

**Little Hoover Commission  
Hearing on Forest Management and Tree Mortality**

**Thursday, January 26, 2017  
9:30 am  
State Capitol, Room 437**

Thank you Chairman Nava and Commissioners for inviting me to speak on the tree mortality crisis in California. My name is Mark Ghilarducci, and I am the Director of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES).

After five years of persistent drought, California is experiencing an additional cascading impact, the unprecedented die-off of trees due to bark beetle infestation. In response to this catastrophic epidemic, on October 30, 2015, Governor Brown proclaimed a State of Emergency that included provisions to identify and expedite the removal and disposal of the hazardous dead and dying trees. At the time of the proclamation, there were an estimated 22 million drought-induced dead or dying trees. At the present time, just over a year later, there are more than 102 million, dead and dying, in multiple counties along our Sierra front, and in our state and national forests and parks. In the coming months and years, millions of additional drought-stressed trees are expected to die. Many of these trees are located in communities, in neighborhoods, and along personal property, posing a significant threat to public safety and critical infrastructure, should they fall. These trees also serve as significant fuel for wildfires.

In Governor Brown's State of Emergency Proclamation, he directed the establishment of a public-private Tree Mortality Task Force. The Tree Mortality Task Force is comprised of state and federal agencies, local governments, utilities, and various stakeholders that identify and confirm threat, monitor ongoing and evolving conditions, and address potential mitigation solutions with regard to tree mortality. The Governor's Office and its Office of Emergency Services, along with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) co-chair and coordinates activities of the Tree Mortality Task Force.

California has been focusing its resources toward immediately removing trees that pose a risk to public safety and critical infrastructure. As of June 2016, California's state agencies have expended nearly \$190 million to begin the process of removing hazardous trees that pose a threat to health and safety, including the removal of dead and dying trees along state and federal roadways.

The State's efforts include providing grants to local entities, fire districts, fire safe councils, and tribal entities for planning and tree removal efforts. Additionally, California has identified high-hazard areas in order to remove trees that pose an immediate threat to public health and safety, create evacuation routes, and establish safety/safe refuge zones. Equipment, foresters, hand crews, engine companies, and heavy equipment operators all have been redirected to hazardous tree removal and wildfire fuel reduction efforts. This includes efforts to chip, burn and/or recycle material to lessen the threat to public safety.

Cal OES works closely with state agencies and local governments in the response to and recovery from emergencies and disasters within the State of California, under the authorities of the California Emergency Services Act, the California Disaster Assistance Act (CDAA), and/or when applicable, the federal Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act. Cal OES is directly responsible for managing disaster recovery programs and providing or facilitating assistance to local governments, special districts, certain nonprofit organizations, individuals, businesses and agricultural communities impacted by emergencies or disasters. Cal OES acts as grantor for the state CDAA program or as the grantee for any federally-funded disaster assistance programs.

Governor Brown's State of Emergency Proclamation authorized the allocation of CDAA funds to eligible applicants for the identification, removal, and disposal of dead and dying trees which pose a threat of falling on public right-of-way roads and public infrastructure. Cal OES has been working closely with local governments with identified tree mortality to assist them with understanding eligibility and with preparing applications for CDAA assistance to remove the hazardous dead and dying trees.

Currently, a total of 21 counties and special districts have submitted applications for CDAA assistance. The initial damage estimates provided by the counties and special districts is \$132,515,595 with current obligated CDAA-approved costs at \$579,752. The state share on disaster assistance cannot exceed 75 percent of the total eligible costs pursuant to Government Code section 8585.9.

Examples of eligible costs that are covered under CDAA are:

- Evaluation and identification of dead or dying trees threatening the public rights-of-way and public infrastructure by a certified arborist or forester;
- Removal of trees threatening public rights-of-way and public infrastructure, which may include trees on private property;
- Contracted tree removal, transportation, holding site fees, and disposal;
- Reasonable overtime labor and equipment costs.

Examples of non-eligible costs that CDAA are precluded from covering are:

- Removal of trees from private property that do not pose a threat to public rights-of-way or public infrastructure;
- Straight-time Force Account labor (normal daily workforce labor);
- Income, fees, revenues, wages, lost or voluntarily waived by local agency;
- Activities or costs associated with permanent work such as construction of a biomass facility; and

This problem is going to take Herculean efforts to remedy and will require the combined forces of all levels of government and the private sector. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today and can answer any additional questions that you may have.