Re: AB 642 (Friedman); Request for signature

Dear Governor Newsom:

We are writing to notify you that the Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center strongly supports AB 642, which will protect Californians living in high fire hazard areas by making various changes to increase cultural burning and prescribed fire and improve fire prevention. We urge you to sign this important bill and help California move toward a more fire-resilient future.

On January 8, 2021, the Governor’s Forest Management Task Force (Task Force) released a comprehensive action plan to reduce wildfire risk for vulnerable communities, improve the health of forests and wildlands, and accelerate action to combat climate change. The Task Force’s action plan, among other things, called for expanding the use of prescribed fire and cultural burning. The Task Force’s action plan also called for the support of community wildfire risk reduction. AB 642 will assist in implementing these portions of the Forest Management Task Force action plan.

AB 642 includes a number of critical actions around prescribed fire and fire prevention, including (but not limited to) the following:

- Requires development of a proposal for a prescribed fire training center in California, in collaboration with a wide range of partners;
- Requires CAL FIRE to consider availability of non-departmental contingency resources when making decisions on whether to issue prescribed fire permits;
- Takes steps to improve retention on dedicated fuels crews, and requires outreach to tribal communities for employment on those crews;
- Requires creation of a Cultural Burning Liaison at CAL FIRE;
- Requires CAL FIRE to respect tribal sovereignty, customs, and culture when engaging with tribes, tribal organizations, and cultural practitioners;
- Requires CAL FIRE to improve and update wildfire severity maps.

We believe California must take bold action to become more fire resilient and reduce the damage caused by high-severity wildfires. AB 642 includes a powerful set of actions to set California on a better trajectory for living with fire in the future. For these reasons, the Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center strongly supports AB 642 and urges your signature on this important bill.

Governor Newsom
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814
leg.unit@gov.ca.gov
Sincerely,

Jessica Matthews  
Program Director  
Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center  
Jessica@mountshastaecology.org