To: Interested Parties
From: Megafire Action
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Subject: Five Wildfire Decisions Facing California's Next Governor

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Overview

California spent the past year building one of the most comprehensive state wildfire policy frameworks in the country. Gov. Gavin Newsom signed seven bills from the Joint Megafire Prevention Package, alongside other major actions to strengthen landscape resilience, protect homes and communities, and accelerate wildfire technology. New Zone Zero regulations add another critical tool for reducing the risk that wildfires destroy homes and spread through communities.

But passing policy is only the first step. California's next wildfire challenge is implementation and scale — and the next governor will inherit many of the tools, but also many of the decisions, that will determine whether the state succeeds.

That means turning new home-hardening programs into a mass market for wildfire resilience; connecting mitigation investments to meaningful insurance outcomes; building local capacity to help communities implement new requirements; moving promising technologies from pilots to statewide deployment; and securing durable funding to treat high-risk landscapes. Done right, California has an opportunity to move from incremental risk reduction toward protecting homes and landscapes at a scale that matches the threat.

Here are five wildfire decisions that should be on the agenda of California's next governor:

1. Will California Commit to One Million Wildfire-Safe Homes?

California will not meaningfully reduce the risk of entire communities burning down, stabilize insurance markets, or contain utilities' wildfire liabilities until we are hardening homes by the hundreds of thousands. The next governor should launch a Million Wildfire-Safe Homes Initiative, setting an ambitious statewide target and mobilizing the political capital needed to achieve mass adoption. Like California's Million Solar Roofs Initiative, success will require sustained gubernatorial leadership and a coordinated strategy to make wildfire resilience a mainstream investment for homeowners.

2. Will California Make Home Hardening Affordable at Scale?

Half of homeowners in high-risk areas cite cost as their biggest barrier to mitigation. The next governor must capitalize the new SB 894 low-interest financing program, pair loans with smaller, targeted grants, and move beyond expensive, one-home-at-a-time assistance models. California should also explore dedicating a portion of insurance premium tax revenue growth to a permanent home-hardening fund. Public dollars must leverage private capital to reach tens of thousands of homeowners annually, rather than paying the full cost of each retrofit.

3. Will California Reward Homeowners for Reducing Wildfire Risk?

Homeowners need a clear financial reason to invest in wildfire resilience. Building on the new home-hardening certifications established by AB 1934, California should work with insurers to establish tiered premium discounts that reward progressively stronger mitigation and clear

pathways for homeowners to move off the FAIR Plan after completing certified improvements. Targeted tax credits and rebates can further reduce costs. The goal is simple: homeowners should know what improvements to make, what they will cost, and what financial benefits they can expect.

4. Will California Move Wildfire Technology from Pilots to Scale?

California has pioneered wildfire technologies but too often struggles to deploy promising innovations at scale. The next governor must fully fund the Fire Innovation Unit established by SB 1079, with dedicated resources to rapidly test, procure, and deploy technologies that improve prevention, detection, and suppression. With billions spent on fuels management and firefighting, even modest improvements in effectiveness can deliver substantial returns. Firefighters deserve the best available technology to keep them safe and give them a better chance of stopping catastrophic fires.

5. Will California Invest in Sustainable Fire Resilient Landscapes?

California must move beyond measuring success primarily in acres treated and embrace outcome-based measures that track meaningful reductions in wildfire risk. The next governor should adopt a 10-year strategy to prioritize investments in the highest-risk landscapes to restore conditions that will allow land managers to transition to a long-term strategy of sustainable maintenance with beneficial fire. A statewide wildfire data commons, stronger landscape-level planning, and risk-based project prioritization can direct limited dollars toward the highest-return interventions. The next governor must also continue permitting reforms that accelerate prescribed and cultural burning while securing durable General Fund and Cap-and-Invest funding for beneficial fire, fuels reduction, and long-term landscape stewardship.

Conclusion

California has laid the groundwork for a different approach to wildfire resilience. The next governor has the opportunity to turn that foundation into lasting change by making homes safer and more affordable to protect, accelerating innovation, and restoring healthier, more resilient landscapes. The question isn't whether California has the tools necessary to solve the megafire crisis, but whether its next leaders will commit the resources, coordination, and political will to deploy them at scale.

If you're interested in learning more, please don't hesitate to reach out to comms@megafire.org.

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