

CSAC Issue Brief

Disaster Recovery and Resilience

Background

The 2017 fire season was among the deadliest and most destructive in California's history. In October, a series of wildfires erupted in Northern California and engulfed 100 square miles. Soon after, several other wildfires devastated more than 245,000 acres across the state and destroyed over 8,900 structures. Tragically, 44 lives were lost, and containment of the blazes took nearly two weeks. In December, another series of wildfires erupted in Southern California, followed by a storm system that caused flash flooding, erosion, and substantial mud and debris flows throughout the burned areas.

Climate-related conditions such as warming temperatures, statewide drought, and our tree mortality crisis are compounding wildfire risk, resulting in what Governor Brown describes as the "new normal" of increasingly catastrophic natural disasters. CSAC is engaging in a number of efforts to help counties recover and become more resilient to future events.

CSAC has taken the lead role in negotiating fiscal relief packages for the counties devastated by the 2017 fires. CSAC has

helped develop accurate data on lost property tax revenue and establish direct dialogue with the Administration's senior budget staff. The Legislature is considering a variety of policy responses to make California more resilient, including changes to land-use and forestry practices, emergency notification procedures, utility infrastructure and operating procedures, and insurance laws.

CSAC has also convened several summits to facilitate direct communication and dialogue between county supervisors and staff in disaster-impacted counties and key state and federal administrators.

Finally, CSAC has created a Resiliency Advisory Committee to lead the effort to make California more resilient. This group of appointed supervisors and staff will help guide CSAC's engagement and advocacy efforts on state and federal resiliency and sustainability policy and funding priorities. They will provide leadership to California's state resiliency efforts through a county-led network of disaster preparedness and hazard mitigation stakeholders.

Talking Points

- **CSAC strongly supports the full property tax backfill** to counties affected by the recent natural disasters and urges Administration to consider other revenue streams, such as sales and hotel taxes, that support local services, infrastructure, and programs.
- **CSAC supports policy changes that modernize and enhance vegetation and forest management practices** for fire prevention and carbon sequestration; promote public infrastructure that maximizes resilience to extreme weather events; and provide resources and tools for hazard mitigation, resilience, and adaptation planning.
- **CSAC strongly opposes immunity for investor-owned utilities**, retroactive or otherwise, regarding legal liability resulting from utility-caused fires.

