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From: Bill Tippetts <billtippetts@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 5, 2019 5:42 PM
To: Public Comments@BOF; Office of the Secretary CNRA
Subject: RE: Item 9, December 11, 2019, California Vegetation Treatment Program (CalVTP) - Opposition to VTP boondoggle

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Dr Keith Gilles, Chair
Board of Forestry and Fire Protection
P.O. Box 944246
Sacramento, CA 94244-2460

RE: Item 9, December 11, 2019, California Vegetation Treatment Program (CalVTP) - Opposition to VTP

Dear Chairperson Gilles and Members of the Board:

The Vegetation Treatment Program (VTP) is a significantly flawed approach to managing large portions of California's natural lands. Its previous incarnation, the Vegetation Management Program, was a similar attempt to provide for vegetation (primarily the chaparral vegetation community type) management, ostensibly for fire management and vegetation restoration. However, it also resulted in some vegetation conversion - particularly encouraging non-native grasslands and never achieved its purported goals.

The VTP would remove native vegetation across a vastly over-scaled 250,000-acre footprint each year, at massive financial and ecological cost. You may be under the impression that its purpose is to protect Californians from the devastating wind-driven fires that ravaged Paradise, Santa Rosa, Ventura, and so many other places. You may think it will save some of the billions of dollars now spent by the state and federal governments fighting these fires. But it will do none of these things.

CalFire now admits that the program would be ineffective for the huge wildfire events that cause the vast majority of loss of life and property damage, which are the ones being driven by wind. Faced with this fact, CalFire proposes to enact the very same program for fires not being driven by wind, although these typically come under control and are not the fires of concern. Indeed, in many parts of the state, the VTP will not only do no good, but will be counterproductive by promoting highly flammable weeds.

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

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

Please bring scientific and budgetary accountability to CalFire.

Sincerely,

Bill Tippets
La Jolla, CA

cc: Secretary of Natural Resources