

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 2146

**Introduced by Assembly Member Patterson
(Coauthors: Assembly Members Bigelow, Brough, and Olsen)**

February 17, 2016

An act to add Section 4599 to the Public Resources Code, relating to forestry and fire protection.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2146, as introduced, Patterson. Forestry and fire protection: greenhouse gas emissions.

Existing law requires the Department of Forestry and Fire Prevention to implement various fire prevention programs intended to protect forest resources and prevent uncontrollable wildfires. The California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 requires that all moneys, except for fines and penalties, collected by the State Air Resources Board from the auction or sale of allowances as part of a market-based compliance mechanism to be deposited in the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund and to be available, upon appropriation by the Legislature, for greenhouse gas emissions reduction activities.

This bill would provide that \$200,000,000 from the fund shall be made available annually, upon appropriation in the annual Budget Act, to the department for activities that reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the state caused by uncontrolled forest fires.

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

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the
2 following:

3 (a) California continues to experience catastrophic wildfires of
4 a magnitude previously unknown. Unlike traditional regenerative
5 forest fires, modern forest fires are extremely destructive with
6 devastating economic and environmental consequences, including
7 loss of life and property destruction, job losses, erosion,
8 downstream drinking water quality degradation, proliferation of
9 nonnative and invasive species, nonnative species choking out
10 reemerging native vegetation, soil sterilization, ecosystem
11 destruction, and tremendous amounts of greenhouse gas emissions.

12 (b) While the state focuses its climate change efforts on reducing
13 greenhouse gas emissions from industrial sources, it is turning a
14 blind eye to the equally significant greenhouse gas and short-lived
15 climate pollutant emissions resulting from forest fires.

16 (c) The 2015 calendar year brought disastrous fires of high
17 intensity, including the Rough Fire, which burned over 150,000
18 acres over a two-months period, injuring 12 people; the 2015
19 Valley Fire, which caused four civilian casualties, four injured
20 firefighters, over 1,000 destroyed homes, 27 destroyed multifamily
21 structures, and over 600 other structures destroyed, prompting the
22 declaration of a major disaster from the President of the United
23 States; and the Butte Fire that continued for over a month, resulting
24 in two deaths and destroying 475 homes and over 350 other
25 structures.

26 (d) The 2013 Rim Fire burned over 250,000 acres over 69 days
27 and caused hundreds of millions of dollars in economic and
28 environmental damage; destroyed significant habitat for a number
29 of California's rarest species; and demanded more than \$125
30 million in firefighting resources. It is estimated that the Rim Fire
31 released over 11 million metric tons of greenhouse gases, which
32 is equivalent to the annual emissions of 2.3 million cars. Experts
33 have attributed the fire's exponential growth to a century's worth
34 of fuel left behind due to historical fire suppression policies and
35 practices.

36 (e) The 2007 Angora Fire resulted in roughly 143,000 tons of
37 greenhouse gas emissions, or approximately 46.2 tons per acre.
38 Studies indicate that those emissions could have been lowered to

1 12 tons per acre if the tree density were reduced from
2 approximately 273 trees per acre to the natural 60 trees per acre
3 level.

4 SEC. 2. Section 4599 is added to the Public Resources Code,
5 to read:

6 4599. The sum of two hundred million dollars (\$200,000,000)
7 from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, created pursuant to
8 Section 16428.8 of the Government Code, shall be made available
9 annually to the department, upon appropriation in the annual
10 Budget Act, for activities that reduce greenhouse gas emissions in
11 the state caused by uncontrolled forest fires, including, but not
12 limited to, vegetation management, forest overgrowth reduction,
13 and measures to ensure that future fires are more consistent with
14 the historic regenerative fire regime.

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