



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

STAFF REPORT

To: ESCOG Joint Powers Authority
From: Elaine Kabala, ESCOG Staff
Subject: Consideration of the Eastern Sierra Wildfire Alliance Memorandum of Understanding
Meeting date: April 22, 2026
Prepared on: April 15, 2026
Attachments: A) Eastern Sierra Wildfire Alliance Memorandum of Understanding

BACKGROUND

The Eastern Sierra Wildfire Alliance (ESWA) is an emerging regional collaborative formed in response to increasing wildfire risk in Inyo and Mono Counties. The ESWA brings together Tribal nations, federal and state land management agencies, local governments, fire agencies, nonprofits, community organizations, and private partners with the shared objective of improving wildfire resilience across jurisdictional boundaries.

ESWA has been meeting informally over the past year to improve coordination on fuels reduction, community preparedness, project planning, resource leveraging, and capacity building.

As the level of coordination and workload associated with wildfire resilience has increased, ESWA members determined that a more clearly articulated organizational structure was necessary to support shared planning, communication, and project development. In response, ESWA partners prepared a draft MOU to formalize roles, expectations, and basic governance functions while preserving the collaborative's voluntary and adaptive nature.

ESCOG was identified as a Steering Committee member based on its regional convening role, its experience with intergovernmental coordination, and its involvement in regional wildfire resilience and biomass utilization initiatives.

ANALYSIS

The draft MOU establishes a voluntary, nonbinding framework for regional collaboration. Key elements include the following:

1. **Purpose and Mission**

The MOU affirms ESWA's mission to strengthen wildfire resilience by identifying shared priorities, coordinating across landscapes, and leveraging collective resources. The document reinforces the Alliance's commitment to collaborative, inclusive, innovative, transparent, and community-driven values.

2. **Authority and Funding Provisions**

The MOU explicitly states that it does not commit ESWA members to funding contributions, project implementation, or administrative support. No party may obligate another, and no rights or responsibilities are created under law. This structure ensures that participation is voluntary and flexible.

3. **Organizational Structure**

- **General Membership:** Open to any agency, organization, or individual contributing to wildfire resilience.
- **Steering Committee:** Provides administrative support, meeting planning, and strategic guidance. Representation includes ESCOG, local counties, Tribal governments (as desired), land management agencies, fire agencies, utilities, and community representatives.
- **Administration & Staffing:** Administrative support is currently provided through funding partners and member contributions. The MOU anticipates future needs such as fiscal management, a dedicated coordinator, communications capacity, and technical support.
- **Working Groups:** Standing working groups (Funding, Projects, Communications, Community Resilience, Biomass Utilization) and ad hoc groups will support project development and strategic planning.

4. **Meetings and Public Access**

ESWA will hold quarterly, publicly accessible meetings throughout the region, potentially including field visits. Additional meetings may be scheduled as needed to support project planning or emerging opportunities.

5. **Term and Modifications**

The MOU is effective upon signature and continues through December 31, 2031. Signatories may join or withdraw at any time. Modifications require written agreement from all signatories.

ESCOG's participation would further formalize its role as a regional convener and partner on wildfire resilience efforts. Although the MOU does not require financial or staffing commitments, Steering Committee participation may involve meeting planning support, communications coordination, or technical contributions as capacity allows. ESCOG currently lends capacity support leverage Eastern Sierra Pace and Scale Accelerator funding.

The ESWA's regional focus aligns with ESCOG's work as envisioned through the Sustainable Recreation and Ecosystem Management Program (SREMP), including interagency coordination, project development, and biomass utilization efforts.

BUDGET IMPACT

There is no additional budget impact at this time. ESCOG's current participation is included in the administrative budget for the CDFW Prop 1 Eastern Sierra Pace and Scale Accelerator grant.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the ESCOG Board approve the Consideration of the Eastern Sierra Wildfire Alliance Memorandum of Understanding.