

March 6, 2020



CAL FIRE Grant Program CEQA Overview

California Department of Forestry and Fire
Protection
CAL FIRE



Overview

California Climate
Investments – Background

Program Objectives

CEQAs Roll

Project Administration



California Climate Investments

The 2018-2019 budget allocated \$160 million to CAL FIRE CCI Programs:

- Forest Health, Forest Legacy, and Fire Prevention grants, CAL FIRE Urban and Community Forestry Program Research specific grants.

The 2019-2020 budget allocated \$165 million to support these programs.



The Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF)

- Cap-and-Trade Program began in 2012
- Market-based regulation
- Companies must hold enough emission allowances to cover their emissions and can buy/sell allowances on the open market
- Allowances sold at quarterly auctions and reserve sales
- Proceeds go into the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF)
- Legislature & Governor appropriate GGRF funds for projects that meet the goals of AB 32



AB 32 The Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006

- Requires California to reduce GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020
- Helps mitigate risks associated with climate change, while improving energy efficiency, expanding use of renewable energy resources & cleaner transportation, & reducing waste
- Regulatory & market-based programs
- California Air Resources Board is the lead agency
- For more information:
<http://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/ab32/ab32.htm>



California Climate Investments



Cap-and-Trade Auctions



Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF)

Annual Budget Appropriations

\$\$



State Agencies



Authority

\$\$



California Climate Investments

Forest Health Program

Activities



Priority projects will implement a mix of these activities:

- Forest fuels reduction
- Prescribed fire
- Pest management
- Reforestation
- Biomass utilization
- Research
- Conservation – Forest Legacy

Fire
Prevention
Program
Activities

Priority projects will implement a mix of these activities:

- Forest fuels reduction
- Fire prevention planning
- Fire prevention education



California Forest Legacy Program



- Protect environmentally important forestland threatened with conversion to non-forest uses
- Ensure CA forests remain a carbon storage sink
- Conservation easements or fee title



Forest Health

Research Program



- Stand-alone research in support of goals of Forest Carbon Plan
- Identify outstanding questions, prioritize needs, and fund sound scientific studies
- Support forest landowners, resource agencies, and fire management organizations in California

Research- only projects

	Project Type	Budget %	Expected Number of Awards
1	Projects on any land in CA relevant to the Forest Carbon Plan	50%	2-6
2	Projects on Demonstration State Forests	40%	2-5
3	Graduate student projects	10%	2-5



Environmental Compliance



- If applicant is a public agency, they will assume the role of lead agency.
- If the applicant is not a public agency, CAL FIRE will assume the role of lead agency.
- Project work completed on Federal lands must comply with NEPA.

CEQA



CEQA applies to governmental action that may affect the environment. This includes actions that an agency:

- Carries out.
- Supports.
- Issues a permit (for a private activity).



CEQA

(Continued)



- Grantee must submit proof of California Environmental Quality Act and/or National Environmental Policy Act compliance within one year of the execution of the grant agreement.

CEQA How?



- 1. **Notice of exemption (NOE)** filed with the State Clearinghouse or the county clerk.
- 2. **Initial study** and **negative declaration** or **mitigated negative declaration** and all associated noticing documents filed with the State Clearinghouse or the county clerk.
- 3. Draft and final **environmental impact report** and all associated noticing documents filed with the State Clearinghouse or the county clerk.

CEQA How?

(Continued)



- 4. **Timber harvesting permit** or notice in compliance with the California Forest Practice Act and Rules for projects that undertake timber operations per Public Resources Code § 4527.
- 5. Finding of no significant impact-decision notice, **categorical exclusion-decision memo** or environmental impact statement-record of decision prepared in compliance with the **National Environmental Policy Act** for projects that are exempt from CEQA pursuant to Public Resources Code § 4799.05(b).
- 6. Certification that the project qualifies for the limited **suspension of requirements of CEQA pursuant to the Governor's October 30, 2015, Proclamation of a State of Emergency**. Pursuant to paragraph 15 of the Governor's October 30, 2015, Proclamation of a State of Emergency, CAL FIRE, in its sole discretion, must concur with the certification by the Grantee.

CEQA

How?

(Continued)



Statutory Exemptions – granted by legislature

- Preventing and mitigating an emergency.
- Ministerial projects.
- Others.

Categorical Exemptions – 33 classes

- These classes of activities do not have a significant effect on the environment.

14 CCR § 15063

CEQA How?

(Continued)



If the activity is subject to CEQA and not exempt, the lead agency will conduct an initial study. The **initial study**:

- Is based on CEQA Guidelines Appendix G.
- May be prepared by the lead agency, project proponent, or contractor.
- Considers all aspects of the project (planning, implementation, operation).
- Determines if a significant effect on the environment will occur.
- Determines if the project needs modification.
- Determines the type of environmental document.

14 CCR § 15063

CEQA

How?

(Continued)



If the **results** of the **initial study** show the project:

- Will **not have a significant effect** on the environment, the lead agency prepares a **negative declaration**.
- Will have a significant effect on the environment, but **mitigation will lessen the effect to a less-than-significant** level, the lead agency prepares a **mitigated negative declaration**.
- **Will have a significant effect** on the environment, the lead agency prepares an **environmental impact report**.

14 CCR § 15063(b)

CEQA How?

(Continued)



- For **exempt projects** where the **grantee is a public agency**, the grantee will be responsible for:
 - (a) preparing the Environmental Review Report for an Exempt Project and notice of exemption; and
 - (b) filing the notice of exemption.

CEQA How?

(Continued)



- For **non-exempt projects** where the **grantee is a public agency**, the grantee will assume the role of lead agency. The **lead agency** is responsible for:
 - (a) performing the necessary environmental effects analysis;
 - (b) preparing environmental documents; and
 - (c) filing associated notices.

CEQA How?

(Continued)



- When CAL FIRE is the lead agency, the grantee must work closely with the department to ensure the environmental documents reflect its independent judgement.

CEQA

How?

(Continued)



- For all environmental documents where **CAL FIRE is the lead agency**, except timber harvesting permits or notices, cultural resources must be assessed per the procedures outlined in **Archaeological Review Procedures for CAL FIRE Projects**, which is available on the CAL FIRE Archaeology Program's website

<https://www.fire.ca.gov/programs/resource-management/resource-protection-improvement/environmental-protection-program/archaeology-program/>

CEQA

How?

(Continued)



What are the options to pursue any of these approaches?

- City Planning Dept.
- County Planning Dept.
- USFS Office
- CAL FIRE Unit
 - VMP, NOE, CaIVTP, CFIP.

Project Administration Reminder



- Project amendments & termination
- Eligible & ineligible costs
 - **Meeting CEQA is an eligible cost to add to the grants.**
- Payment of grant funds - advances





GRANT UPDATES

Get Updates on CAL FIRE's
Grant Programs

<http://www.fire.ca.gov/grants/grants>

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