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An act to amend Sections 4124 and 4124.5 of the Public Resources Code,
relating to wildfire prevention.

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THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Section 4124 of the Public Resources Code is amended to read:

4124. (a) For the purposes of this article, “fire prevention activities” means those lawful activities that reduce the risk of wildfire in California, including, but not limited to, mechanical vegetation management, prescribed grazing, prescribed burns, creation of defensible space, communitywide mitigation and community perimeter hardening, and retrofitting of structures to increase fire resistance.

(b) For purposes of this section, “communitywide mitigation and community perimeter hardening” means activities that reduce wildfire risk and bolster fire prevention efforts on lands in the areas described in Sections 51178 and 51179 of the Government Code and paragraph (2) of subdivision (b) of Section 4124.5, including, but not limited to, activities adjacent to evacuation routes within state responsibility areas, local responsibility areas, and federal responsibility areas to the extent permitted by federal law, that improve a community’s resiliency to wildfire.

SEC. 2. Section 4124.5 of the Public Resources Code is amended to read:

4124.5. (a) The department shall establish a local assistance grant program for fire prevention and home hardening education activities in California. Groups eligible for grants shall include, but are not limited to, local agencies, resource conservation districts, fire safe councils, the California Conservation Corps, certified community conservation corps as defined in Section 14507.5, University of California Cooperative Extension, the Board of Commissioners under California Volunteers described in Section 8411 of the Government Code, Native American tribes, and qualified nonprofit organizations. The department may establish a cost-share requirement for one or more categories of projects.

(b) (1) The local assistance grant program shall establish a robust year-round fire prevention effort in and near fire-threatened communities that focuses on increasing the protection of people, structures, and communities. To the maximum extent practicable, the grants shall be designed to be durable and adaptively managed so that while improving resiliency to wildfire, the projects, when on forest land, retain a mixture of species and sizes of trees to protect habitat values. The department shall prioritize, to the extent feasible, projects that are multiyear efforts.

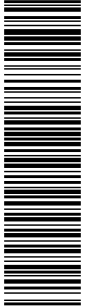
(2) For purposes of this subdivision, “fire-threatened communities” means those communities in high and very high fire hazard severity zones, identified by the State Fire Marshal pursuant to Section 51178 of the Government Code, or Article 9 (commencing with Section 4201) of this code, or on the “Fire Risk Reduction Community” list maintained by the board pursuant to Section 4290.1.

(c) Eligible activities shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following:

(1) Development and implementation of public education and outreach programs. Programs may include technical assistance, new technologies, game elements to enhance and accelerate the education of property owners, workforce recruitment and training, and equipment purchases.

(2) Fire prevention activities as defined in Section 4124.

(3) Projects to improve compliance with defensible space requirements as required by Section 4291 through increased inspections, assessments, and assistance for residents with relevant socioeconomic characteristics, as defined in Section 8654.7 of the Government Code.



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(4) Technical assistance to local agencies to improve fire prevention and reduce fire hazards.

(5) Creation of additional “Firewise USA” communities in the state or other community planning or certification programs deemed as appropriate by the department.

(6) (A) Projects to improve public safety, safety and fire prevention capabilities, including, but not limited to, access to emergency equipment, prepositioned mobile rigid water storage, and mobile rigid dip tanks to support firefighting efforts, projects to improve the response and effectiveness of fire engines and helicopters, and projects that make improvements to public evacuation routes on lands described in Sections 51178 and 51179 of the Government Code and paragraph (2) of subdivision (b) to improve resiliency to wildfire.

(B) For purposes of this section, “mobile rigid dip tank” is a mobile rigid dip tank for storing water, retardant, or other firefighting material for the on-ground equipment or aerial refilling of firefighting helicopters that is constructed of steel and is designed to be resistant to vandalism when left unattended.

(C) For purposes of this section, “mobile rigid water storage” is a mobile rigid water tank for storing water for refilling of ground equipment or helicopter dip tank, or both, that is constructed of steel and is designed to be resistant to vandalism when left unattended and have an extended service life.

(7) Vegetation management along roadways and driveways to reduce fire risk. Where appropriate, the Department of Transportation shall be consulted if state infrastructure will be affected. Those projects shall remain consistent with paragraph (1) of subdivision (b).

(8) Public education outreach regarding making homes and communities more wildfire resilient, including training on defensible space and prescribed grazing.

(9) Projects to reduce the flammability of structures and communities to prevent their ignition from wind-driven embers.

(10) Development of a risk reduction checklist for communities that includes defensible space criteria, structural vulnerability potential, and personal evacuation plans.

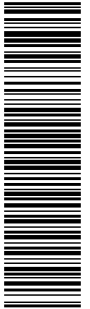
(11) (A) Projects involving the application of prescribed grazing, which may include the installation of fencing or watering improvements.

(B) Watering improvements described in subparagraph (A) shall not include the creation of a well or replacement of well infrastructure.

(d) The department may consider the fire risk of an area, the geographic balance of projects, and whether the project is complementary to other fire prevention or forest health activities when awarding local assistance grants.

(e) When reviewing applications for the grant program created pursuant to this section, the department shall give priority to any local governmental entity qualified to perform defensible space assessments pursuant to Section 4291.5 in very high and high fire hazard severity zones, as identified by the State Fire Marshal pursuant to Section 51178 of the Government Code or Article 9 (commencing with Section 4201) of this chapter or by a local agency pursuant to Section 51179 of the Government Code, for using the common reporting platform created pursuant to subdivision (c) of Section 4291.5 to report that information.

(f) (1) The director may authorize advance payments from a grant awarded pursuant to this section. The advance payment shall not exceed 25 percent of the total



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grant award. The director may authorize a greater amount, not to exceed 50 percent of either the total grant award or the cost of equipment or supplies, whichever amount is less, for the purpose of purchasing necessary equipment or supplies.

(2) The grantee shall expend the funds from the advance payment within six months of receipt, unless the department waives this requirement.

(3) The grantee shall file an accountability report with the department no later than six months from the date of receiving the funds and no later than every six months thereafter.

(g) Until July 1, 2025, the department may authorize advance payments on a grant awarded under this section in accordance with subdivision (d) of Section 11019.1 of the Government Code.

(h) The department may expand or amend an existing grant program to meet the requirements of this section.

(i) Funding for the local assistance grant program created pursuant to this section shall be made upon appropriation by the Legislature.

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LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

Bill No.

as introduced, Seyarto.

General Subject: Wildfire prevention: local assistance grant program: communitywide mitigation and community perimeter hardening: mobile rigid water storage.

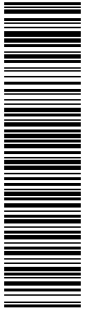
Existing law requires the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to establish a local assistance grant program for fire prevention and home hardening education activities in California and extends eligibility for grants to, among others, local agencies, resource conservation districts, fire safe councils, the California Conservation Corps, certified community conservation corps, Native American tribes, and qualified nonprofit organizations. Existing law defines "fire prevention activities" for these purposes to mean those lawful activities that reduce the risk of wildfire in California, including, but not limited to, mechanical vegetation management, prescribed grazing, prescribed burns, creation of defensible space, and retrofitting of structures to increase fire resistance.

This bill would revise the definition of fire prevention activities to include communitywide mitigation and community perimeter hardening, as defined.

Existing law provides that eligible activities under the local assistance grant program includes, among other things, projects to improve public safety, including, but not limited to, access to emergency equipment and improvements to public evacuation routes.

This bill would expand that provision to specifically include prepositioned mobile rigid water storage and mobile rigid dip tanks, as defined, projects to improve the response and effectiveness of fire engines and helicopters, and projects that make improvements to public evacuation routes on specified lands to improve resiliency to wildfire.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes. State-mandated local program: no.



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