE 7: e29212. 54 Scott, J.H., M.P. Thompson, and J.W. Gilbertson-Day. 2016. Examining alternative fuel management strategies and the relative contribution of National Forest System land to wildfire risk to adjacent homes – A pilot assessment on the Sierra National Forest, California, USA. Forest Ecology and Management 362: 29-37.	Program Effectiveness
O217	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	VI. Key Objectives of the VTP Are Not Based On Substantial Evidence The DEIR fails to present substantial evidence to support key objectives of the VTP. The VTP's first objective to "[m]odify wildland fire behavior to help reduce losses to life, property, and natural resources" is the "governing goal of the Program." DEIR at E-3. This objective is based on the "primary assumption… that vegetation treatments can affect wildland fire behavior through the manipulation of wildland fuels." DEIR at 2-7. However, the DEIR itself acknowledges that this assumption is highly uncertain, thus undermining the basis for the entire program. For example, the DEIR states that "existing modeling literature suggests that relatively large proportions of the landscape needs to be treated to achieve wildfire risk reduction at the landscape scale" but then admits that the VTP will not be treating large portions of the landscape (e.g., "the proposed annual acres of treatment may not affect all the potential landscape fuels," DEIR at 2-7). The DEIR also states that "there is not a direct correlation between implementation of a vegetation treatment project and a proportionate reduction in numbers of fires or acres burned" (DEIR at 4-430) and that the "VTP is not proposed as the solution to California's vegetation management and fire problem" (DEIR at 2-36). Furthermore, the DEIR briefly acknowledges the need for frequent follow-up "maintenance" of areas receiving fuel treatments in order for treatments to remain effective (DEIR at 4-75), but fails to analyze how maintenance will be incorporated into the Program nor the environmental impacts of repeat treatments.	Program Effectiveness

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O218	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	Even more fundamentally, the DEIR fails to provide substantial evidence to support its governing assumption that fuel treatment activities will be effective in reducing wildfire activity. The body of studies on fuel reduction treatments indicates that the potential for fuel treatments to reduce wildfire occurrence is highly uncertain.55 Research indicates that larger fires are driven by hot, dry, windy weather conditions, with forest fuel conditions playing a relatively unimportant role in determining fire behavior and intensity.56 Furthermore, research in western US forests indicates that there is a low probability that an area that has received a vegetation treatment will overlap with a moderate or high-severity fire, further limiting the presumed efficacy of the VTP.57	Program Effectiveness
O219	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	The DEIR similarly provides no support for the assumption underlying objective 3 that "decreasing fire size will have a resulting decrease on overall fire suppression costs." DEIR at 2-8. In fact, the DEIR cites a study (Gude et al. 2013) indicating that fire proximity to homes is a significant driver of suppression costs. The DEIR also acknowledges that there is no evidence showing that fuel treatments reduce fire damage in the WUI, defined in the DEIR as the area starting beyond the defensible space to 1.5 miles from a structure. DEIR at 2-8 ("there is a lack of quantifying data to directly relate treatment methods to a reduction in damage and costs relative to the WUI"). As detailed above (Section V.H., supra), the best-available science indicates that vegetation management within the defensible space in the 40 meters surrounding individual homes effectively protects homes from wildland fire, while forest management in the WUI beyond the defensible space does not effectively protect homes. 55 E.D. Reinhardt, et al., Objectives and considerations for wildland fuel treatment in forested ecosystems of the interior western United States, 256 FOREST ECOLOGY & MGMT. 1997 (2008). 56 Id.; see also J.M. Lydersen, M.P. North, and B.M. Collins, Severity of an uncharacteristically large wildfire, the Rim Fire, in forests with relatively restored fire regimes, 328 FOREST ECOLOGY & MGMT. 326 (2014); T. Schoennagel, et al., The interaction of fire, fuels, and climate across Rocky Mountain Forests, 54 BIOSCIENCE 661 (2004); E.A. Johnson, Towards a sounder fire ecology, 1 FRONTIERS IN ECOLOGY & THE ENVT. 271 (2003). 57 J.J. Rhodes and W.L. Baker, Fire probability, fuel treatment effectiveness and ecological tradeoffs in western U.S. public forests, 1 OPEN FOREST SCIENCE JOURNAL 1 (2008).	Program Effectiveness
O221	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	First, the DEIR completely fails to disclose, analyze, or assess the significance of impacts resulting from the Program's efforts to reduce wildfire activity in California ecosystems, including high-severity fire activity. As discussed in detail above (Part V.A, supra), overwhelming scientific evidence demonstrates that California forests are adapted to mixed- severity fire regimes, including significant amounts of high-severity fire that create critical habitat diversity and are necessary for the persistence of numerous animal and plant species. The Program's fundamental goal to reduce wildfire activity threatens California forest ecosystems which are already experiencing a significant fire deficit in comparison to historical conditions (Part V.B, supra). Nor does the DEIR adequately acknowledge the detrimental effects on wildlife species and habitat of removing dead trees (whether killed by fire, drought, or beetles) from the forest. The DEIR must acknowledge and analyze the findings of numerous studies, detailed above, that demonstrate that reduction in wildfire activity and fuel reduction activities threaten the health, resilience, and diversity of California ecosystems and species. Instead, the DEIR simply substitutes this required analysis with a conclusory and unsupported statement that high-severity wildfire (a natural component of most California ecosystems) is detrimental to wildlife: "each of the various treatment types proposed in this program come with potential negative direct and/or indirect effects on wildlife, one must weigh these effects against the known effects on wildlife from catastrophic high severity wildfire." DEIR at 4-117. Such unsupported, conclusory statements are not permitted under CEQA. Such statements also represent an impermissible attempt to balance adverse environmental effects against purported project benefits without making the specific findings required by law. "CEQA does not authorize an agency to proceed with a project that will have significant, unmitigated effects on the environment, based simply on a weighing of those effects against the project's benefits, unless the measures necessary to mitigate those effects are truly infeasible." City of Marina v. Bd. of Trs. of Cal. State Univ., 39 Cal. 4th 341, 368-69 (2006); see also Pub. Res. Code § 21081(a)(3), (b).	Program Effectiveness

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O248	Principe	Zachary	The Nature Conservancy - California Chapter	Two additional and related topics should be directly addressed during project evaluation within South Coast shrublands to ensure adequate protection of this ecosystem type under the VTP: effectiveness of altering landscape fuels; and the threat of type conversion. The effectiveness of altering landscape fuels to reduce fires that result in losses of life, property and natural resources for South Coast shrublands should be evaluated using the most up-to-date science. Peer-reviewed literature is available that assesses the influence of prescribed fire on wildfires in shrublands of the South Coast and similar biomes1. Based on this literature, the most efficient and effective strategies appear to be focusing fuel treatments within direct structure protection zones and along evacuation routes.	Program Effectiveness
O260	Spencer	Wayne	Conservation Biology Insitute	Misplaced Goals. Despite the PEIR's stated goals (reducing risks to human life, property, and natural resources) its actual goal seems to be reducing regulatory hurdles so that CalFire can treat more acres/year—whether or not the treatments are actually needed and effective. Note that these different goals lead to very different approaches. If the goal is to treat more acres, there is little incentive to consider more effective, less costly, or more environmentally friendly alternatives. There is no scientific support for acreage quotas.	Program Effectiveness
O266	Spencer	Wayne	Conservation Biology Insitute	No Evidence the Proposed Treatments Will Be Effective. The PEIR still provides no evidence, references, or research studies demonstrating the effectiveness of the proposed treatments in protecting homes or other resources. Anecdotal case studies do not represent substantial, objective analyses. Cherry-picking case studies, such as cases when a fuel break may have helped stop a wildfire, can be highly misleading, particularly in the face of peer-reviewed studies showing low probabilities of this occurring over a large sample of fires (Syphard et al. 2011, 2012).	Program Effectiveness
O272	Spencer	Wayne	Conservation Biology Insitute	Conclusions The VTP PEIR remains fundamentally flawed, should not be certified, and needs to be completely redone once a much more scientifically valid approach to wildfire management replaces the current VTP. I again recommend that the program be rethought from the ground up in collaboration with scientists, stakeholders, and other appropriate experts to develop a strategy that might actually achieve the goals of reducing risks to human and natural resources. All this PEIR does is try to justify increasing the acreage of vegetation treated by various means, without sufficient guidance or oversight, in the misguided assumption this will solve the problem. Contacting the California LCC for assistance might be a fruitful first step.	Program Effectiveness
O280	Whitestone	Karen	California Native Plant Society, East Bay Chapter	Our Hope Having worked on the Vegetation Treatment Program since 2005, our experience with this process allows us to offer a uniquely informed evaluation of the DPEIR. Despite addressing the same problems over and over again, after all the well-informed feedback, all the legal battles, and all the delays caused by failures to meet requirements of environmental compliance, we remain hopeful that a quality Vegetation Treatment Program will emerge in a collaborative manner. For a quality Program to develop, however, the process must focus on "How do we protect lives and property from wildfire?" rather than the current priority, "How do we manage fuel?" These are different questions with very different solutions.	Program Effectiveness
P7	Collender	Tori		Apologies for writing on the last day for comments about Cal Fire's Vegetation Treatment Plan. I didn't realize that the new draft was out. While I'm sure Cal Fire has been working hard and the prospect of keeping tens of millions of Californians safe in a multi-year drought must be daunting, this doesn't do it. As I read it it's a rehash of the last one. The last one was inadequate on many many fronts. PLEASE DO NOT APPROVE IT.	Program Effectiveness

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
P12	Ferron	Suzannah		Given this time in our history of unparalleled, human-caused environmental stressors that threaten our rapidly dwindling landscapes, biodiversity and habitats, we must do all we can to preserve them. Ravaging 22 million acres of habitat willy-nilly through mowing it down or, even worse, using chemicals, is an obvious recipe for disaster for our native plant, animal and insect species and will result in dangerous erosion, the encouragement of invasive weeds, depletion of seed banks, an increase in local plant community extinctions, and an increase in animal/insect endangerment and extinction. For the sake of California's future, we need to slow this process down, consult with a range of biologists, native plant experts, arborists, geologists, etc., who have a much more thorough and science-based range of knowledge about native landscapes/habitats/communities and hardscaping specialists who can provide ideas about how to fire-proof houses and communities rather than natural landscapes and habitat. To do otherwise is dangerous to the long-term health of this area. I do not believe we need to denude nature and destroy what little wilderness there is left for wildlife for the sake of expediency. We can and must do better. Thank you for your time and consideration on this critical matter.	Program Effectiveness
P13	Fisher	Gerald		The timing of events, EIR comments due May 31, 2016 by BOF, and recent legal settlement agreements re: the San Luis Rey River Watershed/5 major San Diego County Indian Tribes, necessitate an immediate sharing of information. Thus, I hope this email, and others, will work to the best interest of all. [For clarity: Comments to Board of Forestry first] #1) Technical aspects such as dealing with CEQA issues, Flora and Fauna are supported by the undersigned as presented by the California Chaparral Institute and Cindy Buxton, chair of the Forest Committee of San Diego Sierra Club. #2) As a past hotshot crewman for the USFS, current member of the Fire Safe Council, and owner of a designated Conservancy Property, the perspective of the proposed Wildland Fire approach, as stated by USFS and observed by CalFire practices of past years (no prevention, "keep it burning"), is not in the best interest of the public or lands of all kinds.	Program Effectiveness
P25	Halula	Theresa		My comments are in support of extending the comment period for the EIR and that the committee assigned to produce this report actively seek broader scientific input to be reflected in the fire management EIR and policy to be proposed. A review of comments already sent for the committee were not fully incorporated into the revised draft of 4/16. This project is too important to be allowed through without a more diverse approach to protect habitat being discussed for fire prevention action. I request that the Proposed EIR for the Vegetation Treatment Program by CalFire and the California Board of Forestry be denied approval and that the proposed draft EIR be returned to committee for revision following mandated consultation and interviews with a outside ecologists and biologists in the area of fire systems of California and vegetation management. There are many people with expert knowledge, many of whom have already provided comments that are not reflected in the 4/16 revision of the EIR. I was raised in fire county in Southern California, being evacuated from my home and witnessing many wild fires over the years. Large wild fires are destructive to private property and wild lands and drain key resources of our fire control budgets. As a young woman I was employed for a short time to clear brush by hand for fire defense, so I am speaking from an informed position of experience. Fire management is needed where we have created risk to property or wild places over the years due to past fire management policies. However fire management strategies must necessarily be fitted to the ecology of place and implemented with care and respect for wild places.	Program Effectiveness
P31	Mitus-Uribe	Suzanne		We strongly oppose this wrongheaded and potentially damaging proposal. It will put us personally at risk - we live at the urban/wildlife interface. It will devastate wildlife and encourage weeds and non-native growth. No place for these monstrous machines in California.	Program Effectiveness

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
P32	Ollen	George		I am writing to demand the end of the clearing of chaparral ecosystems in the name of fire prevention. Fire prevention of this nature is not a long range strategy with benefit to the planet's climate. Sequestering the excess carbon produced by human civilization can be done most effectively and economically by utilizing the ability of soil and plants to store the carbon we emit. Clear-cutting habitats in the name of fire prevention is a direct threat to the natural ability of Earth's ecosystems to lessen the impacts of our carbon pollution in the atmosphere, which causes climate warming and the demise of the human species as well as that of millions of other species on this planet. There is no justification for Chaparral clearance that outweighs this basic fact.	Program Effectiveness
P39	Puzo	Joseph		How can the destruction of chaparral, an already endangered habitat possibly be a good thing? There is so little natural habitat left due to over building/overpopulation, that many plants and animals are either extinct or on the endangered species list. When the remaining natural habitat is destroyed by removing the natural vegetation, the immediate impact completely wipes out many plants and animals, and prevent any subsequent recolonization. Non native grasses and other invasive species are a problem(and of course a problem created by man), but there are better ways of dealing with it than the "scorched earth" scenario being proposed. Please consider these other alternatives as our only alternatives.	Program Effectiveness
P40	Reagle	Cheryl		Please reconsider the current clear cutting plan that destroys habitats for birds and animals with no true value in stopping the spread of fires. The spread of non native grasses in treated areas only makes the land more flammable. Many reports have been written that show how clear cutting changes the land ,ruins the natural water shed, destroys habitat,and does little for fire suppression. The Cedar fire was on it's way from the mountains to the beach when it was old growth chaparral that held it back.	Program Effectiveness
P41	Reeve	Sharon		California has the most unique and valuable native vegetation in the entire US. Heavy-handed tactics to destroy 34 million acres to prevent fire is reckless and not backed by scientific studies! Natural resources such as old-growth chaparral, intact habitat, and important wildlife corridors need to be seen for what they are, assets at risk. The proposed vegetation treatment will INCREASE THE FIRE POTENTIAL OF TREATED LANDS by replacing native vegetation with much more flammable invasive grasses which will automatically replace killed native vegetation. This is not sound science.	Program Effectiveness
P43	Schriebman	Judy		Your plan to cut down acres of shrubby habitat is completely misguided. It will not reduce fire damage. It will wreak habitat destruction and create great Climate Warming which will increase fire danger. It makes no sense and is biologically and environmentally unsound. Please come to your senses. There are certain environments that people maybe should not be living in. They should not be destroying the environment they sought to live in and neither should you.	Program Effectiveness
P45	Spolskly	A		The Vegetation Treatment Program as proposed is a mistake. It will not prevent fire damage, in fact, it will make the fire issues worse.	Program Effectiveness
P47	Spolskly	A		Please do the right thing and find a better way. There are many people who could assist you with this. Listen to them.	Program Effectiveness
P56	Summers	Nancy		In summary, the proposed VTP will be counter productive to wildlife habitat, native plants, the watershed, soils and will promote addition climate warming by decimating forest land and vegetative cover.	Program Effectiveness
P62	Wallace	Elizabeth		This draft fails to address the most effective ways to protect lives and property from wildfire. Clearance of chaparral is destructive and allows wind-driven embers to threaten homes. The trees and chaparral I have growing on my property protected my home from fire in 2007 by stopping embers from blowing under my home's eaves. This draft does not support Cal Fire's mission to protect life, property and natural resources. How will you re-draft this DPEIR to meet the requirements of CEQA and protect property and natural resources?	Program Effectiveness

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
P63	Walsh	Mary Ann		I was distressed to read about the draft EIR submitted by CalFire to destroy millions of acres of irreplaceable California native habitat in a misguided plan to reduce fire danger. This plan, if it goes forward, The draft ignores the comments that scientists and citizens made on the previous version of the report. I appreciate that CalFire has a very tough job, but this approach, if allowed to go forward, will cause irreversible damage to the ecology of our state. It could turn huge swaths of California into a desert. There must be a better way--one that recognizes the latest scientific thinking about fire ecology, and that sets up a transparent and cooperative process for CalFire to partner with experts who have the same ultimate goal--to protect California from fire devastation.	Program Effectiveness
P72	Wells	Jim		1) We can NOT prevent wildfire from burning human structures in, nor proximal to wildlands. Sometimes, yes. In many situations in the past, yes. But evermore, not, for even the degree of success we have had in the past and could have in the future, is and will be at ever-increasing cost, a clearly unsustainable approach. 2) The degree to which we can mitigate the risk of wildfires burning human structures in or proximal to wildlands by physically removing vegetation in the wildlands is directly proportional to the actual degree of degradation of the wildland ecosystems said removal results in, and it is not a 1:1 ratio -- it is heavily weighted towards the environmental degradation. 3) We humans insist on placing our structures in and proximal to wildlands and concurrently insist that our structures not be burned by wildfires and, by god, we will therefore reactively and preemptively strike those wildlands to make sure that their wildfires do not. That means it is those human structures that are the threat to the wildfires, not the other way around. 4) Wildfire is a vital Ecosystem Process, each ecotype evolutionarily adapted with and to particular fire regimes, conveying multiple benefits upon those wildland ecosystems, which in turn, facilitates us to benefit from those ecosystems as well (both types of benefits we call "ecosystem services".) 4) Therefore, Physician, Heal Thyself: It actually IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY to MANAGE OUR STRUCTURES to minimize their susceptibility to being burned by wildfires, while also managing the wildlands in ways that facilitate Fire to operate in them in their natural regimes.	Program Effectiveness
P73	Wells	Jim		Fire is not the enemy. As the saying goes, we have met the enemy . . . Which reminds me of another saying I heard once from a Regional Forester retired from the early "Timber Wars" era in the PNW. "When people disrespect one another, they take it out on the land." Perhaps Cal Fire, the California Board of Forestry, and its critics in locked horns with them should reflect on who it is that they are not respecting, why, and need it really be that way? Consider the opposite: truly collaborative brainstorming. I can say, beyond a shadow of a doubt, it produces far better outcomes, AND it feels way better.	Program Effectiveness
P78	Woolley	Robert		Please help us bring sanity to the California Board of Forestry's proposal to clear more than a half million acres of habitat over the next ten years in the name of fire protection. It doesn't work, it never will. All such activity ultimately accomplishes is the elimination of animal homes, destruction of ancient manzanita stems where rare lichens grow, an...d the spread of noxious weeds that produce stickers the end up in your pet's ears... as well as producing field of highly flammable grasses. It makes No Sense to destroy habits using large gasoline (desil) guzzling macines. It DOES NOT reduce wildfire. It is ugly and destructive. Simply a waste of time and money.	Program Effectiveness

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
P83	Fotheringham	CJ		It has been said that California has two types of fires; the ones we plan for (fuel and topography driven) and the ones that actually do the vast majority of the damage (wind and fire brand driven). As the largest and most costly fires are wind driven, particularly in southern California, the affect of fuel manipulation needs to be addressed within the wind-driven fire scenario when justifying of the VTP. It is not. Fire brands are mentioned but the potential of the of interaction with treated fuel breaks under wind driven fires is not acknowledged much less addressed and weighed in the design of the plan. This impact of fuel treatments must be addressed if Cal-Fires goal is to reduce losses from fire rather than just increasing acres treated.	Program Effectiveness
P94	St. Clair2	Peter		8. There should be many cases where maintenance has priority in protecting lives and property as well as in conserving natural resources. I think these problems highlight the difficulty of "checklist" style environmental and project analysis. Indeed, since VTPEIR concludes that SPR's take the place of mitigation, there needs to be far more public involvement than is planned. This includes front end involvement in project design. It includes monitoring. It includes revisions to protocols following project analysis. Since landscapes change over long periods of time (response to fire is slow and growing slower as drought conditions increase), it is best to prioritize VT correctly and to go slow, taking into account many perspectives on past incidents and responses as well as emerging and changing perspectives on the impact of VT on resource conservation. VT can accomplish many things, but not everything. Follow through on sheltering in place and hardening structures is perhaps the least costly and fastest way of gaining protections in the WUI.	Program Effectiveness
P97	St. Clair2	Peter		11. Paragraph 4 Section 3.3, page 3-9 makes the statement that the most destructive wildfires are predominately in mountain areas. I do not think that is even close to the truth in Southern California. Again, there is a prejudice in the VTPEIR for large scale VT when much smaller scale management under PRC 4291 or in the WUI or in VHFHSZ may work better.	Program Effectiveness
O58	Fenton	Drew	Community of San Lorenzo Valley	The community of San Lorenzo Valley in Santa Cruz county believes, along with others, that our state flora would be better managed and better off from fire hazards if California State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection withdrew this PEIR for Vegetation Treatment Program.	Program Necessity
O63	Fenton	Drew	Community of San Lorenzo Valley	5. The April 1, 2016, Notice of Availability states “Similar projects are currently undertaken by CalFire as part of the existing Vegetation management Program (VMP) The Vegetation Treatment Program (VTP) intends to lower the risk of damaging wildfires on SRA lands by managing vegetation to modify and or reduce hazardous fuels - are all parts of CalFire’s comprehensive fire prevention strategy. CALFIRE’S CURRENT VMP includes many exemptions, one called “FIRE HAZARD TREE REMOVAL” exemption allows logging of fire retardant trees (coast redwood) In Santa Cruz County since at least 2010, CalFire has been issuing exemption permits in a hazardous fuel reduction program on a form called REMOVAL OF FIRE HAZARD TREES WITHIN 150 FEET OF A STRUCTURE EXEMPTION (form RM-73 (1038C)(12/06) is a notice of timber ops that are exempt from THP requirements. The filings ftp://thp.fire.ca.gov/THPLibrary/North_Coast_Region/Exemption%20Notices/ have only been recently available to the public, displays the exemption is being used to cut down fire retardant Coast Redwood trees anywhere even watercourses, Class I. It is a catastrophe and ongoing. Homeowners are solicited to cut down their fire resistant redwoods for quick cash, only possible with CalFire’s assistance. How can CalFire be trusted with another VTP program when a permanent loss of “rain forest” trees has permanently altered tree species, creating new fire hazard potential, increasing landscape flammability, by agency not able to be trusted to run a fire prevention programs [photo] ftp://thp.fire.ca.gov/THPLibrary/North_Coast_Region/Exemption%20Notices/2016/20160414_1-16EX-108SCR.pdf	Program Necessity

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O271	Spencer	Wayne	Conservation Biology Insitute	No Consideration of Other Land and Resource Management Plans As an ecologist with a long history of involvement in California's landscape-scale conservation planning efforts, I am especially concerned that the PEIR seems blind to the progress we have made in establishing ecosystem reserves and how to manage them. I cannot even begin to document this in this letter due to time constraints, but it is unbelievable that a state-wide VTP PEIR would fail to address how its actions relate to existing preserve management guidelines that apply to large areas of conserved land that fall within the State Responsibility Area. This is a major problem that CalFire needs to coordinate much more closely with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Natural Communities Conservation Program, and numerous Habitat Conservation Plans, Conservation Strategies, and other progressive land and water conservation and management plans in this state. CalFire needs to engage with other agencies—state, federal, tribal, and local—to collaboratively determine how best to manage vegetation and fire issues on our landscape. On its own, CalFire has shown it is not sufficiently informed and competent to meet its stated objectives. Collaboration, science, and logic are needed. I suggest that that it would be fruitful for CalFire and BOF to coordinate with organizations like the California Landscape Conservation Cooperative (CA LCC: http://californialcc.org/) to improve coordination of the VTP with US and California collaborative efforts to conserve biological diversity in the face of climate change using best available science and decision-support tools. CA LCC has representation from all pertinent state and federal agencies and NGOs, except for CalFire. CalFire should catch up with the rest of state government to get on board with efficient, collaborative, science-based programs. The current VTP is not it.	Program Necessity
O170	Dodson	Snowdy	California Native Plant Society - Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains Chapter	7.) Why isn't one of the VTP's primary objectives to map large occurrences of dead and dying trees with the objective of removing / thinning those trees, perhaps moving them to an open area where they can be chipped and processed in a nearby biofuel facility, with no greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and the production of biofuel? Working with local land use jurisdictions and perhaps providing grant funding to site a biofuel facility near stressed forest areas, especially those in quarantine, and then supplying green waste from forest management activities is a far more useful vegetation treatment program than anything proposed in this PEIR.	Program Objectives
O171	Dodson	Snowdy	California Native Plant Society - Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains Chapter	8.) Why isn't one of the VTP's primary objectives to protect watershed health and the ability of soils in those watersheds to absorb rainwater through careful maintenance of mixed native shrubs which stabilize loose slopes with a network of deep and shallow roots, in concert with a range of soil organisms? Bare earth clearance in watershed areas near houses erodes hillsides and destroys watershed health. Why not clear from the houses in the WUI outward? We need absorptive hillsides, not runoff to storm drains.	Program Objectives
O178	Dodson	Snowdy	California Native Plant Society - Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains Chapter	15.) Page 2-57, BIO-6: "In shrublands containing native oaks, treatments may incorporate retention of older, acorn producing oaks to create deer forage. CAL FIRE or applicants may plant other vegetation to promote species diversity and improve wildlife habitat when such practices are not in conflict with program goals." Mature oaks provide forage for birds, small mammals, etc. Why is the only excuse to "provide deer forage".? Why plant "other vegetation", perhaps non-native or not part of the natural native plant community? What is the program goal? Shouldn't the goal be to have a healthy, diverse, native plant community? Does this PEIR have two contradictory sets of goals: one set to protect the natural plant and animal resources, water and air, and the other to promote non-native (highly flammable) grasslands for grazers, low diversity tree farms for easy timber harvesting, and to eliminate the highly biodiverse shrublands? Aren't these two sets of goals incompatible in the 21st century, in a time of climate change and drought?	Program Objectives
P95	St. Clair2	Peter		9. Again with respect to Southern California, the only reason to undertake VT beyond defensible space boundaries would be to conserve resources. But that does not appear to be a program objective. (See Section 3 page 3-9). But it is also possible that the most effective means of conserving resources is not Vegetation Treatment. Indeed, VT seems only a minor subset of resource conservation efforts.	Program Objectives

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
P33	Paul	Lori		The current DRAFT PEIR for the California Vegetation Treatment Program (VTP) is astonishing in its failure to incorporate past comments and in its failure to answer relevant questions regarding the basis for its recommendations that would destroy thousands of acres of California wild lands. The current DPEIR for the VTP remains full of glittering generalities and scientific inaccuracies; however, this version seems to make it clear that the its author's attitude at this phase of the process amounts to "this is our Big Plan and we are still sticking to it." It is certainly easier to blame California's wild lands for catastrophic fires and to recommend "lunar landscaping" approximately one quarter of the state than it is to instead acknowledge that too frequent, human-ignited wildfires (via arson, power lines, car fires, careless hunters, etc...), in fact, result from decades of bad land use planning and lack of appropriately applied fire resources and structure protection measures. There is also a failure to recognize that climate change, with its resulting severe weather and drought patterns, more than ever drives major wildfires with high winds that can race across even "cleared" landscapes that have been recently control burned. At a glance, it appears to be far easier to simply "get rid of the fuel," which means destroying biodiverse habitat and replacing it all with type-conversion to even more flammable invasive foreign annual weeds.	Program Necessity
O30	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	Suggested Improvements to the Draft DPEIR - Reduce fire risk from the house out. As we have written many times over the past decade, the most effective way to prevent the loss of life and property from wildland fires is to work from the house out, rather than from the wildland in. In other words, focus on reducing home flammability first (ember-resistant vents, replacing flammable features, cleaning roof gutters, etc.). Properly maintained defensible space is the other important half of the fire risk reduction equation. Wildland fuel treatments (beyond the defensible space zone) offer the least effective strategy to protect communities from wildfire. All fire science points to this. Many county fire programs support "from the house out" concept. Cal Fire promotes this strategy too, and has since at least 2007. http://www.fire.ca.gov/fire_prevention/fire_prevention_wildland_faqs#gen01 Unfortunately, DPEIR ignores these facts and focuses exclusively on vegetation management. This bias is reflected in Cal Fire's and the Board's public messages as well.	Program Scope/Contents
O31	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	During Wildfire Awareness Week (May 1- 8, 2016), Cal Fire made 8 posts on their official Facebook page about protecting your home from fire. None mentioned the importance of home flammability. All focused on vegetation clearance. On April 21, 2016, Cal Fire began a #ShareYourDefensibleSpace photo challenge on their Facebook page. We are submitted a photo of an ember-resistant attic vent to the contest with the suggestion to begin a companion #ShareYourFireSafeHome photo challenge to emphasize the main reasons homes actually ignite and burn down - unsafe structure design and flammable, non-vegetative materials around the home. Our photo was deleted shortly thereafter. We resubmitted the photo and it remained online for several weeks. The Cal Fire Facebook moderator (Heather) thanked us for pointing out the importance of home flammability. Unfortunately, it appears the original contest post and the photo entries have now been deleted. We urge the Board to reconfigure the DPEIR so that it incorporates the entire fire risk reduction equation, not just vegetation management. Suggestions on how to do so, and examples of programs that have worked, can be found in Appendix B: An Appeal to California's Fire Agencies.	Program Scope/Contents

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O32	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	Suggested Improvements to the Draft DPEIR - Reassess the efficacy of remote fuel modifications. Current research makes it clear that strategic fuel modification has only helped stop fires in fire weather if fire suppression forces can quickly and safely access them. Remote, back country fuel modifications are generally not effective in stopping fires and, as a consequence, haven't generated any significant reductions in total annual area burned in southern California (Keeley et al. 2009, Syphard et al. 2011). Global surveys concerning fuel modifications have also demonstrated that even very large amounts of strategic fuel modification are not very effective in reducing total areas burned. This research makes a compelling case that constructing and maintaining large fuel treatments is not the most effective use of fire risk reduction resources (Price et al. 2015, Price et al. 2015b).	Program Scope/Contents
O35	Marderosian	Ara	Sequioa ForestKeeper	Extensive scientific research clearly indicates that the best way to protect lives, property, and the natural environment from wildfire is through a comprehensive approach that focuses on community and regional planning, reducing ignitability of structures, and modifying vegetation within and directly around communities at risk. By focusing exclusively on clearing habitat, the Board is NOT addressing the main causes for loss of life and property from wildland fire. The Board's proposal will target about 22 million acres (1/3 of the entire state) for "masticating," spraying with herbicides, burning, or grazing. This would increase its existing habitat clearance program five times over current levels. If certified, the programmatic EIR will exempt individual habitat clearance projects from public oversight required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Everything from state parks to private lands could be stripped bare without local notice or a chance to appeal. Every decade we increase funding for habitat clearance operations and fire suppression activities, followed by a decade of even worse fire impacts. The Board's proposal perpetuates and expands this same approach, one that has failed to reduce cumulative wildfire damage and firefighting expenditures over the past century. As a consequence, the proposal is a waste of tax payer money, will cause significant damage to the environment, and will fail to effectively protect Californians from wildland fire.	Program Scope/Contents
O38	Marderosian	Ara	Sequioa ForestKeeper	The EIS Analysis should consider an Alternative Approach to Providing Defensible Space. The DEIR is proposing to treat the WUI defense and threat zones, supposedly to create defensible space to protect the homes in the adjacent communities from a wild fire. Defensible space is a place where firefighters can be safely stationed in the path of the advancing fire. And although the Forest Service has designated large WUI areas, cutting down trees beyond 200 to 300 feet from homes to create defensible space for firefighters to battle the wall of flames that might be approaching and to protect the homes from the fire will place firefighters in danger and will cause unnecessary resource damage. It will eventually result in areas that will become more flammable because of the subsequent growth of more flammable bushes and grasses than existed prior to leaving the forest canopy intact, including exotic grasses and herbaceous annuals that carry fire quickly to the base of the remaining trees. Treating the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ), the 200 to 300 feet surrounding homes, and using that treated HIZ as the defensible space from which prescribed fire is anchored and allowed to burn into the surrounding forest would be far less costly and more effective than mechanical treatments beyond the HIZ.	Program Scope/Contents

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O39	Marderosian	Ara	Sequioa ForestKeeper	We urge the agency to consider this alternative WUI size, defined by the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) as a safezone from which firefighters would initiate prescribed fire to burn away from the HIZ and into the WUI. Science support treatments limited to the Home Ignition Zone. The Forest Service's own Jack Cohen (Jack D. Cohen, Research Physical Scientist, Fire Sciences Laboratory, PO Box 8089, Missoula, MT 59807 406-329-4821 (fax) 406-329-4825 jcohen@fs.fed.us), has shown that the Home Ignition Zone – the 200 to 300 feet immediately surrounding homes, is where mechanical fuel treatments should be implemented to protect homes. The Home Ignition Zone treatments can be the mechanically-treated safezone that anchors prescribed fire treatments that would then be implemented beyond the HIZ and into the WUI to protect homes. Treating areas for thousands of feet down slope of rural residences will only cause unnecessary changes in the wildlands and not protect the rural residences from the wildfire that could start in the wildland area, if treatments have not been applied to the area within 200 feet of structures (Cohen 1999). The alternative of using the HIZ as the safezone anchor for prescribed fires into the WUI is reasonable because firefighters have successfully utilized narrower areas than the 200 to 300 foot wide HIZ when prescribed fires or backfires are initiated from roads and trails in forested areas.	Program Scope/Contents
O121	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	1.B. What exactly is the Proposed VTP, and what are its boundaries in space and time? Here is what we do know about the VTP, from the DEIR: • (p. E-6) "The total land area where the vegetation formation assemblages are appropriate for a ...treatment is approximately 22 million acres, or 71 percent of the SRA [State Responsibility Area]." • Maps in Figure ES-1 (pE-7) make it clear that many treatment acres are outside the SRA. Other maps (e.g. Figure A1-1, p. A-2) show that some of the "treatable acres in the VTP" are either in Local Responsibility Areas or Federal Responsibility Areas, although all maps in the DEIR are at too small a scale to see boundaries, a fact emphasized by the "blowup" sections on some to show the presence of undescribed and unanalyzed details (e.g. 2.2-9, p. 2-20). • The VTP seeks to treat 60,000 acres per year, with 231 projects per year averaging 260 acres each (p. 2-35). This is huge (60,000 acres is 93.75 square miles, roughly the size of Oakland and Berkeley combined), but it is not clear if it is appropriate. For example, if every one of the 22,000,000 acres " appropriate for a treatment" were to be treated just once, it would take almost 367 years (22,000,000 acres/60,000 acres per year), which is clearly inadequate for any kind of sustained vegetation management. Clearly the VTP actually intends to treat a small subset of land " appropriate for a treatment, "but the actual parcels to be treated are not discussed, mapped, or analyzed, and may not be determined yet. • The VTP breaks California down into nine ecoregions; it proposes three types of fuel management treatments, at the Wildand Urban Interface (WUI), on fire breaks, and as ecological restoration; it proposes a menu of treatment activities including controlled burns (supposedly half of the treatments), grazing with non-native herbivores, mechanical clearance, clearance by hand, and herbicide application. Just a simple combinatorial analysis, 9 ecoregions times 3 management treatments times 5 treatment activities, leads to 135 different scenarios, even without adding further very necessary complexities. Analyzing the impacts of over one hundred scenarios is an enormous task, one that is impossible in a document that is only 759 pages long. Indeed, the DEIR does not grapple with this full complexity at all, so we have no idea exactly what will happen when, where, why, or how often.	Program Scope/Contents
O157	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	• Set hard boundaries early. The math for the VTP simply does not work, and to be blunt, we suspect that a PEIR that realistically tried to analyze the impacts to 22,000,000 acres of any project would be unworkably huge. We are also quite sure that any real VTP will be a small fraction of that size. We are also quite sure that there are projects that everyone wants done. It should not be as hard as the project proponents think to figure out where projects need to be done and are likely to be done, and to focus the VTP down so that it only works on those areas. Indeed, once the VTP has done that, it might be easier to expand it from a small area using supplemental EIRs, rather than trying to deal with an unworkably huge initial project.	Program Scope/Contents

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O162	Bradford	Margaret	Healthy Steps Hiking	I am worried that 1/4 of California will be subjected to deforestation techniques that will be devastating for animals our soil and native plants. Not an answer for drought. Stop using water for fracking etc.. Why can't we listen to intelligent people not slash and burn types?	Program Scope/Contents
O244	Principe	Zachary	The Nature Conservancy - California Chapter	I. Considerations for South Coast Shrublands As well described in chapter 4 of the VTPEIR, the fire ecology and natural fire return intervals in South Coast shrublands differ significantly from those of many other vegetation communities in the state. These differences are well described in the VTPEIR, but do not appear to result in significant differences in the overall conclusions drawn or recommendations made for how a project is evaluated or implemented. To address the differences among shrublands and other vegetation communities, we recommend a number of modifications to language throughout the VTPEIR.	Program Scope/Contents
O257	Principe	Zachary	The Nature Conservancy - California Chapter	In conclusion, the Conservancy recommends that vegetation treatments in the South Coast should be reviewed under different criteria than those for other vegetation types. The VTPEIR discusses the unique characteristics and threats faced by these vegetation communities following fires and disturbance treatments, but does not address these differences adequately in the criteria for projects review. Modifications to the language of the criteria, project requirements and guidance presented in the VTPEIR could address these problems and provide the protections and mitigation measures necessary for South Coast shrublands. We would be happy to further discuss our recommendations for conservation and management of South Coast shrublands and for a robust science-driven project review process. Thank you for your consideration.	Program Scope/Contents
P5	Cochrane	Guy		You and the Board of Forestry should retract the proposed habitat clearance program and to instead work with the California Natural Resources Agency and the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Water to create a Comprehensive Fire Protection Program that: - focuses on actual assets at risk rather than habitat clearance - preserves the rights of citizens to object to destructive projects - incorporates the most current science - understands the difference between forests and other ecosystem	Program Scope/Contents
P11	Ferron	Suzannah		I am writing to you as a new homeowner in Shadow Hills, a Marriage and Family Therapist and Ecotherapist, a member of the California Chaparral Institute, and a volunteer at the Hahamongna Native Plant Nursery and the Nogales Nursery at Debs Park, to express my strong concern regarding your potentially devastating vegetation treatment program. Instead of the one-size-fits all program, I urge you instead to create a program that will: 1. Thoroughly consider the entire fire environment, focusing on fire-prepping/proofing houses, structures and communities rather than bulldozing natural landscapes/habitat 2. Reflect bioregional differences rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach in an area with clear biodiversity 3. Allow for transparency and independent oversight--citizens have the right to have individual projects such as this one thoroughly evaluated under CEQA for potential environmental impacts, 4. incorporate the most up-to-date science available rather than anecdotal information and outdated, decades-old fire hazard data, 5. Incorporate a thorough, area-specific and complete determination of the long-term environmental impacts on wildlife, plant communities, water and air quality, visual and aesthetic resources, recreation, soils, and invasive weed spread in all of the areas affected.	Program Scope/Contents

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O86	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	B. The DEIR's Description of the VTP Is Vague and Not Finite. An accurate description of a proposed project is “the heart of the EIR process" and necessary for an intelligent evaluation of the project's environmental effects. Sacramento Old City Ass 'n. v. City Council (1991) 229 Cal.App.3d 1011, 1023; see Rio Vista Farm Bureau v. Cnty. of Solano (1992} 5 Cal.App. 4th 351, 369-370 (project description is the "sine qua non" of an informative and legally sufficient EIR} (citation omitted}. Consequently, courts have found that, even if an EIR is adequate in a11 other respects, the use of a "truncated project concept" violates CEQA and mandates the conclusion that the lead agency did not proceed in a manner required by law. San Joaquin Raptod Wildlife Rescue Center v. Cnty. of Stanislaus (1994) 27 Cal.App.4th 713, 730 (citation omitted). Thus, an inaccurate or incomplete project description renders the analysis of significant environmental impacts inherently unreliable. While extensive detail is not necessary, the law mandates that EIRs should describe proposed projects with sufficient detail and accuracy to permit informed decision-making . See CEQA Guidelines § 15124 (requirements of an EIR). Here, one of the essential defects of this DEIR is its thoroughgoing failure to accurately describe the Program. The DEIR identifies categories of fuel management treatments (e.g., wildland urban interface; fire breaks and ecological restoration) and explains that within each of these treatment categories, a menu of treatment activities would be implemented to modify fuels within the landscape. These treatment activities include, for example, prescribed fire, "beneficial" grazing, and herbicide applications. See DEIR at 2-2; 2-3; 2-17; and 3-4. The fuel management treatments are projected to take place over a staggering 21.9 million acres throughout the state. Id. Within a ten year period, it is estimated that there would be approximately 2,300 projects implemented -approximately 231 projects per year at an average project size of 260 acres. Id. at 2-35. Yet, when one attempts to drill down to determine how the Program would actually be implemented, it becomes clear that the Board has no idea which program activities would take place or where they would be implemented. Consequently, the vagueness of the DEIR's description of the VTP creates all sorts of analytical problems.	Program Scope/Contents (description of program)
O87	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	For example, the DEIR states that the number and type of vegetation activities would be selected based on a number of parameters including: the potential for significant adverse impacts; opportunities to conserve desirable vegetation and wildlife habitat; and proximity of the treatment area to sensitive areas, such as wetlands, streams, or habitat for plant or animal species of concern, rare plants and..." DEIR at 2-34. The DEIR explains that these parameters would be considered before activity methods are selected, but the document provides no criteria as to how these parameters would be applied. And, as discussed below, the DEIR lacks the necessary analysis of the VTP's environmental impacts. Thus a parameter suggesting that a specific vegetation treatment activity would be selected based on the "potential for significant adverse impacts' is entirely meaningless. Indeed, there is no way to know what the environmental impacts of the Program will be if there is not even a finite, stable project description. San Joaquin Raptor, supra, 27 Cal.App.4th 713, 730 (requiring "[a]n accurate, stable and finite project description" in an EIR (citation omitted). In essence, the Project Description here is no more than an idea -an idea that may be changed in a never-ending variety of ways over the next decade or more.	Program Scope/Contents (description of program)
O95	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	In sum, the total failure of the Project Description makes the rest of the DEIR inadequate as well. Because the specific details of the Program are unknown, its environmental impacts cannot be accurately analyzed, nor can effective mitigation be identified. The fog of uncertainty surrounding the Program and its impacts leads inevitably to deferred analysis and mitigation; over and over again the DEIR states essentially that impacts will be determined as they happen and mitigation will be worked out then. This strategy, while made necessary by the inadequate Project Description, is unlawful under CEQA.	Program Scope/Contents (description of program)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O122	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	There is a problem with this approach: as we understand it, the courts have ruled that "[a]n accurate, stable and finite project description" in an EIR is necessary to analyze its impacts, and a "truncated project concept" violates CEQA.8 While exhaustive detail is unnecessary, CEQA mandates that EIR project descriptions should be sufficiently detailed, and sufficiently accurate, to permit informed decision making.9 Given that the DEIR does exactly the opposite of what CEQA policy states and courts support, why was the DEIR written that way? Would it not have been better to follow CEQA and relevant case law? What exactly is the VTP? 8 Sacramento Old City Association. v. City Council (1991), Rio Vista Farm Bureau v. County. of Solano (1992) 9 CEQA Guidelines § 15124	Program Scope/Contents (description of program)
O123	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	1.C. Where is the program map, and what parcels are subject to the VTP? According to CEQA10: "The precise location and boundaries of the proposed project shall be shown on a detailed map, preferably topographic. The location of the project shall also appear on a regional map." While numerous maps are supplied, they are labeled as responsibility areas or as modeled areas that might be treated. We could find no hard-line map. • How can local impacts be analyzed if the time and place affected by any program is not specified? How can cumulative impacts be analyzed if there is insufficient local data on where and when the program occurs, and what is affected? • How can landowners determine whether they or neighboring properties are susceptible to the VTP, in case they want to take action? • Why does the DEIR show maps that are insufficiently detailed for any landowner to determine whether they are subject to the proposed program or not? Environmental impacts must, by definition, have an environment in which to occur. Phrasing the acreage as " appropriate for treatment" is insufficient. If a parcel is considered eligible for the Program, then the Program has a boundary, and all parcels within that boundary must shown on maps, to circumscribe the environment impacted by the Program. There is a second map issue, which can be seen clearly in Figure ES-1, but which is repeated throughout the DEIR: Why do the maps of the State Responsibility Area, Treatable Vegetation Formations, and Treatable Acres in the VTP not agree? It appears that there are quite a few acres (fire breaks?) that occur in the deserts and other areas outside the State Responsibility Area. Is CALFIRE responsible for these? • Why is vegetation that is outside the State Responsibility Area discussed but not mapped? • Why are there fuel breaks that appear to be in the Federal Responsibility Area (compare Figure A-1.1, page A-2, and A-1.3, page A-5)? If these areas are under Federal Responsibility should the DEIR not also be an environmental impact statement, and EIR/S? 10 ibid	Program Scope/Contents (description of program)
O196	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	III. The DEIR Fails to Provide an Accurate, Stable, and Finite Project Description In order for an environmental document to adequately evaluate the environmental ramifications of a project, it must first provide a comprehensive description of the project itself. An EIR must describe a proposed project with sufficient detail and accuracy to permit informed decision-making. See CEQA Guidelines § 15124. Indeed, “[a]n accurate, stable and finite project description is the sine qua non of an informative and legally sufficient EIR.” San Joaquin Raptor/Wildlife Rescue Center v. County of Stanislaus, 27 Cal. App. 4th 713, 730 (1994), quoting County of Inyo v. City of Los Angeles, 71 Cal. App. 3d 185, 193 (1977). As a result, courts have found that, even if an EIR is adequate in all other respects, the use of a “truncated project concept” violates CEQA and mandates the conclusion that the lead agency did not proceed in a manner required by law. San Joaquin Raptor, 27 Cal. App. 4th at 730. Furthermore, “[a]n accurate project description is necessary for an intelligent evaluation of the potential environmental effects of a proposed activity.” Id. (citation omitted). Thus, an inaccurate or incomplete project description renders the analysis of significant environmental impacts inherently unreliable. See Communities for a Better Env’t v. City of Richmond, 184 Cal. App. 4th 70, 82-83 (2010) (approval of EIR based on inadequate project description constitutes legal error). Here, the DEIR’s basic description of the Program is impermissibly vague and unstable.	Program Scope/Contents (description of program)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O197	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	The DEIR states that the VTP will implement a wide range of fuel treatment projects across a vast area encompassing 21.9 million acres of habitat in California. DEIR at 3-10. Projects conducted under the VTP fall into three general types (wildland-urban interface, fuel breaks, and ecological restoration projects) that are subject to a potential "menu" of six broad vegetation treatment types (prescribed fire with pile burn, prescribed fire with broadcast burn, mechanical treatment, manual treatment, prescribed herbivory, and herbicides). DEIR at 2-16-17. These treatments "may be applied singularly or in any combination needed for a particular vegetation type to meet specific resource management objectives." DEIR at 2-33. Adding to the Program's uncertainty, the DEIR provides only gross approximations of the proportions of treatment types to be applied in each bioregion, and sets no limits on treatment amounts. DEIR at 2-38. Instead, the vegetation treatment type that will be applied is determined only at the project-level ("during the planning phase of a VTP project, the appropriate activity would be selected," DEIR at 2-33); similarly, the regimen of follow-up maintenance activities is set at the project-level. DEIR at 2- 35 ("In general, all vegetation types require follow up maintenance to meet long-term vegetation management goals. The type of follow-up treatment and interval between treatments would depend on site conditions and project objectives."). Overall, within a ten-year period the DEIR estimates that there would be approximately 2,301 projects implemented with an average of 231 projects per year and 60,000 acres treated annually. Once again, the maximum number of acres treated every year is uncertain and unbounded ("the actual acres treated annually in any region will vary year-to-year based on several factors," DEIR at 2-35) and the locations where treatment activities could occur are provided only at an extremely coarse scale (see maps at Figures ES-1, 2.2-5, 2.2-8, 2.2-10, and 2.2-12). In essence, Cal Fire fails to provide any stable or finite definition of the types and amounts of treatments that will be applied to the landscape, nor where treatments will be applied. The lack of a stable and finite project description renders analysis of the Project's environmental impacts impossible. The DEIR acknowledges that each type of treatment activity will have different environmental impacts. DEIR at 2-38 ("each of these activity types can have a characteristic impact on the environment"). However, without knowing which treatment types and amounts will be used in each bioregion, there is no way of assessing the environmental impacts that the Program's treatments will incur. Accordingly, the DEIR fails to provide an adequate description of the Project.	Program Scope/Contents (description of program)
O249	Principe	Zachary	The Nature Conservancy - California Chapter	The use of prescribed fire and other management methods described in the VTPEIR in South Coast shrublands that have burned within the past few decades are likely to result in conversion these areas to non-native grasslands. Administration of prescribed fire in these areas would subject them to fire return intervals that are significantly shorter than they have experienced historically, and studies in the region have shown reducing the fire/disturbance frequencies in South Coast shrublands below the median interval, noted in the VTPEIR, commonly results in type conversion. Too much fire is recognized in the VTPEIR as a threat to these vegetation communities. CalFire should focus activities that disturb native shrublands on direct human asset protection and should not consider these treatments ecological restoration without further analyses. An updated, region-wide analysis should be conducted to determine the time since last fire of shrublands. Treatment for ecological restoration should only be considered if a significant proportion of the region supports stands older than the median fire return interval for each vegetative community. Pending such an analysis, these vegetation communities should only be available for treatment where there is direct benefit to structure and evacuation route protection within the Wildfire Urban Interface (WUI).	Program Scope/Contents (ecological restoration)
A22	Fege	Anne	Community Forest Advisory Board, City of San Diego	Fuel breaks. The vegetation treatment objective of altering fuel configurations (fuel breaks) needs to build on and be limited to the fuel breaks identified in the Unit Fire Plans. The description in the DPEIR is vague, does not, and should not strategically determine where each should be located. The at-risk resources, expected fire behavior, fire suppression strategies, establishment, and maintenance of these fuel breaks should be developed, publicly reviewed, subjected to CEQA analysis, and approved in the Unit Fire Plans. The DPEIR should cover the long-term impacts of repeated vegetation treatment (such as chaparral type conversion to grasses), and emphasis placed on why and how those fuel breaks would be established and maintained.	Program Scope/Contents (Fuel Breaks)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O70	Kutcher	Celia	California Native Plant Society - Orange County Chapter	Comment 3: On Fuel Breaks: The VTP cites Syphard, et al (2011a)1 but not Syphard, et al (2011b)2. Each study shows that fuel breaks within wildlands don't, by themselves, deter or slow the spread of fires; their main value is as firefighter and equipment access to a fire's vicinity. With that in mind, OCCNPS is puzzled that the VTP would include fuel breaks as a valid method of wildfire control. Furthermore, several studies cited in the VTP show that fuel breaks are likely to be sites from which non-native plants invade wildlands—this corroborates our long-term anecdotal observations. Why would anyone want to expend the time, effort, and funds to install and maintain fuel breaks, when fuel breaks don't do what they're intended to do, and are an entryway for invasives into wildlands? 1. 2011a: Syphard, A.D., J.E. Keeley, T.J. Brennan. Factors Affecting Fuel Break Effectiveness in the Control of Large Fires on the Los Padres National Forest, California. International Journal of Wildland Fire 20.6 (2011): 764-775 2. 2011b: Syphard, A.D., J.E. Keeley, T.J. Brennan. 2011. Comparing the Role of Fuel Breaks Across Southern California National Forests. Forest Ecology and Management 261(2011): 2038-2048. doi: 10.1016/j.foreco. 2011.02.030.	Program Scope/Contents (Fuel Breaks)
O88	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	As another example, the DEIR includes principles for implementing fuel break treatment projects but the principles are so broad and vague as to be meaningless. The DEIR suggests that fuel breaks would be constructed to significantly increase the chance of reducing the occurrence and impact of landscape-scale fires and be located at the most effective position on the landscape. DEIR at 2-23. Later, the DEIR states that the fuel breaks would be located and designed to protect ''critical infrastructure" and to mitigate the "loss of high value assets." Id. But the DEIR never identifies the criteria for determining "the most effective position on the landscape," does not define the term 'critical infrastructure," and provides no description of what would constitute a "high value asset." The DEIR also states that the fuel breaks would be constructed to mini mize or avoid environmental impacts (Id.), but how would the Board decide whether the protection of infrastructure or a high value asset should come at the expense of important environmental resources such as special-status species? This built-in conflict is bound to arise over and over again during the Program's implementation, yet the DEIR does not provide even a hint as to how conflicts such as these would be resolved. Nor does the DEIR give readers any real indication as to where fuel breaks would be located or how the Board would ever determine the optimal locations for fuel breaks. Again, without specificity regarding this critical Program component, there can be no analysis of the VTP's environmental impacts.	Program Scope/Contents (fuel breaks)
P59	Tyson	Wayne		Please go back to the drawing board. Don't be a laughing stock. Don't invite a Congressional investigation of misuse of funds. Firebreaks may provide access and cause slow-moving fires to lay down, but by virtue of the ratio of crew to miles of flame-front in a wind-driven major fire, you will have to keep the crews out of there anyway and the fire will burn past the "break." On top of that, the weed growth that follows such clearance increases ignition potential and accelerates fire spread. The "chips" left behind are excellent ember fodder, so look for an increase in spot and structure fires downwind. A lot of taxpayer money not only wasted, but counterproductive. I'm keeping my comments to a minimum, because, while I doubt they will be read anyway, they shure'n hell won't be if they're complete, and therefore, voluminous, guaranteeing that they won't be read.	Program Scope/Contents (fuel breaks)
P93	St. Clair2	Peter		7. Contrary to what you say on page 7-35 about "shaded fuel breaks", I don't think there are many places in chaparral where this can be achieved. Fuel breaks are more likely to resemble the photos in the VTPEIR	Program Scope/Contents (fuel breaks)
P29	Jensen	Cheriel		The chemical treatment of a vast sea of our California Lands with a desiccant makes absolutely no sense.	Program Scope/Contents (herbicides)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
P30	Jones	Lorraine		I have recently read a report proposed by your agency suggesting the removal of large areas of native chaparral through the brutal method of "mastication". I'm deeply concerned by it and the lack of scientific objectivity in regards to the damage of plants that are part of the natural environment. Removal of these natives not only allows the proliferation of non-native weeds and grasses, but destroys habitat for animals and birds as well. Plus the serious issue of potential wildfires that feed upon these non-native grasses and spread quickly to other areas. Brush removal is not logical, realistic or environmentally sound. Plus is simply looks awful and is extremely destructible and further damages the ecology and beauty of any area where this practice is used. I respectfully suggest that this policy not be used now or any time in the future.	Program Scope/Contents (mastication)
O174	Dodson	Snowdy	California Native Plant Society - Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains Chapter	11.) Page 1-11, 3rd Bullet: "The California Air Resources Board (CARB) and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDFFP) shall work together and with federal land managers and the United States Environmental Protection Agency to expand the practice of prescribed burns, which reduce fire risk and avoid significant pollution from major wildfires, and increase the number of allowable days on a temporary basis to burn tree waste that has been removed in high hazard areas." Why, in a time of chaotic weather patterns is CDFFP seeking more days per year to burn tree waste? Why not chip the tree waste and take it to a biofuel plant to avoid increasing the amount of GHGs created by CDFFP VTP program? There is a real chance that more prescribed burns will become major conflagrations due to increasingly unpredictable wind and weather patterns as our climate changes.	Program Scope/Contents (Prescribed Fire)
P17	Forsman	Alicia		This is just one example of the relationship of the plants, insects, flowers, shrubs, birds, trees, and so on, have to each other. They are interwoven into a living eco system that has evolved over thousands of years. The native plants that have evolved here have special mechanisms to help them survive without much water. They have developed mechanisms that help them retain moisture and survive through the dry months. The invasive plants that take up residence after the natives have been wiped out, do not have those unique mechanisms to retain moisture. They become the bone dry fuel for fires. Wherever the native plants have been lost, and periodically burned again, before the individual species can have a chance to recover to maturity, the more likely it is to be lost permanently. For some folks, like some I know, there is an attitude of "who cares!" They have interests that are elsewhere. As long as the firefighter's don't let the neighborhood burn down, let them do their job! Those individuals don't see that as a neighborhood, they have a job to do. They need to be educated about how to keep their areas "fire safe". That is where there is a need for education. Anyway, I hope you will reconsider the use of controlled burning as one of those methods for keeping a handle on the threat of fire. It is so very destructive to our native plants and animals, and not really accomplishing increased safety for the residents here.	Program Scope/Contents (prescribed fire)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
P52	Summers	Nancy		Personal observations from a VMP: Calfire's burning of areas that were recently burned results in long term / possibly permanent environmental destruction. This is a personal observation made of a chaparral /forest area where a VMP was conducted in an area that had been burned recently (relative to normal fire return intervals). Evidence of charred stumps of coyote bush which never grew back are located in the same area that was burned over again by Calfire. The VTP has supplied no assurances that this pattern of burning areas (which have already been recently burned) will not result in very, very frequent burns!	Program Scope/Contents (prescribed fire)
A12	Osterholm	Lesa	Range Management Advisory Committee	1. Use of Prescribed Herbivory as a treatment activity "Prescribed" grazing is a management practice whereby herbivory and animal activity is managed to accomplish specific ecological and/or production objectives. Controlling invasive weeds is one, but so also is managing for certain habitat structures or conditions required by wildlife species, or managing for certain population densities or seasonal biomass densities of edible shrubs (aka fuels management, particularly ladder fuels). Animals can be concentrated and moved as necessary as vegetation on a site progresses through its seasonal changes to achieve the desired fuel reduction or project maintenance objectives. The Committee believes there is a significant opportunity to utilize prescribed herbivory in all three project types (WUI, fuel break, and ecological restoration) to achieve the target objectives of the VTP with no significant environmental impacts at the project level. However, the Committee is concerned that unfamiliarity with implementing prescribed herbivory projects and the nuances between different grazing and browsing species will limit the use of this tool in project types other than ecological restoration.	Program Scope/Contents (Prescribed herbivory)
A13	Osterholm	Lesa	Range Management Advisory Committee	1.a In Section 4.1.6.4 Prescribed Herbivory Activities, page 4-70, add the following language: Prescribed herbivory can offer a variety of benefits in comparison to other types of vegetation treatments. Herbivory is a historic, natural way of removing biomass and can yield a quality protein product for commercial benefit. Herbivores are essentially a "biological masticator" that can reproduce themselves and turn unwanted biomass into a consumable product. In addition to fire prevention benefits, carefully managed grazing can provide important environmental benefits such as increased soil organic matter, control of invasive species, and improved plant and wildlife habitat. Consider using prescribed herbivory as a low-impact treatment when the following concerns arise: • Air quality, when compared to the use of prescribed fire. • Noise, when compared to mechanical and some manual treatments. • Proximity to structures, when compared to risks of using prescribed fire or mechanical treatments. • Steep slopes, when compared to prescribed fire, manual, or mechanical treatments. • Soil compaction and surface disturbance, when compared to mechanical treatments. • Noxious weed control, when compared to manual or mechanical treatments. When considering a fuel reduction or ecological restoration project, it may be helpful to utilize the Range Management Advisory Committee's Prescribed Herbivory for Vegetation Treatment Projects document, which provides information about different plants and animal species compositions; developing and contracting a prescribed herbivory project; and best management practices. This document is online at http://bofdata.fire.ca.gov/board_committees/range_management_advisory_committee/policy_and_reports/ as "Prescribed Herbivory for Fuel Reduction." Planned Herbivory in the Management of Wildfire Fuels may also help project proponents determine when best to use herbivory (https://journals.uair.arizona.edu/index.php/rangelands/article/view/12320/11609). Two publications from the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources's Understanding Working Rangelands series: Grazing Systems Management (http://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/pdf/8529.pdf) and Cattle, Sheep, Goats, and Horses: What's the difference for Working Rangelands? (http://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/pdf/8524.pdf) may provide implementation assistance once a project proponent decides to initiate a prescribed herbivory project, along with the Targeted Grazing Handbook, from the	Program Scope/Contents (Prescribed herbivory)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A15	Osterholm	Lesa	Range Management Advisory Committee	1.c Prescribed herbivory is a treatment activity appropriate for WUI, fuel break, and ecological restoration treatment types as well as grass, shrub, and tree vegetation formations. The Committee is concerned that the VTP EIR, as written, implies that prescribed herbivory is only appropriate for ecological restoration projects and disregards the fuel reduction and ecological benefits that grazing can provide if used for WUI or fuel break treatments. The Committee recommends adding brief language about how prescribed herbivory or grazing may accomplish WUI or fuel break goals into 2.2.2.2.1 Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) and 2.2.2.2.2 Fuel Breaks, similarly to how it's mentioned in 2.2.2.2.3 Ecological Restoration on page 2-29. It is also suggested a discussion of the use of prescribed herbivory be added to pages 4-38 and 4-54, in the discussion of how WUI (Section 4.1.5.1.2) and fuel break treatments (Section 4.1.5.3.2) might be accomplished.	Program Scope/Contents (Prescribed Herbivory)
A16	Osterholm	Lesa	Range Management Advisory Committee	1.d In Section 4.1.3 Rangeland Base and Ownership, as well as 4.1.6.4 Prescribed Herbivory, RMAC suggests a discussion of the utility of prescribed herbivory in all three stages of fuels management – pre-fire vegetation management, project maintenance, and post-fire recovery. Prescribed herbivory is a management tool that can be ideal throughout the entire fire ecological cycle, and RMAC believes the VTP EIR provides an opportunity to emphasis the benefits of prescribed herbivory throughout this cycle.	Program Scope/Contents (Prescribed Herbivory)
A2	Brosseau	Kimberly	County of Santa Clara Parks and Recreation Department	Under the Recreation Section, G.2 Data and Assumptions, a summary of recreational use by land management category includes state and regional parks. The County of Santa Clara Parks and Recreation Department, a regional parks system of 28 parks, is not mentioned in this section of the Draft Program EIR. Table G.2-1 should include the County of Santa Clara Parks and Recreation Department in the list of public outdoor recreation providers. We recommend that the County of Santa Clara Parks and Recreation Department be included in the Draft Program EIR and included in the project scope as a treatable recreational area in the proposed program.	Program Scope/Contents (size of program)
O241	Woodhouse	Marily	Battle Creek Alliance	Battle Creek Alliance is a non-profit grassroots group which works on forest, watershed, and wildlife issues. We are writing in support of the comments submitted by the California Chaparral Institute which detail problems with the plan to clear tens of millions of acres of wildlife habitat.	Program Scope/Contents (size of program)
O243	Principe	Zachary	The Nature Conservancy - California Chapter	The Nature Conservancy (the Conservancy) is pleased with the thoughtful inclusion of science used to prepare the Program Environmental Impact Report for the Vegetation Treatment Program (VTPEIR). The document includes a strong discussion of the differences in fire and disturbance ecology among different vegetation communities across the state. However, there still appear to be few well-defined limitations on fuel modification treatments designed to protect structures and human life while preventing habitat degradation in vegetation types with long fire-return-intervals and may be subject to type conversion or weed invasions following repeated fires, such as South Coast shrublands (e.g. Southern California chaparral and coastal sage scrub). Below we provide recommendations designed to address these concerns. Our recommendations fall into two broad categories: consideration for South Coast shrublands and recommendations about project review.	Program Scope/Contents (size of program)
O251	Principe	Zachary	The Nature Conservancy - California Chapter	Due to the intersection of biodiversity and threats in the South Coast, as recognized on page 4-91 of the VTPEIR, the Conservancy has concerns about the number of acres proposed for treatment in this region. Although 5,204 acres per year for regions with limited urbanization and few special status species may be insignificant, the potential cumulative loss or degradation of 52,000 acres of habitat in the South Coast over the ten-year period of the VTP is significant. The potential loss of habitat due to fire break construction and degradation from fuel treatment projects should be held to the same project review and mitigation standard as other projects that result in the loss of habitat as described in multiple Natural Community Conservation Planning/Habitat Conservation Plans in the region.	Program Scope/Contents (size of program)
P3	Bradford	Margaret		I am worried that 1/4 of California will be subjected to deforestation techniques that will be devastating for animals our soil and native plants. Not an answer for drought. Stop using water for fracking etc.. Why can't we listen to intelligent people not slash and burn types?	Program Scope/Contents (size of program)
P91	St. Clair2	Peter		5. Too often VT becomes a rural jobs program and not a means to protect life and property. VT allows treatments to occur far from communities where life and property are threatened.	Program Scope/Contents (size of program)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O246	Principe	Zachary	The Nature Conservancy - California Chapter	The use of Condition Class to help guide selection of projects has limitations as presented in the VTPEIR with respect to South Coast shrublands. The Condition Class analysis is cited to be from 2003 using data from 2001. Large areas of the South Coast have burned since 2003, some multiple times, which would result in a misclassification of much of the region (e.g., burned versus unburned area) and overestimation of the time since last fire. This results in an overestimate of the need for prescribed fire and other management activities and increases the probability of negative impacts to these shrublands. Managing under this scenario may lead to type conversion to non-native annual grassland.	Program Scope/Contents (use of condition class)
O247	Principe	Zachary	The Nature Conservancy - California Chapter	The Conservancy recommends that CalFire include a description of how Condition Classes are based on positive or negative deviations from the historic fire regime (as mentioned on page 4-44) and how these differences largely determine the enhancement or degradation potential of a particular vegetation treatment method. We recommend clarifying that under the current human-induced high fire frequency situation in the South Coast, there is no need to conduct ecological restoration in the region's shrublands. Language should be added that where Condition Classes 2 and 3 result from fires that occur too frequently only projects to remove non-native species can be implemented.	Program Scope/Contents (use of condition class)
U8	Dudley	Tom	Marine Science Institute, University of California Santa Barbara	I am especially concerned, and in fact dismayed, that BOF and CalFire continue to promote obsolete and destructive measures that alter entire landscapes, when modern information highlights that fire risk is best addressed at the WUI itself rather than by causing massive alteration of surrounding landscapes. Scientific data indicated that not only is it the Best Management approach to work on vegetation management from the structure outward, rather than from the surrounding landscape inward. That is where protection efforts should be focused, on the structures themselves and the immediately surround vegetation, not away from the WUI. Furthermore, clearing the massive areas at the WUI is also unjustified, as data on vegetation relationships with wildifre show that there is no significant benefit from clearing vegetation further that 100 feet away from structures, yet this DPIER promotes the unjustified idea that it is necessary to destroy natural vegetation many hundreds of feet away from structures. The data simply do not support these larger mass clearing efforts, as and noted earlier, INCREASE rather than diminish fire risk because they invariably promote invasion and proliferation of highly flammable weeds. Clearings furthermore remove the protection that shrubland vegetation provides to soils, which otherwise lose organic content, and are exposed to erosion and mass wasting from rain and other forces. The severely reduce the quality of habitat for sensitive wildlife species, and damage watershed resources by enhancing sediment entrance and transport through stream systems, many of which contain Endangered Southern Steelhead Trout and other sensitive and formally protected species.	Program Scope/Contents (WUI)
A20	Fege	Anne	Community Forest Advisory Board, City of San Diego	There is no rationale for the 1.5-mile-wide WUI, either in the DPEIR or the scientific literature. Embers can definitely be carried that distance in high winds, but such vast areas of ember-free fuel reduction could never be developed or maintained around every at-risk community. Structures need to be built or retrofitted to resist ignition by embers, not rely on "ember-free" WUI zones. The defensible space around communities is generally accepted to be about 300 feet, and that is primarily to create fuel breaks for structure protection, not to eliminate embers. The rationale, establishment, and maintenance of WUI treatment areas should be developed, publicly reviewed, subjected to CEQA analysis, and approved in the Community Wildfire Protection Plans. The project-level analysis to would follow the PEIR, for part of a fuel reduction zone in the WUI around a community, would be incomplete and misleading.	Program Scope/Contents (WUI)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O14	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	Anecdotal evidence Unsupportable WUI definition. In several instances, the DPEIR depends on anecdotal, rather than scientific evidence to support its conclusions. For example, the DPEIR claims a 1.5 mile wide WUI is necessary because this is assumed to be the approximate distance embers can be carried from the fire front (4-36). The DPEIR dismisses concerns that its definition of the Wildland Urban Interface is too large an area because Cal Fire staff overheard USFS representatives from the Cleveland National Forest talk about a 6 mile wide WUI buffer. (4-36) Casual conversations are not legitimate scientific references. The only citation the DPEIR uses for support is the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment. (3-39) This is a serious misrepresentation. The Amendment does not provide any evidence for a 1.5 mile WUI, but rather is a management document that established an arbitrary distance to determine the number of homes/communities affected by the Plan. Ironically, the DPEIR discounts a smaller WUI, such as the 1,000 foot version in one of the alternatives (3-39), because, "A review of the literature found no scientific basis to limiting WUI treatments to 1,000 feet." This perspective is more appropriate for the DPEIR's 1.5 mile WUI as there is significant evidence indicating fuel treatments even beyond 300 feet (the length of a football field) are excessive for the purpose of reducing fire risk to communities (see Cohen's extensive research). The DPEIR appendix, "Characterizing the Fire Threat to Wildland-Urban Interface Areas in California" is equally unscientific and does not provide the necessary information to properly assess the characteristics of the WUI. For example, Figure 1 does not distinguish fuel types, slope conditions, how heat per unit area and rate of spread is estimated/modeled/calculated. The axes are not mentioned in the descriptions. Another important point omitted from this section is that flame length as an indicator of fire risk varies by vegetation type – 12 foot flame lengths in conifer forests are	Program Scope/Contents (WUI)
O19	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	Suggested Improvements to the Draft DPEIR - Redefine WUI. Establish a reasonable distance for the WUI by using science rather than anecdotal information (see Appendix A and B).	Program Scope/Contents (WUI)
O71	Kutcher	Celia	California Native Plant Society - Orange County Chapter	Comment 4: On WUI in OC: The VTP's requirement of a 1.5-mile-wide buffer zone at the WUI is unrealistic in Orange County. The Fire Hazard map at right shows that all OC's SRA Zones are bounded if not surrounded by incorporated development. OC's WUI is our reserve lands: some are in SRA Zones and some are in incorporated areas. The SRA Zones are: 1. The OC portion of Chino Hills State Park, about 1/3 of the whole park. 2. The Santa Ana Mts. foothills, a patchwork of five OC nature parks, small-acreage private lands, and inholdings in the National Forest. 3. Rancho Mission Viejo—the yellow areas are now much extended as development proceeds—and Caspers (county)Wilderness Park and Starr Ranch Audubon Sanctuary. 4. Crystal Cove State Park and Laguna Coast and Aliso and Wood Canyons (county) Wilderness Parks. Applying a 1.5-mile "buffer" of vegetation treatment in the Zones' state and county parks would remove most if not all of the parks' vegetation and the habitats it forms—i.e. removing the very reason the parks were set aside under NCCP or similar mitigation agreements. [CAL FIRE VHFHSZ map with annotations] OCCNPS does agree that it is necessary to do some vegetation treatment in the WUI, to help protect homes from wildfire. Such treatment must be part of an overall fire-safe program that starts from the house and works out, rather that working in from the wildland.	Program Scope/Contents (WUI)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O148	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	Worse, 1.5 miles is a silly number. If VTP projects are supposed to clear 260 acres on average, that is 11,325,600 square feet, and a 1.5 mile wide WUI clearance would be 7,920 feet wide. If one does the math, a 260 acre VTP clearance would create a 1.5 mile wide fire break that is 1,430 feet long, and such a firebreak only works if it is pointed directly at the oncoming fire, and somehow the fire doesn't burn down the uncleared sides of the fire break. Conversely, there is increasing evidence for the utility of 300 feet of fire clearance around structures, and a 260 acre VTP project could be used to create 7.15 linear miles of fire break 300 feet wide. Choosing 1.5 miles at worst leads to silly projects. Why use it at all? Why not try approaches that appear more useful based on repeatable tests of evidence?	Program Scope/Contents (WUI)
O263	Spencer	Wayne	Conservation Biology Insitute	The 1.5-mile WUI definition is not supported by any scientific evidence or rationale, but rather by citing the 2004 US Forest Service Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment, which is a federal planning document that used 1.5-miles as an arbitrary distance to roughly assess the number of homes and communities that might be affected by the plan. (Note also that the Amendment has been highly controversial, with implementation impeded up by various law suits.) Something as key to establishing the area within which treatments are planned to meet the VTP's stated goals (protecting human and natural resources) should be based on sound, objective analysis, not arbitrary analytical thresholds established by another agency for another purpose. As commented on extensively by various scientists already, and supported by peer- reviewed science, creating and maintaining fuel breaks not immediately adjacent to homes is not an efficient expenditure of funds, provides little if any protection to homes or other "high value assets" (especially under severe fire weather when most losses occur) and should be assessed as a resource sacrifice rather than a resource benefit (Cohen 2000; Keeley et al. 2009; Syphard et al. 2011, 2012, 2014; Calkin et al. 2013; Penman et al. 2014; Price et al. 2015).	Program Scope/Contents (WUI)
P58	Tippets	Bill		Thanks for preparing this critical assessment of the DEIR. I haven't read it, but the points you emphasized strongly suggest it it inadequate. I can't believe a 1.5 mile WUI has been seriously proposed - that is even wider than the 1/2-1 mile urban interface/defensible space that the insurance industry once proposed for the "high risk" wildfire areas in San Diego, and which we successfully fought. I agree there is no rational, scientifically-based justification for more than 100 feet (assumes structures are constructed to or exceed current fire standards), and any project exceptions to increase that should be highly restricted and based on abundant evidence.	Program Scope/Contents (WUI)
O138	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	2.F. Why use the outdated WHR, when so much more useful vegetation information is available? California's flora is immensely complex, but the VTP analysis oversimplifies it by shoehorning all species into trees, shrubs, and herbs. No knowledgeable fire fighter would assume that ponderosa pine (Pinus ponderosa) and white fir (Abies concolor) have the same fire ecology, but they are all lumped together as "tree-dominated" vegetation (e.g. Table 4.2-14) for the purposes of describing the vegetation in the Sierra Nevada. Considering that CDFW and CNPS have for decades been cooperating to map the vegetation of California and have created two editions of The Manual of California Vegetation ("MCV"), it really is sad to see the 1980s Wildlife Habitat Relationships system used by any state agency. The MCV contains a wealth of information on fire ecology. While it is admittedly incomplete, even incomplete it is a far more complete and more useful as a mapping system than is the WHR. We strongly recommend that the BoF use the MCV as its primary vegetation mapping tool and incorporate the fire ecology information therein into the analysis of programs like the VTP.	Vegetation Classification

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O163	Dodson	Snowdy	California Native Plant Society - Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains Chapter	The Los Angeles / Santa Monica Mountains Chapter of California Native Plant Society (LASMM, CNPS) membership area covers the Santa Monica Mountains, western portions of the Los Angeles Basin, the San Fernando Valley west through the Simi Hills, and north to the Mojave Desert. We have commented both in writing and at public meetings over the years in the long process of updating the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection Vegetation Treatment Program. General Comment: Why is the PEIR using a very outdated reference (DFG 1988) for defining the major plant alliances around California? The accepted reference, which took years of field surveys around California to assemble, is A Manual of California Vegetation, 2nd Edition, 2009, John O. Sawyer, T. Keeler-Wolf , J. M. Evens. It is a collaboration between CNPS and CDFW, published by CNPS. We have many concerns with this Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) structure and avoidance of addressing serious issues of the 21st century, namely chaotic weather patterns, climate change, bare earth clearance in watersheds near houses in WUI zones and the serious losses of hardwoods, conifers and other trees to insect pests such as borers and to an out-of-control major plant pathogen: Phytopthora ramorum (Los Angeles Times, Tuesday, May 3, 2016, page B-2, “Oaks face unstoppable epidemic”).	Vegetation Classification
O24	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	Suggested Improvements to the Draft DPEIR - Real alternatives. Create at least one new alternative that focuses on a program that emphasizes the reduction of fire risk by using “from the house out” approach – reducing home flammability, properly maintained defensible space, community fire safe retrofits, then strategic fuel treatments within 1,000 feet if needed.	Alternatives Analysis
O110	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	D. The DEIR's Analysis of Alternatives Inadequate. A core substantive requirement of CEQA is that "public agencies should not approve projects as proposed if there are feasible alternatives . . . which would substantially lessen the significant environmental effects of such projects." Pub. Resources Code, § 21002; see also CEQA Guidelines § § l 5002(a)(3), l 502 l(a)(2), 15126(d); Citizensfor Quality Growth v. City of Mount Shasta (1988) 198 Cal.App.3d 433, 443-45. Accordingly, a major function of the EIR '"is to ensure that all reasonable alternatives to proposed projects are thoroughly assessed by the responsible official.rn Laurel Heights, supra, 47 Cal.3d 376, 400 (quoting Wildlife Alive v. Chickering (1976) 18 Cal.3d 190, 197). To fulfill this function, an EIR must consider a "reasonable range" of alternatives "that will foster informed decisionmaking and public participation. " CEQA Guidelines § l 5126.6(a). "An EIR which does not produce adequate information regarding alternatives cannot achieve the dual purpose served by the EIR . . . .'• Kings County Farm Bureau, supra, 221 Cal.App.3d 692, 733. In addition, under CEQA, readers must be able to "eval uate [alternatives'] comparative merits ." Kings County Farm Bureau, supra, 221 Cal.App.3d 692,733 (absence of comparative data in EIR precluded meaningful consideration of alternatives). A thorough comparison of the Program's alternatives' impacts is therefore crucial to a successful environmental document. This evaluation "shall include sufficient information about each alternative to allow meaningful evaluation, analysis, and comparison with the proposed project." CEQA Guidelines § 15126.6(d). The DEIR for the VTP fails to heed these basic mandates. First, while the document purports to identify four alternatives, these alternatives are so similar that they become identical for purposes of environmental review. Second, the DEIR's perfunctory comparative analysis of the VTP alternatives fails to adequately distinguish the environmental impacts of each option, to the extent there are differences. Finally, the DEIR fails to identify a feasible, less environmentally damaging alternative for managing wildfire risk in California.	alternatives analysis

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O111	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	1. The DEIR Fails to Consider A Reasonable Range of Alternatives. Other than the No Project Alternative, the DEIR presents four alternatives that are extraordinarily similar. Indeed, each alternative includes identical vegetation management treatments: prescribed fire, mechanical, manual, herbivory and herbicide applications. The only difference between each alternative and the proposed VTP is the locations of the areas that would be treated and the times of these treatments. 5 DEIR at 3-15; 3-21; 3-25. Alternative A would treat vegetation within the WUI only; Alternative B would treat vegetation within the WUI and Fuel Breaks; Alternative C would treat vegetation within Very High Hazard Severity Zones; and Alternative D would treat vegetation on all of the lands within the VTP but would limit the timing of prescribed burns to reduce the Program' s air quality impacts. In comparison to the proposed VTP which would treat about 22 million acres, the remaining three geographic alternatives would have substantially reduced footprints. DEIR at 3-36. "Alternative A: WUI Only" would treat about 10.6 million acres; "Alternative B: WUI and Fuel Breaks"would treat about 14.6 million acres; and "Alternative C: Very High Hazard Severity Zone" would treat about 11.8 million acres. Id.	alternatives analysis
O112	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	However, because the annual area treated under the alternatives is virtually identical, the DEIR asserts that each of the alternatives would pose nearly identical environmental risks to the VTP. This approach is untenable. Since the primary purpose of an alternatives analysis under CEQA is to explore different options to proposed actions that will adversely affect the environment, analyzing only slight variations of the same proposal -all of which have essentially identical environmental effects -does not constitute an adequate alternatives analysis. Laurel Heights, supra, 47 Cal.3d 376, 403 (purpose of an EIR's alternatives analysis is to identify ways to reduce or avoid significant environmental effects); CEQA Guidelines § 15126.6(c) (agency should analyze alternatives that "could avoid or substantially lessen one or more of the significant effects."); Pub. Resources Code, § 21002 (same). To the extent that the Board believes it has no obligation to consider alternatives other than vegetation treatment because the Program allegedly results in no significant environmental impacts, the agency is mistaken. As this letter clarifies, the only reason that the DEIR determines the Program would not result in significant environmental impacts is that the document fails to conduct the necessary examination. Had the DEIR conducted a thorough investigation of the VTP's environmental impacts, the Board would be compelled to conclude that the Program will cause extensive adverse effects. 5 Alternative D: Reduction of Prescribed Fire Treatments to Reduce Air Quality Impacts calls for allowing prescribed burns in non-attainment areas only on "burn days."	alternatives analysis

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O113	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	2. The DEIR Fails to Cond uct the Necessary Comparative Analysis of the Alternatives' Environ mental Impacts. CEQA requires an EIR to include sufficient information about each alternative to allow meaningful evaluation, analysis, and comparison with the proposed Project. CEQA Guidelines § 15126.6(d). Yet, the DEIR' s perfunctory and uninformative '"analysis" here makes it impossible to determine which, if any, of the alternatives would effectively reduce the Program' s significant environmental impacts. Indeed, the DEIR provides no actual analysis of each alternative's impact on the environment. Instead, it merely asserts the overall impacts of Alternatives A, B and C would be similar to, or even more impactful, than the proposed VTP.6 Id. The DEIR reaches this contrived conclusion because the agency has crafted the alternatives so that each one would treat the exact same amount of acreage (60,000 acres) every year with identical vegetation treatment activities expected to occur. DEIR at 4-154; 155. The DEIR's cursory approach is no substitute for the in-depth discussion comparing each alternative's impacts that the law and common sense require. In order to be adequate, the DEIR must contain enough information to define the issue and provide a clear basis for choice between the alternatives. The alternatives that calls for focusing treatments in the very high fire hazard severity zone or only within the WUI would appear to be logical, less environmentally damaging alternatives since they would concentrate treatments in smaller geographic areas. DEIR at 4-155. Yet, because the DEIR provides no way to distinguish between the impacts caused by the alternatives and those caused by the VTP, the alternatives' analysis thus becomes a meaningless exercise. 6 In addition to being incorrect, the DEIR's conclusion that each alternative would have identical impacts to the VTP, is wholly unsupported by facts or any analysis. Instead of supplying a thorough comparison of the environmental impacts of each alternative, the document merely asserts, as regards biological resources for example, that all impacts would be expected to be similar in nature to those from the proposed VTP. DEIR at 4-155.	alternatives analysis
O129	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	1.I. Why does the Alternatives Analysis depend so much on acres treated? One major issue here is that treating 60,000 acres per year is not one of the official objectives of the VTP, so it should not be used to judge alternatives. Clearly, however, it is the main unofficial objective. Nonetheless, the goal of 60,000 acres per year with unlimited potential for expansion to 22,000,000 acres is problematic, because it means that areas get treated once per century or once per 366 years, as noted above. Things like fire breaks only work if they are cleared regularly, ideally every year. However, limiting the VTP to acres that could be cleared every year would limit the program to something as small as 60,000 high-value acres (so that each acre could be cleared once every year). Any realistic VTP should be something in between 300,000 and 22,000,000 acres (probably less than a few million acres, as even projects in a 1,200,000 acre program would only be visited once every 20 years). That requires a much reduced project, so that some sites are visited frequently, some once. Regardless, any argument that downgrades alternatives because they limit the acreage treated is doomed by logistics and math. It is a criterion based on greed rather than analysis or logistics. Why use it? We strongly suggest that the BoF consider how much they truly need to work on, and make that the area of the VTP. We also strongly suggest that, if acreage treated is so important, that the VTP make that the first official objective, and stop trying to hide this fundamental motivation for the VTP.	Alternatives Analysis

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O198	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	IV. The DEIR Does Not Consider a Reasonable Range of Alternatives The DEIR does not complete an adequate analysis of project alternatives. The mitigation and alternatives sections are the "core" of the EIR, and an agency should not approve a project as proposed if there are feasible alternatives or mitigation measures that would substantially lessen the impact of the project. Pub. Resources Code § 21002; Habitat and Watershed Caretakers v. City of Santa Cruz, 213 Cal. App. 4th 1277, 1302 (2013). Under CEQA, an EIR must consider a range of reasonable alternatives that would feasibly attain most of the objectives of the Program while avoiding or substantially lessening its significant impacts, and must compare the relative merits of these alternatives. CEQA Guidelines § 15126.6. Furthermore, the range of alternatives should be designed to "foster informed decision making." Id. The alternatives presented in the DEIR, however, fail to present a "range" because each alternative is simply some portion or combination of the same components as the preferred alternative. Yet, there are feasible alternatives that were not presented and would meet the objectives of the project and lessen environmental impacts. For instance, wildfire damage could be significantly reduced using a program that focuses "from the house out"(2) to reduce home flammability without extensive biomass removal. 2 See http://www.fire.ca.gov/fire_prevention/fire_prevention_wildland_faqs#gen01.	alternatives analysis
O199	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	The DEIR also dismisses a number of alternatives from consideration without sufficient analysis. Under CEQA, an agency must identify alternatives that were considered but rejected as infeasible. CEQA Guidelines §15126.6(c). In doing so, the agency must provide a reasoned analysis of its reasons because the public should not be expected to accept its determination on blind trust. Laurel Heights Improvement Assn of San Francisco v. Regents of the University of California, 47 Cal. 3d 376, 404 (1988); Habitat and Watershed Caretakers v. City of Santa Cruz, 213 Cal. App. 4th 1277, 1305 (2013). Furthermore, "an EIR should not exclude an alternative from detailed consideration merely because it would impede to some degree the attainment of the project objectives." In re Bay-Delta, 43 Cal. 4th 1143, 1165 (2008). Here, the DEIR rejects in rapid succession seven alternatives from further consideration. The DEIR quickly rejects these alternatives as failing to achieve project objectives and as "not consistent with 2010 Strategic Fire Plan for California or the 2012 Strategic Plan." DEIR at 3-37 to 3-40. Yet no explanation is given for what parts of these Strategic Plans are inconsistent or what aspects of the Project conflict with the stated objectives. Moreover, a generic and conclusory assertion of conflict with an agency's vision for management is not a valid basis for finding an alternative infeasible. The DEIR fails to provide adequate "facts or analysis" to enable the public to "understand and consider meaningfully the issues raised by the proposed project." Laurel Heights, 47 Cal. 3d at 405-405. One alternative that the DEIR must analyze is a VTP limited to treating the defensible space around homes and other structures. As detailed below (Section V.H), on-the-ground research indicates that vegetation management within the defensible space in the 40-meter radius surrounding individual homes effectively protects homes from wildland fire, even intense fire, whereas management beyond the defensible space does not effectively protect homes. An alternative that analyzes vegetation treatments only in defensible space would greatly minimize the significant impacts of the Project while maximizing the protection of people, property, and natural resources of California, the stated mission of the Board and CalFire. DEIR at E-2.	alternatives analysis

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O267	Spencer	Wayne	Conservation Biology Insitute	Inadequate Range of Alternatives. An EIR must analyze a range of reasonable alternatives that could feasibly attain the project objectives. However, all alternatives in the PEIR are just variations on the theme of treating vegetation on wildlands to reduce fire risks to human or natural resources, despite all the science calling this approach into question. None of the alternatives is likely to achieve the stated objectives; and there are more environmentally friendly and effective alternatives. Reasonable alternatives that would meet the stated objectives would need to take a comprehensive approach to fire management that includes community and regional planning, reducing ignitability of structures, and using strategic fuel modifications and ignition prevention planning within and directly around (e.g., within 100 feet of) the commodities at risk. During PEIR revision, the Endangered Habitats League (EHL) in collaboration with several scientists, including me, provided CalFire with an alternative to consider that would better achieve the PEIR's stated goals and reduce the VTP's environmental impacts. This proposed approach prioritized treatments (using properly defined WUI) within 100 feet of at-risk structures (highest priority); within 100-1,000 feet of structures where a tactical fire-fighting evaluation and an ecological evaluation agree there would be a positive benefit/cost ratio (moderate priority); and >1,000 feet from structures, or having adverse ecological effects if closer than this (lowest priority). This recommended alternative approach also reflected the prevailing scientific consensus that fuels treatments in chaparral and other shrub-dominated communities should be generally excluded as too costly and ineffective in reducing fire risks or increasing ecological benefits. I don't see due consideration of such logical, science-based prioritization alternatives in the PEIR.	alternatives analysis
O282	Silver	Dan	Endangered Habitats League	For the Board's assistance in evaluating and improving the Vegetation Treatment Program and its Environmental Impact Report (VTPEIR), please find a document that outlines an alternative approach to vegetation treatments. It is considered a work in progress but nevertheless is an example of what should have been incorporated into the VTPEIR within an adequate range of alternatives. It was previously supplied to CAL FIRE during earlier discussions. [attachment]	Alternatives Analysis
P49	St. Clair	Peter		2. The PEIR fails to address obvious alternatives. The most important is PRC 4291, the defensible space act. Structures can be hardened against fire and communities made more fire safe without the extensive vegetation treatment assessed in the PEIR. There are many more existing or potential alternatives that address vegetation treatment outside areas where it is required for defensible space--areas where treatment improves natural resource quality. These are not mentioned as alternatives to vegetation treatment. They may be superior in all respects to just cutting, spraying, burning or ripping out California's native plants.	Alternatives Analysis
P74	Williams	Chuck		May I suggest Cal Fire consider using these methods of controlling fire which also aide wildlife: BUFFER ZONING With so much of California's biodiversity being fire dependent , it is a mistake for Calfire to not be involved with city and county planning departments on locating and maintaining firebreaks. Cities and counties have the ability to create buffer zoning around parks and nature preserves, which need fire occasionally to keep them healthy. Such zoning can keep homes and other development from being built so close to natural areas as to endanger them and make fire control more difficult. Some of the types of uses allowed in such zones that would be more compatible with both fire and nature are: nature study, education and research centers; organic farms; environmental tourism, outdoor guides; so-called "green" cemeteries, which have native landscaping; rural residences built underground or of bermed-earth design that are essentially fireproof; and possibly even extreme bicycle routes and frisbee courses in areas where erosion and pedestrian conflict can be controlled.	Alternatives Analysis
P75	Williams	Chuck		WILDLIFE CORRIDORS In a similar fashion as with buffering nature preserves, Cal Fire could work in cooperation with other agencies and private land owners to create wildlife corridors between wildlife preserves with buffer zones allowing low impact uses immediately adjoining them and zones of moderate impact further away.	Alternatives Analysis

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
P76	Williams	Chuck		SMOKE MANAGEMENT & CARBON SEQUESTRATION Burn piles that are lit on top instead of on the sides or bottom, create a whole lot less smoke pollution and CO2 release. This method could be added to Appendix J,VII. Mitigation of Smoke Management Plan. If the burning piles are extinguished by smothering or water before they burn down to ash, a lot of charcoal will be created. Scattered around the area this carbon will be sequestered in the soil for many decades.	Alternatives Analysis
P77	Williams	Chuck		For fire protection, many large fields of grass are either totally mowed every year (often more then once), or the perimeter is mowed in the same place every year leaving the rest of the field to build up a deep layer of dead fuel. Most native grasses are perennial bunch grasses which won't produce many, if any seeds after their immature seed heads have been cut off. Therefore when they are cut (or eaten) off every year, the plant eventually dies out. But the predominantly annual non-native grasses will regrow at a lower position after being cut off, and produce more seeds for the next year resulting in a field becoming totally non-native annual grasses which are not the best for grazing nor natural diversity. A partial solution is to mow fire breaks in a different pattern each year so that some native bunches will be left unmowed and therefore able to produce seeds that year. Then over the next 2-4 following years mow the firebreak in a different pattern so that any one bunch of native grass is given a chance to produce seeds by not having their heads cut off. For example: Year one— Mow a firebreak around the outer edge of the field . Year two — mow zig zag across the field north and south. Year three— mow zig zag east and west. Year four — mow a five-point star in the field. Year five — mow a spiral in the field. Year six — start the sequence of patterns over or invent another design or ten. Initial mowing can be done early but should leave 3/4 to 2/3 of the field uncut. Later in the season when the native grass has matured its seed (turned brown) a 2nd, complete mowing is OK and will not hurt the the native grass reproduction, but will help lower the fire danger. This patterned mowing has been seen to increase the number of wildflowers present. If there are no native grasses in the field	Alternatives Analysis
P84	Fotheringham	CJ		The VTP also fails to adequately address an important factor in mitigating large fires which is limiting initial ignition. The majority of fires at lower elevations in California are anthropomorphic in origin and a significant number are ignited accidentally along road ways by car fires, catalytic converter failure, discarding of burning material from vehicles, etc. Cal-fire misses an opportunity to prevent large fires from starting by not considering the potential in this area. Isolating flammable vegetation from road shoulders either by actual manipulation of vegetation in this area or the construction of barriers such as sound walls could have a significant impact. While the latter is initially expensive it is a more permanent solution, causes fewer environmental impacts (and potentially some benefits) and requires lower future maintenance.	Alternatives Analysis

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
P87	St. Clair2	Peter		1. First and foremost, I cannot find justification for VTP Objective #4. It is not an objective. It is a description of the project. An acceptable objective might have been natural resource conservation. Such goals are stated and referenced throughout the VTPEIR, but I do not think they are program objectives. They should be. In this PEIR Vegetation Treatment (VT) is proposed as the only solution to wildfire and the only means of mitigating loss of life and property. This is clearly not true. Therefore, VTPEIR has not considered meaningful alternatives.	Alternatives Analysis
P88	St. Clair2	Peter		2. Section 3 is deficient. One solution would be to significantly scale back the objectives and scope of both VTP and VTPEIR or break apart various programs that together work toward the objectives and consider each on a stand alone, or integrated basis in a new PEIR that would encompass more options. Unless that is done, the No Project Alternative is a more realistic and effective program and is most likely to achieve our goals and objectives. The other alternatives that are considered are at best sub-categories of the Proposed Program. Since resource conservation does not appear to be an Objective, I do not see how the Alternatives can be rejected.	Alternatives Analysis
P89	St. Clair2	Peter		3. Different alternatives might fulfill the project objectives at far lower cost and environmental impact. One is full enforcement of PRC 4291 including structure hardening and "shelter in place" modifications to communities threatened by wildfire. Where implemented, these have proven highly effective in protecting lives and property. Another alternative may be more applicable in Southern California. Here, something like 90% of wildfires are caused by accidental ignition. VTPEIR does not consider the alternative of widespread education and public outreach as a way of reducing such ignitions and eliminating the need for large scale VT.	Alternatives Analysis
P92	St. Clair2	Peter		6. There is a troubling statement on page 3-8 concerning the No Project Alternative and "consistent application" of SPR's and mitigation measures. Why should programs carried out in our incredibly diverse state have to be consistent? And why would any program or project be undertaken by CalFire that is unlawful or inconsistent with exiting regulations? I think you are treading on thin ice when you criticize the No Project Alternative for what may be a virtue: greater compatibility with "on the ground conditions". Indeed, Section 7.1 page 7-1 suggests CalFire may use PSR's in addition to SPR's any time, any place. Your rejection of the No Project Alternative is in itself inconsistent. This incredibly top down thinking leads to other problematic conclusions, such as those reached in Section 7 PSA Priority Ranking flowchart, Attachment B. As I read the flowchart, "maintenance" is never more highly prioritized than a "new project". This cannot be true. Indeed maintenance of prior treatments may be mandated--for example growth of annual weeds and flashy fuels on open fire breaks in Southern California.	Alternatives Analysis
P96	St. Clair2	Peter		10. I continue to be confused about the rejection of the few project alternatives that were actually considered. It appears their rejection is without adequate analysis. The rejections assume VT is the overarching goal and method within the State of California to manage resources and manage wildfire and its outcome. That is clearly not true.	Alternatives Analysis

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
U3	Reed	Chris	University of California, Riverside	The latest draft is highly problematic: - Potential impacts are dismissed without support - Mitigations of impacts are unenforceable and unmeasurable - Clearance of northern chaparral is justified by logical fallacies - Research of several scientists continues to be misrepresented (despite corrections being submitted) - Lack of transparency remains a significant issue. Please act more wisely.	Inadequate data
U4	Franklin	Janet	Arizona State University	I am writing to submit my comments concerning the draft environmental impact report for Cal Fire's Vegetation Treatment Program. I am concerned that ther are a significant number of inconsistencies as the document initially references current science to only qualify or ignore it later in order to support the Program's objectives.The Draft PEIR misrepresents cited scientific literature and depends on anecdotal evidence. I support the request that you retract the Vegetation Treatment Program Programmatic EIR (Environmental Impact Report) and create a program that will properly consider the entire fire environment, reflect regional differences, allow for independent oversight, and incorporate the most up to date science.	Inadequate data
U5	Dudley	Tom	Marine Science Institute, University of California Santa Barbara	Instead of being satisfied with the BOF re-analysis of wildfire preparation planning, I am deeply concerned that this report is inadequate, repeating many of the same short-comings as previous reports and ignoring the input of scientists, conservationists and others. Therefore, I ask that the whole program be over-hauled to correct unsupported statements, that in many cases run counter to current scientific knowledge regarding how to manage and reduce wildfire risks and better protect infrastructure, communities and ecosystems. These misrepresentations are more fully detailed in the response of the the California Chaparral Institute, so I will not repeat them here because I am a co-signer on that document.	Inadequate data
A17	Osterholm	Lesa	Range Management Advisory Committee	2. Inaccurate or Outdated Statistics There are several places the VTP EIR could use improvement in regards to improving inaccurate or outdated statistics. 2.a On page 4-12, "Condition of Non-Federal Grasslands," there is a reference to the 2003 FRAP report on the condition of annual grasslands. The writer explained the "poor" rating (the 2003 report actually stated "fair to poor") as being due to applying methods for perennial grasslands to annual grasslands. That's somewhat right. What they meant was that NRCS (in the 1980s) did not directly evaluate the health of rangelands in terms of soil surface condition, water retention, productivity, etc. but instead against a long out-of-date method of identifying 'seral' ecological stages on the basis of the relationship of the species present to some hypothetical idea of what the ideal plant community composition should be. That particular result was fairly meaningless, and the Committee believes its inclusion in the EIR is bound to confuse readers. RMAC suggests the Board contact the NRI rangeland programs director, Lori Metz, for a simplified NRI report on conditions of California annual grasslands.	Inadequate data
A18	Osterholm	Lesa	Range Management Advisory Committee	2.b Another section, "Grazing Capacity Estimates" on page 5-14, describes animal unit months (AUMs) inaccurately in important regards. An AUM is the amount of forage (dry basis) that a 1,000 pound herbivore will eat in 30 days. Most primary references give it as 780 pounds of dry matter, but the USDA estimates it as 1,000 pounds to be 'conservative' as possible and make the math very slightly easier. In addition to adjusting the AUM discussion, RMAC suggests this section include AUMs for goats and sheep, as those animals are likely to be used in prescribed herbivory projects under this VTP. A fact sheet provided by the Utah State University Cooperative Extension, Determining Your Stocking Rate, by Mindy Pratt and G. Allen Rasmussen (attached) provides the following table, which RMAC recommends inserting on page 5-14 as a "quick reference" for VTP project proponents, along with a reference to the document: [see letter]	Inadequate data

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A24	Fege	Anne	Community Forest Advisory Board, City of San Diego	Accuracy and currency of spatial data. The DPEIR relies on outdated and inadequate spatial data. The analysis is based on the fire hazard analysis from 2001-2003 (2-17), which used a WUI model based on the 1990 census. CalFire developed the Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps in 2007, based on 2000 census data, and they were reviewed by local firefighting agencies. CalFire continues to update the analyses and maps, and they should be used in the DPEIR. CalFire has assembled and analyzed considerable spatial data on fire hazards and current vegetation conditions, and these data layers need to be accessible and incorporated into the DPEIR (not just low-resolution .pdf images inserted into text pages). The experts in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) can and should contribute current data and analysis to the DPEIR, and that data should be easily accessible online by the public.	Inadequate Data
A26	Fege	Anne	Community Forest Advisory Board, City of San Diego	Scientific basis for treatments and analyses. The DPEIR still has inconsistencies, statements unsupported by scientific literature, misrepresentations of citations, contradictory statements, and undefined terms. A number of experts have invested time to identify these over the past several years, and have provided extensive literature that applies to the proposed actions. To ignore all this information, and release such an inadequate DPEIR, is almost inconceivable. The DPEIR needs to be based on published literature, not references that are unpublished, statements in legislative hearings, internal agency notes (such as Beyers 2000 and Zedler 2000), or written 40 to 70 years ago (DeBano 1976, Hanes 1971, Horton 1955, Sampson 1944). Important terms are not defined, allowing for inconsistent implementation and unknown impacts of projects. Examples are as old growth chaparral, critical infrastructure, and forest health. Many of the impact statements of “less than significant” are unsupported by scientific evidence.	Inadequate Data
O4	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	2. Substandard Research - misrepresenting cited scientific literature - dependence on anecdotal evidence - contradictory statements - ignoring information in the record - cited references missing, non sequiturs	Inadequate Data
O5	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	3. Inadequate Data - outdated fire hazard analysis model/data unsuitable for project level planning - utilizing coarse-scale maps that cannot provide sufficient detail for competent analysis - WUI assessments based on 26-year-old information - dependence on maps that no longer reflect current conditions	Inadequate Data
O11	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	2. Substandard Research Another key recommendation of California Fire Science Consortium’s Panel Review Report (CFSC 2014) was to, “Include additional scientific findings throughout,” and that, … a sound scientific foundation should be reflected with each vegetation management plan providing a clear rationale for the selected action. This should be done by providing additional references to support claims in the VTDPEIR and including additional scientific concepts that are relevant to the planned actions. The DPEIR has improved its review of the chaparral’s fire regime. However, as to developing a sound scientific foundation for the plan, the DPEIR fails to do so.	Inadequate Data

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O12	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	References inadequate for a science-based document A significant number of references used to support statements in the DPEIR are from testimony or reports to Congress. While such references can provide overviews, many are too broad or political in nature to be of any use in developing a scientific foundation. And because such references are not peer-reviewed, there is no mechanism for determining how factual, evidence-based, or scientifically accurate they are. McKelvey et al. 1996, a report to Congress on the forest of the Sierra Nevada, is cited out of context to support the notion that, "prescribed fire is believed to benefit the overall health of fire adapted ecosystems" (4-151). While true for some Sierra Nevada forests, this is not true for chaparral. This represents a chronic problem in the DPEIR – citing papers that are not applicable to the statement being made, but are used to support the general objectives of the Program. Bonnickson 2003 (2-11) was testimony provided during a politically charged Congressional hearing after the 2003 fires. Much of the contents are opinion, not scientific fact. Although used to support a statement in the DPEIR, the Bonnickson paper does not appear in the reference list. In fact, there are other papers cited but not listed in the references, or in the reference list and not cited in the text (e.g. Countryman 1972 – a speculative narrative, not scientific research). A simple editing program could resolve this problem.	Inadequate Data
O13	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	Incorrect citations The Sugihara et al. 2006 citation, an introductory chapter in a book about fire in California is used 12 times within Chapter 4. We searched for the specific DPEIR point the citation was supposed to be supporting within the Sugihara et al. work, but were unable do so in most instances. In other words, the statement the DPEIR is using the citation to support does not exist within the Sugihara et al. reference. Using an introductory book chapter multiple times to establish a scientific foundation for the DPEIR is inappropriate. Original peer-reviewed research needs to be used and the research needs to be double checked to verify that cited references are in fact relevant to the point in question.	Inadequate Data

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O15	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	3. Outdated/Inadequate Data - Ignoring Cal Fire Data Inexplicably, the DPEIR is based on decades old data even though Cal Fire's GIS analysts have completed two updated fire hazard analyses since, and are now working on a third. The current document is based on products from a fire hazard analysis done in 2001-2003 which is used a wildland urban interface WUI model based on the 1990 U. S. Census. (2-17) The U. S. Census is conducted every ten years. GIS analysts at the University of Wisconsin-Madison have produced block housing density maps and derived WUI maps serially using the 1990, 2000, and 2010 Census data. They are free to the public. Cal Fire uses these datasets as input for their new fire hazard analyses. The DPEIR does not mention that Cal Fire has produced an updated, revised version of the 2003 fire hazard analysis in 2007 using the 2000 U. S. Census data. They issued revised fire hazard analysis maps that were reviewed and in some cases amended by local firefighting agencies in every county: http://www.fire.ca.gov/fire_prevention/fire_prevention_wildland_zones The DPEIR does not mention that Cal Fire updated fire hazard maps again in 2010, apparently adding some new fire history data inputs: http://frap.cdf.ca.gov/data/assessment2010/pdfs/2.1wildfire_threat.pdf The DPEIR does not mention that a Cal Fire webpage dated April 2016 says the agency is currently gathering updated data to do another wildfire hazard analysis: http://cdfdata.fire.ca.gov/fire_er/fpp_planning_severehazard There is a significant amount of information about the fire hazard analyses and planning based on them on the Cal Fire webpage. It's been there for years (most of it dates to the 2007 update). The current DPEIR ignores much of this. Legal origins of the program: http://cdfdata.fire.ca.gov/fire_er/fpp_planning_severehazard Non-technical overview of the program and analysis: http://osfm.fire.ca.gov/codedevelopment/pdf/Wildfire%20Protection/FHSZ%202007%20 fact%20sheet.pdf	Inadequate Data
O20	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	Suggested Improvements to the Draft DPEIR - Use most current Cal Fire Fire hazard data. It is inadequate to utilize a fire hazard analysis done in 2000-2003 that uses a wildland urban interface (WUI) model based on the 1990 U.S. Census. The DPEIR needs to base the Program on current, scientifically verified information available from Cal Fire.	Inadequate Data
O21	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	Suggested Improvements to the Draft DPEIR - Research support for conclusions. Conclusions in a DPEIR need to be supported by research, not by employing the Fallacy of Authority. Sweeping generalizations like the one below should not be in a science-based document. “Landscape constraints, Standard Project Requirements, and Project Specific Requirements developed as a result of the Project Scale Analysis will, in the aggregate, reduce cumulative impacts to less than significant.”	Inadequate Data
O22	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	Suggested Improvements to the Draft DPEIR - Maintain consistency and research quality. Eliminate contradictions, errors in citations, and inconsistencies throughout the document.	Inadequate Data

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O37	Marderosian	Ara	Sequioa ForestKeeper	There is no scientific dispute that mechanical fuel treatments that remove trees, biomass, and a significant amount of tree canopy increase wind speeds. Science demonstrates that; • Logging is not restoration. • Logging increases fire risk and causes long term damage. • Logging standing dead trees runs contrary to the best available science. • Winds have been a major issue in the fire's spread & an impediment to containment. • Biomass burning will increase atmospheric CO2 levels. • Removing biomass from the forests for generating power will deplete the forest of future soil nutrients and will continue to exacerbate global climate change.	Inadequate data
O40	Marderosian	Ara	Sequioa ForestKeeper	Science Indicates the Importance of Fire as a Natural Ecosystem Process. Wildfire is an essential part of natural ecosystem process. While it is true that fire suppression and logging practices have altered forest structures, it is important to note that this does not eliminate the essential role of fire, including high-severity fire, as a natural ecosystem process in many forest types. In fact, fire can have an essential role in restoring forest structure at larger geographical scales. Fire is a natural and necessary component of forest ecosystems, with many critical functions for diversity and wildlife. It would be a misunderstanding of the science and nature of forest and fire dynamics to approach these emissions in the same context as those from smokestacks, bioenergy and pile burning, which are discretionary activities that occur under direct human control. Numerous studies and multiple lines of evidence indicate that the ponderosa pine and mixed- conifer forests of California are characterized by mixed-severity fire that includes ecologically significant amounts of high-severity fire (see review in Odion et al. 2014). Mixed-severity fire includes low-, moderate-, and high-severity effects that create complex successional diversity, high beta diversity, and diverse stand-structure across the landscape. High-intensity fire patches, including large patches, in large fires are natural in California mixed-conifer forests. California's forested landscapes evolved with fire over thousands of years. This pre-European, forested landscape was shaped by mixed-severity fire, with low, moderate, and high-severity fire types. Plant and animal species in the forest evolved with fire, and many of these plant and animal species depend on wildfires, including high-severity fires, to reproduce and grow. For instance, fire can help return nutrients from plant matter back to soil, the heat from fire is necessary to the germination of certain types of seeds, and the snags (dead trees) and early succesional forests created by high-severity fire create habitat conditions that are beneficial to wildlife. Early successional forests created by high-severity fire support some of the highest levels of native biodiversity found in temperature conifer forests.	Inadequate Data

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O41	Marderosian	Ara	Sequioa ForestKeeper	Several recent studies provide evidence for a mixed-severity fire regime in California forests, including an important role for high-severity fire, as well as declines in high-severity fire, as summarized here: Beaty and Taylor 2001: On the western slope of the southern Cascades in California, historic fire intensity in mixed-conifer forests was predominantly moderate- and high-intensity, except in mesic canyon bottoms, where moderate- and high-intensity fire comprised 40.4% of fire effects [Table 7].) Bekker and Taylor 2001: On the western slope of the southern Cascades in California, in mixed- conifer forests, fire was predominantly high-intensity historically [Fig. 2F]. Bekker and Taylor 2010: In mixed-conifer forests of the southern Cascades, reconstructed fire severity within the study area was dominated by high-severity fire effects, including high- severity fire patches over 2,000 acres in size [Tables I and II]. Collins and Stephens 2010: In a modern "reference" forest condition within mixed-conifer/fir forests in Yosemite National Park, 15% of the area experienced high-intensity fire over a 33-year period—a high-intensity fire rotation interval of approximately 223 years. Nagel and Taylor 2005: The authors found that large high-severity fire patches were a natural part of 19th century fire regimes in mixed-conifer and eastside pine forests of the Lake Tahoe Basin, and montane chaparral created by high-severity fire has declined by 62% since the 19th century due to reduced high-severity fire occurrence. The authors expressed concern about harm to biodiversity due to loss of ecologically rich montane chaparral. Odion et al. 2014: In the largest and most comprehensive analysis ever conducted regarding the historical occurrence of high-intensity fire, the authors found that ponderosa pine and mixed- conifer forests in every region of western North America had mixed-intensity fire regimes, which included substantial occurrence of high-intensity fire. The authors also found, using multiple lines of evidence, including over a hundred historical sources and fire history reconstructions, and an extensive forest age-class analysis, that we now have unnaturally low levels of high- intensity fire in these forest types in all regions, since the beginning of fire suppression policies in the early 20th century. Numerous studies show that high-severity fire is beneficial to wildlife. High-severity fire creates very biodiverse, ecologically important, and unique habitat (often called "snag forest habitat"), which often has higher species richness and diversity than unburned old forest.	Inadequate data
O42	Marderosian	Ara	Sequioa ForestKeeper	Bond et al. 2009: In a radio-telemetry study, California spotted owls preferentially selected high- intensity fire areas, which had not been salvage logged, for foraging, while selecting low- and moderate-intensity areas for nesting and roosting. Buchalski et al. 2013: In mixed-conifer forests of the southern Sierra Nevada, rare myotis bats were found at greater levels in unmanaged high-severity fire areas of the McNally fire than in lower fire severity areas or unburned forest. Burnett et al. 2010: Bird species richness was approximately the same between high-severity fire areas and unburned mature/old forest at 8 years post-fire in the Storrie fire, and total bird abundance was greatest in the high-severity fire areas of the Storrie fire [Figure 4]. Nest density of cavity-nesting species increased with higher proportions of high-severity fire, and was highest at 100% [Figure 8]. Cocking et al. 2014: High-intensity fire areas are vitally important to maintain and restore black oaks in mixed-conifer forests. Donato et al. 2009: The high-severity re-burn [high-severity fire occurring 15 years after a previous high-severity fire] had the highest plant species richness and total plant cover, relative to high-severity fire alone [no re-burn] and unburned mature/old forest; and the high-severity fire re-burn area had over 1,000 seedlings/saplings per hectare of natural conifer regeneration. Franklin et al. 2000: The authors found that stable or increasing populations of spotted owls resulted from a mix of dense old forest and complex early seral habitat, and less than approximately 25% complex early seral habitat in the home range was associated with declining populations [Fig. 10]; the authors emphasized that the complex early seral habitat was consistent with high-intensity fire effects, and inconsistent with clearcut logging. Hanson and North 2008: Black-backed woodpeckers depend upon dense, mature/old forest that has recently experienced higher-intensity fire, and has not been salvage logged.	Inadequate data

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O43	Marderosian	Ara	Sequioa ForestKeeper	Hanson 2013: Pacific fishers are using pre-fire mature/old forest that experienced moderate/high- intensity fire more than expected based upon availability, just as fishers are selecting dense, mature/old forest in its unburned state. When fishers are near fire perimeters, they strongly select the burned side of the fire edge. Both males and female fishers are using large mixed-intensity fire areas, such as the McNally fire, including several kilometers into the fire area. Hutto, R.L. 1995: A study in the northern Rocky Mountain region found that 15 bird species are generally more abundant in early post-fire communities than in any other major cover type occurring in the northern Rockies. Standing, fire-killed trees provided nest sites for nearly two- thirds of 31 species that were found nesting in the burned sites. Hutto, R.L. 2008: Severely burned forest conditions have occurred naturally across a broad range of forest types for millennia and provide an important ecological backdrop for fire specialists like the black-backed woodpecker. Lee and Bond 2015: California spotted owls exhibited high site occupancy in post-fire landscapes during the breeding season following the 2013 Rim Fire, even where large areas burned at high severity; the complex early seral forests created by high-severity fire appear to provide important habitat for the small mammal prey of the owl. Malison and Baxter 2010: In ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forests of Idaho at 5-10 years post- fire, levels of aquatic insects emerging from streams were two and a half times greater in high- intensity fire areas than in unburned mature/old forest, and bats were nearly 5 times more abundant in riparian areas with high-intensity fire than in unburned mature/old forest. Raphael et al. 1987: At 25 years after high-intensity fire, total bird abundance was slightly higher in snag forest than in unburned old forest in eastside mixed-conifer forest of the northern Sierra Nevada; and bird species richness was 40% higher in snag forest habitat. In earlier post- fire years, woodpeckers were more abundant in snag forest, but were similar to unburned by 25 years post-fire, while flycatchers and species associated with shrubs continued to increase to 25 years post-fire.	Inadequate data
O44	Marderosian	Ara	Sequioa ForestKeeper	Sestrich et al. 2011: Native Bull and Cutthroat trout tended to increase with higher fire intensity, particularly where debris flows occurred. Nonnative brook trout did not increase. Siegel et al. 2011: Many more species occur at high burn severity sites starting several years post-fire, and these include the majority of ground and shrub nesters as well as many cavity nesters. Secondary cavity nesters, such as swallows, bluebirds, and wrens, are particularly associated with severe burns, but only after nest cavities have been created, presumably by the pioneering cavity excavating species such as the Black-backed Woodpecker. As a result, fires that create preferred conditions for Black-backed Woodpeckers in the early post-fire years will likely result in increased nesting sites for secondary cavity nesters in successive years. Swanson et al. 2010: A literature review concluding that some of the highest levels of native biodiversity found in temperate conifer forest types occur in complex early successional habitat created by stand-initiating [high severity] fire.	Inadequate data

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O47	Marderosian	Ara	Sequioa ForestKeeper	Trends in fire behavior. While climate change will almost certainly alter many forest processes, including fire behavior, in many ecosystems over the coming decades, the current body of science offers a complex range of projections for California forests. Notably, the majority of studies that have analyzed recent trends in fire severity and frequency in California forests have found no significant trends in these metrics. Studies that project trends in fire activity have no clear consensus on how climate change will affect fire behavior in California forests. Nine studies have analyzed recent trends in fire severity in California's forests in terms of proportion, area, and/or patch size. Seven of nine studies found no significant trend in fire severity, including: Collins et al. 2009 (central Sierra Nevada), Dillon et al. 2011 (Northwest California), Hanson et al. 2009 (Klamath, southern Cascades), Hanson and Odion 2014 (Sierra Nevada, southern Cascades), Miller et al. 2012a (four Northwest CA forests), Odion et al. 2014 (eastern and western Sierra Nevada, eastern Cascades), and Schwind 2008 (California forests). The two studies that report an increasing trend in fire severity – Miller et al. 2009 and Miller and Safford 2012 (Sierra Nevada, southern Cascades) – were refuted by Hanson and Odion (2014) using a larger dataset. Hanson and Odion (2014) conducted the first comprehensive assessment of fire intensity since 1984 in the Sierra Nevada using 100% of available fire intensity data, and found no increasing trend in terms of high-intensity fire proportion, area, mean patch size, or maximum patch size. Hanson and Odion (2014) reviewed the approach of Miller et al. (2009) and Miller and Safford (2012) for bias, due to the use of vegetation layers that post-date the fires being analyzed in those studies. Hanson and Odion (2014) found that there is a statistically significant bias in both studies ($p = 0.025$ and $p = 0.021$, respectively), the effect of which is to exclude relatively more conifer forest experiencing high-intensity fire in the earlier years of the time series, thus creating the erroneous appearance of an increasing trend in fire severity. Hanson and Odion (2014) also found that the regional fire severity data set used by Miller et al. (2009) and Miller and Safford (2012) disproportionately excluded fires in the earlier years of the time series, relative to the standard national fire severity data set (www.mtbs.gov) used in other fire severity trend studies, resulting in an additional bias which created, once again, the inaccurate appearance of relatively less high-severity fire in the earlier years, and relatively more in more recent years.	Inadequate data
O48	Marderosian	Ara	Sequioa ForestKeeper	Three studies have analyzed recent trends in the number of fires in California's forests and have reported conflicting results for trends in fire frequency. Two studies found no trend in the number of fires -- Schwind (2008) and Syphard et al. (2007) -- while Westerling et al. (2006) reported evidence of an increasing number of fires. Projection studies have generally not modeled trends in future fire frequency and severity. Instead most studies have projected changes in area burned and the probability of burning. There is no consensus among these studies on future fire activity. Of seven studies that have projected trends in area burned in California forests, four projected both increases and decreases in total area burned varying by region, including: Lenihan et al. 2003, Lenihan et al. 2008, Krawchuk et al. 2009, and Spracklen et al. 2009. One study projected an overall decrease in area burned (McKenzie et al. 2004), while two studies projected increases: Fried et al. 2004 in a small region in the Amador-El Dorado Sierra foothills and Westerling et al. 2011. The projected increases reported in Westerling et al. (2011) are relatively modest: median increases in area burned of 15% and 19% by 2020 relative to 1961-1990 under a lower (B1) and higher emissions scenario (A2) respectively, 21% and 23% by 2050, and 20% and 44% by 2085.	Inadequate data

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O49	Marderosian	Ara	Sequioa ForestKeeper	Three studies have projected changes in the probability of burning or the probability of a large fire occurring, and these studies have projected no change, increases, or decreases varying by region: Krawchuk and Moritz 2012, Moritz et al. 2012, and Westerling and Bryant 2008. The studies empirically investigating the assumption that the most fire-suppressed forests are burning predominantly at high severity have consistently found that forest areas in California that have missed the largest number of fire return intervals are not burning at higher fire severity. Specifically, six empirical studies that have investigated this question found that the most long-unburned (most fire-suppressed) forests burned mostly at low/moderate-severity, and did not have higher proportions of high-severity fire than less fire-suppressed forests. Forests that were not fire suppressed (those that had not missed fire cycles, i.e., Condition Class 1, or "Fire Return Interval Departure" class 1) generally had levels of high-severity fire similar to, or higher than, those in the most fire-suppressed forests, as found by Odion et al. 2004, Odion and Hanson 2006, Odion and Hanson 2008, Odion et al. 2010, Miller et al. 2012a, van Wagtendonk et al. 2012. Finally, studies have found that California is experiencing a fire deficit compared to pre- settlement conditions, meaning that there is much less fire on the landscape than there was historically, and this deficit is detrimental to forests (Stephens et al. 2007).	Inadequate data
O50	Marderosian	Ara	Sequioa ForestKeeper	The Carbon Impacts of Forest Thinning. The DEIS only considered climate change impacts on managing forests and fails to consider the effects from logging, biomass removal, and soil disturbance on climate change. The result is a highly one-sided defense of policy options to promote logging, followed by the burning of those woody materials for biomass energy production. However, studies that have specifically evaluated the carbon implications of this strategy have found that thinning results in increased carbon emissions to the atmosphere for many decades. Three recently published studies of forests in the western United States suggest that emissions from removal and combustion of forest materials for bioenergy would exceed emissions from even high intensity fires, at least for some period of time. One study examined forest carbon responses to three different levels of fuel reduction treatments in 19 West Coast ecoregions containing 80 different forest types and different fire regimes (Hudiburg et al. 2011). In nearly all forest types, intensive harvest for bioenergy production resulted in net carbon emissions to the atmosphere, at least over the 20-year time frame of the study. Even lighter-touch fire prevention scenarios produced net carbon emissions in most ecoregions. The study shows that at present, across a wide range of ecosystems, thinning for fuels reduction and using the thinnings for bioenergy increases carbon dioxide concentrations, at least in the short term.	Inadequate data
O51	Marderosian	Ara	Sequioa ForestKeeper	A second study similarly found that thinning forests to avoid high-severity fire could actually increase overall carbon emissions (Campbell et al. 2011). Because the probability of a fire on any given acre of forest is relatively low, forest managers must treat many more acres than will actually burn in order to get much of a benefit—removing more carbon during "thinning" than would be released in a fire. The study also found that over a succession of disturbance cycles, models predicting forest growth, mortality, decomposition and combustion showed more carbon storage in a low-frequency, high-intensity fire regime than in a high-frequency, low-intensity fire regime. The study concluded: "we found little credible evidence that such efforts [fuel-reduction treatments] have the added benefit of increasing terrestrial C stocks" and "more often, treatment would result in a reduction in C stocks over space and time." A review by Law and Harmon (2011) concluded that "Thinning forests to reduce potential carbon losses due to wildfire is in direct conflict with carbon sequestration goals, and, if implemented, would result in a net emission of CO2 to the atmosphere because the amount of carbon removed to change fire behavior is often far larger than that saved by changing fire behavior, and more area has to be harvested than will ultimately burn over the period of effectiveness of the thinning treatment."	Inadequate data

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O52	Marderosian	Ara	Sequioa ForestKeeper	Furthermore, scientific studies have found that old forests store up to ~10 times more carbon in biomass per unit ground area than young forests, and old forests continue to have large carbon stores for hundreds of years (Luyssaert et al. 2008, Hudiburg et al. 2009, Law 2014, Schulze et al. 2012). Older trees not only store large amounts of carbon but actively sequester larger amounts of carbon compared to smaller trees (Stephenson et al. 2014). Contrary to the conventional forestry assumption that older trees are less productive, the mass growth rate for most temperate and tropical tree species increases continuously with age, meaning the biggest trees sequester the most carbon (Stephenson et al. 2014). In western USA old-growth forest plots, trees greater than 100 cm in diameter comprised 6% of trees, yet contributed 33% of the annual forest mass growth (Stephenson et al. 2014). Current research also shows that high- severity fire areas generally store the highest levels of carbon, due to the combination of the carbon in snags, downed logs, and post-fire regenerating vegetation, including shrubs and trees (Keith et al. 2009, Powers et al. 2013). Logging significantly reduces forest carbon storage. Harvest of live trees from the forest not only reduces current standing carbon stocks, but also reduces the forest's future rate of carbon sequestration, and its future carbon storage capacity, by removing trees that otherwise would have continued to grow and remove CO2 from the atmosphere (Holtsmark 2012). Even if harvested biomass is substituted for fossil fuels, it can be decades or centuries before the harvested forest achieves the same CO2 reductions that could be achieved by leaving the forest unharvested (depending on harvest intensity, frequency, and forest characteristics) (Searchinger et al. 2009, Hudiberg et al. 2011, Campbell et al. 2012, Mitchell et al. 2012). It takes more than 100 years (~125-130 years) to make up for carbon loss after a forest is logged (Harmon 2014, Law 2014).	Inadequate data
O53	Marderosian	Ara	Sequioa ForestKeeper	Accurate Accounting of the Carbon Impacts of Biomass Bioenergy. Any policy to promote the use of forest-sourced biomass for bioenergy production must fully account for the emissions and climate change consequences associated with those activities. In order to develop a program that makes sense within the forest carbon and GHG emissions contexts, biomass uses must be compared not only to alternative "waste diversion" options but to the full spectrum of alternative fates, including the carbon sequestration and storage associated with living and growing trees and forests. Woody biomass combustion is not carbon-neutral, as acknowledged by numerous scientific studies (see, e.g., Searchinger et al. 2009, Repo et al. 2010, Brandão et al. 2013), the IPCC,1 and the EPA.2 Measured at the smokestack, replacing fossil fuels with biomass actually increases CO2 emissions.3 Notably, a recent study found that the climate impact per unit of CO2 emitted seems to be even higher for the combustion of slow-growing biomass than for the combustion of fossil carbon in a 100-year time frame (Holtsmark 2013). The warming effect from biomass CO2 can continue for decades or even centuries depending on the feedstock. Multiple studies have shown that it can take a very long time for new biomass growth to recapture the carbon emitted by combustion, even where fossil fuel displacement is assumed, and even where "waste" materials like timber harvest residuals are used for fuel (Repo et al. 2010, Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences 2010, McKechnie et al. 2011, Mitchell et al. 2012, Schulze et al. 2012). One study, using realistic assumptions about repeat bioenergy harvests of woody biomass, concluded that the resulting atmospheric emissions increase may even be permanent (Holtsmark 2012). In addition to producing large amounts of CO2, biomass energy generation can result in significant emissions of other pollutants that worsen climate change and harm human health, such as black carbon. Many biomass emissions can exceed those of coal- fired power plants even after application of best available control technology.	Inadequate data

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O54	Marderosian	Ara	Sequioa ForestKeeper	Studies have found that global greenhouse gas emissions must peak by 2020 and drop sharply thereafter in order to preserve a likely chance of keeping global warming below 2°C — a level at which serious impacts will still occur (UNEP 2013). California's climate goals, as reflected in AB 32 and applicable executive orders (S-3-05 and B-30-15) also call for increasingly steep reductions in emissions over the next three decades. Yet the science shows this is precisely the time period during which biomass emissions released today will increase atmospheric CO2 levels. At a time when we need to reduce emissions dramatically in the short term and keep them down, California forest policy should not be promoting biomass burning that will exacerbate climate change. "One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds. Much of the damage inflicted on land is quite invisible to laymen. An ecologist must either harden his shell and make believe that the consequences of science are none of his business, or he must be the doctor who sees the marks of death in a community that believes itself well and does not want to be told otherwise." Aldo Leopold	Inadequate data
O62	Fenton	Drew	Community of San Lorenzo Valley	4. The purpose for the VTP is not based on current science, distorts the facts, threatening to the public and their safety. No biologist has recommended such activity, and must be science based, a requirement of PRC 21001 because CalFire is a "certified regulatory agency .	Inadequate data
O72	Booz	Martha	California Native Plant Society	I am commenting on the latest draft of the In the latest draft of the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (DPEIR) proposed by CalFire for the Vegetation Treatment Program. I find that: - Potential impacts are dismissed without support - Mitigations of impacts are unenforceable and unmeasurable - Clearance of northern chaparral is justified by logical fallacies - Research of several scientists continues to be misrepresented (despite corrections being submitted) - Lack of transparency remains a significant issue	Inadequate data
O73	Booz	Martha	California Native Plant Society	Why didn't you notify environmental groups of this action. You MUST NOT Clear all the Chaparral!!! That is foolish. You must pay attention to the research results provided by the California Chaparral Institute. As a member of the California Native Plant Society, I am deeply disappointed in your Draft Plan. It MUST be improved. Thank you for your attention to the comments above. The Plan must be changed and improved. It will not do as it is!	Inadequate data
O89	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	Piling even more uncertainty on top of the already vague Project description, this DEIR, like its predecessor, lacks sufficient maps of potential treatment areas. The DEIR asserts that the California Fire Alliance undertook spatial modeling to determine the total footprint of the WUI, areas eligible for Ecological Restoration, and treatment areas for Fuel Breaks. DEIR at 4-32, 4-41, and 4-51. Yet, these maps are not serious tools of measurement to identify the locations of areas that would be treated or to evaluate the Program's environmental impacts. As an initial matter, the maps' scale of about 1:16 million render the maps useless to decision-makers and the public. There is no logical reason why the maps could not have been printed at a larger scale on multiple pages and included as an technical appendix to the EIR. More importantly, as Wayne Spencer and Frank Landis explain, the maps are based on an outdated and problematic fire hazard analysis, which, in tum, was based on faulty science. (See May 31, 2016 Report from W. Spencer and May 3 l , 2016 letter from F. Landis).	Inadequate data

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O147	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	4. Why is the DEIR contain so many misstatements based on scientific papers, reliance on anecdotal evidence, and avoidance of scientific advice? We fully support the California Chaparral Institute's comments in their letter of May 24, 2016 ("CCI letter"). Some points we find problematic: • Why does the DEIR misquote the science? The CCI letter contains ample documentation of this, including one scientist denying that his paper said what was implied in the DEIR. We strongly agree with the assessment, and ask the same. • Why does the DEIR rely on anecdotal evidence? This is particularly apparent in the definition of the WUI, which is defined in the DEIR solely in reference to how far embers can fly. As noted in Appendix A of the CCI letter, there is no good science to support 1.5 miles as anything other than a polite political fiction, chosen from overheard conversations at a conference, based on what others might find acceptable. There is no reality behind this anecdote According to the CCI letter and the references therein, the 2009 Bunyip Ridge fire in Australia projected embers 20 km (about 12 miles), while the ongoing Ft. McMurray fire is reported to have projected embers 10 km (about 6 miles). 1.5 miles is insufficient to stop all embers during catastrophic wildfires.	Inadequate data
O149	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	5. Why are there so many contradictions within the DEIR? It is riddled with them, and they are non-trivial. • One example, from page E-3: "California's tremendous diversity in vegetation translates into a similar diversity in fuel types, with a resultant variation in fire behavior throughout the state. Considering statewide variations in fire behavior and the need to characterize it at a workable scale for a statewide environmental analysis, the vegetation of California is condensed into three main groups based on the distinct fire behavior each group exhibits. These groups can be classified as tree dominated, grass dominated, and shrub dominated vegetation formations." Really? Would any firefighter consider white fir and ponderosa pine to have the same fire ecology? How about other pairs of trees and shrubs that have highly divergent fire ecology: sequoia and redwood, lodgepole pine and whitebark pine, chamise and scrub oak? Clearly, the DEIR failed to usefully simplify the complexity, so we are left concluding that the original statement about diversity in fuel types was correct, and that the analysis failed to account for it at all. • The contradictions become more problematic when dealing with biological cumulative impacts. The DEIR states (p 5-24) that "[o]verall, it is impossible to precisely specify at the scale of the state or region both the biophysical and economic ramifications of interaction between disturbance and biological resources." Later it says (p-5-24) that "[c]umulative effects occurring at the scale of the state or the region may not inform project level cumulative effects analysis...Cumulative effects, either negative or positive, can potentially impact individual species of concern, the distribution and sustainability of special habitat elements, wildlife, vegetation structures, and other biological resources. Cumulative effects attributable to these kinds of impact mechanisms are generally most reliably assessed at the scale of the individual project and lands immediately adjacent." At this point, the DEIR is going against CEQA's intent with PEIRs, as noted in section 1 above. Unfortunately, it goes on to say that (p. 5-25) "[t]he VTP Program EIR cumulative impact analysis, conducted at the scale of the watershed or bioregion, identifies and assesses impact mechanisms that may influence landscape scale biological resource issues such as wildlife movement or habitat capability across broad regions, likelihood of genetic interchange, change in plant community composition as a result of non-native species establishment, or change in species distribution." Really? Where is this analysis? What were its conclusions? This part of the DEIR should be thousands of pages long.	Inadequate data

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O150	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	Finally (p. 5-27) the DEIR states, "[b]ecause of the amount of acreage eligible but not receiving treatment under the VTP, the proposed Program would likely result in a less than significant cumulative effect on biological resources at the bioregional scale [emphasis added]. Wildfires would continue to occur in California, having both negative and positive effects on biological resources and wildlife habitat condition; the magnitude of effect being dependent on a wide suite of physical, biological, and climatic variables." This is an absurd, contradictory conclusion. It appears to say that, because only 60,000 acres is treated each year out of 22,000,000, there is no cumulative impact at all. Really? An area half the size of Oakland is deliberately burned every year, but that is not significant, because it doesn't burn one-tenth of the state? And an equivalent area is herbicided, grazed, and masticated, but that's not significant, because the project doesn't herbicide, graze, and masticate one tenth of the state? Why does the BoF think this makes any sense at all? As noted above, it is easy for a single, 260-acre vegetation treatment to wipe out the last stand of old growth chaparral, or to remove critical habitat that causes a sensitive species to spiral towards extinction, or to poison a watershed by accidental release of herbicides into a stream, or to transport a pest or pathogen where it never before existed, or to spark a wildfire that burns thousands of acres, because the crew was impatient and started the fire under inappropriate conditions (as in the 2013 San Felipe Fire). All of these are predictable and analyzable. If such predictable consequences are so hard for the BoF to analyze, why attempt theVTP at all? If the DEIR is supposed to be a trustworthy document, to meet its Objective 5, to "[p]rovide a consistent, accountable, and transparent process for vegetation treatment monitoring that is responsive to the objectives, priorities, and concerns of landowners, local, state, federal governments and other stakeholders," then all internal and external contradictions need to be resolved and removed. How can the VTP be trusted otherwise?	Inadequate data
O154	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	Fortunately, there are workable alternatives: • Base the VTP's objectives and strategies on science. We understand that many firefighters distrust science, so we propose that the term "science" be accepted by the VTP preparers as the stuff that turns out to be true whether anyone believes in it or not. The science that underlies the VTP has to be the things that keep firefighters and others from being burned, properties as safe as possible, and keeps the VTP from being an engine for extinction, type conversion of native lands to weed-fields, and a major vector for pests and pathogens. This is the type of science CNPS tries hard to promote.	Inadequate data
O161	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	How much damage can the BoF do by rushing to implement a vague, opaque program at this time? Our strong sense in reading multiple versions of the DEIR is that the people who wrote it really did not understand most of the issues they wrote about, nor did they get help from some really good in-house researchers, such as the fire researchers in CALFIRE. We believe that the BoF needs to take a couple of years to understand and embrace what the 21st Century has in store for it, rather than rushing to implement a bigger version of the 1980s-era VMP. We only wish that this process had started a decade ago, rather than now. Unfortunately, none of these suggestions change our basic opinion, which is that this DEIR needs to be thoroughly rewritten and recirculated, and that the VTP as written is unworkable. Please take the time to do it right. Please keep us informed of all future developments with this and related projects. Thank you for consideration of our comments and questions.	Inadequate data
O185	Watt	Jean	Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks	The document also reveals a significant number of inconsistencies as it initially references current science, only to qualify orignore it later in order to support the Program's objectives. By using contradictory statements,undefined terms,and legally inadequate mitigation processes,the document abounds in ambiguity. It appears to be a program in search of confirming data rather than one developed from analysis examining the actual problem.	Inadequate data

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O202	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	A. Wildfire, including high-severity fire, is a natural and necessary component of California's forested landscapes. 1. California mixed-conifer and ponderosa pine forests are characterized by mixed-severity fire. Numerous studies and multiple lines of evidence demonstrate that California's mixed- conifer and ponderosa pine forests are characterized by mixed-severity fire that includes ecologically significant amounts of high-severity fire. Mixed-severity fire creates complex successional diversity, high biological diversity, and diverse stand structure across California's forested landscapes. Baker 2014: A reconstruction of historical forest structure and fire across 330,000 ha of Sierra Nevada mixed-conifer forests using data from 1865-1885 demonstrates that these historical forests experienced mixed-severity fire over 43-48% of the land area, with high-severity fire over 31-39% and low-severity fire over just 13-26%. Historical forests were generally dense with abundant large trees, but numerically dominated by smaller pines and oaks. Smaller trees, understory seedlings, saplings and shrubs created abundant ladder fuels. The high- severity fire rotation was 281 years in the northern and 354 years in the southern Sierra, which contributed to high levels of heterogeneity, including abundant areas and large patches (up to 9,400 ha) of early successional forest and montane chaparral, as well as old-growth forest over large land areas. The author concludes that "[p]roposals to reduce fuels and fire severity would actually reduce, not restore, historical forest heterogeneity important to wildlife and resiliency."4 Beaty and Taylor 2001: On the western slope of the southern Cascades in California, historical fire intensity in mixed-conifer forests was predominantly moderate- and high-intensity, except in mesic canyon bottoms, where moderate- and high-intensity fire comprised 40.4% of fire effects [Table 7].)5	Inadequate data
O203	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	Bekker and Taylor 2001: On the western slope of the southern Cascades in California, in mixed- conifer forests, fire was predominantly high-intensity historically [Fig. 2F].6 Bekker and Taylor 2010: In mixed-conifer forests of the southern Cascades, reconstructed fire severity within the study area was dominated by high-severity fire effects, including high- severity fire patches over 2,000 acres in size [Tables I and II].7 Collins and Stephens 2010: In a modern "reference" forest condition within mixed-conifer/fir forests in Yosemite National Park, 15% of the area experienced high-intensity fire over a 33- year period—a high-intensity fire rotation interval of approximately 223 years.8 Halofsky et al. 2011: In the Klamath-Siskiyou Mountains of northwestern California and southwestern Oregon, a mixed-severity fire regime produces structurally diverse vegetation types with intimately mixed patches of varied age. The close mingling of early- and late-seral communities results in unique vegetation and wildlife responses, including high resilience of plant and wildlife species to mixed-severity fire.9	Inadequate data

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O204	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	Hanson and Odion 2016: An assessment of US Forest Service forest survey data from 1910 and 1911 for central and southern Sierra Nevada ponderosa pine and mixed-conifer forests indicates that these historical forests had a mixed-severity fire regime, with an average of 26% high-severity fire effects. This study's findings are contrary to those of several other reports that use a very small subset of the available data from the 1910 and 1911 surveys, demonstrating the importance of analyzing data from sufficiently large spatial scales when drawing inferences about historical conditions.10 Nagel and Taylor 2005: The authors found that large high-severity fire patches were a natural part of 19th century fire regimes in mixed-conifer and eastside pine forests of the Lake Tahoe Basin, and montane chaparral created by high-severity fire has declined by 62% since the 19th century due to reduced high-severity fire occurrence. The authors expressed concern about harm to biodiversity due to loss of ecologically rich montane chaparral.11 Odion et al. 2014: In the largest and most comprehensive analysis conducted to date regarding the historical occurrence of high-intensity fire, the authors found that ponderosa pine and mixed-conifer forests in every region of western North America had mixed-intensity fire regimes, which included substantial occurrence of high-intensity fire. The authors also found, using multiple lines of evidence, including over a hundred historical sources and fire history reconstructions, and an extensive forest age-class analysis, that we now have unnaturally low levels of high-intensity fire in these forest types in all regions, since the beginning of fire suppression policies in the early 20th century.12	Inadequate data
O205	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	2. High-severity fire creates important habitat critical to numerous species. High-severity fire creates complex, biodiverse, ecologically important, and unique habitat (often called "snag forest habitat"), which often has higher species richness and diversity than unburned old forest. Plant and animal species in the forest evolved with fire, and many of these species (such as the black-backed woodpecker13) depend on wildfires, and particularly high- severity fires, to reproduce and grow. Fire helps to return nutrients from plant matter back to soil, the heat from fire is necessary to the germination of certain types of seeds, and the snags (dead trees) and early successional forests created by high-severity fire create habitat conditions that are beneficial to wildlife. Early successional forests created by high-severity fire support some of the highest levels of native biodiversity found in temperate conifer forests. Bond et al. 2009: In a radio-telemetry study, California spotted owls preferentially selected high- intensity fire areas, which had not been salvage logged, for foraging, while selecting low- and moderate-intensity areas for nesting and roosting.14 Buchalski et al. 2013: In mixed-conifer forests of the southern Sierra Nevada, rare myotis bats were found at greater levels in unmanaged high-severity fire areas of the McNally fire than in lower fire severity areas or unburned forest.15 Burnett et al. 2010: Bird species richness was approximately the same between high-severity fire areas and unburned mature/old forest at 8 years post-fire in the Storrie fire, and total bird abundance was greatest in the high-severity fire areas of the Storrie fire [Figure 4]. Nest density of cavity-nesting species increased with higher proportions of high-severity fire, and was highest at 100% [Figure 8].16	Inadequate data

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O206	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	Cocking et al. 2014: High-intensity fire areas are vitally important to maintain and restore black oaks in mixed-conifer forests.17 DellaSala et al. 2014: Complex early seral forests in the Sierra Nevada of California, which are produced by mixed-severity fire including large high severity patches, support diverse plant and wildlife communities that are essential to the region's ecological integrity. Fire suppression and biomass removal after fire reduce structural complexity, diversity, and resilience in the face of climate change.18 Donato et al. 2009: The high-severity re-burn [high-severity fire occurring 15 years after a previous high-severity fire] had the highest plant species richness and total plant cover, relative to high-severity fire alone [no re-burn] and unburned mature/old forest; and the high-severity fire re-burn area had over 1,000 seedlings/saplings per hectare of natural conifer regeneration.19 Franklin et al. 2000: The authors found that stable or increasing populations of spotted owls resulted from a mix of dense old forest and complex early seral habitat, and less than approximately 25% complex early seral habitat in the home range was associated with declining populations [Fig. 10]; the authors emphasized that the complex early seral habitat was consistent with high-intensity fire effects, and inconsistent with clearcut logging.20 Hanson and North 2008: Black-backed woodpeckers depend upon dense, mature/old forest that has recently experienced higher-intensity fire, and has not been salvage logged.21 Hanson 2013: Pacific fishers use pre-fire mature/old forest that experienced moderate/high- intensity fire more than expected based upon availability, just as fishers are selecting dense, mature/old forest in its unburned state. When fishers are near fire perimeters, they strongly select the burned side of the fire edge. Both males and female fishers are using large mixed- intensity fire areas, such as the McNally fire, including several kilometers into the fire area.22	Inadequate data

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O207	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	Hanson 2015: Pacific fisher females in the Sierra Nevada use unlogged higher severity fire areas, including very large high-severity patches. In the McNally fire area at 10 to 11 years postfire, female fishers used the large, intense fire area significantly more than unburned forest, and females were detected at multiple locations >250m into the interior of a very large (>5,000 ha), unlogged higher severity fire patch. The author concludes that these results "suggest a need to revisit current management direction, which emphasizes extensive commercial thinning and postfire logging to reduce fuels and control fire."23 Hutto 1995: A study in the northern Rocky Mountain region found that 15 bird species are generally more abundant in early post-fire communities than in any other major cover type occurring in the northern Rockies. Standing, fire-killed trees provided nest sites for nearly two-thirds of 31 species that were found nesting in the burned sites.24 Hutto 2008: Severely burned forest conditions have occurred naturally across a broad range of forest types for millennia and provide an important ecological backdrop for fire specialists like the black-backed woodpecker.25 Hutto et al. 2016: This review highlights that high severity fire was historically common in western conifer forests and is ecologically essential. Many animal and plant species depend on severely burned forests for persistence. The researchers recommend a "more ecologically informed view" of severe forest fire, including changes in management and education to maintain ecologically necessary levels of severe fire and the complex early-seral forest conditions it creates.26 Lee and Bond 2015: California spotted owls exhibited high site occupancy in post-fire landscapes during the breeding season following the 2013 Rim Fire, even where large areas burned at high severity; the complex early seral forests created by high-severity fire appear to provide important habitat for the small mammal prey of the owl.27	Inadequate data

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O208	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	Malison and Baxter 2010: In ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forests of Idaho at 5-10 years post- fire, levels of aquatic insects emerging from streams were two and a half times greater in high-intensity fire areas than in unburned mature/old forest, and bats were nearly 5 times more abundant in riparian areas with high-intensity fire than in unburned mature/old forest.28 Ponisio et al. 2016: A study of plant–pollinator communities in mixed-conifer forest in Yosemite National Park found that pyrodiversity (the diversity of fires within a region) increases the richness of the pollinators, flowering plants, and plant-pollinator interactions, and buffers pollinator communities against the effects of drought-induced floral resource scarcity. The authors conclude that lower fire diversity is likely to negatively affect the richness of plant– pollinator communities across large spatial scales. 29 Raphael et al. 1987: At 25 years after high-intensity fire, total bird abundance was slightly higher in snag forest than in unburned old forest in eastside mixed-conifer forest of the northern Sierra Nevada; and bird species richness was 40% higher in snag forest habitat. In earlier post- fire years, woodpeckers were more abundant in snag forest, but were similar to unburned by 25 years post-fire, while flycatchers and species associated with shrubs continued to increase to 25 years post-fire.30 Sestrich et al. 2011: Native bull and cutthroat trout tended to increase with higher fire intensity, particularly where debris flows occurred. Nonnative brook trout did not increase.31 Siegel et al. 2012: Many more species occur at high burn severity sites starting several years post-fire, and these include the majority of ground and shrub nesters as well as many cavity nesters. Secondary cavity nesters, such as swallows, bluebirds, and wrens, are particularly associated with severe burns, but only after nest cavities have been created, presumably by the pioneering cavity excavating species such as the black-backed woodpecker. As a result, fires that create preferred conditions for black-backed woodpeckers in the early post-fire years will likely result in increased nesting sites for secondary cavity nesters in successive years.32 Swanson et al. 2010: A literature review concluding that some of the highest levels of native biodiversity found in temperate conifer forest types occur in complex early successional habitat created by stand-initiating [high severity] fire.33	Inadequate data

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O209	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	B. California's forests have a deficit of fire, including a deficit of high- severity fire, compared with historical conditions. Studies indicate that California's forests are experiencing a significant fire deficit compared with pre-settlement conditions, meaning that there is much less fire on the landscape than there was historically (Mouillet and Field 2005, Stephens et al. 2007, Marlon et al. 2012, Odion et al. 2014, Parks et al. 2015).34 A recent analysis by Parks et al (2015) reported that California forests, including Sierra Nevada and southern Cascades forests, experienced a significant fire deficit during the recent 1984-2012 study period, attributed to fire suppression activities.35 According to Stephens et al. (2007), prior to 1800, an estimated 18 to 47 times more area burned each year in California, including 20 to 53 times more forest area, than has burned annually during recent decades: "skies were likely smoky much of the summer and fall." This study estimated that 1.8 million to 4.8 million hectares burned each year in California prior to 1800, of which 0.5 million to 1.2 million hectares were forest, compared to just 102,000 hectares burned each year between 1950-1999, of which 23,000 hectares were forest. Based on this extreme fire deficit, Stephens et al. (2007) recommend "increasing the spatial extent of fire in California [as] an important management objective." Odion et al. (2014) similarly found evidence that there is currently much less high-severity fire in California's mixed-conifer and ponderosa pine forests than compared with historical levels. 34 Mouillot, F. and C. Field. 2005. Fire history and the global carbon budget: a 1º x 1º fire history reconstruction for the 20th century. Global Change Biology 11: 398-420; Stephens, S.L., R.E. Martin, and N.E. Clinton. 2007. Prehistoric fire area and emissions from California's forests, woodlands, shrublands and grasslands. Forest Ecology and Management 251: 205-216; Marlon, J.R., Bartlein, P.J., Gavin, D.G., Long, C.J., Anderson, R.S., Briles, C.E., Brown, K.J., Colombaroli, D., Hallett, D.J., Power, M.J., Scharf, E.A., and M.K. Walsh. 2012. Long-term perspective on wildfires in the western USA. PNAS 109: E535–E543; Odion, D.C. et al. 2014; Parks, S.A., C. Miller, M-A Parisien, L.M. Holsinger, S.Z. Dobrowski, and J. Abatzoglou. 2015. Wildland fire deficit and surplus in the western United States, 1984-2012. Ecosphere 6: Article 275. 35 Parks, S.A. et al. 2015.	Inadequate data

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O210	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	C. Scientific studies are finding no significant trends in wildfire activity: California forests are not experiencing an increase in fire severity or burned area. Scientific evidence does not indicate that wildfire activity is at unnatural levels in California's forests and therefore must be reduced. Notably, the majority of studies that have analyzed recent trends in fire severity, area burned, and fire frequency in California forests have found no significant trends in these metrics. Eleven studies have analyzed recent trends in fire severity in California's forests in terms of proportion, area, and/or patch size. Nine of eleven studies found no significant trend in fire severity, including: Baker 2015 (California dry pine and mixed conifer forests), Collins et al. 2009 (central Sierra Nevada), Dillon et al. 2011 (Northwest California), Hanson et al. 2009 (Klamath, southern Cascades), Hanson and Odion 2014 (Sierra Nevada, southern Cascades), Miller et al. 2012 (four Northwest CA forests), Odion et al. 2014 (eastern and western Sierra Nevada, eastern Cascades), Picotte et al. 2016 (California forest and woodland), and Schwind 2008 (California forests).36 The two studies that report an increasing trend in fire severity— Miller et al. 2009 and Miller and Safford 2012 (Sierra Nevada, southern Cascades)37—were refuted by Hanson and Odion (2014) using a larger dataset. Hanson and Odion (2014) conducted the first comprehensive assessment of fire intensity since 1984 in the Sierra Nevada using 100% of available fire intensity data, and found no increasing trend in terms of high-intensity fire proportion, area, mean patch size, or maximum patch size. Hanson and Odion (2014) reviewed the approach of Miller et al. (2009) and Miller and Safford (2012) for bias, due to the use of vegetation layers that post-date the fires being analyzed in those studies. Hanson and Odion (2014) found that there is a statistically significant bias in both studies ($p = 0.025$ and $p = 0.021$, respectively), the effect of which is to exclude relatively more conifer forest experiencing high-intensity fire in the earlier years of the time series, thus creating the erroneous appearance of an increasing trend in fire severity. Hanson and Odion (2014) also found that the regional fire severity data set used by Miller et al. (2009) and Miller and Safford (2012) disproportionately excluded fires in the earlier years of the time series, relative to the standard national fire severity data set (www.mtbs.gov) used in other fire severity trend studies, resulting in an additional bias which created, once again, the inaccurate appearance of relatively less high-severity fire in the earlier years, and relatively more in more recent years.	Inadequate data
O211	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	D. The most long-unburned forests are not burning at higher fire severity. Studies empirically investigating the assumption that the most long-unburned forests are burning predominantly at high severity have consistently found that forest areas in California that have missed the largest number of fire return intervals are not burning at higher fire severity. Specifically, six empirical studies that have investigated this question found that the most long-unburned (most fire-suppressed) forests burned mostly at low/moderate-severity, and did not have higher proportions of high-severity fire than less fire-suppressed forests. Forests that were not fire suppressed (those that had not missed fire cycles, i.e., Condition Class 1, or "Fire Return Interval Departure" class 1) generally had levels of high-severity fire similar to, or higher than, those in the most fire-suppressed forests, as found by Odion et al. 2004, Odion and Hanson 2006, Odion and Hanson 2008, Odion et al. 2010, Miller et al. 2012, and van Wagtendonk et al. 2012.42 42 Odion, D.C., E.J. Frost, J.R. Strittholt, H. Jiang, D.A. DellaSala, and M.A. Moritz. 2004. Patterns of fire severity and forest conditions in the Klamath Mountains, northwestern California. Conservation Biology 18: 927-936; Odion, D.C., and C.T. Hanson. 2006. Fire severity in conifer forests of the Sierra Nevada, California. Ecosystems 9: 1177-1189; Odion, D.C., and C.T. Hanson. 2008. Fire severity in the Sierra Nevada revisited: conclusions robust to further analysis. Ecosystems 11: 12-15; Odion, D. C., M. A. Moritz, and D. A. DellaSala. 2010. Alternative community states maintained by fire in the Klamath Mountains, USA. Journal of Ecology; Miller, J.D., C.N. Skinner, H.D. Safford, E.E. Knapp, and C.M. Ramirez. 2012. Trends and causes of severity, size, and number of fires in northwestern California, USA. Ecological Applications 22:184-203; van Wagtendonk, J.W., K.A. van Wagtendonk, and A.E. Thode. 2012. Factors associated with the severity of intersecting fires in Yosemite National Park, California, USA. Fire Ecology 8: 11-32.	Inadequate data

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O212	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	E. The projected impacts of climate change on wildfire activity in California are uncertain. While climate change will almost certainly alter fire activity in many California ecosystems, scientific research does not indicate that climate change will increase fire severity nor necessarily increase fire amount in California forests. As described above, the majority of studies that have analyzed recent wildfire trends in California forests have found no significant trends in fire activity. Studies that project trends in fire activity under climate change scenarios indicate that fire severity in California forests is likely to stay the same or decrease, and projection studies show no consensus on how climate change is likely to affect future fire probability or area burned in California forests, as detailed below. Notably, a recent study by Parks et al. (2016) projected that most areas of the western US, including California's forested areas, will experience decreases or no change in fire severity by mid-century (2040-2069) under the highest-emission RCP 8.5 scenario used in global climate models.43 Three studies that have projected changes in the probability of burning or the probability of a large fire occurring show no consensus, with projections for no change, increases, or decreases in fire varying by region: Krawchuk and Moritz 2012, Moritz et al. 2012, and Westerling and Bryant 2008.44 Studies that have projected trends in area burned in California forests under climate change show no consensus. Four studies project both increases and decreases in total area burned depending on the region: Lenihan et al. 2003, Lenihan et al. 2008, Krawchuk et al. 2009, and Spracklen et al. 2009.45 One study projected an overall decrease in area burned (McKenzie et al. 2004), while two studies projected increases (Fried et al. 2004 in a small region in the Amador- El Dorado Sierra foothills; Westerling et al. 2011).46 The projected increases in Westerling et al. (2011) are relatively modest, with median increases in area burned of 21% and 23% by 2050, and 20% and 44% by 2085, relative to 1961-1990 under lower (B1) and higher (A2) emissions scenarios respectively. Given that the average annual burned area in California in the past several decades was many times lower than the burned area historically, these projected increases in fire activity in California would likely remain well within the historical range of the past several centuries.	Inadequate data
O213	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	As reviewed in Whitlock et al. (2015), wildfire projection studies involve numerous uncertainties, including high uncertainty around future changes in precipitation timing and amount in the western US, which create significant differences among study results. According to Whitlock et al. (2015), observed and projected changes in wildfire activity must be understood in terms of (1) fire's ecological benefits, (2) the current fire deficit in most forested regions of North America, and (3) a sufficiently long baseline to capture the historical range of fire variability within the particular ecosystem. Detecting and interpreting the significance of climate-driven fire patterns requires information on the magnitude and direction of change in comparison to the long-term fire occurrence within the ecosystem as well as the relative influences of climatic and non-climatic drivers that affect fire activity (i.e., invasion of nonnative plants, introduction of nonnative grazers, land-use change, and changes in forest management practices).47	Inadequate data

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O214	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	F. Bark beetle outbreaks have not increased annual area burned or fire severity. Substantial field-based evidence demonstrates that bark beetle outbreaks have not increased annual area burned in the western United States, beetle outbreaks do not contribute to severe fires, and outbreak areas do not burn more severely when fire does occur (Bond et al. 2009, Black et al. 2013, Harvey et al. 2013, Hart et al. 2015a, Hart et al. 2015b, DellaSala 2016).48 Furthermore, scientific studies indicate that thinning and logging have no effect during beetle outbreaks of landscape scales, and that post-fire logging can reduce forest resilience to natural disturbances such as fire (DellaSala 2016).49 48 Bond, M.L., D.E. Lee, C.M. Bradley, and C.T. Hanson. 2009. Influence of pre-fire tree mortality on fire severity in conifer forests of the San Bernardino Mountains, California. The Open Forest Science Journal 2: 41-47; Black, S.H., D. Kulakowski, B.R. Noon, and D.A. DellaSala. 2013. Do bark beetle outbreaks increase wildfire risks in the Central U.S. Rocky Mountains: Implications from Recent Research. Nat. Areas J. 33: 59-65; Harvey, B.J, D.C. Donato, W.H. Romme, and M.G. Turner. 2013. Influence of recent bark beetle outbreak on fire severity and postfire tree regeneration in montane Douglas-fir forests. Ecology 94: 2475–2486; Hart, S.J., T. Schoennagel, T.T. Veblen, and T.B. Chapman. 2015a. Area burned in the western United States is unaffected by recent mountain pine beetle outbreaks. PNAS 112: 4375-4380; Hart, S.J., T.T. Veblen, N. Mietkiewicz, and D. Kulakowski. 2015b. Negative feedbacks on bark beetle outbreaks: widespread and severe spruce beetle infestation restricts subsequent infestation. PLoS ONE 10(5): e0127975; DellaSala, D.A. 2016. Do mountain pine beetle outbreaks increase the risk of high-severity fires in western forests? A summary of recent field studies. Geos Institute. 49 DellaSala, D.A. 2016.	Inadequate data
O215	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	G. Trees killed by drought and beetles do not increase fire intensity or extent. The DEIR refers to the Governor's Proclamation of a State of Emergency on Tree Mortality, which addresses drought and beetle-related tree mortality in the state, as evidence that California's forests are in a "perilous condition" and "require accelerated management." DEIR at 1-11. While the governor's declaration identifies the potential health and safety issues related to dead and dying trees directly adjacent to (i.e. within falling distance of) houses, roads, and infrastructure, this does not indicate any ecological or public safety need for forest management (i.e., logging) of forests in general. Specifically, dead trees do not pose an increased fire risk to wildland-urban interface ("WUI") communities, as is made clear in the scientific literature and recent summaries of the state of the science on this issue (Hart et al. 2015a, DellaSala 2016, Hanson et al. 2016).50 Furthermore, ecologically healthy forests and native wildlife populations depend upon abundant snags, and California's forests still have a deficit of snags (Hanson et al. 2016). 50 Hanson, C.T., D.A. DellaSala, M. Bond, G. Wuerthner, D. Odion, and D. Lee. 2016. Scientists Letter to Governor Brown on the Governor's Proclamation of a State of Emergency on Tree Mortality. 4 February 2016.	Inadequate data
O242	Woodhouse	Marily	Battle Creek Alliance	Sequoia Forestkeeper also submitted such thorough comments that we have nothing to add. We agree with their concerns that this is an ill-advised plan which ignores science.	Inadequate data
O245	Principe	Zachary	The Nature Conservancy - California Chapter	First, the VTPEIR should eliminate broad generalizations about the influence of prescribed fire, crown fire, increase of fine fuels, and fire adapted ecosystems and rather present information for specific vegetation communities or groups of vegetation communities. These discussions could be strengthened by greater recognition of the importance of median fire return intervals in influencing how vegetation communities are impacted or enhanced by fire and other management activities proposed in the VTPEIR. A few examples are discussed below.	Inadequate data

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O262	Spencer	Wayne	Conservation Biology Insitute	Poor Scientific Justifications. The PEIR often cites references that don't support its statements, misrepresents some scientific references, uses inappropriate references to justify assumptions and conclusions, and omits a number of cited publications from the References (Chapter 9). Rather than create a lengthy list of these (I trust other scientists will weigh in on this topic as well), here are just a few examples: Chapter 2 still cites Bonnicksen (2003) to support statements about changes in forest composition, habitat value, and stream sedimentation due to fire suppression (although note that the reference is missing from Chapter 9, References). As pointed out in comment letters on the 2013 draft, Bonnicksen (2003) is not a credible or scientific reference, but rather testimony before Congress by a highly controversial timber products lobbyist whose misrepresentations of science and of his own qualifications have been publicly repudiated, including by the University of California System for Bonnicksen claiming a non-existent university affiliation (Rundel et al. 2006). An EIR must objectively consider the best available information, not cherry pick non-scientific opinions.	Inadequate data
O264	Spencer	Wayne	Conservation Biology Insitute	Some conclusions the PEIR draws from the scientific literature are illogical. For example, it cites Safford and Van de Water (2014) to claim that northern California chaparral is not threatened by increased fire frequencies and that therefore fuel treatments in northern chaparral can be used for ecological purposes. First, this ignores that Safford and Van de Water went on to state that "… recent trends in fire activity, burned area, and fire severity suggest that the situation is rapidly changing as climate warms…." Second, it is a non-sequitur to conclude that fuel treatments in northern chaparral may be ecologically beneficial just because they aren't as threatened (yet) by type conversion as southern chaparral. What scientific evidence supports that burning, grinding, or grazing northern chaparral is ecologically beneficial?	Inadequate data
O265	Spencer	Wayne	Conservation Biology Insitute	Poor and Inappropriate Maps, Data and Analyses. It is surprising that the PEIR relies on outdated and inadequate spatial data, presents almost unreadable, very coarse-resolution maps, and that the "GIS-based" analyses are not described with sufficient detail to judge their merits. This is especially concerning given that GIS experts that are familiar with CalFire's GIS staff tell me they are highly competent and have updated data layers that could have been used. Why were these resources not meaningfully deployed to update and refine the analysis and presentation of where fuels treatments would be used or beneficial? The PEIR does not even seem aware of CalFire's own expertise, data products, and directives. It uses a fire hazard analysis from 2001-2003 and a WUI model based on 1990 census data, despite that updated datasets are available (some produced by CalFire!). The results of the fire hazard analyses were not subject to formal peer review. Nevertheless, Syphard et al. (2012) found that the model outputs had no power to predict housing losses from wildfire. Relying on admittedly outdated, inaccurate, imprecise, and poorly described analyses to prioritize vegetation treatments is not acceptable.	Inadequate data
O277	Whitestone	Karen	California Native Plant Society, East Bay Chapter	2. Substandard Research - misrepresenting cited scientific literature - dependence on anecdotal evidence - contradictory statements - ignoring information in the record - cited references missing, non sequiturs	Inadequate data
O278	Whitestone	Karen	California Native Plant Society, East Bay Chapter	3. Inadequate Data - outdated fire hazard analysis model/data unsuitable for project level planning - utilizing coarse-scale maps that cannot provide sufficient detail for competent analysis - WUI assessments based on 26-year-old information - dependence on maps that no longer reflect current conditions	Inadequate data

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O284	Earth Guardian Coalition		Earth Guardian Coalition	[Staff Note: This letter is the same as the letter submitted by Mr. Halsey and the California chaparral Institute. There are two paragraphs in the Earth Guardian Coalition letter that differ from the chaparral Institute letter, and they are below.] (1 of 2) For example, although the DPEIR indicates fires are increasing in northern California, acknowledges chaparral is vulnerable to such fires, explains that climate change is changing fire regimes, and claims the Program is based on the future, it contradicts itself by maintaining northern chaparral is not threatened by such increased fire frequencies. It then misrepresents the research (Safford and Van de Water 2014) by leaping to the conclusion that fuel treatments in northern chaparral can be used for ecological purposes. (4-113) This is a non sequitur. There is no scientific evidence to support such action.	Inadequate data
P1	Andrews	Carl		I have a comment to make about the VTPIER. I quote from the report the following: "Information on responses of wildlife to fuel reduction treatments, including herbicide treatments, is sparse to totally lacking." Suppose I wrote a business plan and sent it to investors. It had all kinds of projections for profit from making a new food product. however, under risk analysis, it said, "Information on health effects of this product for consumers, including possible death caused by its repeated consumption, is sparse to totally lacking." Would you invest in this business? Then why would you invest in/ accept this program?	Inadequate data
P2	Philodygmn			Clearcutting by another name leaving behind the perfect kindling for out-of-control wildfires is a disgraceful derilection of duty to steward the public's interest in our land and the benefits its ecosystem and habitats maintain simply by remaining intact. Shame on anyone pretending a thicket of weeds less problematic than maintaining existing ecology!!! The fact the plan is riddled with inconsistencies in its employment of science data and fails to meet legal standards in what it must bear to account should incense those to whom it was submitted as a slap in their faces which wastes their time. I hope the reputation of its authors and supporters suffers appropriately such that their tired, discredited approach never again rears its shameful, ugly head to oblige we of the citizenry at large to censure its reprehensible hubris and inveterate short-sightedness!	Inadequate data
P8	di Girolamo	Pietro		I am writing in concern for what appears to be an incomplete, partially revised EIR for the VegetationTreatment Program, which includes inconsistencies, inaccuracies, and misrepresentations of acknowledged experts in the field, leading to questionable or improper measures to deal with wild land and urban interface fire suppression. Please reconsider adoption of the current draft in favor of providing a more complete, accurate, and transparent EIR that is truly consistent with CEQA requirements.	Inadequate data
P9	Dobrowolsky	Susan		I am vehemently opposed to the proposed plan and request that you strenuously reconsider the whole thing. Please utilize the available science to redraft a more acceptable plan. The mere destruction of millions of acres of vegetation and wildlife habitat is not justified. I implore you to reconsider. Thank you very much.	Inadequate data
P10	Duggan	Jim		I am writing to express my concern for the state's Vegetation Treatment Program and the current Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Report, (DPEIR). It appears that the management of fuel has become more important than the protection of lives and property from wildfire. The use of old data and the misuse of several scientific studies (even though the correct information has been submitted) seem highly inappropriate. We must not move forward with outdated models, poor research and incorrect assumptions. I urge the board to prepare a revised DPEIR by taking into account current science, not incorrect and outdated views.	Inadequate data

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
P18	Greenwald	Sandy		The DPEIR for the proposed Vegetation Treatment Program fails in the most basic sense, and by its own admission: it actually states that determining environmental impacts is impossible. This is a remarkable conclusion for an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT. It appears to me this document is a blatant attempt to eviscerate existing environmental protections and allow the Board of Forestry to inflict mortal damage on native shrublands randomly and without suffering the inconvenience of public input or scientific guidance. I cannot for the life of me imagine any excuse for including 25 year old data, which pre-dates the GIS and digital revolutions. This lack of interest in data quality tells me there is also no interest in conclusions drawn from that data. Apparently the conclusions are foregone, and this entire Report is intended more to minimize outside interference than to arrive at appropriate best management practices. This document puts huge areas of wildlands at risk of ill-advised devastation, with no assurance that the result will actually increase fire safety. In addition it ignores positive feedback to climate change, which is driving much of our increased hazard. The "old-growth" chapparral must be actually defined and mapped as part of any credible EIR process. You have not done your homework, and you have ignored people trying to help you. You have wasted time on this failed document that will not pass legal muster. These shortcuts will increase red-tape and obstacles instead of resolving and avoiding them. Please take this mess back to the drawing board.	Inadequate data
P26	Halula	Theresa		This proposed action, targeting 22 million acres of California for 'brush clearance' does not reflect contemporary scientific literature for determining the best fire management policies are for California's diverse wild land habitats. Instead the curtent revision of the report appears to be depending on obsolete scientific literature to determine best practices for fire management. This is a dangerous approach for such an important EIR covering a huge project in such a wide range of vegetation types to be treated.	Inadequate data
P28	Halula	Theresa		We are all aware of the devastation of the large recent fires in Southern California such as Witch Laguna Station Cedar Day Rough and many others. I urge the committee to extend the comment period for six months, take reponsibility to schedule interviews with several recognized biologists and revise the EIR based on current fire science.	Inadequate data
P35	Paul	Lori		It appears that much of the DPEIR is based upon data that is decades out of date and that has been superseded by more recent scientific evaluations and research into habitat and wildfire behavior. Why has the revised DPEIR failed to include current data and expert conclusions that do NOT support massive removal of old-growth chaparral and other biodiverse natural landscapes?	Inadequate data

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
P38	Paul	Lori		Sadly, in the intervening years between our last comments in January of 2013, many of the concerns raised in the attached letter by Robert Staehle, remain unaddressed. I urge that the DRAFT PEIR for the California Vegetation Treatment Program (VTP) be rejected and yet another revision undertaken that answers the concerns raised by Mr. Staehle; by the California Chaparral Institute and California Native Plant Society; and by so many others. A major change in focus is required involving defense of homes and other properties, fire-preventive systemic reforms in California land use policies, and applying funds to effective, near real-time detection of fires from orbit fast enough that fires can be extinguished before they rage out of control: NASA / JPL http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/news/news.php?feature=4775 FireSat http://www.firesat.info/ The focus should not be on removing vast tracts of chaparral and other natural vegetation, because destroying California's wild lands will never be an answer to the threat of wildfire in our state. The current version of the DPEIR should be rejected and rewritten in compliance with CEQA and the latest research re: effective fire prevention and planning. May common sense and good science prevail next time around.	Inadequate data
P50	St. Clair	Peter		3. The PEIR fails to incorporate CalFire's own scientific research and data on vegetation types throughout the state. Its "science" is outdated and many of its conclusions from citations are disputed by the very authors of the studies. The PEIR fails to achieve the minimal levels of accuracy and analysis required by CEQA.	Inadequate data
P53	Summers	Nancy		Northern California has insufficient data to determine historical burn frequency. Chaparral areas have no old growth trees to provide burn scar evidence. Native American tribes were decimated over 400 years ago due to the introduction of disease. Consequently, their influence in relationship to human caused fire is not indicative of long-term historical patterns. In southern California ash/charcoal evidence in the ocean sediment is indicative of fire frequency. No such evidence is found in Northern California ocean sediment.	Inadequate data
P65	Weisman	Matt		Absence of scientific or empirical responses to public comments that are based upon science and/or supported by current empirical data. It is like the State of California being concerned about cancer treatments and only looking to use treatments from a quarter of a century ago because current treatments are different than those of the past and because that while older treatments may not be as effective as new ones, it is the older treatments upon which the State has based its cure and too much effort is required to select from current treatments and adjust the draft program. This Board of Forestry approach is not aligned with the intent and provisions for a streamlined review process. I am a citizen who, if I had learned earlier of the details of the proposed DEIR, would have engaged earlier in the process, not the last day for comments. I believe that there are tens of thousands of Californians who if informed would also engage in the discussion and oppose the current DEIR.	Inadequate data

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
P81	Fotheringham	CJ		As with the 2013 version, this latest draft suffers from poor scientific documentation. There are numerous papers cited in the document that are not in the reference list and conversely there are papers listed in the reference list that are not referred to in the document. In many cases citations often don't support (and sometimes contradict) the statement to which they are attached. In other cases, the citation reference a book or large report with no indication of page number on which the supporting information is found. All these issues render the citation invalid and removes any veneer scientific credibility. Some of these errors are documented in the attached table. The table is not exhaustive list of the documentation issues in the VTP-EIR but illustrates the type of short-comings.	Inadequate data
P82	Fotheringham	CJ		Other parts of the document state assumptions without any apparent effort to scientifically support these assumption. One of the most problematic issues, from my point of view as a fire scientist, is the dogged and oft repeated assumption than treatment of wildland vegetation will always have a beneficial (reducing) affect on fire size. The document either does not cite any studies, or cites studies with limited applicability, to support this claim. Vegetation treatments can be effective in reducing fire size if 1) it is a fuel and topography (not wind) driven fire, 2) the fire intersects the treated area, and 3) suppression crews have safe access (although fires will stop on their on at fuel breaks this is uncommon) (Syphard et al, 2011). There are a number of studies conducted in areas of California where large, very expensive fires (in terms of both suppression and asset loss) occur periodically which directly contradict the assumption fuel treatments universally decrease fire size (e.g., Moritz 1997; Moritz et al. 2004; Keeley and Zedler 2009 and citations therein).	Inadequate data
P85	Fotheringham	CJ		There is a large and growing body of literature addressing issues of fire brands and fuel beds that Cal-Fire needs to review and discuss if the VTP-EIR is going to be considered based on current science. I list a number of studies and documents below that would offer an initial introduction to this area of research.	Inadequate data
O59	Fenton	Drew	Community of San Lorenzo Valley	1 NO EXPLANATION, NECESSITY OR PURPOSE is found that is logical or science and fact based for a VTP program	Authority for program
O60	Fenton	Drew	Community of San Lorenzo Valley	2. Statutory authority is not found yet claimed by CalFire without reference to any Public Resource Code -- it claims (page E-1 of the DPEIR): "The Board recognizes the need for a continuous fuel reduction program to ensure a high level of fire protection across the SRA in their Strategic Fire Plan, and has the statutory responsibility to establish policy for wildland resources in the SRA." Public Resource code section 4741 states the board shall assist by making its wildland fire prevention and vegetation management expertise available to local governments, not conduct it: Sec.4741: In accordance with policies established by the board, the department shall assist local governments in preventing future wildland fire and vegetation management problems by making its wildland fire prevention and vegetation management expertise available to local governments to the extent possible within the department's budgetary limitations. Department recommendations shall be advisory in nature and local governments shall not be required to follow such recommendations.	Authority for program
O61	Fenton	Drew	Community of San Lorenzo Valley	3. CalFire's VTP proposal, is voluntary, and not authorized by law, and finally not believed that it will be followed.	Authority for program
P14	Fisher	Gerald		[Comments to U.S. Secretary of the Interior] #1) A substantial portion of the San Luis Rey River Watershed, a major element in 50 years of litigation between the Indian Tribes of La Jolla, Rincon, Pala, Pauma, and San Pasqual, is targeted to be burned. The settlement agreement dated Jan. 30th, 2015, pgs.17 & 18, is clear that the "...Secretary shall...determine duties of...parties pursuant to Federal law regarding Health, Safety, or environment..."	Authority for program

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
P15	Fisher	Gerald		A Fire Management Plan, including any aspects of the proposed BOF before, during, or after any ignition, would be diametrically opposed to the Heath, Safety, and Environment of the people, property, and water of the San Luis Rey River Watershed. In addition, according to law enforcement sources, similar conduct by the general public could be considered as serious as Arson and Murder! Clearly this is black and white. There cannot be both -- it is one or the other. Any truthful level of judgement will read in both documents the wording "First is Health, Safety and Environment." The destruction by fire to people, places and things, is to be done away with.	Authority for program
O99	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	(a) The DEIR Fails to Describe the VTP's Biological Setting. The flaws in the biological resources analysis start at the very beginning, with the description of the Program' s environmental setting. The DEIR lacks sufficient information regarding the resources within each bio-region and thus lacks a sufficient baseline for determining impacts. An EIR's description of a project's environmental setting crucially provides "the baseline physical conditions by which a lead agency determines whether an impact is significant." CEQA Guidelines § 15125(a). "Without a determination and description of the existing physical conditions on the property at the start of the environmental review process, the EIR cannot provide a meaningful assessment of the environmental impacts of the proposed project."Save Our Peninsula Committee v. Monterey Cnty. Bd. of Supervisors (2001) 87 Cal.App.4th 99, 119. Here, the DEIR fails to identify each bio-region' s resources and therefore undercuts the legitimacy of the environmental impact analysis from the outset. The DEIR does acknowledge that the South Coast bio-region is "the most threatened biologically diverse area in the continental U.S. More than 250 species of vertebrate animals and 200 species of plants are either listed as protected or considered sensitive by wildlife agencies and conservation groups." DEIR at 4-92. Notwithstanding this remarkable biodiversity, the DEIR never even attempts to identify the species within the South Coast that could potentially be impacted by the VTP. Instead, it merely lists the number of each species that inhabit the region. See e.g., page 4-92, '"there are 476 vertebrate species... including 287 birds, 87 mammals, 52 reptiles, 16 amphibians and 34 fish." Without some meaningful identification of the resources that would be at risk, the DEIR preparers have no way of determining the Plan's potential impacts or identifying effective mitigation. We can find no plausible explanation for this omission especially because it appears that CAL FIRE has access to specific data regarding biological resources when it states the following: "Over 600 special status wildlife taxa occur in California and over 300 occur in habitats likely to be treated under the VTP." DEIR at 4-118. Certainly the DEIR could disclose the identity of these wildlife taxa, including information as to their habitat requirements. The revised EIR should include this information.	CEQA - establishing baseline conditions

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O115	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	E. The DEIR Must Be Revised and Recirculated. Under California law, the present EIR cannot properly form the basis of a final EIR. CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines describe the circumstances which require recirculation of a draft EIR. Such circumstances include: (1) the addition of significant new information to the EIR after public notice is given of the availability of the DEIR but before certification (7) or (2) the draft EIR is so "fundamentally and basically inadequate and conclusory in nature that meaningful public review and comment were precluded." CEQA Guidelines § 15088.5(a)(4). Here, both circumstances apply. The Board and the public cannot possibly assess the VTP's impacts, or even its feasibility, through the present DEIR, which is riddled with errors. Among other fundamental deficiencies, the DEIR repeatedly understates the VTP's significant environmental impacts and assumes that unformulated or clearly useless mitigation measures will effectively reduce these impacts. In order to resolve these issues, the Board must prepare a revised EIR that would necessarily include substantial new information. Failure to recirculate the revised DEIR would thus violate CEQA. 7 Significant new information includes the identification of new significant impacts, a substantial increase in the severity of identified significant impacts, and the mitigation measures that could reduce impacts below a level of significance. Id.	CEQA - recirculation
A37	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	The DPEIR biological resource thresholds do not adequately identify potentially significant impacts (DPEIR Section 4.2.2.1). For example, the first threshold states that “a significant effect occurs when there is a [t]hreat to eliminate a plant community.” However significant impacts on sensitive plant communities may occur well before elimination. For example, a substantial reduction in riparian or other sensitive plant communities would typically be a significant impact. CEQA Guidelines Appendix G (Appendix G) significance thresholds more adequately state that a project would cause a potentially significant impact if it would “[h]ave a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations, or by [CDFW] or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [USFWS].” The remaining DPEIR thresholds are insufficient to adequately analyze potentially significant impacts, and they do not adequately address the mandatory findings of significance found in the CEQA Guidelines section 15065 and Appendix G, which state, for example, that a project would result in a potentially significant impact if it would “substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal…” It is unclear why the DPEIR only uses the CEQA Appendix G thresholds in the Cumulative Effects Analysis (DPEIR Section 5.5.1.1) and not elsewhere in the DPEIR. The DPEIR should utilize the Appendix G significance thresholds to analyze Project impacts on biological resources. CDFW and most other agencies typically use the Appendix G significance thresholds because they are generally adequate. The thresholds should additionally identify potentially significant impacts on wetlands not subject to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (currently under consideration by the Office of Planning and Research for inclusion in Appendix G).	CEQA - Significance Thresholds

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O100	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	(b) The DEIR Lacks Thresholds of Significance. Determining whether a project may result in a significant adverse environmental effect is one of the key aspects of CEQA. CEQA Guidelines § 15064(a) (determination of significant effects "plays a critical role in the CEQA process"). CEQA specifically anticipates that agencies will use thresholds of significance as an analytical tool for judging the significance of a Project's impacts. Id. § 15064.7. Thus, one of the first steps in any analysis of an environmental impact is to select a threshold of significance. Here, the DEIR contains no thresholds of significance for determining impacts on biological resources. This flaw leads to a cascade of other failures: without a threshold, the DEIR cannot do its job. For example, the DEIR states that the VTP would result in a significant effect if would contribute to a substantial, long- term reduction in the viability of any native species (at 4-115), but the document provides no standard by which to evaluate this impact's significance. This is critical; without a significance threshold, there is no means by which to conclude whether impacts would or would not be significant, and findings under CEQA section 21081 cannot be properly made (i.e., whether significant impacts are reduced to a less-than-significant level and, if so. how}. The revised EIR should identify appropriate thresholds for determining impacts to vegetation and wildlife.	CEQA - significance thresholds
O124	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	1.D How does the DEIR deal with thresholds of significance? CEQA presumes that agencies will use thresholds of significance as a tool for determining the significance of a project's possible impacts. 11 What are the thresholds of significance for biological impacts in the DEIR? We could not find them, and this causes problems throughout the document. For example, the DEIR states that the VTP would have a significant impact if it contributes to the substantial, long-term decline in the viability of any native species (p. 4-115). Unfortunately, there is no threshold to determine what substantial, long-term, and viability mean in order to determine when a significant impact has occurred. Without thresholds, there is no mechanism for determining whether impacts have been mitigated to below the level of significance, and thus the analysis is incomplete. 11 CEQA Guidelines § 15064(a), 15064.7	CEQA - significance thresholds
O119	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	Background California is inarguably the most complicated state in the US, whether the complexity is biodiversity (California is a global biodiversity hotspot1), socio-political, geographic, geologic, or in the massive infrastructure of aqueducts, power grids, farms, forests, and cities that allow over 38,000,000 people to live here. Worse, climate change is affecting everything, from water availability to fire behavior. Writing a programmatic EIR (PEIR) is about analyzing the predictable, cumulative impacts of a program. Writing a PEIR for a program that proposes a diverse set activities across almost one-fifth of California is a truly titanic undertaking that the writers of the DEIR did not really engage in. The main body of the DEIR is only 759 pages long, and it contains multiple repetitions. To show why this is a problem, compare it to the natural resources management plan and Mitigated Negative Declaration for 1,092 acres of urban park in San Diego, which was 159 pages long2. The DEIR, supposedly an analysis of a long-term program that proposes to treat up to 22,000,000 acres over decades, is barely five times longer than a routine local management document that deals with a few miles of trail. There is no way the DEIR can provide adequate analysis in so short a length, and it does not. The scale of the DEIR far too small for the VTP. Unfortunately, the issues do with the DEIR do not stop at its short length. 1 Myers, N., Mittermeier, R. A., Mittermeier, C. G., da Fonseca, G. A. B., and J. Kent. (2000). Biodiversity hotspots for conservation priorities. Nature, 403(6772), 853-858.	Ecological Values
P4	Caragozian	Ted		Hello Folks. I can't say that I'm impressed with your new "improved" vegetation management plan. It still contains vague, outdated and unsupported proposals. As a proponent of nature, I object. The chaparral is an integral component of California's natural habitat and the priority should be to leave it as intact as possible. Your proposal doesn't reflect this. Maybe we should designate a different agency to draw up a reasonable management plan. Someone who values the chaparral for its intrinsic value, instead of wanting to degrade it so badly.	Ecological Values

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
P6	Colbourne	Brooke		As a student who is devoting her life to studying the Environment and the ways which humans can change the way we see the world, I was deeply saddened to be informed by what is in the DPEIR for the states proposed Vegetation Treatment Program. As I read through the plan I noticed many errors that truly do not address what long term effects will be as a result of the plan. I find this incredibly alarming and upsetting. Over my short 23 year life I have gotten to see many parts of California, from San Francisco to Yosemite, to Death Valley, to Borrego Desert, but mostly the coastal regions; Big Sur and Encinitas. As an Environmental Studies major I have learned how important Chaparral is as a habitat for animals specifically in our coastal region. I have seen so many homes built growing up because California is surely a popular place to live. However, I don't think it is fair to take away the homes of animals who dwell in Chaparral. I think this plan needs to be reassessed and the impacts need to be clearly outlined so that people can really see how harmful it is to the environment. Please know that my concern is genuine and as a student I will continue to learn what I can do to minimize the impacts while addressing that other parties may not agree. I fully respect alternate opinions, yet I think that this plans errors need to be reassessed and the plan ideally redeveloped.	Ecological Values
P16	Forsman	Alicia		I am not a scientist, or a firefighter. I am a Californian, who enjoys being able to get out into the fresh air and wild flowers whenever I can. I do not know what mix of experience those who make up the Board of Forestry must have. Certainly, there are some that don't necessarily have as good of a grasp about our wildlife as some others. Your contribution to the board is your expertise in other important areas. I would like to appeal to those who do not have much knowledge about the plants and animals that are native to our State. When I hear about the various plants, for example, referred to as "brush" and "fuel" I feel like there is little appreciation for their unique value. Just for one example, the Monarch Butterfly lays it's eggs on one type of plant only, the milkweed. When the eggs hatch into caterpillars, they eat the leaves of that one kind of plant exclusively. The controlled burn method of preventing wildfires, could seriously endanger the Monarch by depleting the available milkweeds. No milkweed, no Monarch. The "weeds, brush, fuel build up" is not just a bunch of plants, easily replaced by any other bunch of plant that will typically invade a burned area given the opportunity.	Ecological Values
P44	Spolskly	A		First, I really appreciate our firefighters and always fully support increases to the fire budget. I live in the middle of beautiful California Chaparral covered hillsides. We have delightful birds that fill the air with song and three types of frogs and toads that call in the evening - one of them is the rare spade foot toad that breeds on our land. We also have the California Legless Lizard and Horned Lizard.	Ecological Values
P46	Spolskly	A		Let me describe the situation near me. • Home owners who have cleared their land on the slopes over the years cause flooding to homes below me during torrential rains that we get here. That will increase if your proposed clearances are used. • Home owners who have removed native vegetation have then planted very flammable non-natives such as eucalyptus and pines around their homes which will increase the chances of their homes burning during a wildfire but they are not cited or fined or in any way asked to remove those trees even though they threaten my land would a fire come this way. I was told by the fire inspector that it is because non-natives are fine to plant. They just want to get rid of the native plants. • We're very good about fire prevention. We have the requisite 50 and 100 foot limitations and we irrigate near the house. Plus we have 10,000 gals of water tanked on our property. • When land is cleared out here woody weedy species move in so the fire problem actually increases.	Ecological Values

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
P57	Swanson	Amber		I have become aware of the problems with CalFire's Vegetation Treatment Program and the latest DPEIR. As a former botanist with the California Native Plant Society, I would like to voice deep concern with the proposal to destroy habitat in California. Chaparral provides refuge for thousands of plants and wildlife (many rare and endemic to California) around the state. Once these ecosystems have been destroyed it is impossible to bring them back to the healthy native systems they once were. The benefits of Chaparral are varied from carbon sequestration to erosion control to simply beauty. It is simply not worth the cost of destroying these lands for possibly preventing some fire. Please reconsider and do everything you can to preserve California's ancient heritage.	Ecological Values
P61	Wallace	Elizabeth		I have seen the devastation of areas cleared as fire protection. I live in Southern California and watched as fire-hardy chaparral was cleared. The vegetation is replaced by weedy grassland that is prone to quick-moving fires. In addition, our property has been threatened by erosion due to the removal of chaparral.	Ecological Values
P66	Wellhouse	Ann		If you really think it is the right thing to do - sign your own names to it so we know who to blame. California is the most beautiful state in the world. California has the highest diversity of wildlife and the most exquisite wild lands. We are so lucky and so stupid. California is about to make a terrible mistake by poisoning our beautiful exquisite land and destroying delicate necessary habitats and all the wonderful frogs that call at night in the spring and poisoning the ground nesting birds.	Ecological Values
P67	Wellhouse	Ann		You are making another Silent Spring. You will be remembered by your destruction. People have made the ignorant mistake of putting their homes inside wild lands and now want to destroy those wild lands and the exquisite plants and animals forever. Instead of intelligently regulating safe home sites you choose to destroy habitat. Chopping California's habitats into little disconnected pieces is a prescription for environmental collapse. There is not enough water in California's climate to recover these lands once you have destroyed them.	Ecological Values

No.	Lname	Fname	Affiliation, if any	Comment	Category
P79	Zandri	Nonna		Please don't clear the chaparral willy-nilly. It seems your Vegetation Treatment Program would do just that, and maybe you're not paying attention to the environmental impact it will have on our California land, our chaparral, that we love so dearly. Have you walked through the old-growth chaparral lately? It's gorgeous, today it was filled with Chamise blossoms, purple-needle grass, yellow monkey flower, hummingbirds, large white sage.....it truly is lovely, and the birds, so many baby birds. You can check out my Instagram if you would like to see some of the beauty we belong to... @feminina.californica ....but rather it be best you leave the office right now, walk into the chaparral, and listen for the baby birds. Take in the aroma of white sage....Spring is here in the chaparral. And did you know the chaparral only has 3 seasons? ....dry summers, mild, wet winters and spring.... In some of your reports I noticed you are misrepresenting scientists, please stop? This is abuse. ....the people of California are done with abuse....how we treat the land is a reflection of how we treat ourselves...let's change together? I'm passing your plan around to my artists friends, my musician friends....The awareness is growing among our community of the importance of protecting the chaparral. The number of Californians becoming aware of the chaparral is growing at an exponential rate....here is a chance for you to become one of the leaders in this new movement. Imagine, the Board of Forestry working together with artists and musicians. Please make a difference. Tell the Truth. Work with us in keeping the chaparral intact.	Ecological Values
U7	Dudley	Tom	Marine Science Institute, University of California Santa Barbara	It is a serious failing that the current DPEIR circumvents CEQA requirements by inadequately evaluating significant effects of recommended treatments on natural resources and environmental quality, and mitigation measures to address damage that recommended treatments would impose on our landscape. This is in addition to those recommendations being inappropriate and unnecessarily destructive to ecosystem processes and biodiversity in the first place.	Environmental Impacts Analysis
A1	Johnson	Kevin T.	Los Angeles County Fire Department	The statutory responsibilities of the County of Los Angeles Fire Department's Forestry Division include erosion control, watershed management, rare and endangered species, vegetation, fuel modification for Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones or Fire Zone 4, archeological and cultural resources, and the County Oak Tree Ordinance. Potential impacts in these areas should be addressed.	Environmental Impacts Analysis
O16	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	Suggested Improvements to the Draft DPEIR - Detail impacts. Examine possible direct and cumulative impacts and develop legally adequate mitigations for those impacts as required by CEQA.	Environmental Impacts Analysis
O96	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	C. The DEIR's Analysis of and Mitigation for the Impacts of the VTP Are Inadequate. The discussion of a proposed project's environmental impacts is at the core of an EIR. See CEQA Guidelines § 15126.2(a) ("[a]n EIR shall identify and focus on the significant environmental effects of the proposed project"). As explained below, the DEIR's environmental impacts analysis is deficient under CEQA because it fails to provide the necessary facts and analysis to allow the Board and the public to make informed decisions about the Program. An EIR must effectuate the fundamental purpose of CEQA: to "inform the public and its responsible officials of the environmental consequences of their decisions before they are made." Citizens of Goleta Valley v. Board of Supervisors (1990) 52 Cal.3d 553, 564. To do so, an EIR must contain facts and analysis, not just an agency's bare conclusions. Id. at 568. Thus, a conclusion regarding the significance of an environmental impact that is not based on an analysis of the relevant facts fails to fulfill CEQA's informational mandate. Although it is clear that the proposed VTP has the potential to cause extraordinary environmental degradation, neither the public nor the Board have any way of knowing the magnitude of this harm. As we explain below, the DEIR fails entirely to provide the Board and the public with detailed, accurate information about the Program's significant environmental impacts and to analyze mitigation measures that would reduce or avoid such impacts.	environmental impacts analysis

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O98	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	The DEIR fares no better with regard to its conclusions as to the Plan's specific effecr on biota, as the document explains that the Plan would both benefit and harm these resources. For example, in one instance, the DEIR states that the potential exists for substantial adverse effects to special status wildlife taxa. DEIR at 4-121 (emphasis added). In another instance, it asserts that the fire management treatments would be a benefit to biological resources. (See Id. at 4-124 stating that "prescri bed fire is believed to benefit the overall health of [...] ecosystems" (emphasis added). Given this hodge-podge of contradictory statements, the DEIR's so-called analysis of biological impacts achieves a result exactly opposite from what CEQA requires. Under CEQA, decision makers and the public are to be given sufficient information about impacts and mitigation to come to their own judgments and decisions. See Pub. Resources Code, § 21061. This DEIR's strategy is to withhold information and to encourage the public to accept the decision that the agency wants. The DEIR never mentions, let alone analyzes, the actual and specific consequences to vegetation communities and wildlife that would result from this massive Program. The document makes no attempt, for example, to identify the locations of important habitat areas, to identify the specific species that would be impacted, to quantify the expected losses to species and habitat, to analyze the significance of the expected impacts in light of these facts, and finally to propose mitigation measures capable of reducing these impacts to a less than significant level. A complete revision and recirculation is the only way that this document can come into compliance with CEQA. The VTP and its specific projects must be fully and accurately described, and the critical discussion of biological impacts must explain what will happen on the 10.7 mi11ion acres that are designated for Wildland Urban Interface treatments, the 7.4 million acres are designated for ecological restoration treatments, and the 4.0 million acres that are designated for fuel break treatment. DEIR at 4-38; 4-46; 4-54. See Citizens of Goleta Valley, supra, 52 Cal. 3d 553, 568 ("[T]he EIR must contain facts and analysis, not just the agency's bare conclusions . . . .") (quotation marks omitted). A sample of some of the most egregious flaws in the DEIR's analysis of impacts to biological resources follows.	environmental impacts analysis
O102	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	(i) Vegetation Impacts In its discussion of vegetation impacts, the DEIR explains that impacts to botanical resources were analyzed by examining special status plants and communities listed in the California Natural Diversity Database ("CNDDB"}. DEIR at 4-115. Setting aside for a moment the validity of using CNDDB to evaluate the Plan's impacts on vegetation (see e.g., May 31, 2016 letter from F. Landis), the DEIR never actually uses the database-or any other method-to evaluate impacts. Indeed, it fails to provide any analysis at all. Instead, the DEIR calls for a project applicant to "check" for occurrences of special status plants in their project area and provide the information to the wildlife agencies. DEIR at 4-115, 116 (citing SPR BI0-2}. Similarly, the DEIR explains that the wildlife agencies have developed guidelines for assessing the effects of projects on rare, threatened or endangered plants and natural communities (at 4-1 I 6), but here too, the DEIR makes no attempt to use these guidelines to evaluate the VTP' s impacts on vegetation. In lieu of actually analyzing the Plan's impacts on vegetation communities, the DEIR simply asserts that BI0-2 (the measure calling for the applicant to check for special status plants) would reduce the Plan's impacts to a less than significant level. Id. The document, however, provides no evidentiary support for this conclusion. Quite simply, it appears the DEIR was set up to arrive at this preordained result. A conclusion that a measure will be effective in mitigating an impact must be supported by substantial evidence. See Gray v. Cnty. of Madera (2008) 167 Cal.App.4th 1099, 1115-18; see also San Franciscans /or Reasonable Growth v. City & Cnty. o/ San Francisco (1984) 151 Ca1.App.3d 61, 79 (measures must not be so vague that it is impossible to gauge their effectiveness). The DEIR fails to fulfill this paramount CEQA purpose because it neglects to present any factual support for its cursory conclusions.	environmental impacts analysis

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O104	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	(ii) Wildlife Impacts The DEIR's pattern of unlawfully deferred and delegated analysis and mitigation is repeated over and again as the DEIR acknowledges that the VTP would cause impacts to wildlife, but fails to perform the required impact analysis. The DEIR begins its discussion of impacts to wildlife by explaining that it is difficult to determine the effects of fuel reduction on wildlife because of the size of the treatment area and the complexity of the program. It goes on to state that responses of wildlife to fuel reduction have not been studied extensively and information on is lacking. DEIR at 4-116. California courts explain that an agency cannot evade its obligate to analyze a project's environmental impacts on the grounds that the project is just too such large and complex. Following this convoluted reasoning, the greater the environmental harm contemplated by an agency, the lesser the obligation of conducting environmental review. As explained by the Court in Laurel Heights Improvement Ass 'nof San Francisco v. Regents of the University of California (1988) 47 Cal.3d 376, 399 (1988), "[w]e find no authority that exempts an agency from complying with the law, environmental or otherwise, merely because the agency's task may be difficult." Rather than provide an extensive analysis of impacts on wildlife as CEQA requires, the DEIR provides only cursory, unsupported statements. For example, it mentions that impacts to wildlife should be mostly beneficial however, the temporal and spatial effects as well as the short-and long-term effectives that fire will have on animals needs to be considered. DEIR at 4-117. The DEIR never mentions any of the specific species that could be impacted nor what type of impacts might occur. Nor does it provide any factual analysis to support its conclusion that impacts "should be mostly beneficial."	environmental impacts analysis
O105	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	The DEIR generally takes a "trust us" approach when it asserts that direct wildlife mortality due to fire is low since most animals are able to escape or take shelter. Id. Yet, the DEIR's biological resources appendix repeatedly contradicts the DEIR's text. In its two-sentence evaluation of the effect that prescribed fire has on mammals, the appendix states that direct mortality of small mammals as a result of fire are primarily from heat effects and asphyxiation. Biological Resources Appendix at page 2. Direct mortality would not appear to be a beneficial effect. The appendix s three-sentence evaluation of the effect that prescribed fire has on ground dwelling invertebrates is vague and therefore entirely meaningless. Here, the appendix states that the direct effects of prescribed fire depend largely on the invertebrates' locations at the time of the fire and fire intensity, which depends, in large part on duff consumption. Id. Common sense would dictate that the VTP's effects on wildlife would depend on location and fire intensity, but here too, the DEIR does not tell us which species of invertebrates would be most at risk nor what the direct effects to these invertebrates would be. Nor does the DEIR explain "duff consumption"' or how it relates fire intensity. The DEIR's analysis of impacts on biological resources is so fundamentally deficient that it does not come close to meeting CEQA's clear requirements. Revisions of the required magnitude will require recirculation of the DEI R. Ifthis DEIR truly reflects the current state of the VTP, then this is not a Program ready for approval. The first step in revising the DEIR must be serious commitment by the Board to define the VTP in a manner that would allow the Program's impacts to be effectively evaluated.	environmental impacts analysis
O126	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	1.F. Why does the DEIR inadequately analyze so many impacts from the VTP? Under CEQA, "[a]n EIR shall identify and focus on the significant effects of the proposed project."15 As we understand it, the courts have ruled against merely incorporating the conclusions of an analysis, and that an EIR must contain facts and analysis as well.16 We deal with one glaring botanical example of this problem below in 2.A., but it is ubiquitous throughout the DEIR. Why does the DEIR resort to inadequate analysis so often? 15 CEQA Guidelines § 15126.2(a) 16 Citizens of Goleta Valley v. Board of Supervisors (1990)	environmental impacts analysis

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O188	Watt	Jean	Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks	How does the DPEIR justify ignoring a thorough examination of impacts as required by CEQA? The DPEIR vacillates between claiming the Program is too large and complex to analyze, or the actual treatment areas are too small to have an impact. As a consequence, the current DPEIR fails to provide adequate support for concluding that the proposed program will not have a significant effect on the environment.	Environmental Impacts Analysis
O268	Spencer	Wayne	Conservation Biology Insitute	Vague Criteria and Guidelines. The VTP puts a lot of weight on use of various criteria, principles, and guidelines to avoid and mitigate impacts, but does not spell these out with sufficient detail for one to evaluate their effectiveness. For example, the principles for locating and implementing fuel break treatments are so shallow and vague as to be meaningless, and no process is defined for how conflicts between project objectives would be resolved. For example, who decides what to do, and how, when a project might impact a sensitive species? Moreover, some criteria, guidelines, and principles are nothing but empty promises, such as, treatments shall be designed "to prevent type conversion." Who determines this, when, how, based on what? And what recourse is there if the finding is incorrect?	Environmental Impacts Analysis
O269	Spencer	Wayne	Conservation Biology Insitute	Continued Failure to Adequately Analyze Impacts. There is no defensible analysis of VTP impacts for any alternative, nor any meaningful comparison among alternatives. The impact findings are unsubstantiated opinions lacking factual support. In part this stems from the overly vague Project Description and unclear Significance Criteria, which provide no measurable thresholds of significance. For example, concerning biological impacts, the PEIR states that the VTP would have a significant impact if it "contributes to the substantial, long-term decline in the viability of any native species." How are the terms substantial, long-term, decline, and viability defined and measured? Who makes this determination, when, over what portion of the species population distribution, using what data and logic? The impact analysis for each biological resource basically says there is no significant impact because the projects are relatively small (estimated average = 260 ac), and Standard Project Requirements (SPRs) will minimize and mitigate any impacts (despite how vague, unmeasurable, and unenforceable they appear to be; see below). In fact, the PEIR concludes, the SPRs are likely to benefit resources by reducing wildfire size and severity (despite scant scientific support for these assumptions). This is pure speculation without scientific support. Then, for cumulative impacts, the analysis concludes the program is so "large and complex" that the impacts can't really be assessed, but we assume they are not significant at the regional scale. Which is it, too little area or too much area? This does not represent an adequate analysis of either project or program impacts.	Environmental Impacts Analysis

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O270	Spencer	Wayne	Conservation Biology Insitute	Continued Reliance on Vague and Ineffective Mitigation Concepts. The PEIR relies on vague, unmeasurable, unenforceable, and probably ineffective mitigation concepts to reduce project and cumulative impacts to less than significant. In some cases, the "mitigation" is simply to "identify issues" and "take necessary actions." How is "identifying issues" mitigation? What "necessary actions"? Again, the mitigation statements seem to be based on a "trust us, we're professionals" attitude. As an example, the PEIR proposes that the "Project Coordinator" will perform a CNDDB search for sensitive species in and near a proposed project area. Really? CNDDB is a positive-only database that includes data only from areas where surveys have been performed (not to mention it is notoriously out of date, sometimes inaccurate, and does not adequately account for recent taxonomic or status changes, etc.). What are the qualifications of the Project Coordinator? Are they a biologist familiar with the nuances, inadequacies, and interpretations of CNDDB or other biological data sources? I have seen way too many cases of state agencies (and others) misusing CNDDB to draw grossly inappropriate conclusions about project impacts to accept this approach. As pointed out in previous comment letters, there are better, newer, more efficient and informative ways to assess potential resources at risk; and trusting an unnamed "Project Coordinator" to make this determination based on a CNDDB search is not even close to adequate. The PEIR also seems to imply that simply identifying a problem makes it go away. Identifying issues is not mitigation. What is the resolution when a potentially significant impact is identified by the Project Coordinator and the outcomes of discussions with resource agencies? The PEIR does not describe how resource conflicts will be resolved, projects declined or altered, or mitigation prescribed.	Environmental Impacts Analysis
O274	Whitestone	Karen	California Native Plant Society, East Bay Chapter	The most concerning issue, however, relates to the failure of the document to provide a key component of a programmatic EIR - providing a more exhaustive consideration of effects and cumulative impacts than could be accomplished at the project level (14 CCR § 15168). Instead, volumes of repetitive text are punctuated with the unsupported claim that determining impacts is impossible, pushing it off to project managers to determine with a checklist and standard project requirements that depend on subjective judgments. How does the DPEIR justify ignoring a thorough examination of impacts as required by CEQA? The document vacillates between claiming the Program is too large and complex to analyze, or the treatment areas are too small to have an impact.	environmental impacts analysis
O275	Whitestone	Karen	California Native Plant Society, East Bay Chapter	As a consequence, the current DPEIR - fails to provide adequate support for concluding that the proposed program will not have a significant effect on the environment - fails to provide adequate guidance to prevent significant environmental harm - fails to adequately support Cal Fire's mission to protect life, property, and natural resources	environmental impacts analysis

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O281	Whitestone	Karen	California Native Plant Society, East Bay Chapter	1. Circumventing CEQA Failure to Determine Impacts The lack of detail in the DPEIR is a clear violation of the California Environmental Quality Act's requirements for a programmatic EIR. Throughout the document, the DPEIR completely ignores the necessary detail needed to determine if the Program will have significant impacts. Instead, it defers to managers at the individual project level because the Program is either too "large and complex" to consider the true environmental impacts within the DPEIR (4-116 among others), or too small because the projects average 260 acres (5-44 among others). By using the "Fallacy of Authority," the DPEIR claims without providing supporting evidence, Because of the amount of acreage eligible but not receiving treatment under the VTP, the proposed Program would likely result in a less than significant cumulative effect on biological resources at the bioregional scale. (5-27) The DPEIR frequently follows up these claims, again without supporting evidence, with the suggestion that the Program may actually provide a net environmental gain because it may "decrease the frequency, extent, or severity of wildfire." (5-32) Such rationales have no merit. There is a rich source of literature describing the potential impacts, both local and cumulative, of "fuel treatments" as well as the ecological benefits of high-severity fires in crown fire ecosystems. The DPEIR should adhere to the requirements of CEQA and determine the overall environmental impact of the Program, not pass the responsibility on to individual project managers via a checklist based on subjective opinions. This failure to account for environmental impacts is troubling because it gives the impression that the DPEIR was not produced to comply with CEQA, but rather to accomplish its stated goal of streamlining the regulatory process (1-7). In fact, this is in line with the Board of Forestry's 2010 Strategic Fire Plan which endorses efforts to "remove regulatory barriers that limit hazardous fuel reduction activities" (Fire Plan Goal #5, objective "b"). While it may be within the rights of the Board of Forestry to lobby the legislature to change laws, CEQA is quite clear about what programmatic EIRs need to address. An EIR's purpose is to examine environmental impacts. The Board should produce a document that does so.	environmental impacts analysis
P24	Gruchawka	Peter		6. DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE The VTP is proposed to be 600,000 acres. Some of the impacts are "considered less than significant" because the treatment area is only 2.4% of the 25 million acres available. To say burning, and applying chemical agents to 600,000 acres, in combination with the myriad of all other local environmental impacts (cumulative impacts) is "less than significant" is inaccurate, at best. Prescribed burn programs do not always result in resource protection. One recent example is the Boggs Mountain Demonstration State Forest, under the direct management of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. The Boggs prescribed burn program unfortunately had no effect on preventing the 90% loss of the forest during the 2015 Valley Fire. Potential for failures in the program should be acknowledged and weighed against the cumulative impacts of the program, especially when considering dismissing any potential negative impact as "less than significant."	Environmental Impacts Analysis

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
P34	Paul	Lori		Clearing vast tracts of wild lands will not protect our homes from wildfires. This oversimplified view ignores recent research and recommendations from fire ecologists and other relevant experts. It is apparent that the entire structure and recommendations within the revised VTP ignores current data, misrepresents and misquotes current fire experts, dismisses It is absurd to state that the proposed VTP will not have a significant adverse impact on the environment of California. Why has the revised PEIR failed to address the concerns expressed in 2013 by so many persons, organizations, and agencies, including foresters and park managers? Some of us have been following the VTP EIR "process" since 2005 and have lived through several wildfires, including the 2009 Station Fire near our home in the Angeles National Forest. No amount of "vegetative treatment program" — obliteration of natural chaparral cover -- would have stopped the wind-driven fires. The lack of evidence for stating that the proposed VTP "would likely result in less than significant cumulative effect on biological resources at the bioregional scale." [5-27] attempts to side-step acknowledgement of widespread adverse impacts. This is a blatant disregard for the terms of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).	Environmental Impacts Analysis
P48	St. Clair	Peter		I sent detailed comments on VTPEIR earlier in May, 2016 and in 2013. VTPEIR is poorly researched and written. I'd like briefly summarize the major fatal problems: 1. The PEIR lacks any fundamental environmental analysis. It is largely a description of the proposed project. PEIR presents no information about impacts. It says all impacts are mitigated by proposed SPA's for vegetation treatment. It proposes a "checklist" program for specific project analysis. The program objectives elevate new treatment over maintenance of existing treated areas. There is no analysis for any of this.	Environmental Impacts Analysis
A32	Blatt	Fred	North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board	Although the VTPEIR estimates that approximately 50 percent of the total program area will be treated with prescribed fire, methods of ignition and the use of accelerants is discussed in only one paragraph in section 4.1.6.1. Aquatic impacts of prescribed fire activities are discussed in section 4.2.2.3.1, but are restricted to direct temperature effects from the burn, and do not consider the impacts of accelerants or their residue. Although a 2002 US Forest Service report, Residues of Fire Accelerant Chemicals, Volume I: Risk Assessment, prepared by Labat-Anderson, Inc., for the USFS Intermountain Region, determined that the use of most forms of accelerants pose no significant risk to the environment, there is no discussion at all of the potential risk of accelerants or their residue in the VTPEIR. The US Forest Service report is not listed in the VTPEIR references (Section 9). Regional Water Board staff recommend the VTPEIR include a discussion of accelerants, their residues, and their potential environmental impact.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Accelerants)
A94	Robertson	Glenn	Regional Planning Programs Section, CEQA Coordinator, Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board	2. VTPEIR p.4..S2 describes the routine use of an ignited gelled fuel mixture as an accelerant for starting prescribed burns. Another mixture of potassium permanganate and ethylene glycol contained in polystyrene spheres is said to be optimum for starting spot-fires from helicopters . The VTPEIR should consolidate and evaluate the results of toxicity studies on the residues of fire accelerants intended for Project use, particularly in subwatersheds having rapid stormwater runoff. We understand that the U.S. Forest Service has conducted such studies.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Accelerants)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
P19	Gruchawka	Peter		1. ACCELERANTS While Cal Fire has objectives to benefit the citizens of California, I am concerned about the use of “accelerants” near waterways and on watersheds. Cal Fire Procedures for Vegetation Management Operations section 8344.5.7.5 (and other Cal Fire documents) indicate Cal Fire can use “Alumagel” along with some type of fuel. Other documents also allow for “Flash 21”. Flash 21 is a two part mix (Flash 21A and 21B) along with some type of fuel, AvGas 100, for example. The effects of fire accelerants on the environment was extensively studied by the USDA Forest Service. The use of Alumagel, for example, results in a residual of aluminum oxide along with many other chemical agents. The USDA Forest Service studies conclude that the LC50 (mg/kg) (lethal concentration) for aluminum oxide alone on trout is 1.17 mg/kg, daphnia 2.6 mg/kg and salamander 1.4 mg/kg respectively. The USDA Forest Service has guidelines and policies regarding the use of accelerants near waterways and on watersheds. Very small amounts of Alumagel can result in lethal effects on life forms in a watershed. The Flash 21 MSDS simply states “Ecological information not available.” Flash 21 should be studied for it’s possible negative effects on the environment before further use. This should also apply to any agent that may be used that has not been studied for it’s negative effects on the environment. The USDA Forest Service study on accelerants is voluminous while Cal Fire has no such study as part of the VTPEIR. Based on available public records, Cal Fire does not document amounts of accelerants used in similar operations conducted under the Vegetation Management Program (VMP). Because of the real potential harm to aquatic species (no less humans drinking water from the watersheds) these agents should be openly addressed by the VTPEIR and data reviewed by independent experts, not just Cal Fire staff.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (accelerants)
O97	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	1. The DEIR's Analysis of the VTP's Impacts on Biological Resources is Inadequate. The DEIR's biological resources chapter is emblematic of the impossible task the Board has created for the DEIR authors by proceeding with CEQA review of a vague and standardless Plan. They must evaluate the environmental consequences of implementing a Plan that has not yet been defined but has the potential to severely affect millions of acres of lands that have biological resources of unparalleled importance. It is therefore not surprising that the DEIR's "analysis" of impacts is a pile of contradictions which renders it utterly useless, as the following paragraph demonstrates. Regarding the scale of the analysis, the DEIR initially asserts that "evaluating impacts at the bio-regional scale allows for a reasonable analysis of the foreseeable impacts without being neither so large an area as to dilute the impacts or too small an area to magnify the impacts." DEIR at 4-79. The DEIR then completely reverses itself and explains it is not possible to evaluate the VTP's impacts at a bio-regional level. DEIR at 4-121 ("In order for an effect to be considered significant at the bioregional level, the species in question would have to be impacted enough to meet one of the Significance Criteria stated above. The amount of habitat that would have to be adversely modified to cause a substantial adverse effect has not been scientifically determined for most species and is likely unknowable until the threshold has been crossed and the species is in jeopardy. "). The DEIR then states that an analysis at this macro level is appropriate since the VTP's impacts to biological resources would be similar throughout the state (at 4-120) while also acknowledging that vegetation and wildlife differ across California". DEIR at 4-120 and 4-85 (emphasis added).	Environmental Impacts Analysis (biological resources)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O132	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	2.B. Why is the biological description of the project area so incomplete? 4.2.1.2, the Biological Setting and Concerns, is a description of the "nine ecoregions" used in the analysis (p.4-85-4-109) is not useful for environmental analysis. It does not describe what is important, it does not describe what is impacted, it does not use scientific names, but it does lump together plants with radically different fire ecologies and pretends they are equivalent. Indeed, it does not describe concerns or in any way highlight which bits of information are actually important. (For example, the Sierra Nevada is described as having "bold topography," rather than by the elevation range of any vegetation type or species mentioned). According to CEQA,"[a]n EIR must include a description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the project, as they exist at the time the notice of preparation is published."20 This includes the plants and animals within the project's boundary. Section 4.2.1.2. fails to do this. To pick one concern that is left undescribed, we learn on page 4-427, in the climate change section, that the majority of the 30,000 acres subject to controlled burns will occur in "shrub dominated vegetation." Despite the presence of BIO-5, it appears that the VTP specifically targets chaparral, but this is not mentioned in the Biological Setting and Concerns. Why is it not mentioned? Worse, the DEIR contradicts itself on the utility of ecoregions. For example, it notes (p. 4-79) that "evaluating impacts at the bio-regional scale allows for a reasonable analysis of the foreseeable impacts without being neither so large an area as to dilute the impacts or too small an area to magnify the impacts," but later (p. 4-121) states that "[i]n order for an effect to be considered significant at the bioregional level, the species in question would have to be impacted enough to meet one of the Significance Criteria stated above. The amount of habitat that would have to be adversely modified to cause a substantial adverse effect has not been scientifically determined for most species and is likely unknowable until the threshold has been crossed and the species is in jeopardy." In other words, despite the importance of threshold analysis in CEQA as noted above, this document appears to regard threshold impacts as unknowable, at least at the bio-regional scale. Why was this scale used? It is also very unclear what the "Significance Criteria stated above" are, since this is the first use of the term "Significance Criteria" and other uses refer to over issues. What are they? 20 CEQA guideline § 15125	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Biological Resources)
O220	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	VII. The DEIR Fails to Adequately Disclose, Analyze, Assess the Significance of, and Propose Mitigation for Impacts to Biological Resources Caused by the Program The DEIR's disclosure, analysis, and mitigation of impacts to biological resources from the implementation of the VTP are cursory, incomplete, and inadequate. Specifically, the DEIR completely fails to disclose, analyze, and assess the significance of several key impacts that would result from the Program; acknowledges but fails to analyze wide-ranging impacts to special-status species, sensitive habitat areas, and migratory corridors; is inconsistent with the best-available science; fails to identify any clear and consistent baseline against which the Program's impacts to biological resources can be evaluated; and improperly defers mitigation to the project level analysis. Due to all of these failures and omissions, the DEIR's discussion of impacts to biological resources fails to satisfy CEQA's fundamental requirements.	environmental impacts analysis (biological resources)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O223	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	Third, the DEIR's thresholds of significance for biological resources are impermissibly lenient and sometimes contradictory. Under CEQA Guidelines § 15065(a)(1), a lead agency must find that a project will have a significant effect on the environment if the project has the potential to do any of the following: • Reduce substantially the habitat of a fish or wildlife species; • Cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels; • Threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community; or • Reduce substantially the number or restrict the range of an endangered, rare, or threatened species. The DEIR improperly avoids these standards by imposing thresholds that are impermissibly lenient under CEQA and likely to miss significant impacts. In Endangered Habitats League, Inc. v County of Orange, 131 Cal. App. 4th 777, 793 (2005), the court held that the EIR's standard of significance for impacts on biological resources was "impermissibly lenient" because it was narrower than the standards in 14 Cal. Code Regs. §15065(a)(1). The DEIR here makes the same error. For example, the DEIR requires that the "contribution to a substantial long-term reduction in the viability of any native species or subspecies" must occur "at the state level" to be significant. DEIR at 4-115 (emphasis added). Analyzing thresholds at the state level is likely to obscure significant impacts that might happen at smaller geographical scales. The DEIR itself asserts that detecting significant impacts at the bioregional level is virtually impossible: "in order for an effect to be considered significant at the bioregional level, the species in question would have to be impacted enough to meet one of the Significance Criteria stated above. The amount of habitat that would have to be adversely modified to cause a substantial adverse effect has not been scientifically determined for most species and is likely unknowable until the threshold has been crossed and the species is in jeopardy." DEIR at 4-121. The natural conclusion is that detecting impacts at the larger state level is even more infeasible. The significance standards for biological resources are also contradictory at times. For example, CEQA Guidelines require that adverse effects must be considered and mitigated for "any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by CDFW or USFWS." DEIR at 4-114. However, the DEIR limits the scope of analysis to consider adverse effects as "significant" only if they would affect taxa that are listed as either threatened or endangered at the federal or state level. DEIR at 4-118.	environmental impacts analysis (biological resources)
O224	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	Fourth, the DEIR fails to identify any clear and consistent baseline against which the Program's impacts to biological resources can be evaluated. The DEIR contains a brief, general discussion of the environmental and regulatory setting for the Program, but it does not contain any of the information about existing physical conditions necessary to evaluate the Program's biological impacts. See, e.g., Save Our Peninsula Comm. v. Monterey Cty. Bd. of Supervisors, 87 Cal. App. 4th 99, 119 (2001) ("Without a determination and description of the existing physical conditions on the property at the start of the environmental review process, the EIR cannot provide a meaningful assessment of the environmental impacts of the proposed project.").	environmental impacts analysis (biological resources)
O6	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	The DPEIR also fails to properly address the impacts the Program may have on carbon emissions and the loss of carbon sequestration by the clearance of native habitats.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (carbon)
O28	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	Suggested Improvements to the Draft DPEIR - Proper account of carbon sequestration. Recalculate the loss of carbon to account for the loss of below ground carbon sequestration in healthy chaparral communities. With the impacts of human-caused climate change accumulating much faster than even the most severe predictions, it is imperative that every policy we implement from here on out must honestly and exhaustively examine how such policy can facilitate the reduction of carbon in the atmosphere and the protection of what natural environment remains. The current DPEIR fails to do so.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (carbon)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O29	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	Suggested Improvements to the Draft DPEIR Regarding carbon emissions, the DPEIR uses the same response it does throughout to dodge examining significant impacts – it merely states there won't be any impacts because of unsupported assumptions. While there is not a direct correlation between implementation of a vegetation treatment project and a proportionate reduction in numbers of fires or acres burned, it is reasonable to acknowledge that while the VTP program would result in emissions of GHGs as a result of prescribed fire, it would likely result in some reduction in the numbers of fires and/or burned acres from wildfires and, therefore, would avoid some emissions associated with those fires. The VTPs contribution to cumulative GHG emissions would not result in a considerable contribution to GHGs and would result in a less than significant impact. The DPEIR assumes all the projects will work out properly, and treated plant communities will not type convert to low carbon sequestering grasslands because of the Program's project requirements. These requirements are legally inadequate and unenforceable. The DPEIR fails to account for the loss of underground carbon storage with the concomitant loss of above ground shrub cover in shrublands, an important carbon sink (Jenerette and Chatterjee 2012, Luo 2007). The DPEIR also fails to address the research that has shown vegetation treatments often release more carbon than wildfires (Mitchell 2015, Law et al. 2013, Meigs et al. 2009). By using assumptions based on anecdotal evidence and focusing on the short term (such as how to reduce flame lengths, remove dead trees, or increase the number of clearance projects), the DPEIR will likely exacerbate climate impacts, increase the loss of habitat, and fail to adequately accomplish its primary goal – protecting life and property from wildfire loss.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (carbon)
O145	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	3.D. What is the relationship between the VTP and CALFIRE's responsibility for sequestering carbon? Since CALFIRE has responsibility both for administering the VTP, which appears to be only about removing plants, and for carbon sequestration through planting plants, there needs to be an analysis of the impacts of these two programs on each other. After all, they are in fundamental conflict: fire protection seeks to remove plant matter from the landscape, while sequestration seeks to add it to the landscape. One might expect close coordination between these two programs and how they impact each other, yet there is no mention of it in the DEIR. Specifically, the DEIR needs to analyze: • How will the VTP sequester the CO2e it produces (see 3.C. above)? • How will mistakes and accidents increase CO2e emissions from the VTP? • What is the rate or probability of CALFIRE controlled burns escaping control and becoming wildfires? • How are escaped fires controlled, and how much do they burn relative to the proposed size of controlled burns? • How are impacts from escaped burns assessed individually and collectively across the VTP? • What happens if an escaped wildfire impacts a carbon sequestration site? • Can CALFIRE's carbon sequestration programs be used as mitigation for the greenhouse gas impacts generated by the VTP?	Environmental impacts analysis (carbon)
O146	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	3.E. Why did the DEIR ignore the method suggested in the California Chaparral Institute's response to the Notice of Preparation from October 24, 2015? That method would have avoided at least some of the issues raised in 3.A. and 3.D.	Environmental impacts analysis (carbon)
O187	Watt	Jean	Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks	This effort to clear native vegetation appears to ignore the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund expenditures that specify preserving habitat, specifically forest habitat. It is another sign of two agencies working under the same banner that are, in fact, working against one another. In addition, there is a glaring lack of analysis on the GHG emmissions from the use of heavy equipment in the proposed vegetation removal and the loss of carbon sequestration from the removed vegetation that further counters the State's intent to reduce GHG impacts in California.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (carbon)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O279	Whitestone	Karen	California Native Plant Society, East Bay Chapter	The DPEIR also fails to properly address the impacts the Program may have on carbon emissions and the loss of carbon sequestration by the clearance of native habitats. A list of Suggested Improvements will follow the evaluation below.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (carbon)
P69	Wellhouse	Ann		The amount of released carbon will vastly increase our carbon footprint when what we want is to sequester carbon as it is in native habitats. Yes, fires release carbon also but if we allow for smaller fires as would be the natural way of things, that would be low enough to tolerate. Natural habitats regenerate after fires and continue to sequester carbon. This unnatural zone of destruction will increase the albedo and the land will never recover as a natural carbon reservoir.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (carbon)
O9	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	For example, despite the fact that BIO-5 appears to provide a mechanism to reduce the impact of "fuel treatments" in old-growth chaparral (2-57), it essentially requires nothing of the project manager for the following reasons: Only southern chaparral. Without justification, the DPEIR excludes all chaparral from BIO-5 except that which occurs in nine southern and central counties. Old-growth chaparral undefined. The term "old-growth" is not defined, an issue that was pointed out to the Board after the previous draft. Is old-growth chaparral just outside the average fire return interval? Is it more than a century old? Is the presence of 135-year-old Arctostaphylos glauca individuals required? Is it different in San Diego County in comparison to Fresno County? Median fire return interval undefined. Although the DPEIR discusses fire return intervals, there is no guidance in the SPR to assist the local manager in determining what this value happens to be. Given the fact that there is tremendous misunderstanding and resistance to accepting the latest science about this topic (Halsey and Syphard 2015), it is critical that the DPEIR addresses this issue.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (chaparral)
O17	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	Suggested Improvements to the Draft DPEIR - Recognize all chaparral as potentially threatened. Chaparral in the northern part of the state will likely be threatened by higher fire frequencies as the climate continues to change. There is no ecological rationale for fuel treatments in shrub dominated ecosystems in northern or southern California.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (chaparral)
O25	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	Suggested Improvements to the Draft DPEIR - Account for biodiversity in chaparral. Incorporate into the cumulative impact analysis how biodiversity may be impacted by the Program. See Halsey and Keeley (2016).	Environmental Impacts Analysis (chaparral)
O57	Maxwell	Cynthia	Cold Creek Community Council	The board of our homeowners association voted unanimously to recommend that Cal Fire withdraw its Vegetation Treatment Program Programmatic EIR and produce one that is based on best available science and that contains sufficient criteria to determine impacts to the state's biological resources, especially the chaparral habitat that is our home.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (chaparral)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O103	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	The DEIR's failure to evaluate the VTP's impacts on chaparral/sage scrub is particularly troubling as EHL and it scientists along with wildlife regulatory agencies, including the California Department of Fish and Wildlife ("CDFW"), criticized the prior VTP EIR for failing to disclose the severity and extent of damage to this unique and increasingly rare community. See Letter from Sandra Morey, CDFW, February 25,.2013. As CDFW explained, fire management of California's shrublands has been heavily influenced by policies designed for coniferous forests; however, fire suppression has not effectively excluded fire from chaparral and coastal sage scrub landscapes and catastrophic wildfires are not the result of unnatural fuel accumulations. There is also considerable evidence that high fire frequency is a very real threat to native shrublands in southern California, sometimes leading to loss of species when fire return intervals are shorter than the time required to reach reprod uctive maturity. Both common and rare plant species and the habitats they provide are vulnerable to adverse impacts where fire regimes are altered. Since chaparral and coastal scrub are adapted to a regime of infrequent, relatively intense, dry season fires, imposition of low intensity cool season fires through prescribed burning can produce undesirable ecological effects and damage vegetation . Inasmuch as the current VTP proposes extensive treatment of chaparral/sage scrub lands, the DEIR's failure to analyze how these activities would affect these plant communities is a fatal flaw.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (chaparral)
O184	Watt	Jean	Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks	The latest draft again contains: - Environmental impacts of clearance operations that are dismissed without support; - Clearance of northern chaparral being justified by unsupported concepts; - Research from several scientists that continues to be misrepresented (despite corrections that have been submitted); and - A continuing lack of transparency concerning public involvement and notification process regarding clearance projects.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (chaparral)
A25	Fege	Anne	Community Forest Advisory Board, City of San Diego	Future conditions. The DPEIR needs to address future conditions. Yet the Change-Related Standard Project Requirements (7.2.1.5) only state that the greenhouse gas emissions, carbon sequestration measure, and air emissions be considered, not that climate change will likely alter impacts of vegetation treatments. Vegetation conditions, response of vegetation to prescribed fire, and regrowth after mechanical or other treatments may be different in a future changed climate, than historical experience and evidence. Vegetation treatment may be applied as an adaptation measure for climate change, and that needs to be addressed in the DPEIR. Fuel reduction projects can both enhance adaptation or increase the vulnerability of forests and vegetation to drought stress, invasive species, wildlife risks, and more. Treated plant communities may type convert to low carbon-sequestering grasslands.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Climate Change)
O27	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	Suggested Improvements to the Draft DPEIR - Plan for the future. Base project need, selection, and treatment approach, on projected climate change scenarios, not past, anecdotal experiences (Please see Appendix E: Global Warming and Future Fire Regimes).	Environmental Impacts Analysis (climate change)
O140	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	3. There are serious climate change issues as well. As mentioned in the previous section, CNPS is a champion of California's native plants and of vegetation dominated by native plants. Because we were successful co-plaintiffs in the recent case Center for Biological Diversity et al. vs. California Department of Fish and Wildlife and Newhall Land and Farming Company ("Newhall Ranch ruling"), and because we are increasingly having to deal with climate change issues to protect native plants, we now also advocate on climate change issues. In our opinion the treatment of plants and the analysis of climate change impacts in the DEIR have substantial issues. We have a number of issues with the climate change impacts discussion (section 4.14, pp.4-408 to 4-434).	Environmental Impacts Analysis (climate change)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O141	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	3.A. Why was the analysis of climate change impacts performed as it was? As we understand it, the relevant details of the climate change impacts analysis are as follows: • The time frame of analysis is one year. Page 4-424: "Because the generally accepted time frame for evaluating project emissions is the year of project implementation with emissions generally reported as MT/year, this is also the time frame chosen for this analysis. This will conservatively estimate the VTPs impacts because the benefits of future vegetative growth as the site recovers and the reduction of wildfire risk to the treatment area and surrounding landscape is not taken into account." • The DEIR assumes that, of the 60,000 acres proposed to be treated every year, 30,000 acres will be burned, 20% mechanical treatments (p.4-427), 10% manual treatments (p.4-428), and grazing non-native herbivores and spraying herbicides are only accounted for as trip miles, with herbivore methane emissions based on a sheep herd of 450 animals as the only model (p.4-428). Thus, only 50% of it burns. • Conclusion: there are less than significant impacts to greenhouse gas emissions (p. 4-429): "The VTP would create approximately 298,745 MT/year of CO2e, less than the 510,030 MT/year CO2e emissions created by a similar size wildfire burning." The conclusion does not follow from the analysis. It is only relevant if the 60,000 acres treated would have burned in the same year it was treated. This is intrinsically unlikely. 60,000 acres treated/22,000,000 acres in the VTP is 0. 272%. According to Figure 1.1-1, (" annual area burned in California 1950-2010", p. 1-3), during the worst wildfire year, 2007, only 1,400,000 acres burned. This is approximately 6.3% of the 22,000,000 acre VTP area. Even during the worst year in recent history, over 93% of the state went unburned.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (climate change)
O142	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	What are the chances that the area treated by the VTP will burn in the same year, even during a historically bad fire year? If the treatment and the fire are independent events, the chance is much less than one percent. Still, one might argue that the BoF is very good at predicting where fires will occur and putting their treatments there, so the chance is much higher. Unfortunately for this argument, the model used to predict fire hazards in the DEIR has been tested as a predictor for home loss during fires, and it contributed <5% to the model that predicted which homes would burn.28 According to this test the model used in the DEIR is very bad at predicting where fires will occur in a particular year, as are most models. Fire occurrence has a large random component. Other research in southern California showed that, over 28 years (not one year), 23% of fuel treatments intersected fires in the study area, which means that 77% of fuel treatments went unburned over 28 years, in an area notorious for large wildfires.29 Even in Southern California, a fire treatment area will most likely never be touched by a fire in a generation. The upshot is that one cannot analyze the greenhouse gas impacts from a vegetation treatment as if the treatment displaces a similarly sized wildfire on the same spot in the same year. Absent truly improbable events, the treatment will not intersect any fire during the year of analysis. Therefore, greenhouse gas emissions from the treatment will not replace or reduce emissions from a fire that would have burned the same area. Instead, they will be emitted in addition to whatever wildfires occur that year. Clearly, the analysis of climate change impacts is incorrect, and the VTP will cause substantial, unmitigated greenhouse gas emissions. This section needs to be redone, the individual and cumulative impact of greenhouse gas emissions from the VTP need to be analyzed, and real mitigation measures need to be proposed. Moreover, the argument used in this section looks similar to the argument that the California Supreme Court ruled was invalid in the Newhall Ranch ruling. We therefore strongly suggest that BoF read that ruling, and incorporate it into designing a better analysis of greenhouse gas impacts and mitigations. 28 Syphard, A. D., Keeley, J. E., Massada, A. B., Brennan, T. J., and V. C. Radeloff, V. C. (2012). Housing arrangement and location determine the likelihood of housing loss due to wildfire. PLoS One, 7(3), e33954. 29 Syphard, A. D., Keeley, J. E., and T. J. Brennan, (2011). Comparing the role of fuel breaks across southern California national forests. Forest Ecology and Management, 261(11), 2038-2048.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (climate change)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O143	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	3.B. Why is the basic fire science wrong? In section 4.14.1.2.3.1 "Wildfire versus Prescribed Fire Emissions," the EIR makes the incorrect assumption that carbon dioxide emissions from a wildfire are equivalent to emissions of pollutants caused by inefficient burning. This is incorrect. The basic combustion reaction is that hydrocarbons + oxygen → carbon dioxide + water. The more efficiently this reaction runs, the more carbon dioxide is produces. Inefficient combustion produces soot, particulates, and other air pollutants. Decreasing combustion efficiency increases particulate and other pollution. Increasing combustion efficiency increases carbon dioxide production. There is no way to escape producing some pollutant by manipulating an fire. As presented in the analysis, highly efficient controlled burns should produce more carbon dioxide emissions, not less. Carbon dioxide emissions thus cannot be controlled by the same processes that control air pollution from fires. They have to be managed separately, either through not burning or through carbon sequestration. Section 4.14 of the EIR needs to be rewritten to reflect this basic reality, as does SPR CC-1, CC-3, and CC-4.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (climate change)
O237	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	1. The DEIR fails to provide substantial evidence for increased wildfire with climate change. The DEIR purports to analyze whether the VTP will increase vulnerability to climate- induced wildfire. In so doing, it focuses on the assumption that climate change will increase wildfire without providing substantial evidence for that assertion. First, as detailed above (Part V.E., supra), the evidence is weak to non-existent that climate change increases fire hazard. Second, a number of the studies cited in the DEIR related to climate impacts on wildfire are inapposite. For instance, the DEIR cites to Randerson et al. (2006) for the proposition that frequency and intensity of wildland fires may result from altered weather, precipitation and temperatures. DEIR at 4-431. But Randerson et al. did not assess climate impacts on wildfire; instead, the study examined the impact of boreal fire on climate change at high northern latitudes. The DEIR implies that climate impacts somehow relate to increased exposure of people and homes to wildfire at the urban interface areas. Id. But the study by Syphard et al. (2007) that is cited for this proposition actually states that "while climate change may have played some role in our observed change in area burned, we cannot extend those results to our analysis because we included fires of all sizes under multiple land ownership classes, and historical fire patterns in the lower elevations do not correspond to patterns [in other studies]."84 The analysis by Syphard et al. in fact provided an insightful examination of how human activity at the urban interface can increase fire risk and does not address climate change. In short, the DEIR has ignored a large body of data regarding climate change impacts on wildfire and has failed to provide substantial evidence for a number of its assertions related to climate change impacts. 84 Syphard, A.D.et al. 2007. Human Influence on California Fire Regimes. Ecological Applications 17: 1388-1402 at 1399.	environmental impacts analysis (climate change)
O285	Earth Guardian Coalition		Earth Guardian Coalition	[Staff Note: This letter is the same as the letter submitted by Mr. Halsey and the California Chaparrel Institute. There are two paragraphs in the Earth Guardian Coalition letter that differ from the Chaparrel Institute letter, and they are below.] (2 of 2) Failure to properly address climate change. With the impacts of human-caused climate change accumulating much faster than even the most severe predictions, it is imperative that every policy we implement from here on out must honestly and exhaustively examine how such policy can facilitate the reduction of carbon in the atmosphere and the protection of what natural environment remains.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (climate change)
P70	Wellhouse	Ann		By your actions, climate change increases instead of doing the right thing to slow it down. If you really believe this is the only and best solution, stand up and take responsibility personally. Tell us your individual names so we can know who caused the mess you are about to create. Please, I beg you, do not leave a legacy of destruction. Protect our lands and stop this irreversible mistake now.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (climate change)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A81	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	IV. Closely Related Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Probable Future Projects (CUMULATIVE IMPACTS, MANDATORY FINDING OF SIGNIFICANCE: Does the Project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? "Cumulatively considerable" means that incremental effects of the Project are considerable when viewed in connection with effects of past projects, effects of other current projects, and effects of probable future projects?) MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE Does the Project have potential to degrade quality of environment, substantially reduce habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels? COMMENT 18: Section 5.3.2 & 5.3.3, Pages 5-19 to 5-21 Issue: The cumulative effects analysis does not appear to consider and evaluate the impacts of an appropriate range of past, present and probable future projects in and near the Project area and how their impacts could add to those of the Project's to create a significant adverse cumulative impact on biological resources. Projects whose impacts will be considered include, but are not limited to, power line right-of-ways, highway construction, residential and commercial development, and all types of exemption notices. All of these to varying degrees entail removal of vegetation. For example, in less than one year, beginning in September of 2015, more than 40,000 acres have been the subject of exemption notices for the salvage of dead and dying trees submitted under Section 1038(k) of the FPRs. Many of these and others occur in the area covered by the Governor's State of Emergency declaration, and Executive Order (EO) regarding State's record drought conditions, which have exacerbated bark beetle infestation that is killing millions of trees across California. The Tree Mortality Task Force identified approximately 228,633 acres of Tier 1 High Hazard Zones and approximately 6.3 million acres of Tier 2 High Hazard Zones (as defined by watersheds) within the southern Sierra Nevada's (Tuolumne County south through Kern County). Many of these areas should be expected to be under future exemption notices, emergency notices, and THPs, the impacts of which will be estimated and included in the cumulative effects analysis. Specific impact: Several forest vegetation communities including tree and understory growth would be removed and degraded. A	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Cumulative Impacts)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A82	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Why impact would occur: Project activities, such as prescribed fire, manual activities, and mechanical activities would cut, remove, and burn tree and understory vegetation habitat (alive and dead). Evidence impact would be significant: Vast areas of California's varied forests have recently been deeply impacted by projects to remove dead trees, which provide high habitat value. According to the U.S. Forest Service (Nietro et al. n.d.): The dependency of many species on dead trees ranges from absolute to incidental, but for some species the presence of dead trees can mean the difference between local extinction and the perpetuation of existing populations. In forests, cavity-nesting birds may account for 30-45 percent of the total bird population (Jackman 1974a; Raphael and White 1984, Scott et al. 1980). Woodpeckers are dependent on snags and other dead wood for nesting, roosting, foraging, and other functions. Woodpecker nest cavities when abandoned are used by other animals (secondary cavity users) for nest sites. Some researchers believe that the use of cavities has allowed birds to become polygamous, nest earlier, have larger clutches, and fledge more young per nesting effort than noncavity-nesting birds (Nice 1957, Steinhart 1981). The absence of suitable snags can be the major limiting factor for some snag- dependent wildlife populations (Haapanen 1965, Balda 1975). The abundance and diversity of hole-nesting birds are directly related to the dead and dying wood characteristics and general vegetation features of a forest. Morrison and Morrison (1983), in analyzing 30 years of Audubon Society Christmas bird count data, found that populations of three species--common (northern) flicker, hairy woodpecker, and downy woodpecker--show a downward trend in the Pacific Northwest. They speculate that this may be the result of intensive forest management practices." The Project will exacerbate these already potentially significant impacts from dead tree removal as described above, and therefore has the potential to degrade the quality of the environment and substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Cumulative Impacts)
O10	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	Inadequate Analysis of Significance Criteria The entirety of Chapter 5 regarding the dismissal of cumulative impacts can be summed up with the following (parentheses/bold added) (5-41): Landscape constraints, Standard Project Requirements, and Project Specific Requirements developed as a result of the Project Scale Analysis will, in the aggregate, reduce cumulative impacts to --- (fill in the biological resource in question) --- to a less than significant level as assessed at the scale of the bioregion. Reduction in the occurrence of high severity wildfire as a result of vegetation treatment technique application is expected to provide additional benefits to aquatic resources although to a degree not presently determinable. Without supporting evidence, Chapter 5 goes through all the possible biological resources and dismisses the possibility of significant impacts by again employing the Fallacy of Authority. The repeated claim that the Program will reduce high-severity wildfire is added here too, and again the DPEIR defers supporting evidence because it is "not presently determinable." In summary, the DPEIR is stating that there is not enough research to determine the environmental impact of the Program. This is contrary to available information in the record.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (cumulative impacts)
P37	Paul	Lori		Why have the broad benefits of the plant regimes targeted for mass removal not received proper cumulative impact analysis for the resulting loss of biodiversity, carbon sequestration, recreational and economic benefits, and so forth?	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Cumulative Impacts)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O225	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	VIII. The DEIR Fails to Meet CEQA's Requirements with Regard to the Analysis of Greenhouse Gas ("GHG") Emissions The DEIR fails to meet CEQA's requirements with regard to the analysis of greenhouse gas ("GHG") emissions. First, it fails to include reasonably foreseeable indirect impacts of vegetation treatment. Second, the DEIR adopts an invalid threshold for significance. Third, the analysis of impacts under GHG "Impact 2" is fatally flawed.	environmental impacts analysis (greenhouse gas emissions)
O226	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	A. The DEIR fails to analyze indirect greenhouse gas impacts from Cal Fire's Vegetation Treatment Program. The DEIR stops short of the full analysis of impacts required under CEQA because it considers only short-term direct emissions of greenhouse gases ("GHGs"). CEQA requires disclosure and analysis of "direct physical changes in the environment and reasonably foreseeable indirect physical changes which may be caused by the project." CEQA Guidelines § 15064(d). Furthermore, an EIR must take into account both long-term and short term impacts, "giving due consideration to both short-term and long-term effects." CEQA Guidelines § 15126.2; see also Pub. Resources Code §21083; CEQA Guidelines § 15065(a)(2). This DEIR fails to consider either indirect effects or long-term impacts, resulting in a deficient impacts analysis. Greenhouse gas emissions from bioenergy projects should have been considered as an indirect impact of the project. The DEIR notes that up to 10 percent of biomass from mechanical treatments might be removed to fuel biomass plants.63 DEIR at 4-65. Yet, the DEIR contains no evaluation of the impact of emissions from that biomass when it is combusted for energy. This is important because combustion of wood for energy instantaneously releases virtually all of the carbon in the wood to the atmosphere as CO2. Burning wood for energy is typically less efficient, and thus far more carbon-intensive per unit of energy produced, than burning fossil fuels. Measured at the stack, biomass combustion produces significantly more CO2 per megawatt-hour than fossil fuel combustion; a large biomass-fueled boiler may have an emissions rate far in excess of 3,000 lbs CO2 per MWh.64 Smaller-scale facilities using gasification technology are similarly carbon-intensive; the Cabin Creek bioenergy project recently approved by Placer County would have an emissions rate of more than 3,300 lbs CO2/MWh.65 By way of comparison, California's 2012 baseline emissions rate from fossil-fuel electric power generation was 954 lbs CO2 per MWh.66 As one recent scientific article noted, "[t]he fact that combustion of biomass generally generates more CO2 emissions to produce a unit of energy than the combustion of fossil fuels increases the difficulty of achieving the goal of reducing GHG emissions by using woody biomass in the short term."67 Put more directly, replacing California grid electricity with biomass electricity likely more than triples smokestack CO2 emissions.	environmental impacts analysis (greenhouse gas emissions)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O227	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	Even if net carbon cycle effects are taken into account, emissions from biomass power plants can increase atmospheric CO2 concentrations for decades to centuries depending on feedstocks, biomass harvest practices, and other factors. Multiple studies have shown that it can take a very long time to discharge the "carbon debt" associated with bioenergy production, even where fossil fuel displacement is assumed, and even where "waste" materials like timber harvest residuals are used for fuel.68 One study, using realistic assumptions about initially increased and subsequently repeated bioenergy harvests of woody biomass, concluded that the resulting atmospheric emissions increase may even be permanent.69 Another indirect source of emissions from the project is the loss of forest carbon. The DEIR avoids analysis of forest carbon loss through an impermissible constriction of the timescale of analysis. The DEIR acknowledges that impacts could be considered on multiple timescales from annual to decadal. DEIR at 4-424. It elects, however, to consider only annual emissions from equipment and combustion. This violates CEQA's requirement that long-term impacts be considered as well. In both the short- and long-term, vegetation treatment will remove biomass. The loss of this biomass significantly reduces stored carbon and thus equates to carbon emissions. One recent study concluded, for this and other reasons, that thinning operations tend to remove about three times as much carbon from the forest as would be avoided in wildfire emissions.70 Another report from Oregon found that thinning operations resulted in a net loss of forest carbon stocks for up to 50 years.71 Another published study found that even light-touch thinning operations in several Oregon and California forest ecosystems incurred carbon debts lasting longer than 20 years.72 Other recent studies have shown that intensive harvest of logging residues that otherwise would be left to decompose on site can deplete soil nutrients and retard forest regrowth as well as reduce soil carbon sequestration.73	environmental impacts analysis (greenhouse gas emissions)
O228	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	The DEIR also appears to misinterpret the benefits of prescribed burns relative to wildfires when it indicates that prescribed fires reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The EIR states that because the flaming phase is most efficient, it creates minimal emissions, while the smoldering phase causes greater emissions. DEIR at 4-421, 4-379. The DEIR then concludes that because prescribed burns are more efficient, they emit less greenhouse gases. DEIR at 4-421. While this may be true for criteria air pollutants, the exact opposite is true for CO2 emissions. Combustion efficiency is a measure of how much carbon is released as CO2 as opposed to other carbon forms; the greatest efficiency is associated with the largest fraction of CO2. Therefore, the DEIR is factually incorrect in its assertion that increased combustion efficiency associated with prescribed burning translates to reduced greenhouse gas emissions.	environmental impacts analysis (greenhouse gas emissions)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O229	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	63 The EIR provides no analysis, justification, or evidence to support the assumption that 10 percent of biomass from mechanical treatments could be removed to biomass plants. Absent a reasoned explanation and evidentiary support for this figure, Cal Fire's conclusions lack a legally adequate basis. 64 The Central Power and Lime facility in Florida, for example, is a former coal-fired facility recently permitted to convert to a 70-80 MW biomass-fueled power plant. According to permit application materials, the converted facility would consume the equivalent of 11,381,200 MMBtu of wood fuel per year. See Golder Assoc., Air Construction Permit Application: Florida Crushed Stone Company Brooksville South Cement Plant's Steam Electric Generating Plant, Hernando County Table 4-1 (Sept. 2011). Using the default emissions factor of 93.8 kg/MMBtu CO2 found in 40 C.F.R. Part 98, and conservatively assuming both 8,760 hours per year of operation and electrical output at the maximum 80 MW nameplate capacity, the facility would produce about 3,350 lbs/MWh CO2. If the plant were to produce only 70 MW of electricity, the CO2 emissions rate would exceed 3,800 lbs/MWh. If such a facility were dispatched to replace one MWh of fossil-fuel fired generation with one MWh of biomass generation, the facility's elevated emissions rate would also result in proportionately higher emissions on a mass basis. 65 Ascent Environmental, Cabin Creek Biomass Facility Project Draft Environmental Impact Report, App. D (July 27, 2012) (describing 2 MW gasification plant with estimated combustion emissions of 26,526 tonnes CO2e/yr and generating 17,520 MWh/yr of electricity, resulting in an emissions rate of 3,338 lbs CO2e/MWh). 66 See Energy and Environment Daily, Clean Power Plan Hub, at http://www.eenews.net/interactive/clean_power_plan/states/california (visited May 18, 2016). 67 David Neil Bird, et al., Zero, one, or in between: evaluation of alternative national and entity- level accounting for bioenergy, 4 GLOBAL CHANGE BIOLOGY BIOENERGY 576, 584 (2012), doi:10.1111/j.1757-1707.2011.01137.x.	environmental impacts analysis (greenhouse gas emissions)
O230	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	68 See, e.g., Stephen R. Mitchell, et al., Carbon Debt and Carbon Sequestration Parity in Forest Bioenergy Production, GLOBAL CHANGE BIOLOGY BIOENERGY (2012) ("Mitchell 2012"), doi: 10.1111/j.1757-1707.2012.01173.x (attached); Ernst-Detlef Schulze, et al., Large-scale Bioenergy from Additional Harvest of Forest Biomass is Neither Sustainable nor Greenhouse Gas Neutral, GLOBAL CHANGE BIOLOGY BIOENERGY (2012), doi: 10.1111/j.1757- 1707.2012.01169.x at 1-2 (attached); Jon McKechnie, et al., Forest Bioenergy or Forest Carbon? Assessing Trade-Offs in Greenhouse Gas Mitigation with Wood-Based Fuels, 45 ENVIRON. SCI. TECHNOL. 789 (2011) (attached); Anna Repo, et al., Indirect Carbon Dioxide Emissions from Producing Bioenergy from Forest Harvest Residues, GLOBAL CHANGE BIOLOGY BIOENERGY (2010) ("Repo 2010"), doi: 10.1111/j.1757-1707.2010.01065.x (attached); John Gunn, et al., Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, Massachusetts Biomass Sustainability and Carbon Policy Study (2010), available at https://www.manomet.org/sites/manomet.org/ files/Manomet_Biomass_Report_Full_LoRez.pdf (visited May 24, 2016). 69 Bjart Holtsmark, The Outcome Is in the Assumptions: Analyzing the Effects on Atmospheric CO2 Levels of Increased Use of Bioenergy From Forest Biomass, GLOBAL CHANGE BIOLOGY BIOENERGY (2012), doi: 10.1111/gcbb.12015. 70 John L. Campbell, et al., Can fuel-reduction treatments really increase forest carbon storage in the western US by reducing future fire emissions? FRONT. ECOL. ENV'T (2011), doi:10.1890/110057. 71 Joshua Clark, et al., Impacts of Thinning on Carbon Stores in the PNW: A Plot Level Analysis, Final Report (Ore. State Univ. College of Forestry May 25, 2011). 72 Tara Hudiburg, et al., Regional carbon dioxide implications of forest bioenergy production, 1 NATURE CLIMATE CHANGE 419 (2011), doi:10.1038/NCLIMATE1264. 73 David L. Achat, et al., Forest soil carbon is threatened by intensive biomass harvesting, SCIENTIFIC REPORTS 5:15991 (2015), doi:10.1038/srep15991; D.L. Achat, et al., Quantifying consequences of removing harvesting residues on forest soils and tree growth – A meta-analysis, 348 FOREST ECOLOGY & MGMT. 124 (2015).	environmental impacts analysis (greenhouse gas emissions)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O231	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	B. The selected threshold for significance of "Impact 1" is irrational and violates CEQA. In its analysis of GHG "Impact 1" the DEIR compares the annual direct greenhouse gas emissions from vegetation treatment to the CO2 emissions that might occur if an area the same size as the project burned in a wildfire. This choice of significance threshold is invalid because (1) it weighs environmental effects against the objective of the project; (2) it incorrectly assumes that vegetation treatment of an area equates to prevention of wildfire in that location; and (3) it impermissibly and without justification compares the project's emissions to a hypothetical "wildfire" scenario rather than to a baseline derived from existing environmental conditions. First, the comparison violates CEQA by using the benefit sought to be achieved as the threshold. "CEQA does not authorize an agency to proceed with a project that will have significant, unmitigated effects on the environment, based simply on a weighing of those effects against the project's benefits, unless the measures necessary to mitigate those effects are truly infeasible." City of Marina v. Bd. of Trs. of Cal. State Univ., 39 Cal. 4th 341, 368-69 (2006). The DEIR acknowledges that prescribed burn, construction-related, and livestock greenhouse gas emissions74 will occur due to increased forest management activities under the VTP. DEIR at 4-422. But these emissions are compared against the potential emissions from prevented wildfire, the precise objective of the project. DEIR at 2-6. The DEIR's attempt to dismiss the proposed VTP's adverse effects by weighing them against its purported benefits is legally improper absent full and formal compliance with the findings requirements of Public Resources Code section 21081.	environmental impacts analysis (greenhouse gas emissions)
O232	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	Second, the DEIR fails to provide substantial evidence that vegetation treatment actually prevents fire, which is a fundamental assumption inherent in the selected threshold. The DEIR consistently indicates that potential reductions in wildfire size or severity are uncertain and unpredictable: "while there is not a direct correlation between implementation of a vegetation treatment plan and proportionate reduction in numbers of fires or acres burned, … it would likely result in some reduction." DEIR at 4-430; see also DEIR at 4-423 (cannot predict, but "reasonable to assume"). This is largely because it is impossible to know in advance where fires will occur, and thus impossible to target only the areas likely to burn for treatment.75 Viewed most optimistically, the data in the DEIR suggest that treatment at best may produce a reduction in burn severity. DEIR at 4-423, 424. Furthermore, the DEIR ignores the body of literature that finds no relation. For instance, a recent study by Syphard et al. (2012) found that Cal Fire's hazard analysis fails as a predictor of wildfire.76 Price et al. (2015) found no relationship between area burned and previous fire for the Sequoia-Kings Canyon area.77 Other studies have found that vegetation treatment in remote areas is ineffective.78 Even if vegetation treatment were positively associated with lower fire severity, there remains extreme uncertainty that vegetation treatment of an area can even influence wildfire behavior in that particular location.	environmental impacts analysis (greenhouse gas emissions)
O233	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	Third, by comparing project emissions to emissions that would occur if a similar area burned in a wildfire, the DEIR relies on an impermissible baseline. CEQA requires that environmental impacts be assessed against existing physical conditions rather than hypothetical or merely legally conceivable scenarios. See, e.g., CEQA Guidelines § 15125(a); Communities for a Better Env't v. S. Coast Air Quality Mgmt. Dist., 48 Cal. 4th 310, 319, 322 (2010); Save Our Peninsula Comm. v. Monterey Cty. Bd. of Supervisors, 87 Cal. App. 4th 99 (2001). As discussed above, there is no possible way Cal Fire can carry out vegetation treatments in only the areas that will burn in a wildfire. As one recent study put it, "[a]ny approach to [carbon] accounting that assumes a wildfire burn probability of 100% during the effective life span of a fuel-reduction treatment is almost certain to overestimate the ability of such treatments to reduce pyrogenic emissions on the future landscape."79 As a result, the DEIR's assessment of GHG emissions rests on an inherently misleading and legally impermissible baseline and is also unsupported by substantial evidence.	environmental impacts analysis (greenhouse gas emissions)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O234	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	Finally, it should be noted that the annual predicted volume of emissions from the proposed VTP would be significant based on objective measures. The DEIR estimates that the project would result in 298,745 metric tons of CO2e each year. DEIR at 4-427. This is equivalent to 62,894 passenger cars or the electricity use in 41,098 homes80 – not an insignificant source of emissions. For comparison, the South Coast Air Quality Management District has established a GHG threshold of 10,000 MT CO2e per year.81 The Bay Area Air Quality Management District established thresholds of 10,000 MT CO2e per year for stationary sources and 1,100 MT CO2e per year for non-stationary sources,82 although these thresholds are currently not in place due to pending review at the California Supreme Court.83 The DEIR also makes the mistake of minimizing GHG impacts by comparing the project's emissions to national and state inventories. This is not a valid basis of comparison. As the California Supreme Court recently noted, the global nature of climate change means that any one project is unlikely to appear significant, but rather the question is one of incremental effects that are cumulatively significant. Center for Biological Diversity v. Dept. Fish and Wildlife, 62 Cal. 4th 204, 219 (2015).	environmental impacts analysis (greenhouse gas emissions)
O235	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	74 We note that methane from enteric fermentation is the primary greenhouse gas emitted by the livestock in question. In order to compare these to other project emissions, the EIR uses an extremely inaccurate value for methane global warming potential ("GWP"). The value used by the EIR is 21 (EIR at 4-420), but this is outdated. The most recent IPCC Fifth Assessment Report assigns a value of 34 to biogenic methane over 100 years and a value of 86 over 20 years. At a minimum an updated 100-year GWP must be adopted. See G. Myhre et al., Anthropogenic and Natural Radiative Forcing, in CLIMATE CHANGE 2013: THE PHYSICAL SCIENCE BASIS. CONTRIBUTION OF WORKING GROUP I TO THE FIFTH ASSESSMENT REPORT OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE IPCC Table 8.7 at 714 (Cambridge Univ. Press 2013). Furthermore, we urge Cal Fire to adopt a 20-year GWP as the California Air Resources Board has for its recent greenhouse gas analyses. 75 See generally Campbell 2011, supra note 70 at 4 (noting that "[a]mong fire-prone forests of the western US, the combination of wildfire starts and suppression efforts result in current burn probabilities of less that 1%," and reviewing literature finding that only 3% of the area treated is likely to be exposed to fire during an effective treatment lifespan of 20 years). 76 Syphard, A.D., J.E. Keeley, A.B. Massada, T.J. Brennan, and V.C. Radeloff. 2012. Housing arrangement and location determine the likelihood of housing loss due to wildfire. PLoS ONE 7: e33954 at 4 (doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0033954). 77 Price, O.F., J.G. Pausas, N. Govender, M.D. Flannigan, P.M. Fernandes, M.L. Brooks, and R.B. Bird G. 2015. Global patterns in fire leverage: the response of annual area burnt to previous fire. International Journal of Wildland Fire 24(3): 297-306. 78 Keeley, J.E, H. Safford, C.J. Fotheringham, J. Franklin, and M. Moritz 2009. The 2007 Southern California wildfires: lessons in complexity. Journal of Forestry September: 287-296; Syphard, A.D., J.E. Keeley, and T.J. Brennan. 2011. Comparing fuel breaks across southern California national forests. Forest Ecology and Management 261: 2038-2048. 79 Campbell 2011, supra note 70 at 4.	environmental impacts analysis (greenhouse gas emissions)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O236	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	C. Analysis under GHG "Impact 2" is confusing and unsupported by substantial evidence. The DEIR's GHG "Impact 2" titled "Impacts of climate change on VTP projects: increase in vulnerability of lands in Cal Fire's responsibility area" is confusing and appears to be attempting several different analyses at once. To the best we can discern, the DEIR is claiming that climate change will increase the incidence of wildfire, and vegetation treatment will mitigate the purported climate-related fire hazard. But then the same impact analysis also seems to consider whether the VTP complies with state climate goals. Both portions of the analysis are invalid and inadequate under CEQA. Furthermore, this confusing juxtaposition of analyses violates CEQA's requirement that information be clearly presented in order to adequately inform the reader. Kostka & Zischke, Practice Under the California Environmental Quality Act § 11.20 (CEB 2016 supp.). 80 Converted using EPA's Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator, available at https://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gas-equivalencies-calculator. 81 See http://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/ceqa/handbook/scaqmd-air-quality- significance-thresholds.pdf?sfvrsn=2. 82 See http://www.baaqmd.gov/~/media/Files/Planning%20and%20Research/CEQA/BAAQMD%20CEQA%20Guidelines_May%202011_5_3_11.ashx. 83 See http://www.baaqmd.gov/~/media/Files/Planning%20and%20Research/CEQA/BAAQMD%20CEQA%20Guidelines_May%202011_5_3_11.ashx.	environmental impacts analysis (greenhouse gas emissions)
O238	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	2. The DEIR fails to adequately consider potential conflict with State GHG goals. As noted in the DEIR, one of the significance criteria for greenhouse gases under Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines is whether the project would "conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases." Yet, the DEIR ignores the potential conflict between losses of forest carbon from vegetation treatment and state climate goals, asserting without analysis that the VTP is necessary and sufficient to protect forest carbon goals. Increased removals of carbon from forests and increased operational CO2 emissions over the next 10 years will likely conflict with science-driven greenhouse gas reduction goals established in the 2008 Scoping Plan, the 2014 Scoping Plan update, Executive Order B-30-15, and Executive Order S-3-05.85 As discussed in detail above, the removal of excess biomass will result in a net loss of forest carbon and the use of forest materials for bioenergy generation can increase atmospheric CO2 concentrations for a period of decades to centuries depending on the feedstocks involved. The DEIR fails to address whether foreseeable increases in CO2 emissions as a result of VTP over the next several decades conflict with science and state policy requiring CO2 emissions to decrease sharply over that same period. See Center for Biological Diversity v. California Dept. of Fish & Wildlife, 62 Cal. 4th 204, 223 & n.6.	environmental impacts analysis (greenhouse gas emissions)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O239	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	The DEIR must compare how this project's impacts both in the form of direct GHG emissions and in the form of lost carbon storage relate to the deep carbon reductions that climate science as reflected in state policy indicates are necessary. In particular, the 2014 Scoping Plan Update states that "California forests must be managed to ensure that they provide net carbon storage even in the face of increased threats from wildfire, pests, disease, and conversion pressures." Scoping Plan Update at 72. Furthermore, Executive Order S-3-05 set a statewide greenhouse gas emissions reduction target of 1990 levels by 2020, and Executive Order B-30-15 set the greenhouse gas target of 40% below 1990 levels by 2030. And while none of these referenced plans set a specific numerical target for forest carbon, removals of carbon from forests and resulting CO2 emissions need to be evaluated in light of these targets and cannot be ignored. The DEIR asserts that vegetation treatment has been implemented in part under grants made possible in part by ARB's cap-and-trade program to mitigate impacts of climate change and reduce risks of catastrophic wildfire. But as noted above, the DEIR has ignored evidence that such treatment is ineffective for protecting forest carbon stores. Thus, the DEIR has not adequately analyzed potential conflict with state goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. 85 See CAL. AIR RES. BD., FIRST UPDATE TO THE CLIMATE CHANGE SCOPING PLAN: BUILDING ON THE FRAMEWORK 33-34 (2014), available at http://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/scopingplan/document/ updatedscopingplan2013.htm (visited May 20, 2016); CAL. AIR RES. BD., CLIMATE CHANGE SCOPING PLAN: A FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE 117-21 (December 2008), available at http://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/scopingplan/document/scopingplandocument.htm (visited May 20, 2016).	environmental impacts analysis (greenhouse gas emissions)
P22	Gruchawka	Peter		4. WATER QUALITY, AIR QUALITY AND GLOBAL WARMING The VTPEIR should address the use of chemical agents (combusted or otherwise applied) and their effects on water and air quality. Toxic Air Contaminants (TAC) Emissions are not considered for the use of accelerants and open air burning of various fuels and ignition sources ("Products") via sprayers, heli-torches, drip torches, diesel flame throwers, terra-torches and other means. Currently there are no records available to the public on the quantity by type of Products used for VMP's so research and independent review will need to be conducted without the benefit of records of past use. The amount of Products applied to 600,000 acres will be considerable. (Per the VTPEIR: 300,000 acres prescribed fire). The VTPEIR should also provide studies and conclusions on the effects of conducting burns on "no burn days" or specifically state that local units may no longer seek exceptions for burning on "no burn days" as is now the case under VMP's. The contribution of each gas and chemical agent to the greenhouse effect is affected by the characteristics of that gas or agent. For example, the effect of a mass of methane is about 72 times stronger than the same mass of carbon dioxide. CFCs were phased out via the Montreal Protocol due to their part in ozone depletion. This anthropogenic compound is also a greenhouse gas. What is the effect on global warming of the products and byproducts of the chemical agents that will be used during VTP's? The quantities used are not insignificant. They should be studied individually and in combination and not left out of the "emissions."	Environmental Impacts Analysis (greenhouse gases)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A64	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Would the Project conflict with provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP), or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan? COMMENT 10: Section 2.5.1, Page 2-56, etc. Issue: There is considerable overlap between the SRA and lands under NCCPs and/or HCPs. The PDEIR does not provide any maps or metrics detailing this overlap, or any provisions that tiered projects will detract from the goals and objectives of NCCPs or HCPs. In the PDEIR BIO-4 Standard Project Requirement, a CAL FIRE Environmental Coordinator is directed to request information regarding special status species in HCPs (NCCPs are not mentioned). However, HCPs (and unmentioned NCCPs) cover more than just special status species. They all account for patterns, ecological processes, and natural communities with the goal of keeping landscape-level areas intact and ecologically functional. Specific impact: Vegetation treatment activities could conflict with the goals and objectives of HCPs/NCCPs and/or have a significant effect on conservation areas.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Habitat Conservation)
A65	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Why impact would occur: If project proponents do not know the locations of and the potential impacts to HCPs or NCCPs, projects might occur in conservation plan areas without consideration of how to minimize or avoid impacts. There are numerous large HCP and NCCPs comprising a substantial extent of the state. The measures (BIO-4) meant to indicate awareness of these landscape-level plans is inadequate as they do not recognize the need to respond to the presence of NCCPs or coordinating with implementing agencies of HCPs or NCCPs to avoid significant impacts. Evidence impact would be significant: Conflicts with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan is deemed to be a significant impact.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Habitat Conservation)
A73	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	COMMENT 14: Section Chapters 2, 4, and 5 Issue: The Project may impact 600,000 acres, which covers a vast area and a wide variety of habitats in California. 600,000 acres is 2.73 percent of the total treatable area of the state. For each of the bioregions, the estimates are likewise calculated at 2.73 percent of the total treatable area for that bioregion. However, due to the use of inadequate mapping standards where all vegetation is classed into three broad categories, it is impossible to determine if impacts would occur in sensitive natural communities, or if the total effect of the treatment would represent a significant impact. Additionally, impacts could be significant on natural communities that have not yet been designated as sensitive. Specific impact: The quantification of potentially impacted acres is not adequate to determine level of significance. Why impact would occur: Sensitive and non-sensitive habitats may be disproportionally impacted by the Project; greater than 2.73 percent of these habitats may be impacted. Evidence impact would be significant: As the information disclosure is incomplete, there is insufficient information to make an informed decision on whether the Project has the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, or threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Habitat Conservation)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A44	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	I. Project Description and Related Impact Shortcoming Would the Project have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by CDFW or USFWS? COMMENT 1: Section 4.4.3, Pages 4-244 to 4-255 Issue: The hazardous materials section of the DPEIR includes a discussion of "various pesticides…and other hazardous materials (e.g., common household hazardous materials such as fuels, oils, lubricants, solvents, and detergents; retardants, foams, and water enhancers to control an escaped prescribed fire)." While the discussion of the possible impacts from pesticides is in-depth, there is no discussion of the "other hazardous materials." Common household hazardous materials," such as the hydrocarbon mixtures found in gasoline and oil, can have lasting impacts on the environment. Such impacts have typically been noted after large oil spills in marine environments (Chang et al. 2014). However, terrestrial impacts occur as well. In addition, use of "retardants, foams, and water enhancers" can also significantly adversely affect the environment (Backer et al. 2004). Use of these materials needs to be fully disclosed and possible impacts discussed. As stated above, the DPEIR includes an in-depth discussion of pesticide chemicals proposed for use during Project activities (see Appendix D).Three chemicals identified for VTP herbicide treatments are classified as "high mobility" during runoff events: Clopyralid, hexazinone, and imazapyr. Both Hexazinone and imazapyr have a half-life of 30 days after foliar application occurs (DPEIR Appendix D, Table D.2-2 and Table D.2-3). Due to the combination of high mobility and fairly long half-life, these chemicals are more likely to come into contact with non-target species, including special status species, after rain events following application.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Hazardous Materials)
A47	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	HAZ-2 requires that "prior to the start of vegetation treatment activities, the Project coordinator or contractor shall inspect all equipment for leaks." However, when addressing on-going inspection of equipment, HAZ-2 lacks specificity and inadequately requires the project coordinator to "regularly inspect [the equipment] thereafter until equipment is removed from the site." Without a definition of regular inspections, there is no way to ascertain how often equipment inspections would occur. Additionally, there is no instruction for actions to take if a leak is found. Specific impact: Hazardous materials used during vegetation treatment, but not fully discussed in the DPEIR, could result in habitat destruction, injury, or mortality of special status species. Specifically, pesticide drift could occur and adversely impact special status species if herbicides are applied up to 30 days before a storm event. Additionally, leaks from equipment and vehicles can impact water and soil quality, and reduce the fitness of organisms that come into contact with them. (Bergeon Burns et al. 2014; Ball and Truskewycz 2013) Why impact would occur: No description of the above mentioned household hazardous materials exists in the current DPEIR though these materials could substantially adversely affect special status species. In addition, HAZ-9 and HAZ-2 do not adequately prevent pesticide drift from rain events that could occur greater than 24-hours post-application or equipment leaks. Evidence impact would be significant: The project's use of hazardous material, including herbicides, fuels, and fire retardants, could substantially adversely affect special status species by resulting in further decline including local or regional extirpation of already vulnerable populations.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Hazardous Materials)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A95	Robertson	Glenn	Regional Planning Programs Section, CEQA Coordinator, Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board	3. In Chapter 4 and Appendix D, Herbicides, the VTPEIR thoroughly evaluated the known potential environmental impacts of the seven herbicides(1) and one fungicide for heterobasidion root disease (borax), intended for varied, targeted use statewide. This evaluation includes review of any documented acute and chronic toxicity for each herbicide selected, with risk for aquatic biota and discussion of epidemiological pathways into plant and animal life. Perhaps ten percent of the activities in the various watersheds would constitute herbicide application at diluted concentrations, as part of an effort to first find all other feasible options to remove targeted vegetation (VTPEIR p.2-38; 4-77; 4- 239). Herbicides would not be applied aerially, but instead manually from walking personnel,tractors, or all-terrain vehicles using various techniques:backpack applicator, spray bottle (p.4-73), pellet dispersal (4-73, p.2-33-4) , or wiping. As part of Mitigation Measures HYD-1 through HYD 13, Board staff understands that Cal Fire intends to comply with each Regional Board and its Basin Plan by issuing a standard notification of components for each upcoming project with requests for consultation and site visits with Board staff. Similarly, Mitigation Measure BI0-11 states that aquatic habitats and species shall be protected through the use of watercourse and lake protection zones (WLPZ; California Forest Practice Rules, CCR Chapters 4, 4.5, and 10), and that the Regional Board may be consulted for operational restrictions. Regional Board staff believes that such notification via electronic mail,to addresses below, would suffice and we appreciate this level of communication. While consultations and visits may be necessary depending on the treatment situations,they may be limited once the program is established. The Board of Forestry should discuss with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers the appropriate compliance with Clean Water Act Section 404 (p.4-165). A 404 Permit would likely require an applicable statewide Water Quality Standards Certification from the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) to cover inevitable stream crossing impacts and any temporary fill to a water body. (1) From Appendix D p.8, 22 23 - Sodium tetraborate decahydrate (Borax/boric acid), clopyralid, glyphosate (Roundup©), hexazinone, imasapyr, sulfometuron methyl, triclopyr, and p-Nonylphenol (NP9E). Each variously targets cell structure, metabolism, or attacks a predatory organism/fungus.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Herbicides)
A96	Robertson	Glenn	Regional Planning Programs Section, CEQA Coordinator, Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board	4. At sufficient dosages, herbicides can be deleterious to invertebrates and vertebrates in riparian environments (p. 4-74). Therefore, the VTPEIR provides assurances of protection of water bodies from adverse effects, with several commendable measures: • Mitigation Measure HAZ-8 (p.244) states that projects shall avoid herbicide treatment in riparian areas or other sites adjacent to water bodies. P. 4-72 states that herbicides shall be handled in accordance with their attendant Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs), and that "minimum buffer widths are specified between activity areas and water bodies when using herbicides not approved for aquatic use." Where aquatic habitats, sensitive habitats, or sensitive plant species are identified,these areas shall be marked and herbicides would not be applied within 50 feet of these areas (p.4-239 says 15 feet for sensitive plant species); where such areas cannot be avoided during an area's treatment, Cal Fire would proceed with separate environmental review of that particular project. • A Spill Prevention and Response Plan would be prepared and implemented (p.4-244) to keep herbicides out of water bodies. • Mitigation Measures HAZ-3 and HAZ-4 (p.2-61, -62) require examination of whether herbicide use is warranted in the onsite situation and how the application may be implemented safely. The storage, loading, and mixing of herbicides shall be set back at least 150 feet from any aquatic feature or special status species/habitat, and non- toxic colorants may be added to the herbicide mixture to indicate treated areas (HAZ- 11-12). • P.App.D-97 states that the chemical active ingredients, and the parameters under which they will be used, are well within U.S. Forest Service guidelines.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Herbicides)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A97	Robertson	Glenn	Regional Planning Programs Section, CEQA Coordinator, Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board	• P.4-239 notes that the herbicides to be used have been selected for minimal ecological toxicity and environmental fate, minimal transport, and proven efficacy against targeted species. Where repeated exposures to most of these herbicides have been anticipated to disrupt endocrine, neurological, reproductive, and/or immune systems, or have somatic (carcinogenic) and mutagenic (generational) effects, lab testing has indicated that there is No Observed Adverse Effect Level (NOAEL) for chronic toxicity. • Prescribed herbivory by domesticated animals may prove to reduce the need for herbicides (p.4-70) during the VTP. • Animal ingestion, including human exposure, is expected to be non-toxic (p.4-240) and impacts to the food-web through insect uptake are anticipated to be limited. Notwithstanding the above, Board Staff note that Glyphosate (Roundup©) has toxic effects in water and around amphibians (p.App.D-120, 121), with a corresponding increase in general toxicity with an increase in temperature and acidity (low pH) of the water it is released into. Although Board staff conventionally understand that Rodeo© is more compatible with aquatic use than Roundup©, the p. App .D-121 discussion of Roundup Biactive© indicates that this Australian formulation is less toxic to rainbow trout than Rodeo©. Further, P.D-123 indicates that Rodeo© is far more toxic at a pH of 8.0 than at a normal 6.5. We note that this more basic pH may occur where formations are naturally releasing salts into ponds and streams. Therefore, this information leads to our request to consider the use of Roundup Biactive© outside of the proposed aquatic buffers instead of Rodeo©. Nonylphenol (NP) is an herbicide surfactant highly toxic to aquatic organisms (EPA finding, App.D-136) and its use, even outside of aquatic buffers, should be reconsidered.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Herbicides)
P55	Summers	Nancy		Herbicides should not be used at all for VTPs due to non-target, “collateral” damage to wildlife and soil. For example, Glyphosate is toxic to fish and amphibians and Clopyralid is toxic to some crops. Clopyralid does not degrade even when treated vegetation passes through the digestive system of an herbivore.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Herbicides)
P68	Wellhouse	Ann		Glyphosate remains in the habitat contrary to what you are telling us. Glyphosate has been shown to cause long lasting environmental health problems for both people and wildlife. I remember, and so do many of you, when people like you said DDT was safe. The sun may degrade Glyphosate but much of it goes into the ground away from the sun and into ground water.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Herbicides)
O139	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	2.G. How does the VTP avoid becoming a major vector for pests and pathogens? CNPS has found that non-native, pathogenic water molds (genus Phytophthora) are spreading through the state and into wildlands through nursery-mediated infection of plants for restoration and landscaping. In 2015 we implemented a policy to try to stem the spread, at least through native plant nurseries.27 The genus Phytophthora may be unfamiliar, but Phytophthora ramorum (the cause of Sudden Oak Death) is depressingly familiar, as is the Irish potato blight (Phytophthora infestans) that caused so many famines. Southern California is so far free of Sudden Oak Death, but it faces beetle invasions, from gold-spotted oak borer and polyphagous shot-hole borers. Native pine boring beetles have caused major tree die-offs elsewhere in the state. All of these pests and pathogens can be readily transported by carelessly handled wood, litter, untreated or insufficiently composted green waste, uncleaned equipment, carelessly grown nursery stock, and so on. Proper sanitation and quarantine are necessary to keep vegetation treatment activities from spreading pests and pathogens throughout the state. Unfortunately, this was not addressed in the DEIR. As a result, the VTP can be expected to cause substantial individual and cumulative impacts as workers inadvertently spread pests and pathogens on uncleaned equipment and by removing dead, but still infected, plant material. Even leaving some infected material might be problematic, as the pest or pathogen could simply reinfest the area from whatever is left behind. What is the VTP going to do about proper sanitation and quarantine? What are the impacts of doing these, or conversely, of not doing them? How are these impacts to be mitigated, individually and cumulatively? 27 http://www.cnps.org/cnps/archive/phytophthora_policy_2015.pdf	Environmental Impacts Analysis (invasive pests)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O67	Kutcher	Celia	California Native Plant Society - Orange County Chapter	Comment 1: On Invasive Plants: In Orange County, wildfires are an irregular occurrence in our wildlands, and evolutionarily necessary to its ecological integrity. Invasive non-native plants, however, are a constant threat to that integrity. OCCNPS has an active program to lessen that threat (occnps.org/invasives). We agree with the VTP's Chapter 4.2.2.3.1, especially the first and third bullets: A recent thorough study of the relationship between fire and invasive species in California is in a chapter from The Landscape Ecology of Fire (Keeley et al., 2011). Essentially, [the relationship] is much more complicated than previously understood [emphasis added]. Some of the conclusions are worth including here: • Fires are natural ecosystem processes on many landscapes. Perturbations to the fire regime, such as increased fire frequency and fire suppression, are the real "disturbances" to these systems and can lead to alien plant invasions. • In forests, both too little fire and too much fire can enhance invasions. Restoration of historical fire regimes may not be the best way to balance these two risks. • Repeated fires in shrublands decrease fuel volumes, decrease fire intensity and increase alien plant invasion. Decreasing fire frequency may be the best means of reducing alien invasions. • Prescription burning that targets noxious species in grasslands is often not sustainable unless coupled with restoration	Environmental Impacts Analysis (invasive species)
O131	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	2. A. Why were Standard Project Requirements (SPRs) BIO-1, BIO-2, and BIO-3 not carried out in preparation of the DEIR itself, rather than as a task to be carried out in subsequent analyses? The entire botanical analysis is the following statement: "[i]mpacts to botanical resources were analyzed by examining special status plants and communities listed in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) for each bioregion."How does this meet CEQA Guideline 15125(c): "The EIR must demonstrate that the significant environmental impacts of the proposed project were adequately investigated and discussed and it must permit the significant effects of the project to be considered in the full environmental context[?]" Note that CEQA requires this analysis in all EIRs. It is not option, nor, as noted above, is it allowable to forego this impacts analysis until after the VTP DEIR is approved. • Where is the detailed evidence that this analysis was ever done? • What were the detailed results of this analysis? • What can we check to determine that this analysis was done properly, so that we can help fix any deficiencies? • What were the impacts to populations of sensitive species? How many will be lost? How many will need to be transplanted or replanted? How many new populations were discovered? • How are the impacts to each species to be mitigated below significance? • What are the cumulative impacts? • How are they to be mitigated below the level of significance? • Are there unavoidable impacts? Where is the declaration of over-riding consideration for them? • How did impacts to sensitive plants and the mitigation thereof influence the design of the VTP? The current version of the DEIR has the dubious distinction of containing even less information about California's native plants than did its predecessors. Note that not all of California's plant species are affected by the VTP. Insular species like the extremely rare Cercocarpus traskiae will never be subject to vegetation treatment. Nor will a wide selection of beach dune plants (e.g. Acmispon prostratus, Phacelia stellaris, and Nemacaulis denudata var. denudata) that mostly occur on urban dunes. The fundamental point is that the Program does not affect all listed plants, it affects a subset of them. Why was this subset not identified?	environmental impacts analysis (plant species)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
P54	Summers	Nancy		Results of frequent burns are: Hydrophobic soils which do not readily absorb water. The hydrophobic soil is barren and very hard which results in water running off rather than recharging the ground water and providing surface water for plants, microorganisms and other life forms. When water is not absorbed into the soil, ultimately vegetation dies and a desert is created. The streams become "flashy" resulting in very high, intense flows from rapid run-off which cannot be absorbed by the hydrophobic soils. Because the run-off has abnormally strong force, the streams become eroded and incised. Incised streams lower the historic water table which results in vegetation drying out and further exasperates desertification. Thus, frequent burns result in damaged soils which result in desertification which results in dying vegetation creating more dangerous fuel for fires, destruction of wildlife habitat and loss of wildlife. Frequent burning results in destruction of native plants and topsoil which is conducive to an invasion of non-native plants such as broom, star thistle, medusa head grass and numerous other noxious non-native plants that can out compete native plants. Such non-native plants provide little or no food value to native wildlife and crowd out regrowth of native plants. Calfire claims that the VTP will reduce the chance of destructive wildfires, however, some species of chaparral such a coyote bush regenerate sufficiently within a year to provide a bridge for fire to spread. Calfire claims that wildlife habitat will benefit, as well as plant species, yet topsoil and native plants are destroyed thus allowing the invasion of non-native plants.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Prescribed Fire)
A45	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Would the Project interfere substantially with movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede use of native wildlife nursery sites? COMMENT 2: Section Chapter 4 Issue: Herbivory is included as a potential treatment method, including the potential of installing fencing to confine animals within the herbivory treatment unit. The Project description does not include the type of fencing that would be utilized or how fencing would be installed, nor do the PSA or SRAs include anything specific to herbivory fencing and potential impacts to wildlife corridors/movement and wildlife entrapment. Specific impact: Fencing for herbivory treatment units may interfere substantially with movement of any native resident or migratory wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors. Fencing may also potentially ensnare wildlife, including special status species. Why impact would occur: Fencing may be installed within wildlife movement/migratory corridors which would not be identified for avoidance. Evidence impact would be significant: The project could substantially adversely affect wildlife movement/corridors. Further, the type of fence and installation of the fence could ensnare, injure, or kill wildlife, including special status species.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (prescribed herbivory)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A60	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	COMMENT 8: Section 4.2.3.1, Page 4-158 Issue: DPEIR BIO-11 states aquatic habitats and species shall be protected through the use of watercourse and lake protection zones (WLPZ) as defined in the California Forest Practice Rules (FPRs) and HYD-3. However, the FPR's watercourse classification system (i.e., Class I, Class II, etc.) and standard WLPZs may not be adequate to avoid project- related impacts to riparian habitat, and to seeps, springs and wetlands, which are not defined under the FPRs. Specific impact: Riparian habitat and the species that depend on them would be impacted by Project activities, e.g., prescribed fire, manual activities, and mechanical activities, prescribed herbivory, and targeted ground application of herbicides. Impacts would result from dust, project site run-off, soil compaction, soil erosion, sedimentation, release of pollutants, and exhaustion of important soil seed banks. "Backing fires" are allowable within all classes of streams, suggesting that organic matter, herb layers, woody material, and live vegetation adjoining streams could be damaged by ground fire. This may reduce the ability of these areas to filter sediments and maintain channel integrity. Backing fires have the potential to consume or damage vegetation flanking streams and remove ground litter thereby increasing the potential for surface erosion and sediment discharge, adversely affecting resources onsite and downstream. Why impact would occur: The classification system utilized in the DPEIR would not identify all riparian and other aquatic habitat types for avoidance. Evidence impact would be significant: The Project could substantially adversely affect riparian habitats by resulting in loss or further destruction of these vulnerable habitat types.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (riparian areas)
A35	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Due to the multiple issues presented below, CDFW strongly encourages BOF to review, as an example, the Department of Conservation Draft Program EIR for Analysis of Oil and Gas Well Stimulation Treatments in California (http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dog/SB4DEIR) and to incorporate a similar structure and initial study checklist for subsequent activities. With regards to this letter, "special status species" includes, but is not limited to, the following: • A species that is listed as rare, threatened, or endangered under federal law • A species that is listed as rare, threatened, endangered, candidate, or fully protected under California State law • A sensitive species listed by the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (BOF) • A species with a California Rare Plant Rank (CRPR) of 1 through 4 (http://www.cnps.org/cnps/rareplants/ranking.php) • A California Species of Special Concern (SSC) (http://www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/nongame/ssc/) • A local or regional rare plant identified in a local or regional plan, policy, or regulation A species that meets the criteria of CEQA Guidelines section 15380 are "CEQA rare and endangered species."	environmental impacts analysis (special status species)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A38	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Further, it is unclear if the DPEIR threshold (d) in Section 4.2.2.1 intends that any adverse impact on special status species or their habitats would be considered significant. It is unlikely that the Project objectives would be achieved if all adverse impacts would be avoided because special status species occur across broad areas of California. The DPEIR should clarify if any adverse impacts are anticipated, and state that additional analysis will be required to determine impact significance in additional tiered environmental documents. Alternatively, the DPEIR could analyze potential impacts on a suite of fish, wildlife, and habitat resources that are more likely to be significantly impacted by the Project (e.g., species with a wide range), and include mitigation as necessary, to avoid frequent preparation of additional CEQA environmental documents. A program EIR is most helpful in addressing subsequent activities if it treats the effects of the program as specifically and comprehensively as possible (CEQA Guidelines, § 15168).	Environmental Impacts Analysis (special status species)
A49	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE Does the Project have the potential to threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, or substantially reduce the number or restrict range of a rare or endangered plant or animal? COMMENT 3: Section 4.4.3, Pages 4-244 to 4-255 Issue: Same as Comment 1 for rare and endangered species. Specific impact: Same as Comment 1 for rare and endangered species. Why impact would occur: Same as Comment 1 for rare and endangered species. Evidence impact would be significant: CEQA rare and endangered species are among the most vulnerable species in California and often are threatened with extinction. The project could substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of CEQA rare and endangered species by resulting in further decline including local or regional extirpation of already highly vulnerable populations. MITIGATION MEASURE 3a: To reduce impacts to less than significant: Implement Mitigation Measure (MM) 1a to ensure hazardous materials, herbicides, pesticides, and leaking equipment do not cause a potentially significant impact on CEQA rare and endangered species.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (special status species)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A50	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	II. Environmental Setting and Related Impact Shortcoming Would the Project have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by CDFW or USFWS? COMMENT 4: Section 4.2.3.1, Page 4-156 Issue: DPEIR BIO-1 and BIO-2 would not identify all special status species. Specific impact: Vegetation treatment activities could result in habitat destruction, injury, or mortality of these special status species. Why impact would occur: Special status species may be present and would not be identified for avoidance during vegetation treatment activities. Evidence impact would be significant: The project could substantially adversely affect special status species by resulting in further decline including local or regional extirpation of already vulnerable populations.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (special status species)
A52	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	COMMENT 5: Section 4.2.3.1, Page 4-157 Issue: The DPEIR BIO-3 field review within the project area conducted by a project coordinator would often not identify presence or absence of special status species or their habitats that may be impacted by the Project. Often, a species-specific protocol level survey is necessary to identify presence or absence of special status species (e.g., northern spotted owl (Strix occidentalis caurina) survey protocol from 2012). Additionally, the expertise of a qualified biologist is generally necessary to identify appropriate habitat for special status species. In most cases, surveys and habitat assessments include areas adjacent to the project site and any other areas that may support special status species that may be impacted by the project. Specific impact: Vegetation treatment activities could result in habitat destruction, injury, mortality, or reduced survivorship or reduced reproductive success, of special status species and destruction of their habitat. Why impact would occur: Special status species or their habitats may be present and would not be identified for avoidance during vegetation treatment activities. Evidence impact would be significant: The Project could substantially adversely affect special status species by resulting in local or regional decline or extirpation of already vulnerable populations.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (special status species)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A54	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	COMMENT 6: Section 4.2.3.1, Page 4-158 Issue: DPEIR BIO-8, 9, and 10 do not address impacts on special status species by aquatic invasive species (e.g., mudsnails, mussels), disease (e.g., sudden oak death, chytrid fungus), and plant pathogens such as Phytophthora spp. Additionally, pile burning-related impacts on special status species are not assessed. Specific impact: These invasive species could adversely impact special status species (as defined in Comment 1) and their habitat. For example, sudden oak death affects many vegetation communities that support CEQA special status species, such as oak woodlands (Oak Mortality Task Force, 5/11/16, http://www.suddenoakdeath.org/about-sudden-oak-death/faq/).	Environmental Impacts Analysis (special status species)
A55	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Why impact would occur: The Project may transport these invasive species with logging/water drafting equipment. The high heat of Project pile burning activities may damage native seed banks, soil structure, and micro-organisms, resulting in gradual replacement by invasive weeds and fragmented, degraded habitat. According to the U.S. Forest Service: "Burning to reduce fuels would increase the likelihood of noxious weed establishment due to the exposure of mineral soil by fire. Pile burning is especially conducive to weed establishment since it creates small areas devoid of any ground cover…Scattered burn piles would require more time and manpower to monitor for weeds… cheatgrass establishment post burning would be a major concern because of the difficulty in displacing established species with native plants… Depending upon the level of treatment completed and amount of access it will be important to monitor and treat any noxious invasive weeds post treatment to limit establishment or spread." (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2005) Use of weed-free straw described in BIO-8 would not measurably reduce damage caused to soils and seedbanks from the high heat caused by pile burning. Wind and animal- dispersed invasive seed may reach these areas and weeds are likely to establish and persist, absent a direct program to control subsequent invaders and reintroduce appropriate native species. CDFW staff has repeatedly observed that burn piles in chaparral typically become weed dominated and support few, if any, native species. Project activities, particularly those resulting in soil movement or plant parts via vehicles, clothing or equipment, has the potential to spread plant pathogens. Evidence impact would be significant: The Project could substantially adversely affect special status species by resulting in their further decline through local or regional extirpation of already vulnerable populations.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (special status species)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A58	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Would the Project have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations, or by CDFW or USFWS? COMMENT 7: Section 2.2.2 Page 2-12 Issue: The mapping standard for vegetation is extremely coarse and inaccurate, which could lead to undetected impacts on sensitive natural communities. Specific impact: The Project could result in the destruction of sensitive natural communities. Why impact would occur: The analysis within the PDEIR is based on an inadequate mapping standard. Vegetation is mapped to a coarse level of three categories: trees, shrubs, and grasses. These three categories are simplified from more specific California Wildlife Habitat Relationships (CWHR) categories; CWHR is a classification of habitat, not vegetation (CDFW 2014). Without a finer-scale mapping standard, impacts to natural communities cannot be adequately assessed. Many natural communities are rare globally or in the state. Evidence impact would be significant: Many natural communities within the Project area (SRA) are sensitive and face many threats, including: development, fire, climate change, and grazing. Examples that could be impacted by treatment activities include Oregon white oak woodlands and Valley oak woodlands which have a State-rank of S3 (“vulnerable”). CDFW and CNPS maintain a list of natural communities derived from “A Manual of California Vegetation”. This publication includes global and state rarity rankings: • http://www.dfg.ca.gov/biogeodata/vegcamp/natural_communities.asp • http://www.dfg.ca.gov/biogeodata/vegcamp/natural_comm_list.asp • http://vegetation.cnps.org/	Environmental Impacts Analysis (special status species)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A67	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Does the Project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, or substantially reduce the number or restrict range of a rare or endangered plant or animal? COMMENT 11: Section 4.2.3.1, Page 4-156 Issue: DPEIR BIO-1 and BIO-2 would not identify all species that may be impacted by the Project that are rare or endangered under CEQA (CEQA Guidelines, § 15380). As with Comment 4, there are several other categories of species under CEQA that are rare and endangered species, including but not limited to: • CRPR species ranked 1B, 2, and in some cases rank 3 or 4 (see Comment 4) • SSC (see Comment 4). • Locally or regionally rare plants identified in a local or regional plan, policy, or regulation (See Comment 4) Specific impact: Same as Comment 4 for CEQA rare and endangered species (CEQA Guidelines, § 15380). Why impact would occur: Same as Comment 4 for CEQA rare and endangered species. Evidence impact would be significant: CEQA rare and endangered species are among the most vulnerable species in California and often are threatened with extinction. The project could substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of CEQA rare and endangered species by resulting in further decline including local or regional extirpation of already highly vulnerable populations or habitat destruction.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (special status species)
A69	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	COMMENT 12: 4.2.3.1, Page 4-157 Issue: The DPEIR BIO-3 field review within the project area conducted by a project coordinator would often not identify presence or absence of CEQA rare and endangered species or their habitats that may be impacted by the Project. As with Comment 5, other surveys and expertise is required to identify CEQA rare and endangered species that may be impacted by the project. Specific impact: Same as Comment 5 for CEQA rare and endangered species. Why impact would occur: Same as Comment 5 for CEQA rare and endangered species. Evidence impact would be significant: CEQA rare and threatened species are among the rarest and endangered in California and often are threatened with extinction. The project could substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of CEQA rare and endangered species by resulting in further decline including local or regional extirpation of already highly vulnerable populations or habitat destruction.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (special status species)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A71	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	COMMENT 13 Section 4.2.3.1, Page 4-158 DPEIR BIO-8, 9, and 10 do not address aquatic invasive species (e.g., mudsnails, mussels) and disease (e.g., sudden oak death, chytrid fungus) impacts on CEQA rare and endangered species (as defined in Comment 11). Specific impact: Same as Comment 6 for CEQA rare and endangered species. Why impact would occur: Same as Comment 6 for CEQA rare and threatened species. Evidence impact would be significant: CEQA rare and endangered species are among the most vulnerable species in California and often are threatened with extinction. The project could substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of CEQA rare and endangered species by resulting in further decline including local or regional extirpation of already highly vulnerable populations or habitat destruction.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (special status species)
A75	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	III. Mitigation Measure or Alternative and Related Impact Shortcoming Would the Project have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by CDFW or USFWS? COMMENT 15: Section 4.2.3.1, Page 4-158 Issue: DPEIR BIO-7 50-foot and 15-foot buffer areas around species status species, nest sites, or den locations are generally inadequate to avoid impacts on these species. Specific impact: Vegetation treatment activities could result in injury, mortality, or reduced survivorship or reproductive success of special status species. Why impact would occur: Special status species would be impacted by vegetation treatment activities including: prescribed fire, manual activities, mechanical activities, prescribed herbivory, and targeted ground application of herbicides. Impacts would result from noise, dust, project site run-off, visual disturbances, soil compaction, soil erosion, sedimentation, release of pollutants, spread of plant pathogens such as Phytophthora, spread of invasive plant species, creation of conditions that are favorable for the spread of invasive species, exhaustion of important soil seed banks, and other impacts. Evidence impact would be significant: The Project could substantially adversely affect special status species by resulting in further decline including local or regional extirpation of already vulnerable populations.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (special status species)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A77	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Would the Project have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations, or by CDFW or USFWS? COMMENT 16 Section 2.5.1, Page 2-57 Issue: DPEIR BIO-6 states that older, acorn producing oaks may be retained during activities, indicating that young oaks and acorn mast would not be retained. Specific impact: Vegetation treatment activities could result in the reduction in the extent of or local extirpation of some oak natural communities through the elimination of oak regeneration and recruitment. Why impact would occur: Manual, mechanical, or fire removal of understory material would result in the elimination of young oaks and oak mast. This would negatively impact oak regeneration which is already well documented as low (Zavaleta et al. 2007). Evidence impact would be significant: Oak natural communities are sensitive and facing many threats, including: development, fire, climate change, and grazing. Some oak natural communities are rare, with a state-rank of S3 or higher. Examples that could be impacted by treatment activities include Oregon white oak woodlands and Valley oak woodlands. CDFW and CNPS maintain a list of natural communities derived from “A Manual of California Vegetation.” This publication includes global and state rarity rankings.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (special status species)
A79	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE Does the Project have the potential to threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, or substantially reduce the number or restrict range of a rare or endangered plant or animal? COMMENT 17 Section 4.2.3.1, Page 4-158 DPEIR BIO-7 50 foot and 15 foot buffer areas around CEQA rare and endangered species, nest sites, or den locations are generally inadequate to avoid impacts on these species. Specific impact: Same as Comment 15 for CEQA rare and endangered species. Why impact would occur: Same as Comment 15 for CEQA rare and threatened species. Evidence impact would be significant: CEQA rare and endangered species are among the most vulnerable species in California and often are threatened with extinction. The project could substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of CEQA rare and endangered species by resulting in further decline including local or regional extirpation of already highly vulnerable populations or habitat destruction.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (special status species)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O135	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	It is routine to find new populations of sensitive species or even new species in areas (such as large, old ranches) that were never or rarely surveyed. The author of this letter (Dr. Landis) found what eventually turned out to be a new species of Eriastrum in 2007, on a wind farm project in the Tehachapis. The San Diego Plant Atlas, since 2003, has found over 300 new county records, 10 state records, and 2 new taxa.22 Tejonflora.org documents the ongoing floristic survey of the Tejon Ranch, and the new species that are being described from there. A new species of cholla was described in Riverside and Imperial County in 201423, and an undescribed new manzanita species will be published in June. Carex cyrtostachya, described in 2013, is found in Butte, Yuba, and El Dorado Counties,24 and it is a CRPR List 1B species that may not yet be in CNDDB. The same is true for the Sierran Carex xerophila, published in 2014,25 and for Calystegia vanzuukiae from El Dorado County, published in 2013.26 According to an informal, one-week email and Facebook survey of CNPS botanists undertaken in the last week of May 2016, undescribed new species in process of identification were reported to exist in Marin, Tehama, Butte, Shasta, and Santa Barbara counties, and more will certainly be found as large, old ranches and remote areas are surveyed for development, wind, and solar projects, and probably for the VTP. Experienced botanists know how to deal with this issue. Untrained bureaucrats do not.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (special status species)
O136	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	The VTP provides no guidance as to the qualifications of Project Coordinators, nor does it specify when or how long they should spend in the field in each project, going against the advice of both CDFW and CNPS cited in the DEIR. In any case, CNPS always strongly suggests that surveys be left to qualified botanists with experience in the local area of any proposed project, that surveys should take place when the plants are most likely to be alive and identifiable, and that qualified surveyors be allowed adequate time for their work, and not forced to do a cursory, 15 minute visit where they do not get out of the vehicle. What is to stop Project Coordinators from doing cursory drive-by visits and not even setting foot on project sites? Why should drive- by surveys be considered acceptable under CEQA?	Environmental Impacts Analysis (special status species)
O176	Dodson	Snowdy	California Native Plant Society - Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains Chapter	13.) Page 2-56, BIO-2: “The project coordinator shall run a nine-quad search or larger search area (maybe required if a project is on the boundary of two USGS quad maps) of the area surrounding the proposed project for special status species, using at a minimum, the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) or its successor (e.g., DFW’s Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program, VegCAMP).” In this time of climate change, how, without rigorous field surveys several times during the year, can the project coordinator be sure that the species are still present in those locations? Have they migrated to a wetter, drier, colder or more shaded niche? Have they died out? Have they hybridized or otherwise changed genetically? Are they dormant in a seed bank? The databases mentioned are limited to the accuracy and timeliness of information received.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (special status species)
O177	Dodson	Snowdy	California Native Plant Society - Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains Chapter	14.) Page 2-56, BIO-3: “The project coordinator shall write a summary of all special status species identified in the biological scoping including the CNDDB search with a preliminary analysis, identifying which species would be affected by the proposed project. A field review will then be conducted by the project coordinator to identify the presence or absence of any special status species, or appropriate habitat for special status species, within the project area.” How can one field review be enough? Many special plant species are annuals or short-lived perennials. Their blooming times may be very dependent on rain and temperatures.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (special status species)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O222	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	Second, the DEIR fails to adequately analyze the adverse impacts of the VTP's treatment activities on biological resources. The DEIR states that over 300 special status wildlife taxa occur in habitats likely to be treated under the VTP. DEIR at 4-118. The DEIR repeatedly acknowledges that VTP's fuel reduction treatments are likely to have adverse effects on a wide variety of species: "direct effects to special status wildlife taxa due to fuel reduction treatments are inherently adverse and will not vary much between bioregions" and "some potential exists for substantial adverse effects [from fuel reduction treatments]" (DEIR at 4-121); "the potential for substantial adverse effects from prescribed fire are most likely to occur in the conifer woodland, hardwood woodland, herbaceous, and shrub habitat types due to problems with invasive species, impacts to regeneration, burn intensity, canopy removal and burn frequency" (DEIR at 4-128); "in summary, mechanical activities have the potential for significant effects in all lifeforms since there is no comparable natural disturbance to which individual plants or communities have adapted over time, and because of the high level of disturbance to canopy cover and the soil layer" (DEIR at 4-139). However the DEIR completely fails to discuss and analyze the adverse impacts of the VTP on specific special-status species and sensitive habitats. To serve as an adequate informational document, the DEIR must analyze how the Program will impact special-status species, including California's forest-dependent special-status species such as the state and/or federally listed northern spotted owl, Sierra Nevada red fox, marbled murrelet, American wolverine, Pacific fisher, and the fire-dependent black-backed woodpecker58 (under consideration for federal listing), and riparian and aquatic special status species such as the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog, mountain yellow-legged frog, Yosemite toad, Siskiyou Mountains salamander, and numerous listed salmon and steelhead species. Forest thinning has been found to degrade and eliminate habitat for numerous rare and imperiled wildlife species, and this must be disclosed and analyzed in the DEIR. For example, adverse effects have been found with regard to spotted owls (Gallagher 2010),59 Pacific fishers (Garner 2013),60 black- backed woodpeckers (Hutto 2008),61 and olive-sided flycatchers (Robertson and Hutto 2007).62 The need for species-specific analysis is affirmed by the DEIR itself which states that effects of the VTP will be species-specific and are thus difficult to generalize. DEIR at 4-116 ("Effects of fuel reduction on wildlife depend on the specific ecological requirements of individual species and thus are difficult to generalize, especially in a treatment area as large and complex as that considered here"). The DEIR must also analyze impacts to sensitive habitat areas, wildlife movement corridors, and consistency with conservation plans. 58 For example, thinning and post-fire clear-cutting are shown to have detrimental effects on the fire-dependent black-backed	environmental impacts analysis (special status species)
O250	Principe	Zachary	The Nature Conservancy - California Chapter	II. Recommendations Related to Project Review The Conservancy believes assessment and implementation of many of the standard project requirements (SPRs) and project specific requirements (PSRs) is too subjective to ensure cumulative impacts will be avoided as discussed on pages 5-29 through 5-31 with respect to invasive species mitigation in South Coast shrublands. Due to the subjectivity of some of the project assessment criteria, the project and/or California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) coordinators appear to have too much flexibility in determining the need for further review or the implementation of certain mitigation measures. Throughout the plan, it is stated that the project coordinator will be the lead on determining the project impacts and in completing the checklist. Under this system, if a project coordinator determines there is no need for additional review, there seem to be few checks to ensure further CEQA review if it is indeed warranted. Additionally, with approximately 230 projects anticipated to occur each year, additional staffing would appear necessary to allow adequate review. We are concerned that the large number of projects anticipated could outpace the ability of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and/or the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to provide adequate review. There is also no discussion of the need for protocol level surveys, only "field review" even for listed species and it is unclear how this meets the requirements of California Endangered Species Act (CESA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA).	environmental impacts analysis (special status species)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
P27	Halula	Theresa		A one-size-fits-all approach is just an uninformed deception and will damage our wild land ecosystems for many years to come. In the face of climate change projections, explosive development throughout California and the pressure to preserve green space we must listen to biologists while making such a sweeping plan to manage fire across the state. Recent literature is available detailing the natural succession cycle and time required for natural systems to reach climax states following a wild fire and indicates that restoration is quite variable within each biome being considered. Response and sensitivity to each habitat type is needed. There are many endangered and rare plants in the areas being planned for clearance. Removing these is in violation of federal rules protecting endangered species. If destroyed, the seed base for these endangered plants many never recover.	environmental impacts analysis (special status species)
O172	Dodson	Snowdy	California Native Plant Society - Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains Chapter	9.) In Table ES-1 why does the PEIR assume no VTP effects on utilities or on climate change? Does this mean the VTP will not encourage utilities with power grids crossing SRAs to install power breakers all along their system that will shut power off when a short occurs, e.g. from wind-blown limbs hitting two lines or wind causing two lines to touch or to break and hit the ground? Does this mean the VTP will not move forward with any meaningful steps to adjust to climate change?	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Utilities)
A93	Robertson	Glenn	Regional Planning Programs Section, CEQA Coordinator, Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board	1. Total VTP treatments are projected for an average of 60,000 acres per year statewide during a 10-year period. Region 8 contains 1.6% of the treatable area (p.4-282) . The proposed Project is preferred by the Board of Forestry over five alternatives (listed in compliance with CEQA) that would reduce the vegetation treatments. Regional Board staff agrees that the maximum treatment possible under the VTPEIR program, as proposed, would likely have low risk of significant, long-term adverse environmental impacts, including to water-quality beneficial uses and Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs).	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Water Quality)
A98	Robertson	Glenn	Regional Planning Programs Section, CEQA Coordinator, Santa Ana Regional Water Quality	5. Prescribed burns would be conducted in a mosaic pattern to maintain old and new growth, and when burn intensities are low to moderate during the spring season (p.4- 241). If vegetation is to be thinned or burned such that sediment is more likely to be washed into a subwatershed's drainage, then p.4-122 and/or an appropriate page should state what "Standard Project Requirements (SPRs), or Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be used to retain soil and nutrients.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Water Quality)
A99	Robertson	Glenn	Regional Planning Programs Section, CEQA Coordinator, Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board	6. Water drafting (p.4-158; Mitigation Measure BI0-10) is taken to mean the pumping of water from streams for temporary uses such as controlling burns. Screens would be used at pump intakes to keep out egg masses and small fauna. Board staff suggests the vertical insertion of slotted polyvinyl chloride pipe into soft streambeds , in order to create mobile temporary wells that may harvest underflow and pose little impact to surface waters. The general use of this water and streambed should be discussed with the SWRCB Division of Water Rights and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Water Quality)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O45	Marderosian	Ara	Sequioa ForestKeeper	Erosion and Sediment Delivery from Harvest Units. Erosion and sediment delivery into streams in the watershed from harvest units must be considered in the EIS. An Analysis of Turbidity in Relation to Timber Harvesting in the Battle Creek Watershed, northern California, September 2014, Prepared for the Battle Creek Alliance, www.thebattlecreekalliance.org Manton, CA by Jack Lewis, Statistical Hydrologist, Arcata, CA, jacklewis@suddenlink.net shows that substantial sediment flows from harvest units is an environmental impact that must be considered. This study found also at http://nebula.wsimg.com/f65f0fa520ec0c113b3e880b52fd565a?AccessKeyId=01B8D7A67C3C F9F65262&disposition=0&alloworigin=1 has documented that clearcutting and post-fire salvage logging is degrading water quality in California. Lewis analyzed data from the 1,700 measurements Battle Creek Alliance has collected for its Citizen's Water Monitoring Project since 2009. Key findings of the analysis are: • Increased turbidity (i.e. dirtiness of the water) is strongly associated with the amount of logging taking place in the watersheds that drain into the measurement sites. • In watersheds that have been 30% cut, the average increase in turbidity is 200%. In watersheds that have been 90% cut, the average increase in turbidity is 3000%. • These changes are far in excess of the Water Board's turbidity standard for the Central Valley region. These findings led Lewis to conclude that "turbidity is greatest in tributaries that have experienced the heaviest logging."	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Water Quality)
O46	Marderosian	Ara	Sequioa ForestKeeper	Erosion and sediment delivery into streams in the watershed from harvest units must be considered and surveyed during periods of rainfall to assess whether there is and the greatest extent of erosion and delivery of sediments from harvest units. To survey during any other periods of time would fail to assess the full extent of the impact to watersheds from logging. Rhodes, J.J., and C.A. Frissell. 2015, The High Costs and Low Benefits of Attempting to Increase Water Yield by Forest Removal in the Sierra Nevada. 108 pp. Report prepared for Environment Now, 12400 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 650, Los Angeles, CA 90025. http://www.environmentnow.org found environmental damage, including increased sediment flows from logging. Intensive forest management aimed at elevating water yield would incur major and enduring environmental costs, due to the frequency and magnitude of forest removal that would be needed to maintain increases in water yield. Together with associated forest removal activities, including roads, landings, and skid trails, frequent and extensive forest removal would permanently degrade soils, riparian areas, aquatic systems, and water quality. The latter would incur significant water supply costs, including increased costs of treatment for elevated sediment and nutrient levels, as well as the likelihood of increased flood damage. Thus, the at best modest benefits for water yield would come at the expense of high environmental and economic costs. http://www.environmentnow.org/publications.html. The cumulative impacts of the prescription issued in the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection Comprehensive Fire Protection Program DEIR that enables logging throughout California's forests must be reassessed in an EIR that contains no inaccuracies and misrepresentations of fact and science like those in the DEIR.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Water Quality)

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A62	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Would the Project have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption or other means? [CDFW added same question for non- federally protected wetlands] COMMENT 9: Section 4.2.2.4, Pages 4-121 to 4-153 Issue: The DPEIR does not address the potential for the Project to directly or indirectly impact wetlands not subject to the federal Clean Water Act, which are important habitats for a variety of species. Note that wetlands that are not subject to the federal Clean Water Act ("state" wetlands) are addressed under Fish and Game Code and policies of the California Fish and Game Commission. Specific impact: Project activities could result in loss or degradation of wetlands. Why impact would occur: Wetlands not subject to the Clean Water Act could be impacted by the Project would not be detected because no site-specific surveys by qualified biologists with expertise in wetland identification and delineation are required. Fixed buffer distances applied to WLPZ and ELZ areas may not adequately protect the site-specific conditions that vary by specific geologic, topographic and biological conditions, and therefore may be ineffective. State wetlands lacking permanent water may not be detected within proposed treatment areas. Drought cycles may influence the condition of wetlands, making detection more problematic. Furthermore, some seasonal wetlands which support vernal pool species or semi-aquatic species (e.g. western spadefoot (Spea hammondii)), may exhibit no evidence of recent ponding (because of drought effects) or may lack aquatic plant indicator species. Three criteria are used to identify wetlands: indicator plants, inundation or saturation, and hydric soils. Only one of the three wetland criteria is necessary to define state wetlands (Cowardin et al. 1978). Drought can also affect isolated springs and seeps, some of which currently are releasing no water, yet retain an ability to recover when drought abates. Evidence impact would be significant: More than 90 percent of California wetlands have disappeared primarily by development	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Wetlands)
A8	Robinson	Tal	Central Valley Water Board	6. Many references in the VTP PEIR discuss hydrologic disconnection of watercourses and roads to mitigate any potential discharge. However, hydrologic disconnection is not achievable in all cases. Please update the discussion to include a description of additional mitigations that may be used where hydrologic disconnection cannot be achieved.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Water Quality)
A9	Robinson	Tal	Central Valley Water Board	7. On page 4-283, the 4th paragraph states that no new road construction or reconstruction is allowed under the VTP. In areas where road access is a limiting factor, please list any alternatives that may be available to project proponents.	Environmental Impacts Analysis (Water Quality)
A33	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	In 2013 CDFW commented on an earlier version of the PEIR and provided comments on the Notice of Preparation for this PDEIR (see Attachment B). Many of the issues detailed in this letter are similar to those that CDFW commented on in the past.	Historical reference
A34	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	The 1994 Interim Joint CDFW/Board Policy on Pre, During, and Post Fire Activities and Wildlife Habitat (Joint Policy) outlines a process to facilitate needed coordination to achieve common goals and objectives, develop implementation plans for fire-related activities and address potential effects on wildlife habitat. CDFW recommends that the VTP PEIR acknowledge this Joint Policy and its guidance for developing and maintaining a cooperative working relationship between CAL FIRE and CDFW regarding BOF's VTP.	Historical reference

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O1	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	It is with a deep sense of disappointment to find that the current Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (DPEIR) for the state's proposed Vegetation Treatment Program contains many of the same errors (some with the exact wording), contradictions, and failures to identify environmental impacts that were pointed out in previous versions. Many of the productive suggestions provided to the Board of Forestry on how they could improve the draft DPEIR were ignored, including those from the California Legislature's required review by the California Fire Science Consortium, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, fire scientists, and environmental groups. Potential impacts are dismissed by the DPEIR without support, mitigations of impacts are unenforceable and unmeasurable, the treatment of northern chaparral is justified by non sequitur reasoning, and the research of several scientists continues to be misrepresented (despite corrections being submitted). The lack of transparency remains a significant issue – using a local newspaper to inform the public about projects is no longer adequate.	Historical Reference
O34	Marderosian	Ara	Sequioa ForestKeeper	We hereby incorporate herein the May 24, 2016 comments by the California Chaparral Institute in their entirety by reference. We hereby incorporate herein the April 8, 2016 comments by the Center for Biological Diversity in response to the "California Forest Carbon Action Plan Concept Paper in their entirety by reference. We hereby incorporate herein the February 4, 2016 in its entirety by reference.	Historical Reference
O36	Marderosian	Ara	Sequioa ForestKeeper	We hereby incorporate herein, in its entirety, by reference, the February 4, 2016 joint letter from scientists to Governor Brown about his State of Emergency proclamation that the 2015 "die-off is of such scale that it worsens wildfire risk across large regions of the State", is strongly at odds with the best available science. http://www.sequoiaforestkeeper.org/pdfs/Science_papers/160204_Hansen_Scientist_letter_to_G ov_Brown_re_2015_snags.pdf "Based on the best available scientific evidence, the October 2015 emergency proclamation is not scientifically sound and, in fact, is directly contradicted by the overwhelming weight of current science. Further implementation of the proclamation would cause serious harm to numerous imperiled snag-dependent wildlife species, would exacerbate the ongoing deficit of snags in California's forests relative to the minimum needs of the most sensitive wildlife species, would substantially reduce carbon storage in our forests and cause large emissions of greenhouse gases due to increased burning of snags in bioenergy plants, and would not reduce fire intensity or spread." Letter to Governor Brown from Chad Hanson, Ph.D., Research Ecologist John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute, Dominick DellaSala, Ph.D., Chief Scientist Geos Institute, Monica Bond, M.S., Principal Scientist Wild Nature Institute, George Wuerthner, Senior Scientist Foundation for Deep Ecology, Dennis Odion, Ph.D., Ecologist Earth Research Institute, University of California Santa Barbara, and Derek Lee, Ph.D., Principal Scientist Wild Nature Institute.	Historical Reference
O74	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	This firm represents the Endangered Habitats League ("EHL") in connection with the Vegetation Treatment Program ("VTP"or "Program") and its associated Draft Environmental Impact Report ("DEIR").1 EHL is southern California's only regional conservation organization, and it and its members have a direct stake in maintaining the health of Southern California's unparalleled biodiversity and the native ecosystems that support it. Our client is deeply concerned about the far-ranging environmental impacts that would result from implementation of the VTP. This letter is also submitted on behalf of Audubon California; California Chaparral Institute; California Native Plant Society, San Diego Chapter; Laguna Greenbelt, Inc.; Natural Resources Defense Council; San Diego Audubon Society; and Sea and Sage Audubon Society. 1 The VTP and the DEIR have been prepared as one document. To avoid confusion, this letter distinguishes the Program from the DEIR.	Historical Reference

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O77	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	The current VTP is particularly concerning as EHL and its expert scientists in the fields of fire science and ecology, fire management, biogeography, native plant ecology, biodiversity, and wildlife conservation biology submitted extensive comments on the prior proposed VTP and its DEIR.(2) Wildlife regulatory agencies, including the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish & Wildlife, and other environmental organizations also submitted comments on the prior VTP and the DEIR.(3) Each of these letters and reports explained that the prior Program's approach to reducing the severity and frequency of fires lacked a reasoned justification based on science and substantial evidence. The prior VTP indefensibly treated the diverse ecological regions of the state with the same broad brush. For the scrub systems of Southern California, in particular, its management prescriptions-to the extent they could be gleaned from the DEIR-were bereft of scientific basis and lacked demonstrable efficacy. Furthermore, as EHL explained, the assumption that fire safety could be manufactured through vegetation removal is illusory as certain of the strategies contemplated by the VTP would likely result in an increase in fire frequency. Equally concerning, the VTP would encourage the continued expansion of the Wildland Urban Interface ("WUI"), and the resulting vicious cycle of additional home construction in high fire hazard areas. The DEIR for the prior VTP was equally deficient. Wildlife regulatory agencies and environmental organizations including EHL explained that the environmental document defined the Program so vaguely as to preclude reasoned and meaningful assessment of its environmental impacts. The DEIR relied on speculation, not substantial evidence, in its analysis of environmental impacts. These agencies and organizations explained that although the VTP had the potential for irreversible environmental damage, there was simply no basis for determining the extent of the impact on the physical environment that would result from the burning or other modification of millions of acres of vegetation.	Historical Reference

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O78	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	2 The following letters and reports are attached and are incorporated by reference into this letter: Letter from Dan Silver, Executive Director, Endangered Habitats League to George Gentry, Executive Officer, Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, February 25, 2013, attached as Exhibit l ; Letter from CJ Fotheringham, Research Ecologist, USGS to George Gentry, Executive Officer, Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, February 25, 2013, attached as Exhibit 2; Letter from Wayne D. Spencer, Chief Scientist, Conservation Biology Institute to Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, February 25, 2013, attached as Exhibit 3; and Letter from Alexandra D. Syphard, Research Scientist, Conservation Biology Institute to George Gentry, Executive Officer, Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, February 25, 2013, attached as Exhibit 4. 3 The following letters and reports are attached and are incorporated by reference into this letter: Letter from Karen A. Goebel, Assistant Field Supervisor, U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service to George Gentry, Executive Officer, California Department of Fire and Forest Protection, February 25, 2013, attached as Exhibit 5; Letter from Robert Taylor, Fire GIS Specialist, Department of the Interior, National Park Service, to George Gentry, Executive Officer, Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, February 25, 2013, attached as Exhibit 6; Memorandum from Sandra Morey, Deputy Director, Ecosystem Conservation Division, California Department of Fish and Wildlife to George Gentry, Executive Officer, Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, February 25, 2013, attached as Exhibit 7; Letter from Van K. Collinsworth, Natural Resource Geographer, to George Gentry, Executive Officer, Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, February 21, 2013, attached as Exhibit 8; Letter from Richard W. Halsey, Director, California Chaparral Institute to George Gentry, Executive Officer, Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, January 25, 2013, attached as Exhibit 9; Letter from Richard W. Halsey, Director, California Chaparral Institute and Justin Augustine, Attorney, Center for Biological Diversity to George Gentry, Executive Officer, Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, February 25, 2013, attached as Exhibit 10; Letter from Richard W. Halsey, Director, California Chaparral Institute to George Gentry, Executive Officer, Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, April 8, 2013, attached as Exhibit 11; Letter from Anne S. Fege, Adjunct Professor, Department of Biology, San Diego State University to George Gentry, Executive Officer, Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, February 23, 2013, attached as Exhibit 12; Letter from Greg Suba, Conservation Program Director, California Native Plant Society to George Gentry, Executive Officer, Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, February 25, 2013, attached as Exhibit 13; Letter from Frank Landis, Conservation Chair, California Native Plant Society to George Gentry, Executive Officer, Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, February 15, 2013, attached as Exhibit 14; and, Letter from Sweetgrass Environmental Consulting to George Gentry, Executive Officer, Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, February 24, 2013; attached as Exhibit 15.	Historical Reference
O79	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	A peer review of the prior VTP and its EIR, conducted by the California Fire Science Consortium ("CFSC") was commissioned by CAL FIRE and the Board. See Panel Review Report of Vegetation Treatment Program Environmental Impact Report Draft, California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection in Association with CAL FIRE Agency, August 2014, at 5, attached as Exhibit 16. The CFSC peer review largely echoed the concerns raised by the other scientists, wildlife regulatory agencies and environmental organizations. It criticized the VTP's flawed approach of attempting to collapse the state's varied fire and fuel regimes into a standardized matrix where all treatments would be equally effective in all landscapes. CFSC Peer Review at 5-8. The CFSC explained that without deliberate oversight and revisions, the VTP would result in unassessed environmental impacts and irreparable damage to public agency relationships. The peer review culminated in a recommendation that the VTP undergo a major revision if the Plan was to be a contemporary, science based document. Specifically, the CFSC recommended that the VTP and its EIR explicitly describe how the treatments proposed for private lands fit into the state's overall fire plan, including protection of high value assets, state and local land use planning policies, and federal land use practices. The panel also called for a revised plan to utilize formal adaptive management: rigorous analysis of monitoring data collected in response to implementation of VTP projects. From these monitoring efforts, the CFSC explained, the EIR could be used to implement projects and collect information on the relative efficacy and ecological effects of treatment and vegetation combinations. Id.	Historical Reference
O80	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	EHL has a long history of supporting reasonable strategies to protect people and property from the hazards associated with wildfire. Recognizing the critical importance of promoting sound wildfire prevention strategies, EHL offered the assistance of its world-renowned scientists to collaborate and assist on a revised VTP that would better protect natural resources and incorporate the most recent science.	Historical Reference

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O81	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	Upon learning that the prior VTP had been withdrawn, EHL was optimistic that the Board would take these suggestions and offers of assistance to heart and make substantive modifications to the VTP and revise the EIR in a manner that complied with CEQA. See e.g., Letter from Dan Silver, Executive Director, Endangered Habitats League to Duane Shintaku, Deputy Director, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, October 2, 2014, attached as Exhibit 17. Yet, after carefully reviewing the current VTP and DEIR, it is clear that the Board 's response to these comments and suggestions is, lamentably, denial. The vast majority of concerns raised by the CFSC, wildlife regulatory agencies and scientists about the Program and its EIR appear to have been rejected out of hand. Rather than substantively revise the VTP or accurately analyze the environmental harm that would accompany the Program, the VTP and its DEIR merely seek to defend the faulty science, erroneous assertions and conclusions of the prior documents.	Historical Reference
O82	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	Submitted under separate cover are reports prepared by Dr. Wayne D. Spencer, Ph.D, Conservation Biology Institute and CJ Fotheringham, Ph.D. that address the substantive flaws in the Board's approach to fire prevention and the inability of the VTP to achieve its own objectives. (See Letter from Wayne D. Spencer, Chief Scientist, Conservation Biology Institute to E. Hannigan, California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, May 31, 2016 and letter from CJ Fotheringham, Research Ecologist, USGS to E. Hannigan, California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, May 31, 2016). We respectfully request that the Final EIR respond separately to each of the points raised in the scientists' technical reports as well as to the points raised in this letter. In addition, this letter also incorporates by reference the letter from Richard Halsey, Director, California Chaparral Institute to E. Hannigan, California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, May 24, 2016 and the letter from Frank Landis, Conservation Chair of the San Diego Chapter of the California Native Plant Society to E. Hannigan, California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, May 31, 2016.	Historical Reference
O118	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	Based on the DEIR, we have many questions, including: 1. How the DEIR deals with its procedural lapses and irregularities 2. How the DEIR deals with native plants issues 3. How the DEIR deals with climate change 4. Why the DEIR contains so many misstatements based on scientific papers, reliance on anecdotal evidence, and avoidance of scientific advice? 5. Why the DEIR contains so many internal contradictions. The following groups of questions are based on the concerns summarized above. We formally request that the BoF fully consider and respond to our questions in an effort to improve the Draft DEIR by clarifying, among other things, its purpose, rationale, and management structure. We note that this letter contains similar material to the San Diego CNPS (CNPSSD) comment letter on a previous version of the DEIR, sent February 15, 2013. That letter also included a formal request to the Board of Forestry to respond to the questions that letter raised. The BoF never responded to that request, which is unfortunate, as many of those questions were specifically designed to help the BoF write a better DEIR. As a result, the current Report repeats many of its predecessors' mistakes, and the same criticisms still apply.	Historical Reference
O183	Watt	Jean	Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks	The recently revised Draft Program Environmental Impact Report for the proposed Vegetation Treatment Program again fails to meet the requirements of good science, rational project analysis, and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). It also fails to address the most effective ways to protect lives and property from wildfire. In this light, our comments from February 15, 2013 remain relevant as to the many issues of concern with the revised DPEIR.	Historical Reference
O189	Watt	Jean	Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks	Friends of Harbors,Beaches and Parks strongly opposes the conclusions of this faulty document, as we did in our letter of February 15, 2013 for the prior Draft [attached]. We believe that it is imperative that the Board and staff re-evaluate the baseline approach to formulate a new and comprehensive program to address vegetation treatment only within the immediate vicinity {100 meters) of occupied residential structures in California.	Historical Reference

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O190	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	The Center for Biological Diversity (the "Center") submits the following comments on the Draft Program Environmental Impact Report ("DEIR") for the State's proposed Vegetation Treatment Program ("VTP" or "Program") prepared by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection ("Cal Fire"). The Center also joins, and incorporates by reference here, comments submitted on 27 May 2016 by Richard Halsey of the California Chaparral Institute and nine additional organizations, comments submitted on 24 May 2016 by The California Chaparral Institute, and comments submitted on 27 May 2016 by Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger.	Historical Reference
O258	Spencer	Wayne	Conservation Biology Insitute	I am Chief Scientist at the Conservation Biology Institute (CBI), a nonprofit research and planning institution that performs applied research in biological conservation and resource management. We also provide scientific guidance and support for large-scale conservation and land management plans. By training, I am an ecologist and wildlife biologist with over 35 years of research and conservation planning experience in California and the west. Because I combine science and real-world planning experience, I am often asked to lead science advisory processes and collaborations amongst agencies, land managers, academic scientists, NGOs, and other stakeholders to resolve complex and contentious land and resource management issues. Since the 2003 Cedar Fire disaster in San Diego County (during which I housed evacuated friends, and after which I monitored biological impacts) a passionate goal of my work has been to develop better approaches for reducing wildfire risks to human and natural resources while sustaining natural ecological conditions and biological diversity. Currently, I lead teams of experts from state and federal agencies, academia, and NGOs that are tasked with refining management strategies for Sierra Nevada forests to reduce wildfire risks, restore more naturally resilient forest conditions, and improve habitat for species associated with "fuel rich" forests—especially the Pacific fisher (Pekania pennanti; a California Threatened Species) and the California spotted owl (Strix occidentalis occidentalis; a Candidate for listing). Based on this professional experience, and at the request of the Endangered Habitats League (EHL), I offer the following comments on the 2016 VTP PEIR.	Historical Reference

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O259	Spencer	Wayne	Conservation Biology Insitute	The current Draft VTP PEIR remains fundamentally flawed and inadequate under CEQA. Numerous substantial comments1 pointing out errors, fallacies, inadequacies, and other problems with the 2013 Draft VTP PEIR—as well as recommendations from the Fire Science Consortium peer reviewers—appear to have had little influence on the 2016 draft, which still fails to adequately describe the VTP, analyze impacts, develop clear, enforceable and effective mitigation measures, develop an appropriate range of alternatives, or even to justify the purpose and need for the PEIR with any meaningful scientific support. I understand that the flood of negative comments from scientists, conservationists, and other informed parties in 2013 were largely responsible for the BOF withdrawing and redrafting the PEIR, and obtaining independent scientific peer review by the California Fire Science Consortium. Since 2013, I participated in one meeting with the peer reviewers and several other meetings, workshops, and phone conferences with PEIR participants, scientists, and other experts. Our intent was to provide useful recommendations to CalFire and BOF for improving the VTP and the PEIR. Considering all this expert input during the PEIR revision process, I had hoped that this new draft would be a substantial improvement over the previous. I am disappointed. Although the PEIR authors did correct some errors and improved much of the content (at least in introductory chapters)—including somewhat improved descriptions of California's vegetation communities and fire regimes—they failed to adequately apply this scientific information in meaningful ways to actually improve the program or the PEIR's defensibility under CEQA. In fact, actions proposed in the VTP are often in conflict with the cited science. This results in the PEIR contradicting itself in later chapters, such as the impact and mitigation chapters. The following issues are fundamental flaws that render the PEIR out of compliance with CEQA. 1 My comment letter from 2013 (Attachment A) is incorporated herein by reference, because many of the problems it addressed remain in the 2016 PEIR.	Historical Reference
P71	Wells	Jim		25 years ago, I was a leading-edge wildfire policy activist. I co-authored the multi-precedent-setting Ecology of Fire Alternative for the Warner Fire Recovery Project (Willamette National Forest, PNW Region), at the time (and I think still) the only citizen alternative presented as comment on a USForest Service Draft Environmental Impact Statement to be fully analyzed in the Final (and, to boot, verbatim as submitted.) I subsequently sole-authored the world's first proposal for a Fire Process Research Natural Area, 5 years later called by a sitting Region 6 Forester as having been too far ahead of its time. The list went on. I lived for 15 years quite literally as a wildland-"rural" interface under a lifeway that was reliant on the intact, fully-functioning, forest ecosystem. Recently, I stepped down from the Chair of the Southern Oregon Prescribed Fire Network after 5 consecutive terms served by unanimous request. From that collective experience, I write now to STRONGLY alert you to the serious, systemic error in the April 16, 2016 draft of your Vegetation Treatment Program Programmatic Environmental Impact Report. Many have tried to point it out to you, but somehow it seems to have been missed. Others will claim it was "ignored", but you and I know otherwise, and I shall hypothesize that it simply has not yet been articulated to you succinctly, which I will attempt now to do:	Historical Reference
P80	Fotheringham	CJ		I have reviewed much of the new VTP-EIR and am submitting comments in my capacity as a fire scientist and published author on numerous scientific studies and reviews pertaining to fire regimes, management and ecology in California. I reviewed and commented previous versions of the VTP-EIR and am broadly familiar with it's evolution over the past several years.	Historical Reference
P101	St. Clair2	Peter		Here are my comments from February, 2013. Nothing in the newly circulated draft seems to have addressed these concerns and the alternative of enforcing PRC 4291.	Historical Reference

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A42	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	The DPEIR does not include a method of monitoring and reporting measures to avoid significant impacts on biological resources because it treats those measures as SPRs that are part of the project description rather than mitigation measures. CDFW understands the purpose of this practice, and recognizes the CEQA definition of mitigation (CEQA Guidelines, § 15370) and the "gray area" between measures that constitute mitigation and measures that may be considered a project feature. However, based on the scale and scope of the Project and anticipated measures to reduce impacts, SPRs should be designated as Project mitigation measures. Regardless of whether BOF chooses to treat the measures as project features or mitigation, due to the broad scope of the project, large impact area, and high potential for multiple and ongoing significant impacts on fish and wildlife resources, the DPEIR should include a mechanism for monitoring and reporting measure implementation, and reporting should be available to CDFW (CEQA Guidelines, § 15097).	Mitigation Measures
A43	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	CDFW offers additional resource-specific comments and recommendations ("Mitigation Measures" or "MM") below to assist BOF in adequately identifying and/or mitigating the Project's significant or potentially significant direct and indirect impacts on fish and wildlife (biological) resources. Editorial comments or other suggestions are also included below to improve the document. A Comment Organization Key is provided in Attachment A. Implementation of CDFW proposed feasible mitigation measures would likely, in many cases, reduce impacts to less than significant. However, CDFW anticipates that BOF may not implement some mitigation measures for site-specific activities to achieve Project objectives. Based on the potential for the Project to have a significant impact on biological resources, CDFW concludes that an Environmental Impact Report is appropriate for the Project. In the comment section below, bold and italicized text indicates a heading from the CEQA Guidelines Appendix G (subsection IV) Checklist.	Mitigation Measures
A46	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	MITIGATION MEASURE 2a: To reduce impacts to less than significant: A qualified biologist will assess potentially impacted wildlife corridors prior to fence installation for herbivory Project activities. The Project proponent, under the guidance of a qualified biologist, will avoid corridors as feasible and where infeasible, utilize wildlife friendly fencing. A qualified biologist will evaluate fence installation impacts on sensitive biological resources. The project proponent will avoid such impacts. To be qualified, a biologist must hold a bachelor degree from an accredited university and: 1) be knowledgeable in relevant species life histories and ecology, 2) can correctly identify relevant species, 3) have conducted field surveys of relevant species, 4) is knowledgeable in survey protocols, and 5) is knowledgeable of state and federal laws regarding the protection of sensitive species.	Mitigation Measures

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A48	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	MITIGATION MEASURE 1a: To reduce impacts to less than significant: The Project proponent will: • Avoid herbicide application during the rainy season. The rainy season varies by Bioregion, and will be identified for each site specific activity. • Inspect equipment every day prior to Project activities. • Prohibit use of any leaky equipment during Project activities. • Include spill scenarios in the Spill Prevention and Response Plan (SPRP) for house hold hazardous materials, not just pesticides, discussed in HAZ-4. Fully discuss when fire suppressants would be used during VTP activities and where they would be stored. Include the relevant materials (retardants, foams) in the SPRP. Fully describe the common household hazardous materials that would be used and their specific purpose. Describe any on-site storage of these hazardous materials The DPEIR should describe the additional actions to take if a leak is discovered, at minimum placing a drip pan beneath the leak to prevent hazardous materials from leaching into the soil.	Mitigation Measures
A51	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	MITIGATION MEASURE 4a: To reduce impacts to less than significant: Identify all special status species that may be impacted by the Project through conducting an adequate and thorough database and literature review, and field survey (field survey as necessary, see Comment 3). The review shall be conducted by a qualified biologist. The review shall minimally include, and, based on a qualified biologist's professional discretion, exceed the following (or the most recent equivalents): • A California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) nine-quad search or 5-mile radius surrounding the Project site (note CNDDB is a positive detection database and lack of data does not indicate species absence) • USFWS critical habitat mapping • USFWS Sacramento Information, Planning, and Conservation System (IPaC) (http://www.fws.gov/sacramento/es_species/Lists/es_species_lists-overview.htm). • County lists of locally and regionally rare species • Santa Barbara Botanical Garden list of locally rare or uncommon species (Santa Barbara County only) • California Native Plant Society lists of locally unique species • Current aerial imagery (past aerial imagery as necessary to review seasonal/historical habitat changes) (e.g., Google Earth) • Aquatic habitat databases: • EcoAtlas (www.ecoatlas.org) • California Environmental Data Exchange Network (www.ceden.org) • USFWS National Wetlands Inventory (www.fws.gov/wetlands/Data/Mapper.html) • USFWS species 5-year reviews and recovery plans (as applicable) • Local Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs)/Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCPs) • CDFW Species Accounts of Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Plants from 2004 Status Report (www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Plants/Info) • U.S. Department of Agriculture web soil survey mapping (as applicable to identify soils suitable to support CEQA special status plants) (see websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/HomePage.htm) • Implement MITIGATION MEASURE 5a	Mitigation Measures

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A53	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	MITIGATION MEASURE 5a: To reduce impacts to less than significant: The database and literature review conducted by the qualified biologist (see MM 1a and MM 2a) will identify special status species and their habitats with the potential to be impacted by the project. Species presence and impacts will be assumed unless a qualified biologist conducts an appropriate survey to infer absence. In many cases, a species-specific protocol survey may be necessary if suitable habitat may be impacted by the project. Protocol surveys must be conducted by individuals with the qualifications required by the protocols, including in some cases CDFW or USFWS approval. Several protocol survey procedures for wildlife and plants are available on the CDFW webpage at: http://www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/nongame/survey_monitor.html#Plants). If species presence or their habitat is assumed or documented during a survey, Project activities shall avoid impacts on special status species and their habitats.	Mitigation Measures
A56	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	MITIGATION MEASURE 6a: To reduce impacts to less than significant: The Project proponent will implement protocols to decontaminate equipment and prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species and disease, including but not limited to the following: • California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2013. Aquatic Invasive Species Decontamination Protocol. Invasive Species Program, Sacramento, CA (http://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=43333) • California Oak Mortality Task Force. 2014. Sudden Oak Death Guidelines for Forestry. Berkeley, CA http://www.suddenoakdeath.org/wp- content/uploads/2014/12/forestry-08-10-with-new-2014-map.pdf • Johnson, M.L., Berger, L., Philips, L., and R. Speare. 2003. Fungicidal effects of chemical disinfectants, UV light, desiccation and heat on the amphibian chytrid Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis. Diseases of Aquatic Organisms 57:255-260 The Project proponent will proactively control for invasive species by: • Reducing or otherwise directly controlling existing weeds on existing or new fire lines, historic fuel or fire breaks, roadsides and staging areas prior to initiating treatments in adjoining areas; • Ongoing Integrated Pest Management (IPM) activities: Direct weed management by appropriately trained personnel and direct monitoring of treatment areas annually for at least three years and including at least one year of average or above average rainfall. Weed management teams will undertake direct control of invasive weeds if they are establishing or expanding following treatments; • Explicit incorporation of the Best Management Practices described in Chapter 10.2 of the California Invasive Pest Plant Council's (Cal-IPC) "Preventing the Spread of Invasive Plants: Best Management Practices for Land Managers (3rd edition)" (California Invasive Pest Plant Council, 2012). • Locating burn piles only on previously disturbed ground and outside natural habitat areas. If infeasible, burn pile locations will receive direct subsequent weed control treatments and native species suitable to the location will be restored through direct methods including reseeding. • Minimize disturbance in areas susceptible to invasive plant establishment.	Mitigation Measures

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A57	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	All Project activities will fully incorporate specific measures, appropriate to the activity, to prevent the establishment, spread, and persistence of invasive weeds by following the established procedures outlined in Cal-IPC (2012). For projects on private lands with local stakeholders, their equipment and personnel will also comply with these procedures to prevent invasive from spreading into more remote areas where treatments may occur. Plant pathogen best management practices will be implemented from the following sources: http://www.valleywater.org/uploadedFiles/Programs/Safe_Clean_Water_and_Natural_Flood_Protection/Priority_D/sensitive_contam_site_final_bmp_072215.pdf?n=4310 http://www.valleywater.org/uploadedFiles/Programs/Safe_Clean_Water_and_Natural_Flood_Protection/Priority_D/General%20construction%20BMP_final_081915%20(2).pdf?n=1583	Mitigation Measures
A59	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	MITIGATION MEASURE 7a: To reduce impacts to less than significant: The PDEIR must employ a finer-grain analysis to determine impacts on sensitive natural communities. The use of a vegetation classification scheme that employs a classification system with more detail than "trees, shrubs, and grasses" is an essential starting point. CDFW can work with the BOF and lead agencies to implement methods used to develop "A Manual of California Vegetation" and map natural communities and assess potential impacts. Once it is understood where sensitive natural communities are relative to the treatable area, the lead agencies can assess potential impacts to them and alter (or restrict entirely) the types of treatments relative to these sensitive resources. A description of methods to be employed to classify natural communities is found in: Survey of California Vegetation Classification and Mapping Standards, June 30, 2015. http://www.dfg.ca.gov/biogeodata/vegcamp/survey_ca_veg_class_and_mapping_stds.asp.	Mitigation Measures
A61	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	MITIGATION MEASURE 8a: To reduce impacts to less than significant: A qualified biologist will delineate riparian and other aquatic habitat and adjacent areas that may be impacted by the Project, and establish buffer areas to ensure avoidance. Project activities will avoid the buffer area except for existing crossings of aquatic habitat. If impacts are unavoidable, potential site-specific significant impacts will likely require additional analysis and related mitigation in a subsequent environmental document prepared by the Lead Agency.	Mitigation Measures
A63	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	MITIGATION MEASURE 9a: To reduce impacts to less than significant: A biologist with experience conducting wetland delineations will identify all wetlands, including both those subject to the Clean Water Act and those described in the Fish and Game Commission policies that may be impacted by the Project. The proponent, under the guidance of a qualified biologist, will: • Avoid impacts to wetlands. This may include installation of silt fencing or other materials around waters and wetlands. • Establish vegetative buffer strips within vegetation treatment areas around wetlands to maintain ground litter, shade, and root systems to minimize soil erosion, prevent sediment discharge maintaining channel and side slope integrity. Vegetative buffer strips will be established based upon specific topography and site conditions. Extending these areas to the first slope break is recommended. If impacts to wetlands are unavoidable, avoidance of potential significant impacts will likely require additional analysis and related site-specific mitigation in a subsequent environmental document prepared by the Lead Agency.	Mitigation Measures

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A66	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	MITIGATION MEASURE 10a: To reduce impacts to less than significant: The PDEIR needs to map the location of HCPs, NCCPs, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plans relative to vegetation treatment project impact area (i.e., SRA). After determining the overlap, the plan will indicate whether total avoidance with HCP/NCCP lands is warranted or how treatment activities would not conflict with the goals and objectives of the HCPs/NCCPs. The Project proponent will coordinate with state or local implementing agencies to ensure treatment activities are compatible.	Mitigation Measures
A68	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	MITIGATION MEASURE 11a: To reduce impacts to less than significant: Identify all CEQA rare and endangered species that may be impacted by the Project through conducting an adequate and thorough database and literature review, as described in MM 4a. Implement MM 5a.	Mitigation Measures
A70	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Mitigation Measure 12a: To reduce impacts to less than significant: Determine presence or absence of CEQA rare and endangered species or their habitats and avoid impacts on such species by implementing MM 5a.	Mitigation Measures
A72	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	MITIGATION MEASURE 13a: To reduce impacts to less than significant: The Project proponent will implement the protocols in MM 6a to decontaminate equipment and prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species and disease: If impacts are unavoidable, potential site-specific significant impacts will likely require additional analysis and related mitigation in a subsequent environmental document prepared by a Lead Agency.	Mitigation Measures
A74	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	MITIGATION MEASURE 14a: To minimize significant impacts: Implement MM 7a to minimize impacts on the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, or threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community.	Mitigation Measures
A76	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	MITIGATION MEASURE 15a: To reduce impacts to less than significant: A qualified biologist will establish special status species buffer areas based on the species-specific sensitivity, life cycle stage, local conditions, and documented and CDFW/USFWS-recognized species-specific recommended avoidance buffers. The buffer area will be as large as necessary to ensure avoidance of species impacts. In some cases, the buffer distance may be considerably more than the proposed 50 and 15 feet, particularly for species defined as sensitive. Sections 919.3 and 919.9 of the FPRs provide for modification through consultation with CDFW on a case-by-case basis. Regarding plants: under the guidance of a qualified biologist, the Project proponent will establish a buffer area of 50 feet or more around CEQA special status plant occurrences or populations that may be impacted by the Project. Experts on the affected plant taxa and how activities could affect them may recommend a smaller or larger buffer. The Project proponent will install and maintain high-visibility flagging or fencing at the outer margins of buffer areas surrounding the plant populations before and during Project activities and prohibit all Project activities within the buffer zone. These measures will be included in all Project plans and contracts.	Mitigation Measures

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A78	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	MITIGATION MEASURE 16a: To reduce impacts to less than significant: Implement MM 7a to avoid impacts on young oaks and acorn masts.	Mitigation Measures
A80	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	MITIGATION MEASURE 17a: To reduce impacts to less than significant: A qualified biologist will establish avoidance buffer areas around CEQA rare and endangered species by implementing MM 15a.	Mitigation Measures
A83	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	MITIGATION MEASURE 18a: To minimize significant impacts: Minimize exacerbation of vast forest habitat degradation by conducting Project activities in a way that minimizes to the extent feasible destruction of California forests. CDFW recommends digitizing all projects being conducted under the Governor's EO and all CAL FIRE Exemptions/Emergencies, and ensure these projects are included in the DPEIR Cumulative Impacts analysis.	Mitigation Measures
O106	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	The DEIR Contains Inadequate Mitigation Measures that Are Unenforceable, Uncertain, and Vague and Thus Do Not Ensure Im pacts Will Be Reduced to Insignificant Levels. CEQA requires an EIR not only to identify a project's significant effects, but also to identify ways to avoid or minimize them. Pub. Resources Code, § 21002. 1. An EIR generally may not defer evaluation of mitigation to a later date. CEQA Guidelines § 15126.4(a)(l)(B). Furthermore, for every mitigation measure evaluated, the agency must demonstrate that the mitigation measure either: (I) will be effective in reducing a significant environmental impact; or (2) is ineffective or infeasible due to specific legal or "economic, environmental, social and technological factors." Friends of Oroville v. City of Oroville (2013) 219 Cal.App.4th 832, 841-44; Pub. Resources Code, §§ 21002. 21061.1; CEQA Guidelines §§ 15021(b), 15364. In addition, the lead agency must adopt all feasible mitigation measures that can substantially lessen the project's significant impacts, and it must ensure that these measures are enforceable. Pub. Resources Code, § 21002; CEQA Guidelines §§ l 5002(a)(3), 15126.4(a)(2); City of Marina v. Bd. of Trustees of the Cal. State Univ. (2006) 39 Cal.4th 341, 359, 368-69. The requirement for enforceability ensures "that feasible mitigation measures will actually be implemented as a condition of development, and not merely adopted and then neglected or disregarded." Federation of Hillside and Canyon Associations v. City of Los Angeles (2000) 83 Cal.App.4th 1252, 1261 (italics omitted); CEQA Guidelines § 15126.4(a)(2). Uncertain, vague, and speculative mitigation measures have been held inadequate because they lack a commitment to enforcement. See, e.g., Anderson First Coalition v. City of Anderson (2005) 130 Cal.App.4th 1173, 1188-1189 (holding traffic mitigation fee measure inadequate under CEQA due to vagueness in program for implementing required improvements) . Here, the DEIR is woefully inadequate because it relies on measures that are unenforceable uncertain and vague to conclude that the VTP's impacts would be Jess than significant.4 Indeed, these measures simply do not and cannot reduce to insignificance the severe impacts caused by the Program.	Mitigation Measures

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O107	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	For example, SPR BI0-3 calls for the Coordinator to prepare a summary of all special status species which would be affected by the project and then to conduct a field review to determine the presence or absence of any special status species. DEIR at 4-157. The fact that this measure requires a study of special status species does not save the DEIR's analysis; it is too little too late. "A study conducted after approval of a project will inevitably have a diminished influence on decisionmaking. Even if the study is subject to administrative approval. it is analogous to the sort of post hoc rationalization of agency actions that has been repeatedly condemned in decisions construing CEQA." Sundstrom, supra, 202 Cal.App.3d 296, 307. Moreover, this measure relies largely on the California Natural Diversity Database ("CNDDB") to identify species that would be affected by VTP projects. Yet, as Wayne Spencer and Frank Landis explain in their letters, this database is incomplete, at best. While it may identify some of the species that would be impacted by a VTP project, it is highly unlikely to identify all potentially impacted species. The CNDDB records rely on field biologists to voluntarily submit information on the results of surveys and monitoring. As a result, the database is biased geographically towards areas where surveys have been conducted or where survey efforts are greater. Many areas, including private lands where the VTP projects would likely be implemented, have not been surveyed at all. Moreover, even if the Coordinator were able to identify all species that could be affected, SPR BI0-3 does nothing to ensure that species would actually be protected during the projecf s implementation.	mitigation measures
O108	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	The DEIR fares no better with SPR BI0-13. This measure states that if any special status species are identified within the project area, the project manager would evaluate the habitat requirements of the species, identify the SPRs or mitigation measures, and take "necessary actions." See BI0-13 at 2-58. While this measure calls for the agency to take necessary actions, it does not specify the nature of such actions. It could include suggesting that the project applicant attempt to protect sensitive habitats, if feasible. But, attempting to protect habitats is a vague, voluntary concept and therefore provides no assurance that the habitat would in fact be protected. There is no indication in the document as to what would constitute a "necessary action", much less whether those actions would be effective in avoiding significant impacts to special status species. BI0-4 calls for the Coordinator to submit the evaluation of impacts to wildli fe agencies with a request for information relating to avoidance measures to be implemented. (See BI0-4 at 4-157). Yet, simply submitting an evaluation to wildlife agencies does not ensure that impacts would be mitigated. The SPR does not call for any action by the wildlife agencies. Nor could it since the Board has no authority to force another agency to adopt or implement mitigation. At first glance, BI0-5 appears promising as it suggests that limitations should be placed on vegetation treatment projects in southern California. See DEIR at 4-157. Unfortunately, a detailed review of this measure reveals it is nothing more than an empty shell as it contains numerous loopholes. For example, the measure calls for designing a project to prevent vegetation type conversion. Yet, the DEIR never defines "vegetation type conversion; " nor does it provide any indication as to how a project would be designed to prevent such conversion . The measure also lacks definitions for important terms such as "critical infrastructure" and "forest health." It does not provide any criteria for making a determination as to which projects would be necessary to protect forest health. The measure also fails to include any criteria for determining whether vegetation has or has not reached the age of "median fire return intervals." Finally, the measure does not require the Board, or anyone else for that matter, to take any action at all. The closest it comes, in this regard, is a suggestion that the agency take into account wildlife when planning and implementing a project.	mitigation measures

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O109	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	Yet another fatal flaw common to all of the DEIR's measures is their failure to include any basis to judge their effectiveness. Rather, it appears that these measures are a mere expression of hope that the Board will eventually be able to devise a way to address the VTP's impacts on plant and wildlife. CEQA requires more than that to mitigate significant impacts. Lincoln Place Tenants Association v. City of Los Angeles (2005) 130 Cal.App.4th 1491, 1508. Since the DEIR relies on vague, malleable and non-enforceable mitigation measures, it lacks the evidentiary basis to conclude that the VTP's impacts would be reduced to less than significant levels. 4 The DEIR identifies a series of "Standard Project Requirements ("SPRs") that are considered minimum standards for each of the individual projects that would be implemented by the VTP. DEIR at 4-156. The DEIR appears to use the terms SPRs and mitigation measures interchangeably . See e.g., Table 4. 1-1 (DEIR p. 4-6): Impact Summary Analysis and Reference Locations which includes a column "Mitigation/SPR" and indicates that impacts to biological resources were to determined to be less than significant after mitigation is applied.	mitigation measures
O127	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	1.G. Why does the DEIR contain so many mitigation measures that are vague, unenforceable, and inadequate? CEQA requires all EIRs to not only identify significant impacts but also to find ways to mitigate them below the level of significance as much as possible.17 Furthermore, the mitigation measures must be enforceable.18 As we understand it, the courts have ruled against mitigation measures that are vague and unenforceable. 19 Why does the VTP DEIR resort to these tactics so often? Where is the detailed, complete, and sufficient analysis in the DEIR to allow anyone to conclude that the VTP will not have significant individual and cumulative impacts? 17 Public Resources Code, §§ 21002, 21061.1; CEQA Guidelines §§ 15021(b), 15364 18 Public Resources Code, § 21002; CEQA Guidelines §§ 15002(a)(3), 15126.4(a)(2) 19 Anderson First Coalition v. City of Anderson (2005)	mitigation measures
O193	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	II. Standard Project Requirements are Actually Mitigation Measures and Must Be Treated as Such Throughout the DEIR, Cal Fire presents Standard Project Requirements (SPRs) that “are program design elements for reducing or avoiding adverse environmental effects of the treatment activities that are set by the VTP and applied to individual projects.” DEIR at 2-51-52. The DEIR broadly presumes these SPRs will mitigate any potentially significant impacts from the project. See, e.g., DEIR at 3-8, 4-118, 4-429, 430. But this approach runs afoul of CEQA’s requirement that impacts first be fully disclosed and analyzed separately from the mitigation analysis. As the court noted in Lotus v. Dep’t of Transportation, separation of significance and mitigation/alternatives analysis ensures that appropriate mitigation measures have been considered and that decision makers and the public can “intelligently analyze the logic of the [agency’s] decision.” Lotus v. Dept. of Transportation, 223 Cal. App. 4th 645, 655-656 (2014). In Lotus, the EIR for a highway through an old-growth redwood stand assumed that because certain mitigation measures to minimize damage were proposed as part of the project, the impact was non-significant. The court, however, held that the EIR was deficient because it failed to first identify the significant impacts and then appropriate alternatives and mitigation measures, consequently “subvert[ing] the purposes of CEQA by omitting material necessary to informed decisionmaking and informed public participation.” Id. at 658. Similarly, the VTP DEIR impermissibly conflates the impacts analysis and mitigation analysis to the extent that it assumes SPRs will reduce impacts to the level of non-significance.(1) 1 The fact that some of the SPRs may also be regulatory requirements does not excuse the DEIR’s lack of analysis. Compliance with a regulatory requirement does not automatically reduce environmental impacts to a less-than-significant level. See, e.g., Californians for Alternatives to Toxics v. Department of Food & Agriculture, 136 Cal. App. 4th 1, 16-17 (2005).	mitigation measures

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O194	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	The fallacy of relying on SPRs rather than quantified mitigation measures is particularly apparent with regard to greenhouse gases. Some of the SPRs that the DEIR claims will reduce GHG emissions do not appear to do so. For instance, SPR CC-1 states that the project coordinator will run GHG emission models to "confirm" that GHG emissions are minimized. DEIR at 4-432. Yet, there is zero indication what it means to "confirm" minimal emissions, and what changes would be implemented to reduce greenhouse gases. This SPR is not only ineffective on its face but also constitutes impermissible deferred mitigation. See CEQA Guidelines § 15126.4(a)(1)(B). The DEIR also indicates that implementation of mitigation measure AIR-3 would reduce greenhouse gas emissions (DEIR at 4-432) but, as noted below, the air quality mitigation measures are aimed at reducing criteria pollutants such as particulate matter that vary inversely with CO2 emissions. Had the effectiveness of these and other SPRs been subjected to the detailed analysis required for mitigation measures under CEQA, the shortcomings in assumed GHG reductions would have become evident. Furthermore, without sufficient information on the effectiveness of each mitigation measure, the DEIR fails as an informational document under CEQA. See, e.g., Sierra Club v. County of San Diego, 231 Cal. App. 4th 1152 (2014).	mitigation measures
O195	Wolf	Shaye	Center for Biological Diversity	Moreover, CEQA's requirements for mitigation measures are intended to ensure those measures are enforceable and are actually implemented. CEQA prohibits public agencies from approving projects with significant environmental impacts unless all feasible mitigation measures to minimize those impacts are adopted. See Pub. Res. Code §§ 21002, 21002.2(b), 21081. In doing so, the lead agency must "ensure that feasible mitigation measures will actually be implemented as a condition of development, and not merely adopted and then neglected or disregarded." Federation of Hillside and Canyon Assns. v. City of Los Angeles, 83 Cal.App.4th 1252, 1261 (2000) (italics omitted). Mitigation measures must be "fully enforceable," either through conditions of approval or through incorporation into a project itself. CEQA Guidelines § 15126.4(b). Where feasible mitigation measures exist, a public agency cannot approve a project without specifically finding that legally adequate measures have been incorporated into the project. See Pub. Res. Code § 21081(a)(1). An agency also must adopt a mitigation monitoring and reporting plan to ensure that measures are actually implemented following project approval. Pub. Res. Code § 21081.6(a)(1); CEQA Guidelines § 15097. If mitigation is infeasible, the agency must make a specific finding to this effect, and must adopt a statement of overriding considerations before it can approve the project. Pub. Res. Code § 21081(a)(3), (b); CEQA Guidelines §§ 15091(a)(3), 15093. Here, the DEIR improperly substitutes unenforceable, vague, and uncertain SPRs in place of the enforceable mitigation measures required under CEQA. The DEIR improperly relies on these vague SPRs to determine that each and every one of the Program's adverse impacts would be reduced to a less-than-significant level.	mitigation measures
O164	Dodson	Snowdy	California Native Plant Society - Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains	1.) Where does this PEIR address the problem of plant pests and pathogens?	Plant pests and pathogens
O165	Dodson	Snowdy	California Native Plant Society - Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains	2.) Why are only invasive plants considered a problem?	Plant pests and pathogens
O166	Dodson	Snowdy	California Native Plant Society - Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains	3.) Why doesn't Appendix B have proper directions for sanitizing equipment, tools, shoes, etc. when workers have been in contact with infested or infected plant material in the field?	Plant pests and pathogens
O168	Dodson	Snowdy	California Native Plant Society - Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains	5.) Where does this PEIR indicate knowledge that chipping and grinding infected or infested trees also requires sterilizing the resulting mulch before it may be left onsite?	Plant pests and pathogens
O169	Dodson	Snowdy	California Native Plant Society - Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains	6.) Where does this PEIR indicate that California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) must be included as one of the supervising agencies for any processing of cut trees or removal of those trees or understory plants when the site is in a quarantined area?	Plant pests and pathogens

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O182	Dodson	Snowdy	California Native Plant Society - Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains Chapter	Information on Phytophthora ramorum in California as of May, 2016 is attached. Additional powerpoint and web references: 1) Brandeis U. show on bark beetle infestations: people.brandeis.edu/~clewis/GIS_FireSeverity.ppt 2) Pest Infestation Protocols: http://www3.calrecycle.ca.gov/organics/Threats/BarkBeetle.htm 3) WUI fire science: http://www.nrs.fs.fed.us/pubs/gtr/gtr_nrs1/stewart_1_197.pdf 4) WUI fire science: http://frap.fire.ca.gov/projects/wui/525_CA_wui_analysis.pdf	Plant pests and pathogens
A41	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	The SPRs and PSA checklist do not adequately identify potentially significant impacts in or out of the DPEIR scope because the DPEIR significance thresholds, and the inadequate methods of establishing the environmental setting and determining impacts, as discussed above. Establishing a procedure in the DPEIR for determining if subsequent Project activities are within the scope of the DPEIR, or require an additional environmental document, will be critical to ensuring adequate analysis of Project activity effects on biological resources. Such a procedure and checklist, which can be used as a model, was developed for infill projects and can be found in CEQA Guidelines section 15183.3 and Appendix N. The checklist should be accompanied by enough relevant information and reasonable inferences from this information to support each conclusion concerning biological resources. For subsequent Project activities that may affect sensitive biological resources, a site-specific analysis should be prepared, from which the supporting information would be derived. A qualified biologist should prepare the site-specific analysis (see comments below). The checklist should cite the specific portions of the DPEIR, including page and section references, containing the analysis of the subsequent Project activities' significant effects and indicate whether it incorporates all applicable mitigation measures from the DPEIR. The DPEIR should state that as soon as the lead agency has determined that an additional environmental document will be required for a subsequent Project activity, it shall consult with all responsible and trustee agencies, including CDFW, to obtain recommendations as to whether an additional EIR or negative declaration should be prepared (CEQA Guidelines, § 15063).	Project Scale Analysis
O255	Principe	Zachary	The Nature Conservancy - California Chapter	Questions 18, 19 and 20 on the checklist are very difficult to answer because of the large degree of uncertainty associated with burning in chaparral that reflects site specific disturbance histories, current composition, seedbank makeup, unpredictability of fire behavior, and climate conditions following the prescribed fire. As a result, we can offer no scientifically based metrics that can easily be applied to assess the potential impacts of prescribed fire on chaparral. Instead we recommend that treatments in chaparral be restricted to projects focused on direct structure and evacuation route protection and not be carried out to alter landscape fuel characteristics.	Project Scale Analysis
O256	Principe	Zachary	The Nature Conservancy - California Chapter	Question 28 appears to provide project reviewers too much discretion to conclude the VTP has no significant impacts to biological resources. Virtually any project within the WUI could be considered, even if it is to occur far from the closest structure and results in take of special status species. As a result, there is no way to adequately assess the level of impact under consideration, nor identify mitigation measures. To allow for such a question to be on the checklist, the Conservancy recommends including maximum distances of vegetation treatments to structures or evacuation routes, and based on these distances, evaluating a maximum area or threshold that could be impacted with "detrimental impact to a biological resource".	Project Scale Analysis

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A27	Fege	Anne	Community Forest Advisory Board, City of San Diego	Public Review. The public notification and opportunity for involvement needs to be realistic and robust. Informing the public through local newspaper notifications is totally inadequate and outdated,. Notices can be placed on CalFire websites that are kept updated and organized so that communities can identify projects that will affect them. CalFire needs to maintain an online list of proposed, current, and completed projects in each unit, with the draft project plans and schedule of public meetings and comments. The Project Scale Analysis (PSA) needs to be available for public review, to ensure that each project is consistent with the final approved PEIR for vegetation treatment. Project managers need to identify, reach out to, and work with stakeholders in their community. These can be identified from participants in CalFire workshops and other public meetings. In addition, interested stakeholders need to be kept informed as a proposed project moves forward, including modifications made to the project plan or implementation, completion of the project, and outcomes from the vegetation treatment.	Public Involvement
O23	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	Suggested Improvements to the Draft DPEIR - Consultation on chaparral treatments. All projects involving chaparral should be developed in consultation and in agreement with the California Native Plant Society.	Public Involvement
O26	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	Suggested Improvements to the Draft DPEIR - Increase transparency. Develop a web-based public notification process for projects similar to the US Forest Service SOPA website. For example: http://www.fs.fed.us/sopa/forest-level.php?110502	Public Involvement
O69	Kutcher	Celia	California Native Plant Society - Orange County Chapter	Comment 2: On Vegetation Treatment in Southern California: OCCNPS is pleased to see that Chapter 4.2.3, Mitigation and Standard Project Requirements, includes recognition that southern California's shrubland vegetation is different from the rest of the state's vegetation types: BIO-5: Vegetation treatment projects that are not deemed necessary to protect critical infrastructure or forest health in San Diego, Imperial, Riverside, Orange, Los Angeles, Ventura, Santa Barbara, Kern, and San Bernardino counties shall: • Be designed to prevent vegetation type conversion. • Not take place in vegetation that has not reached the age of median fire return intervals. • Not re-enter treatment areas for maintenance in an interval shorter than the median fire return interval outside of the wildland urban interface and excluding fuel break maintenance. • Not take place in old-growth chaparral without consultation regarding the potential for significant impacts with the CDFW and the CNPS. [Comment: More specificity is needed on the purposes and outcomes of this consultation.] • Take into account the local aesthetics, wildlife, and recreation of the shrub- dominated subtype during the planning and implementation of the project. • During the project planning phase, provide a public workshop or public notice in a newspaper that is circulated locally describing the proposed project during the project planning phase for projects outside of the WUI. The notification will be used to inform stakeholders and to solicit information on the potential for significant impacts during the project planning phase. [Comment: Using only a local newspaper to inform the public about projects is not adequate in this electronic age. You have an email notification list, at a minimum derived from the previous VTP iteration and increased by this iteration—use it! CA.gov must have IT staff knowledgable in the use of social media—use them!]	Public Involvement

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O94	Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger		Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger, LLP	It is also particularly disconcerting that the Coordinator's review and determination would happen behind closed doors. It is clear that the public would have no opportunity to be notified of, or influence, the process. The public' s right to participate in the environmental review process under CEQA is mandated in the statute itsel f and is vigilantly protected by the California courts that interpret and enforce CEQA. Pub. Resources Code, § 21091. Put simply, the public participation process is a critical tool to ensure that the public has an opportunity to hold agencies accountable for their actions. The Subsequent Review process set out in the DEIR is grossly deficient. It must be revised to provide that each VTP project will receive full environmental review pursuant to CEQA, with full public participation, and must demonstrate how CALFIRE intends to provide such review for such a massive number of projects given its current staffing and budgetary limitations.	Public Involvement
P23	Gruchawka	Peter		5. RECORDS TRANSPARENT TO THE PUBLIC There is no indication the VTP record keeping will be any different than the current VMP. A public records search of numerous completed VMP's produces a dearth of completion reports and quantity and types of chemical agents used. This needs to be corrected. The units should be keeping written records indicating days operations were conducted, acres treated each day, types and quantity of chemical agents used, and a detailed accounting on any "escaped fires", "escaped chemical agents" or any other "slop-over."	Public Involvement
P36	Paul	Lori		Why has this devastating Vegetative Treatment Program not been widely presented to the public for comment? The vast majority of our community here in Altadena, for example, knows absolutely zero about the State VTP. Assurances of public involvement in any future habitat clearance is not sufficiently guaranteed. A statewide VTP is, quite simply, too big a program for sufficient local involvement, as the lack of public outreach during the entire VTP EIR process has demonstrated.	Public Involvement
P51	St. Clair	Peter		4. The vegetation treatment program virtually eliminates public input. It dismisses post-treatment analysis and review, preferring to adopt something called active adaptive management, which is just a simple way of saying, "If CalFire did it, it was right."	Public Involvement
P64	Weisman	Matt		I am writing to express to you, and to my state representatives and to the governor by copy, my opposition to the current Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (DPEIR) for the state's proposed Vegetation Treatment Program. Lack of meaningful communications with citizens of California and opportunity for comment: Except for a limited number of citizen organizations who track your department's activities, there has been no material and practical outreach communications in media, e.g., email, social media, electronic news, to the citizens of California to inform them and to engage them in a discussion on a proposed plan that will affect nearly one quarter of the state's natural plant resources. Meeting "historical" notice standards is inconsistent with current methods employed by the State of California to communicate with its citizens. Confining the communications announcements is not consistent with the goals of streamlining the review process.	Public Involvement
P98	St. Clair2	Peter		12. Moving to Appendix I, subsection I-1 seems to say "We might listen to the public, but we plan to ignore you." This is pretty insulting. So is most of the analysis on adaptive management. I 2.1 seems to dismiss third parties, including scientists and the benefits of their involvement in project design, monitoring, review and adaptation. Your sense of active adaptive management reminds me of the joy felt by administrators everywhere who revise the annual calendar year budget each month then proclaim they have "made budget" after the final revision in December. Guess what? There is no learning. In natural settings it may take a great deal of time for the ecosystem to respond to something like wildfire--or something like VT. Please give things time. Do not rush to judgment as to what is happening or not happening. Wildfire has been a major player in Western ecosystems for tens of thousands of years.	Public Involvement

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
P99	St. Clair2	Peter		13. Again in Appendix I, why would you undertake VT in an area that excludes critical infrastructure or forest health? This idea pops up a few times in VTPEIR. This suggests the scope is virtually unlimited. Yet as important as these treatments are, you exclude the public and third party (scientists) from evaluation and approval. See I.4.2 If this is the case there should be very few projects where any notice is given. If not, the scope of VT is greater than implied. And public input is valued at close to zero.	Public Involvement
A3	Robinson	Tal	Central Valley Water Board	1. Multiple references to HYD-2 and other Hydrologic and Water Quality-Related Standard Project Requirements appear throughout the document. Please update all corresponding sections to reflect the following: a. If herbicide use is planned, the standard letter to the Regional Board should include the herbicide trade name or active ingredient and season of application. b. Project maps should include at a minimum: topographic lines, watercourses and their associated classification, and roads within the project area of sufficient scale for desktop review. c. The standard letter to the Regional Board should discuss any alternative mitigation measures to the Forest Practice Rules (14 CCR, Ch. 4&4.5) that are necessary to meet site-specific conditions and how those alternatives will provide equal to or greater protection to the beneficial uses of water quality.	Standard Project Requirements
A4	Robinson	Tal	Central Valley Water Board	2. Multiple references to HYD-11 and associated water drafting operations contain no reference to the use of absorbent pads underneath vehicles. At a minimum, it is recommended that absorbent pads or similar materials be made available at each drafting location in the event that leaking fluids are discovered during operations.	Standard Project Requirements
A5	Robinson	Tal	Central Valley Water Board	3. The VTP PEIR states that burning will not occur within any WLPZ unless a backing fire is allowed to enter the zone. However, when referring to burn piles, there is no specific mention of standard mitigations as it relates to the distance away from any WLPZ. Please clarify HYD-15 to include language about locating burn piles outside of the WLPZ corresponding to stream classification.	Standard Project Requirements
A10	Robinson	Tal	Central Valley Water Board	8. Mitigation HYD-16 and page K-1, indicates that additional hydrologic analysis will be performed when the percent watershed disturbance exceeds 20 percent. The type of analysis is not described and this requirement is not sufficiently clear. a. Provide the reference document(s) that explains the origin and significance of the 20% disturbance threshold statewide. b. Please provide the type(s) of additional hydrologic analysis that will be conducted when disturbance exceeds the 20 percent threshold.	Standard Project Requirements
A39	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	The DPEIR incorrectly concludes that impacts on biological resource will be less than significant with implementation of Standard Project Requirements (SPRs) and undetermined Project Specific Requirements (PSRs). The Project Scale Analysis (PSA) checklist indicates that SPRs may not be implemented for Project activities (e.g., checklist question 16). If SPRs are not implemented and it is not determined if PSRs could reduce impacts to less than significant, then impacts would be potentially significant. The purpose of the checklist questions unrelated to SPRs is unclear. Additionally, the SPRs would not mitigate impacts to less than significant levels for “in scope” Project activities if implemented, as discussed below.	Standard Project Requirements

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A40	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	The SPRs do not mitigate impacts on biological resources to less than significant. For example, if a project may substantially adversely impact a special status species: • The SPRs would not necessarily identify species potentially impacted because the method of establishing the environmental setting (baseline conditions) is inadequate (further discussed in specific comments). • If a species was identified as potentially impacted, the field survey conducted by the project coordinator may not detect the species due to the absence of a disclosed accepted survey protocols or the need to follow adequate survey protocols. • If species impacts were determined, BIO-4 states that CDFW, USFWS, and NOAA Fisheries (wildlife agencies) would be consulted to determine avoidance measures. CDFW may assist as resources allow; however, it is not incumbent on CDFW to assess take avoidance measures unless our project authorization (e.g., California Endangered Species Act Incidental Take Permit) is warranted (CEQA Guidelines, § 15020). Many special status species impacts do not require wildlife agency authorization (e.g., several California Species of Special Concern) CDFW appreciates BOF's efforts to include in the DPEIR consultation with CDFW to assist in avoiding significant impacts on biological resources through SPR BIO-4 and the Burn Plan in DPEIR Appendix J. However, for the above stated reasons, SPR BIO-4 should not include CDFW consultation.	Standard Project Requirements
O68	Kutcher	Celia	California Native Plant Society - Orange County Chapter	The VTP appears not to have taken this study to heart. Throughout all parts of Chapter 4.2 that discuss invasive plants, the assumption seems to be that invasion of non-natives after a VTP treatment will be reduced to "less than significant" [but recall the old saying: "Give a weed an inch and it'll take a yard"] by applying Standard Project Requirements BIO-8 and/or BIO-9. 1. BIO-8: "Only certified weed-free straw and mulch is to be used." This SPR is repeated mantra-like throughout Chapter 4.2.2, as if it were the cure-all for weed invasion. OCCNPS' long-term experiences and anecdotal observations have shown that: • "Certified weed-seed-free" straw usually isn't weed seed free. • Applying mulch thick enough to smother weed seeds will also likely smother the native seeds that are already in the soil awaiting overstory removal so they can germinate. • Weed seeds (blown-in, bird-dropped, e.g.) are often capable of germinating within mulch and sending roots through the mulch into the soil, thus getting an even bigger head start over native seeds. 2. BIO-9: "The project coordinator is to determine if there is a significant risk of introducing invasive plants and, if so, develop specific mitigation measures using principles outlined the California Invasive Plant Council's Preventing the Spread of Invasive Plants: Best Management Practices for Land Managers (2012)." This publication is an industry standard. Its BMPs should be integrated from the start into all phases of project planning and implementation—not just consulted at the end, as BIO-9 seems to imply. OCCNPS suggests removing BIO-8 and replacing it with a rewritten BIO-9: New BIO-8: "At the outset of project planning, all who are involved in planning and coordination shall study the most recent edition of Preventing the Spread of Invasive Plants: Best Management Practices for Land Managers" (California Invasive Plant Council, cal-ipc.org/ip/prevention/landmanagers.php) and integrate the BMPs it details into all phases of implementation and mitigation." The use of mulch, including but not limited to "weed-free" straw, can be a BMP. OCCNPS agrees that mulch has appropriate uses. The best mulch is formed by the vegetation's own fallen leaves, left undisturbed to allow soil organisms to recycle the nutrients in the leaves back into the soil for the roots to absorb again.	Standard Project Requirements
O133	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	2.C. Why is SPR BIO-1 thought to be sufficient or workable? To us, SPR BIO-1 is unworkable, as it does not cover sensitive species on the CRPR list (note that the CNPS list has been the California Rare Plants Rank list for many years now), nor does it cover species protected by cities and counties. As written, this SPR fails to cover hundreds of sensitive plants. Moreover, the DEIR misses the fact that List 2 was split to List 2A and List 2B, to parallel Lists 1A and 1B. This SPR must be rewritten to conform to current practice and terminology, as it is obsolete as written. At the very least, the definition should follow CDFW current practice. We also note that counties like San Diego and Ventura have their own lists, which largely, but not entirely, match with those maintained by the state. The VTP should honor local lists and local practice that reflect local expertise and local needs.	Standard Project Requirements

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O134	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	2.D. Why does SPR BIO-2 designate the Project Coordinator to conduct a field review of any proposed project? What qualifications demonstrate that the Project Coordinator is competent to perform field identifications? Where is this competency requirement specified in the VTP? How will qualifications be assessed? The problem is that, unless the Project Coordinator is a qualified botanist, (s)he will lack the ability to determine how accurate the CNDDB or any other database is, will not know when or how to survey (the excellent guidance from CDFW and CNPS is inadequate without real training), will not know how to collect specimens, nor where to send them in problematic cases, nor how to deal with any truly complex issues. Another problem here is that all databases are insufficient. For example, the CNDDB states, "[W]e cannot and do not portray the CNDDB as an exhaustive and comprehensive inventory of all rare species and natural communities statewide. Field verification for the presence or absence of sensitive species will always be an important obligation of our customers."21 Trained botanists know this. Untrained bureaucrats do not.	Standard Project Requirements
O137	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	2.E. How is SPR BIO-5 actually supposed to protect anything? Critical terms like "type conversion," "median fire return interval," and " old growth" are left undefined, their determination at the mercy of the Project Coordinator whose qualifications are also left undefined. Moreover, these areas are to be protected for " aesthetics, wildlife, and recreation," not for sensitive plants, lichens, or even the reproduction of species that take decades to reproduce. Why should mountain bikers desiring new trails be privileged over the continued existence of last-of-their-kind stands? Additionally, local experts like the California Chaparral Institute, numerous local land management groups, and scientists from both academia and other agencies are left out of the decision loop. Why are they excluded? Finally, this SPR needs to be extended to all old growth vegetation throughout the state, because there is very little left of any of it. As the author (Dr. Landis) is finding, working in an urban stand of old growth chaparral, old growth is often home to other poorly known or even undescribed species. SPR BIO-5 is unworkable as written. It should incorporate the analysis of impacts to old growth stands directly into the DEIR, rather than forcing it onto a single Project Coordinator who only needs to make a single site visit. Why was this not done?	Standard Project Requirements
O144	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	3.C. Why are BIO-5 and BIO-6 mentioned in SPR CC-2 (p.4-434)? These two SPRs have nothing to do with carbon sequestration. The DEIR does need SPRs to deal with carbon sequestration, but it is not CC-2. This SPR needs to be totally rewritten to be useful.	Standard Project Requirements
O179	Dodson	Snowdy	California Native Plant Society - Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains	16.) Pages 2-56 & 2-57, Biological Standard Requirements; Where in this set of thirteen Biological Standard Requirements is there any mention of how CDFFP and Cal-Fire are going to plan and to put into action any program that covers the safe removal and decontamination of pest-killed and plant pathogen killed trees?	Standard Project Requirements
O252	Principe	Zachary	The Nature Conservancy - California Chapter	For BIO-5, which addresses treatments in much of the South Coast, the criteria definitions are unclear. To strengthen the Mitigation and Standard Project Requirement, both “old-growth chaparral” and “critical infrastructure” should be clearly defined. In addition, a maximum width for fuel breaks should be included to remove subjectivity around what can be defined as a fire break. Given the large size of the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) for the South Coast, as defined in the VTPER, language should be added to focus projects on direct structure and evacuation route protection. Further, as a result of the many recent and large fires in the South Coast, projects outside of the WUI and fire breaks should be restricted to those that treat non-native species, but do not disturb native species.	Standard Project Requirements
O253	Principe	Zachary	The Nature Conservancy - California Chapter	We recommend that CalFire reconcile inconsistencies with respect to BIO-8 and clarify that this practice must be implemented for all projects. Under its definition on pages 4-148 and 7-24 there is no mention of this practice being at the discretion of the project coordinator, but on pages 4-124, 4-130, and 4-146 it states it must be implemented only “if needed to prevent inadvertent introductions” or “mitigate project impacts”. As a result, it is unclear if this measure is at the discretion of the project coordinator or must be implemented on all projects as implied by its definition. We recommend this practice be implemented for all projects.	Standard Project Requirements
O254	Principe	Zachary	The Nature Conservancy - California Chapter	BIO-9 allows the project coordinator to determine if there is a significant risk of introducing invasive plants, and if so to develop mitigation measures. This level of subjectivity does not appear appropriate based on the conclusion drawn on page 4-124 that “The establishment of invasive plants within fuel treatments is a serious concern because many treated areas extend into remote, pristine wildland areas.” The BMPs should be implemented on all projects to limit the spread of non-native species.	Standard Project Requirements

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
P90	St. Clair2	Peter		4. Section 3 makes statements (eg 3.7.3 page 3-35) about the efficacy of fuel breaks and prescribed burns. While the FBE SPR's are excellent, I have not observed them actually working. In So Cal forests, hired crews cut brush and low limbs and pile them. The piles are ignited. Ground fire results, but the height and density of the piled fuels leads to burning and scorching of tree trunks and limbs. These have not regenerated, more so in pine forests than other areas. So in prescribed burns we lose a lot of healthy young trees. An officer in charge of two recent controlled burns told me, "They burned too hot and too high." No amount of FBE SPR's or PSR's can prevent this.	Standard Project Requirements
P100	St. Clair2	Peter		14. I do not understand the language of BIO 6 on page I-21. What "species" is referred to? The oaks, or the wildlife that inhabit oak lands? Who is an "applicant"? This section seems to say that public lands will be managed to suit hunters. Is that an objective of VT?	Standard Project Requirements
A6	Robinson	Tal	Central Valley Water Board	4. Table 4.5-1 and other tables contain information that is not directly attributed to a source. Please provide a reference or description for where information presented in each table has been obtained.	Administrative
A7	Robinson	Tal	Central Valley Water Board	5. In Table 4.5-2, p. 4-264, there are several abbreviations of “BIOL”, yet no definition is provided in the left column. Please include a definition for “BIOL”.	Administrative
A14	Osterholm	Lesa	Range Management Advisory Committee	1.b The VTP EIR uses the terms “prescribed herbivory,” “prescribed grazing,” and “grazing” but only defines “prescribed herbivory.” RMAC recommends a close review of when those terms are used in the document and revising the language choices when necessary, and adding “prescribed grazing” and/or “grazing” into the glossary if needed. The VTP EIR talks extensively about grazing in several sections (page 44-145, page 5-11, et al) but does not relate those discussions back to the use of prescribed herbivory for fuel reduction nor how grazers might utilize other treatment activities, such as prescribed fire, for ecological benefit. “Planned Herbivory in the Management of Wildfire Fuels,” by Glenn Nader, Zalmen Henkin, Ed Smith, Roger Ingram, and Nelmy Narvaez (https://journals.uair.arizona.edu/index.php/rangelands/article/view/12320/11609), provides information that may be helpful in connecting the two issues in, for example, Section 4.1.3 Rangeland Base and Ownership and page 5-11, part of Section 5.3.1.2 Related Past Projects, as well as Section 4.1.6.4 Prescribed Herbivory Activities.	Administrative
A30	Blatt	Fred	North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board	The hydrologic and water quality-related standard project requirements (SPR) are listed in sections 2.5.1, 4.2.3.1, 4.3.3.4, 7.2.1.10, Appendix I.5.2 of the VTPEIR. A table titled “Watercourse and lake protection zone buffer widths by watercourse classification and hill slope gradient” is included below PSR HYD-3 in each section. The table lists the standard Forest Practice Rules (FPR) watercourse and lake protection zone (WLPZ) widths for watersheds without listed anadromous salmonids. The Table does not list WLPZ widths for watersheds with listed anadromous salmonids, including Class II Large watersheds. Regional Water Board staff recommend including WLPZ widths and protections for watersheds with listed anadromous salmonids.	Administrative
A31	Blatt	Fred	North Coast Regional Water Quality Control	Additionally, the tables in section 7.2.1.10 and Appendix I.5.2 are not designated with any table number. The reference to the tables in the HYD-3 description in those sections state “(Error! Reference source not found.).” Regional Water Board staff recommend the references be corrected.	Administrative
A36	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish	The DPEIR should state that CDFW is anticipated to be a Responsible Agency that will use the DPEIR in its decision making for Project activities (CEQA Guidelines, § 15124).	Administrative

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A84	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	V. Editorial Comments and/or Suggestions Global • CDFW is intermittently referred to as DFG. Please update these references to CDFW. Chapter 2 • Section 2.5.1, page 2-53: ADM-3 states that if a SPR does not perform adequately to protect the specified resource the project coordinator should determine adaptation strategies in coordination with the contractor and/or CAL FIRE personnel. It is unclear if the potential impacts of the "adaptation strategies" must be within the original PSA for the project. Example: if the staging area must be moved to a new location, but the new location and potential impacts were not included in the original PSA would the "adaptation strategies" of moving the staging area be allowed? CDFW recommends a qualified biologist is also consulted prior to implementing "adaptation strategies" that may impact fish and wildlife resources, and that CDFW is notified. Chapter 4 • Section 4.2.1, page 4-79: Please include the specific website for the Wildlife Action Plan. https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/SWAP • Section 4.2.1.1, page 4-79: The California Laws and Regulations list is incomplete and does not include other relevant Fish and Game Codes, such as 3503 (regarding unlawful "take," possession or needless destruction of the nest or eggs of any bird), 3503.5 (regarding the "take," possession or destruction of any birds-of- prey or their nests or eggs), and 3513 (regarding unlawful "take" of any migratory nongame bird). BOF is responsible for complying with all applicable local, State, and Federal laws, including the Fish and Game Code. • Section 4.2.1.1, page 4-80: Capitalize "fish" in "fish and Game Commission."	Administrative
A85	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	• Section 4.2.1.1, page 4-80: This section cites "The California Endangered Species Act…was enacted in 1984…" Please correct this reference to identify the California Endangered Species Act was enacted in 1970 (Stats. 1970, ch. 1510, § 3). The current basic structure was added to the California Fish and Game Code in 1984, replacing the original Act from 1970 (stats. 1984, ch. 1162, §§ 5 & 6: stats. 1984, ch. 1240, §§ 1 & 2.). • Section 4.2.1.2, pages 4-85 to 4-114: The Biological Setting and Concerns by Bioregion includes examples of sensitive species that occur in each bioregion, yet they do not meet the definition of "special status species" in the glossary, and therefore would not be identified in the PSA. • Section 4.2.1.2, page 4-98: Text references the incorrect table for Sacramento Valley bioregion. Text references 4.2-17 and 4.2-18. Should be 4.2-11 and 4.2-12. • Section 4.2.2.1, page 4-114, 4-115, 4-120: Use of direct/indirect take is inaccurate. Neither under the federal nor California Endangered Species Acts is there a reference to "direct" or "indirect" take. There is only "take." The authors may be referring to mortality vs. habitat loss or modification. Additionally, the over- arching assumption that treatment activities will avoid mortality of a special status species is not substantiated given measures to determine presence or absence of special status species are inadequate. • Section 4.2.2.1, page 4-115: This section states a significant effect occurs when there is a violation of any state or federal wildlife protection law. The DPEIR does not address Fish and Game Code sections 3503, 3503.5, or 3513, nor does the PSA or SPRs include any protection measures for nesting birds. The trees, shrubs, and grasses that would be removed and disturbed within and in the vicinity of the vegetation treatment activities likely provide nesting habitat for songbirds and raptors. If vegetation treatment activities occur during the breeding season (February through mid-September), BOF is responsible for ensuring that implementation of the Project does not result in any violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act or relevant Fish and Game Codes as referenced above. Due to the nature of the VTP, it is unclear how BOF will comply with the Fish and Game Codes referenced above, and avoid violating state or federal wildlife protection laws and, thus, a significant effect under CEQA by BOF's own definition. • Section 4.2.2.2, page 4-115: Please include the specific website for CNDDB https://www.dfg.ca.gov/biogeodata/cnddb/mapsanddata.asp • Section 4.2.2.2, page 4-116: "(subterranean (" has a typo with extra parenthesis. • Section 4.2.2.3.4, page 4-145: In the first paragraph in the Invasive Species section, the fifth sentence is unclear: "Prescribed	Administrative

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
A86	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	• Section 4.5.1.1: This section describes the regulatory setting regarding water quality-related requirements. Please include in this section a discussion of Fish and Game Code section 5650 which describes the prohibition on discharge of specified substances. Appendix A • Section A.1.3: This section inaccurately describes the role of CDFW's Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program (VegCAMP) in mapping vegetation formations for the VTP. Specifically, the DPEIR conflates the Manual of California Vegetation (MCV) with the Survey of California Vegetation (SCV). While the MCV provides a description of vegetation and vegetation patterns in California, the mapped data used in VTP crosswalking comes from SCV data. Please edit this section to accurately describe the mapping process. Appendix D • Appendix D: There is no literature cited section for Appendix D. However, there are multiple parenthetical references. The references are not included in DPEIR Chapter 9 References. Please include these references. Appendix J • Appendix J, pages J-3 to J-13: The VTP Burn Plan Specific Resources Review questions include several questions that are also included in the PSA and SPRs; however, there are several inconsistencies. The VTP Burn Plan includes additional biological resources questions/evaluations, and it is unclear why items in the VTP Burn Plan are not included in the PSA or SPRs for all VTP projects. The VTP Burn Plan takes into consideration 'rare' species and 'sensitive' species, which are not evaluated in the PSA or SPRs. Other types of vegetation treatments could potentially adversely affect species that can be shown to meet the criteria for Endangered, Threatened, or Rare as specified in the CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, and Section 15380), and should be fully considered in the environmental analysis for all VTP projects. The Specific Resources Review questions also include a list of potential mitigation measures which are not included in the PSA or SPRs. Several of the biological resources questions include a statement of CDFW reviewing the project, or conducting a site inspection, and making a determination and/or conclusion about potentially significant impacts to biological resources. CDFW is not ultimately responsible for conducting an adequate analysis of significant impacts on biological resources (see Impact Analysis above).	Administrative
A87	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	ENVIRONMENTAL DATA CEQA requires that information developed in environmental impact reports and negative declarations be incorporated into a database which may be used to make subsequent or supplemental environmental determinations (Pub. Resources Code, § 21003, subd. (e)). Accordingly, please report any special status species and natural communities detected during Project surveys to the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB). The CNNDB field survey form can be found at the following link: http://www.dfg.ca.gov/biogeodata/cnddb/pdfs/CNDDB_FieldSurveyForm.pdf. The completed form can be mailed electronically to CNDDB at the following email address: CNDDB@wildlife.ca.gov. The types of information reported to CNDDB can be found at the following link: http://www.dfg.ca.gov/biogeodata/cnddb/plants_and_animals.asp.	Administrative
A88	Macedo	Richard	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	FILING FEES The Project, as proposed, would have an impact on fish and/or wildlife, and assessment of filing fees is necessary. Fees are payable upon filing of the Notice of Determination by the Lead Agency and serve to help defray the cost of environmental review by CDFW. Payment of the fee is required in order for the underlying project approval to be operative, vested, and final. An additional filing fee is required for each separate environmental document prepared for Project subsequent activities unless the Project proponent obtains a No Effect Determination from CDFW (Cal. Code Regs, tit. 14, § 753.5; Fish & G. Code, § 711.4; Pub. Resources Code, § 21089.)	Administrative
O18	Halsey	Richard	California Chaparral Institute	Suggested Improvements to the Draft DPEIR - Define terms. Define all terms utilized in the text needed to ensure consistency in use such as old growth chaparral, critical infrastructure, forest health, etc.	Administrative

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O64	Fenton	Drew	Community of San Lorenzo Valley	6. All Maps are illegible.	Administrative
O65	Fenton	Drew	Community of San Lorenzo Valley	7. The Notice of completion filed with the state clearing house is signed by someone, yet no name is typewritten. It could be signed by Matt Dias, a person who has not declared a conflict of interest, yet one is known as he is a Forester for Big Creek Lumber, among other positions.	Administrative
O130	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	2. With respect to native plant issues, we noticed many problems. The treatment of native plants issues is riddled with issues, starting with the trivial (CNPS is repeatedly referenced in the DEIR, but the acronym is not spelled out nor included in the front glossary). In addition, the plural of plant is not vegetation, and vegetation has different issues than plants, despite the attempt of the DEIR to bundle them together), and going rapidly to the seriously non-functional. We have the following questions about how native plant issues were treated in the DEIR:	Administrative
O153	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	Then there is the time scale of preparation. The VTP in its current incarnation has been around since 2013, and its roots go back to the 1990s. That's a long time, and a lot of analysis and project design could have been accomplished in that interval. Unfortunately, the DEIR is still focused on trying to avoid that analysis through a combination of pushing it forward (contrary to CEQA) to individual projects, hiding motivations, padded, repetitive, vague, contradictory and obfuscatory writing, ignoring reality, and simple sloppiness. As a result, the process has wasted years, and is no closer to satisfying CEQA or satisfying people, like us, who will have to deal with the VTP's consequences.	Administrative
O159	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	• Use a multi-year, overlapping planning process for each proposed project. Since we can expect the climate to get more extreme in coming years (bigger storms, bigger droughts, and so forth), planning for things like burn days for controlled burns is going to be an exercise in patience. Rather than trying to go from plan to treatment in a single year, we suggest using a multi-year process, like the existing VMP, so that areas can be surveyed by professional biologists, local information and buy-in can be sought, and plans can be made ready for when the weather cooperates. Moreover, overlap projects, so that some are being researched while some are being implemented and others are being evaluated afterwards. Rushing will not just make waste, it may make wildfires, injure firefighters, and send species into extinction. Is convenience really worth this price?	Administrative
O160	Landis	Frank	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	• Consider taking five years to create the next iteration of the VTP. This is not for our convenience, but because so many things are changing right now: o Fire behavior may be changing with climate change, and new types of wildfires may be emerging. o California is still developing its climate change response by both limiting emissions and increasing sequestration, and it is fairly clear to us that few people in California government understand its ramifications yet. o Pests and pathogens are spreading rapidly, and new ones are showing up.	Administrative
O167	Dodson	Snowdy	California Native Plant Society - Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains	4.) Why is Appendix B called “Biological Resources” when it is a manual on attacking invasive plants?	Administrative
O173	Dodson	Snowdy	California Native Plant Society - Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains Chapter	10.) Page E-12, E-10 Areas of Known Controversy: Isn’t Bullet 8 actually two bullets put together? Bullet 8: “Impact to climate change and greenhouse gases Ability to address the ecological and social complexities of the state in a single Program.” Perhaps “Ability to address the ecological and social complexities of the state in a single Program” should have been the first bullet in this section?	Administrative
O175	Dodson	Snowdy	California Native Plant Society - Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains	12.) Page 1-17, 1.7.4 California Forest Improvement Program (CDFIP): Aren’t two suggested activities missing from this list of bullets? After bullet 4: “Release from brush competition”, shouldn’t there be a bullet 5: “Release from non-native grass competition” and a bullet 6: “Release from non-native tree competition”?	Administrative

No.	Lname	Fname	Affliation, if any	Comment	Category
O283	Bell	Carl	California Native Plant Society - San Diego	As part of the VTP public comment you received a letter from the San Diego (CNPS-SD) and Kern County Chapters of the California Native Plant Society. That letter was written by Frank Landis, chair of the conservation committee of the CNPS-SD chapter. His letter was not reviewed and approved by the executive committee of the chapter, of which I was a member. So I feel that you should regard that letter as representing just his views on the VTP. I do not know the views of the other CNPS-SD committee members, but my views of VTP are favorable to implementing the plan.	Administrative
P20	Gruchawka	Peter		2. OBSOLETE VMP The VMP is based on science that predates May 18, 1981, when the program went into effect. Indeed the San Francisco court threw out some of the "science" for the VMP. If the VTP is put in place the VMP should be concurrently discontinued. This is not considered in the VTPEIR.	Administrative
P21	Gruchawka	Peter		3. CONFIRMATION OF COOPERATOR'S PROPERTY LINES AND PROTECTION OF NEIGHBORING PROPERTY There is no indication the VTP will determine property lines any differently than the current VMP. Most project maps used in the VMP program use the tax assessors data base maps to determine parcel lines. Every tax assessor within the State of California clearly states that the tax assessor's parcel map lines are approximate and NOT SURVEY LINES, they are for viewing purposes only AND SHOULD NOT BE USED TO DETERMINE LEGAL BOUNDARY LINES. Often the VMP projects extend to touch these erroneous "parcel lines" and the VMP results in trespass of neighbors' property. One Cal Fire technical term for this is "slop-over" in the few cases when there is a control line or natural barrier intended to confine the fire. Other VPM's simply do not have containment lines. The VTPEIR should address specific protections to be implemented including only relying on legal surveys to determine property lines. Also defensible setbacks from property lines need to be defined that consider, fuel, terrain and resources immediately on hand.	Administrative
P86	Fotheringham	CJ		The authors of the VTP-EIR also conflate the terms fire intensity, fire severity and burn severity and they fail to include any definition for these terms in the glossary. This has been problematic in the literature and has been addressed in the literature (Keeley, 2009; Jain et al. , 2004). Hazard and risk are also not defined and are used interchangeably in varying contexts. California suppression crews and managers are some of the best in the world and frequently put their lives on the line to protect others, Cal-fire should respect these heroes by producing a scientifically supported plan that will ease their burden and make their work safer.	Administrative