

AB 1981

Compost Application on Fire Damaged Land

Assemblymember
Monique Limón
37TH DISTRICT



THIS BILL

AB 1981 would require CalEPA, SWRCB, CDFG, and CALFIRE to promote watershed health, reduce fire risk, and improve post fire recovery, by implementing projects that use woody biomass from forests and working lands and promote their highest and best use through onsite chip application and integration with other organic waste streams for the purposes of creating compost.

BACKGROUND

Current law requires that the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) coordinate with the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), the Air Resources Board (ARB), and the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFG) to develop and implement policies to increase organic waste as a feedstock for compost. Waste streams include agricultural, forestry and urban organic waste.

Current law also requires stakeholder engagement to promote organic waste and recycling infrastructure state-wide. The state also has a goal of reducing 75% of organic waste by 2025. While forestry waste is listed as a feedstock for compost, the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CALFIRE) and the Tree Mortality Task Force are not involved in the coordination process.

The 2017 California wildfire season was the most destructive wildfire season on record in the state of California. A total of 1,248,606 acres of land were burned across the state. Fire followed by storms also creates deadly situations. Debris Flows killed over 20 people and destroyed over 100 homes in Santa Barbara County. Restoring land burned by fire is critical and compost can improve the soil by

bringing back vegetation. When soil can re-grow its protective vegetative layer quickly, the result is less erosion, cleaner waterways and lives saved.

In the same way, the dangers of wildfire are worsened by the tree mortality crisis. 129 million trees have died since 2010 in California. The crisis led Governor Brown to declare a state of emergency in 2015 and create the Tree Mortality Task Force. When discussing how to deal with the volume of deadwood, the focus often turns to biomass facilities and energy generation.

Because compost also provides a viable option for woody waste, increasing opportunities to divert woody waste to compost and promoting the application of compost to burnt lands would provide two necessary approaches to reducing wildfires in California.

PURPOSE

AB 1981 would include the Department of Forest and Fire Protection into discussions on waste diversion and compost, the use of woody biomass in compost, and the use of compost on fire-damaged land. The Departments would be further required to support post fire recovery efforts to reduce erosion and stabilize fire-damaged land through the application of compost to restore soil aggregation, increase water infiltration, reduce runoff, prevent erosion and support plant growth.

SUPPORT

California Catholic Conference
California State PTA
Common Sense Kids Action
The Family Assistance Program
House of Ruth

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Love Never Fails
Pomona Police Department

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