

CAPITOL OFFICE
STATE CAPITOL, ROOM 3076
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814
(916) 651-4008

DISTRICT OFFICES
102 GROVE AVE., SUITE B
OAKDALE, CA 95361
(209) 848-8001
6215 NORTH FRESNO STREET
SUITE 104
FRESNO, CA 93710
(559) 253-7122
33 C BROADWAY
JACKSON, CA 95642
(209) 223-9140
WWW.SEN.CA.GOV/BERRYHILL

California State Senate

SENATOR
TOM BERRYHILL
EIGHTH SENATE DISTRICT



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INSURANCE

September 24th, 2015

Honorable Jerry Brown
Governor, State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Tree Mortality State of Emergency Declaration

Dear Governor Brown,

I am writing to formally request that a State of Emergency be declared regarding a statewide tree mortality disaster in order to expedite the necessary funding and support needed to immediately remove dead and dying trees in afflicted areas. This is an important step in protecting and maintaining California's watersheds and wildlife habitat, promoting carbon sequestration, and protecting the safety of communities under the constant threat of severe wildfire.

Unprecedented drought has left our forests not only at high-risk of catastrophic wildfires, but also particularly susceptible to insect and disease infestation, like the Bark Beetle, leaving the forests and communities impacted even more vulnerable to wildfire. The severity of fires this summer underscores the importance and need for swift action on removing dead or dying trees.

Declaring a State of Emergency will assist the public agencies and private individuals that have been harmed by the infestation and will bring immediate attention to the role fuel reduction projects play in lowering the intensity of wildfires and stopping the spread of disease.

While, the infestation of the Bark Beetle endemic and tree mortality disaster are affecting counties statewide, I ask that you place a particular emphasis on the needs of the counties in the Sierra Nevada Watersheds. These watersheds supply nearly two-thirds of the water used in California. Any risk to it threatens to further diminish air quality, increase the release of greenhouse gases, and disrupt California's Agriculture production.

The alarming rate at which tree mortality rates have grown across the Sierra and San Joaquin forests has prompted my local counties: Madera, Mariposa, Tuolumne, and Fresno, to issue their own local emergencies and urge a State of Emergency declaration. Other counties are also considering similar declarations.

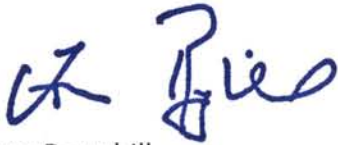
Tree mortality now ranges between 20 and 85 percent of all trees in several areas of the state encompassing several million acres statewide. Trees are dying on both private and public lands, including in national parks and managed forests. Given the scale of the disaster, it is clear that the state and federal agencies have not directed enough resources to avert or mitigate this situation.

The risk to our treasured state and national parks is too great to delay action any longer.

I urge you to make this declaration as soon as possible in order to provide much-needed resources to the counties affected and to ensure critical support is available to the local agencies that are in desperate need of assistance.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you need more information regarding this situation, please do not hesitate to contact me directly. I can be reached through my Capitol office at 916-651-4008.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Berryhill". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Tom Berryhill
Senator, 8th District

Cc: Mark Ghilarducci, Director, Emergency Services