

Expanding the Use of Beneficial Fire

Sara A. Clark

Igniting Innovation:

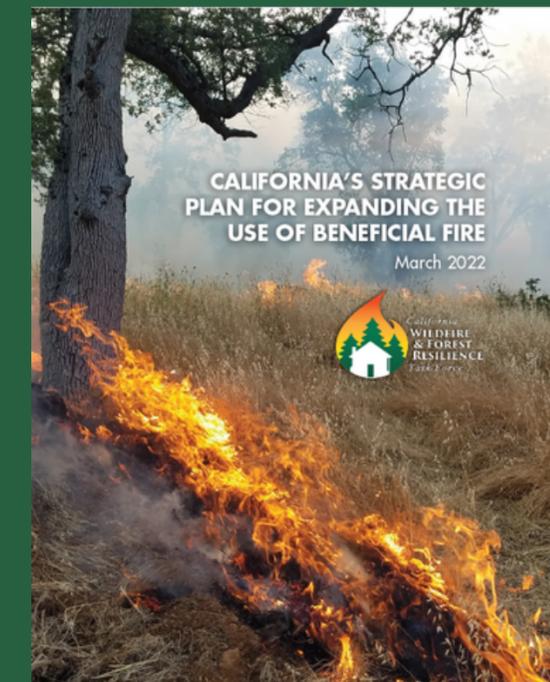
Progress and a Path Forward for Wildfire Policy

March 03, 2026



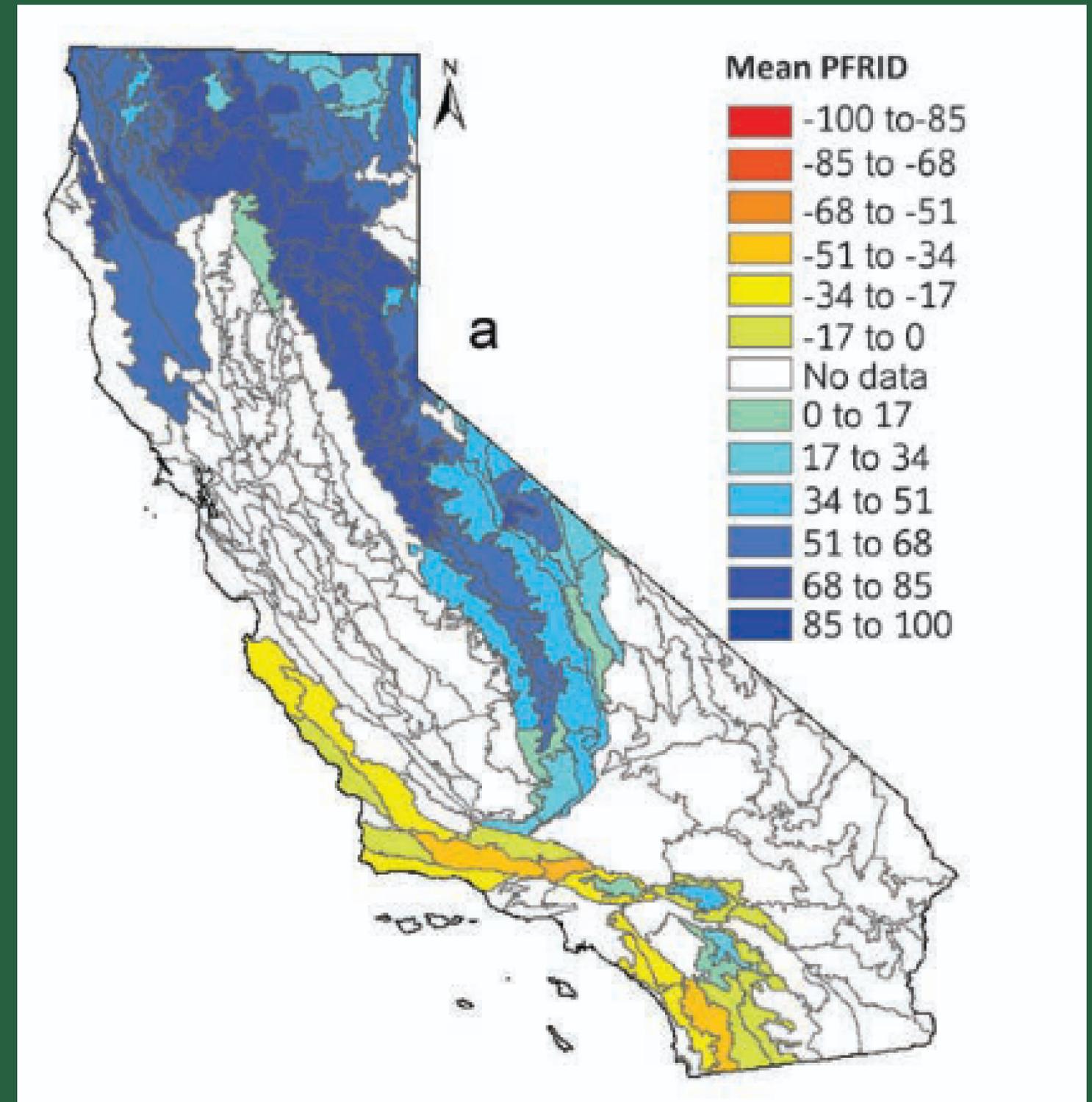
My Background

- Assist prescribed burn associations, Tribes, land trusts, and local agencies implement prescribed fire projects
- Lead Author of Good Fire I and II
- Helped draft multiple CA laws on prescribed fire liability and cultural burning
- Part of advisory group to establish California's claims fund
- Lead facilitator for California's Strategic Plan to Expand the Use of Beneficial Fire
- Subject Matter Expert for Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission



Why Beneficial Fire?

- **Prescribed Fire:** The intentional application of fire to land for wildland management goals. Prescribed fires are typically conducted in compliance with a written prescribed fire plan that outlines the conditions necessary for the burn to be “within prescription.” Regulated by state and federal law.
- **Cultural Burning:** The intentional application of fire to land by Tribes, Tribal organizations, or cultural fire practitioners to achieve cultural goals or objectives. Cultural burning can differ from prescribed fire in terms of size, seasonality, timing, prepping/planning, and post-fire treatment. Regulated by Tribal law and Indigenous Knowledge.
- **Wildfire Managed for Resource Benefit:** The strategic choice to manage unplanned ignitions to achieve management objectives, such as ecosystem restoration or hazard reduction. Fire managed for resource benefit is typically deployed in wilderness areas, national parks, and other areas in public ownership under specific conditions or circumstances. It can also be referred to as “managed fire.”



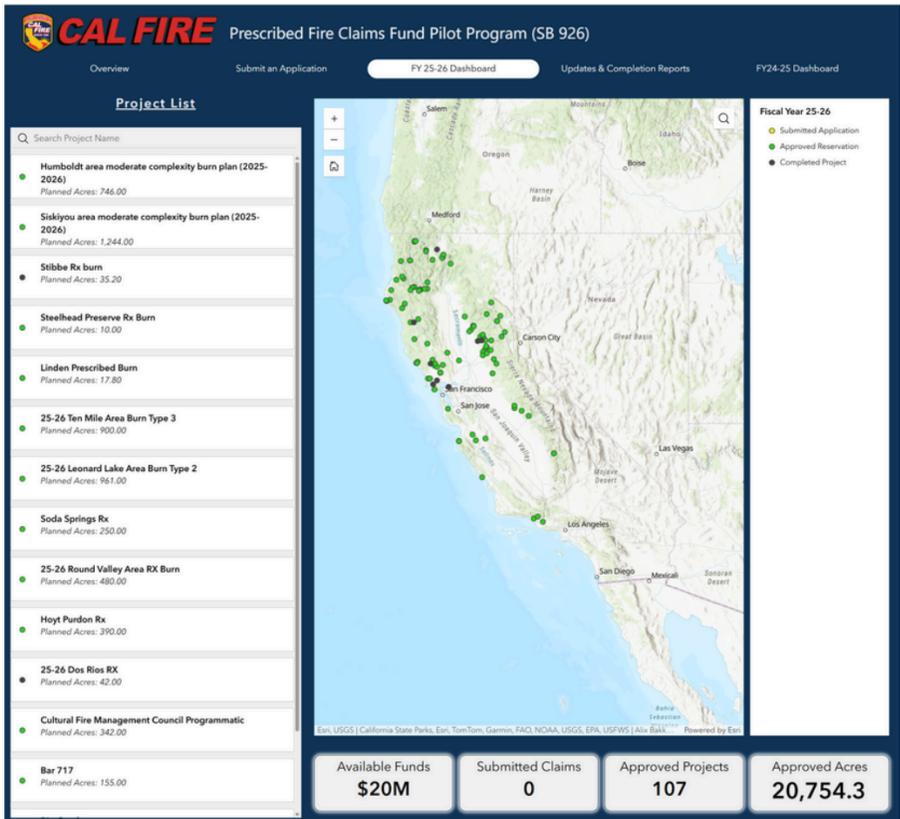
H. Safford et al., 2014. Using fire return interval departure (FRID) analysis to map spatial and temporal changes in fire frequency on national forest lands in California, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station

Addressing Liability Concerns

Establishment of Prescribed Fire Claims Funds



Modifications of liability standards and recoverable damages

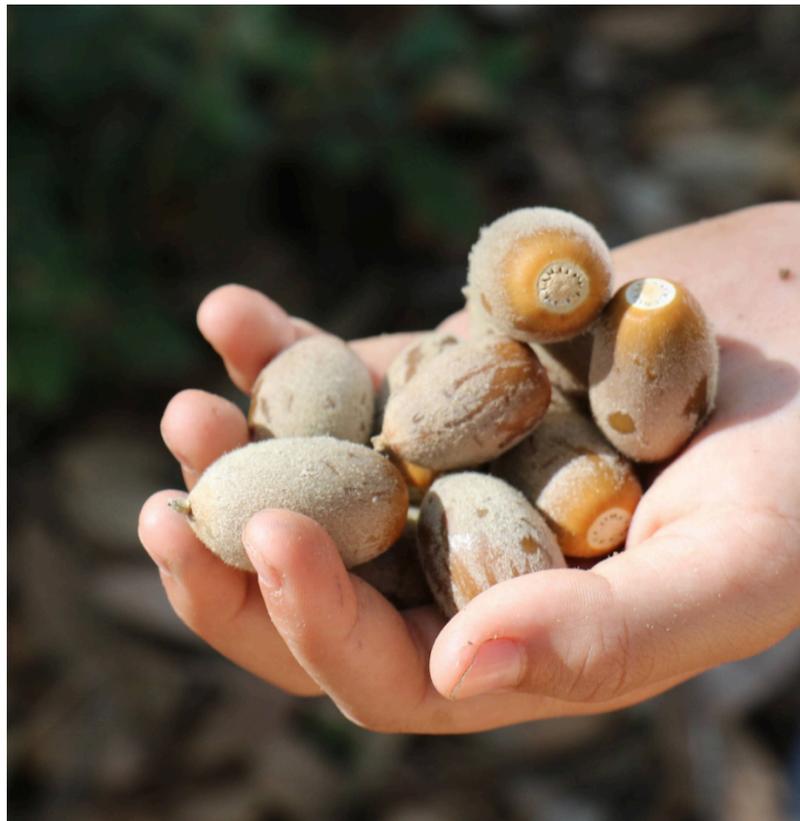


Application of Federal Tort Claims Act coverage



Enabling Cultural Burning under Tribal Law

Recognizing Tribal
Sovereignty



Enabling agreements on
federally administered lands



Clarifying BIA role on Tribal
trust lands



Cutting the “Green Tape”

National Environmental
Policy Act Review



Clean Air Act & Exceptional
Events



Endangered Species Act

