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ORANGE SKIES TO SAFER SKIES: NEW SENATE BILL TARGETS WILDFIRES & FIREFIGHTER SUPPORT



By Kent Clark

A new bill, introduced by Senator Mike McGuire of Senate District 2, aims to protect and restore Northern California forests, as well as provide support to firefighters in this region. SB-79, otherwise known as the California Forest Protection, Firefighter Support, and Forest Restoration Act, is a one-time $20 million pilot program inside CAL FIRE to prevent wildfires, support firefighters, and clean up and restore California's forests.

San Francisco and Bay Area residents that witnessed the 2020 wildfires that burned in Northern California forests can understand that these fires send smoke across the entire Bay Area. Thick smoke and ash trapped high in the atmosphere, producing some of the worst air quality in the world. This act, though not yet applicable to all of California, will prevent millions of people across the state from breathing in smoke when there is no fire anywhere near them.



Orange Skies Day (San Francisco) - September 9, 2020

***EXCLUSIVE* Interview with Senator Mike McGuire**

In an interview with the author of this bill, California Senator Mike McGuire, discussed the importance of this bill not only for the people in his district, but the rest of California and its sacred environments with historical significance as well. "I'm hoping that this pilot program is expanded to the rest of California. Northern California isn't the only place in the state that is affected by wildfires. We've seen that with the LA fires [...] We've been talking about how this would affect the people, which of course is very important. Keeping people safe is priority number one. But also the surrounding wildlife and environments. A lot of my district includes the Red wood forests and keeping that alive, well, and healthy is a very important part of California's environment and culture, as they've been around for many years."

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NEW SENATE BILL TARGETS WILDFIRES & FIREFIGHTER SUPPORT (CONTINTUED)

Key Facts of the Bill:

- Effective date: January 1, 2027.
- Spending categories: Firefighter prevention and preparedness ($9M), forest management and restoration ($7M), forest and community cleanup ($3M), and research, monitoring, and evaluation ($1M).
- CAL FIRE awards grants to local fire departments, local governments, federally recognized tribes, and nonprofits, prioritizing high fire hazard areas.



Senator Mike McGuire will present SB-79 to committee to be heard in during the upcoming legislative session.

- The bill includes a firefighter wildfire prevention program, tribal consultation, and cultural burning provisions.
- There will be an annual report to the Legislature each January 1, and funds that expire after three fiscal years.

Senator McGuire seems to be optimistic about SB-79 getting passed. He states, “I am optimitisc on it getting passed [...] I’ve talked to many of my other democratic senators and they seem very open about it,” he stated. “There are other bills relating to wilfires by both Democrats and Republicans. That is something I’m willing to support if my bill fails to pass. It’s something that would at least help my district.”

Other than Senators with similar policies in mind, the California Chamber of Commerce and the Sierra Club are among supporters of the California Forest Protection, Firefighter Support, and Forest Restoration Act.



Learn more about Senator Mike McGuire’s Bill here! SB-79->

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