



**Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG)
Joint Powers Authority Agenda**

STAFF REPORT

To: ESCOG Joint Powers Authority
From: Kristen Pfeiler, ESCOG staff
Subject: Wildfire Coordinator Report
Meeting date: August 27, 2025
Attachments: N/A

Sustainable Recreation and Ecosystem Management Program:

Eastern Sierra Pace and Scale Accelerator:

- Staff is working to build capacity to support the Eastern Sierra Pace and Scale Accelerator and strengthen relationships with federal and NGO partners leveraging Inyo National Forest (INF) Liaison Funding. This includes:
 - Meeting monthly with INF to identify project priorities and gaps/solutions to implementation.
 - Attending ESSRP meeting on 7/7/25.
 - Facilitating the Projects Subcommittee through the Eastern Sierra Wildfire Alliance, which is developing an updated regional project list and associated map that aligns and integrates with the CA Wildfire Taskforce Dashboard. Planning team meetings were held on 8/4/25, 8/11/25, 8/13/25, and 8/18/25. The first Project Subcommittee meeting was held on 8/14/25 and the second will be on 8/28/25. A completed project list, parameters defining how a project makes it on that list and what attributes need to be associated with that project, along with a prototype of an all-lands project map will be presented to the larger ESWA group on 9/18/25.
- Biomass Utilization Working Group
 - Staff is working in partnership with Stacy Corless and Christiana Darlington, consultants who have available funding to assist the Eastern Sierra in organizing efforts to solve for biomass generated from fuel reduction and forest health work. Staff is assisting with the facilitation of this biomass utilization working group. This continues to be one of the main barriers to full-scale execution of these types of projects like the Eastern Sierra Climate and Communities Resilience Project (ESCCRP) and is increasingly important to bring together all interested parties, as this is a complex issue that is too large for one entity to solve on their own.
 - Planning team meetings were held on 7/9/25, 7/21/25, and 8/4/25.
 - Biomass Utilization Working Group meeting was held on 8/6/25. At this meeting Whitebark Institute delivered the results of a feasibility study that was done to assess

feedstock supply for a bioenergy facility and West Biofuels indicated that they had submitted a proposal to the Inyo National Forest to build a bioenergy facility on INF managed land.

2025 CAL FIRE County Coordinator Program:

- Eastern Sierra Wildfire Alliance Development

This region faces significant wildfire potential. A single fire here can put entire communities at risk, cut off critical access routes, damage recreation resources that sustain the local economy, and degrade ecosystem health and water supplies that serve both residents and downstream users.

Compounding this risk are the diverse land ownership patterns in the region – federal, state, tribal, and private. While there is tremendous local commitment to wildfire resilience, work has often been fragmented across multiple agencies and volunteer groups with few opportunities to coordinate or align funding.

The establishment of the Eastern Sierra Wildfire Alliance (ESWA) addresses this challenge directly. ESWA provides a single regional platform where counties, federal land managers, fire districts, tribes, community Fire Safe Councils, Firewise USA sites, utilities, and nonprofit partners can plan, prioritize, and implement wildfire resilience projects together. By pooling knowledge and capacity, aligning funding, and reducing duplication, ESWA enables the region to move from isolated projects to a coordinated strategy and efficient execution that is competitive for funding.

The Inyo and Mono County Coordinators are central to this effort. Rather than building two separate, duplicative programs, the Coordinators are using CAL FIRE County Coordinator funds to operate as two halves of one integrated regional program. While their day-to-day tasks differ, they are intentionally designed to interlock and connect into the larger ESWA efforts. Inyo County provides much of the regional backbone and infrastructure development, creating systems such as an updated and interactive project pipeline, GIS mapping for project implementation, the ESWA website update with a SharePoint-style backend for collaboration and resource-sharing, governance processes, and grant alignment and project execution through the Project Management Office (PMO). Mono County delivers the front-line engagement, leading Firewise USA and Fire Safe Council organizing, volunteer mobilization, and community communications across both counties, while feeding field data back into the established systems. Together, this creates a continuous cycle: community action generates data → data informs planning and prioritization → priorities align with funding opportunities → funding drives project implementation → implementation strengthens community action. This feedback loop ensures that wildfire resilience efforts across the Eastern Sierra are not fragmented, but instead connected, adaptive, and regionally scaled. The Coordinators ensure that the community needs integrate and inform the efforts of the ESWA and that the ESWA provides support and capacity for increased community action and risk reduction.

All member agencies are represented in the ESWA meetings. Mono County Supervisors Paul McFarland and Lynda Salcido have joined regularly. Inyo County Supervisor Jen Roeser also attends. Mammoth Lakes Fire Department is an integral partner and Chief Russel from Bishop Fire Department has also attended.

- Staff is part of the core planning team for the ESWA. Planning team meetings were held on 7/2/25, 7/9/25, 8/13/25, 8/22/25.

- ESWA general meeting was held virtually on 7/14/25.
- Staff attended the Communications Subcommittee meeting through the ESWA on 6/6/25.
- Staff attended the SCALE Conference hosted by the Sierra Institute 7/23-25 in Lake Tahoe. This conference brought together many of the formal collaborative groups working to move landscape-scale projects forward. Whitebark Institute staff members also attended that conference and spoke briefly about the ESCCRP. Staff attended a workshop focused on long term contracts and agreements with federal agencies and how to leverage those to build local capacity and another workshop focused on biomass utilization.
- Eastern Sierra Riparian Resilience Working Group
 - Staff is part of the core planning team for the Eastern Sierra Riparian Resilience Working Group.
 - Staff participated in site visits to identify areas for treatment in Lone Pine, Oak Creek, and Three Creeks on 7/1/25.
 - The Eastside Riparian Working Group is an informal a collaboration of agencies, tribes, and local partners focused on treating streambeds that often act as the primary carriers of wildfire into communities. Historically, restoration and fuel reduction work in riparian areas has been slowed by complex permitting requirements. With the Governor's Proclamation suspending CEQA and certain permits, we now have a unique opportunity to advance these high-risk sites to shovel-ready status.
 - ESCOG's staff role is to coordinate to move the overall strategy forward, connecting people and agencies, aligning riparian treatments with existing projects, and ensuring work is planned and implemented effectively across jurisdictions.
- Staff submitted two grants for Inyo County and assisted with two grants for Mono County and one for 40 Acres Fire Safe Council for the CAL FIRE Prevention Grant solicitation. These projects are:
 - Mono County Community Wildfire Protection Plan Update
 - Mono County Air Curtain Burner
 - Inyo County Fuels Reduction Vouchers
 - Fuel Reduction in Inyo County Parks and Campgrounds
 - Wildfire Readiness: Ensuring Safe Emergency Access and Evacuation for the 40 Acres Community

California Jobs First Initiative:

- Staff attended recreation and tourism working group meeting on 8/8/25.