New Butte Fire Safe I Forest Resilience Bond Launches to Protect Communities and Reduce Wildfire Risk in Butte County

New FRB accelerates forest restoration efforts in remaining unburned landscapes in Butte County, protecting communities, infrastructure, and natural resources.

Butte Fire Safe Council on the landscape

Small control burn on the landscape to reduce risk of catastrophic wildfire

PARADISE, CA, UNITED STATES, October 8, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Blue Forest, in partnership with the Butte County Fire Safe Council (BCFSC), Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), and CAL FIRE, announces the launch of the Butte Fire Safe I Forest Resilience Bond (FRB). This project is accelerating forest restoration and wildfire mitigation efforts in some of the last remaining unburned landscapes in Butte County, protecting local communities, critical infrastructure, and natural resources.

The project will focus on privately owned lands in the wildland-urban interface (WUI) — areas where homes and forests meet — that are highly vulnerable to catastrophic wildfires. Since 2018, more than 50% of the WUI in Butte County has burned, including devastation from the 2018 Camp, 2020 North Complex, 2021 Dixie, and 2024 Park and Thompson fires. With increasingly frequent and severe wildfires, strategic action is essential to protect what remains.

“Much of the project area has narrowly avoided catastrophic wildfire destruction in recent years,” said Taylor Nilsson, Executive Director at the Butte County Fire Safe Council. “The treatments supported by the Butte Fire Safe I FRB are designed to create strong, strategic buffers along ridge lines and near communities, giving firefighters the tools they need to protect lives, homes, and essential infrastructure. This is about making our communities safer and more resilient."

This effort will implement a suite of forest restoration treatments to reduce wildfire risk, including forest thinning, oak woodland restoration, prescribed burning, and post-fire recovery work such as hazard tree removal. The BCFSC, acting as project implementor, is also collaborating with tribal crews, integrating Indigenous Knowledge and workforce development into the project. Treatments will take place near Paradise, Forest Ranch, and areas surrounding Lake Oroville, focusing on ridgelines and high-risk areas.

The importance of this work was underscored during the Park Fire of July 2024, which ultimately became the fourth-largest wildfire in California's history. Fuel reduction treatments previously completed by the Fire Safe Council around the community of Cohasset slowed the fire's spread, giving firefighters critical time to protect homes and infrastructure.

"I personally witnessed how the fire, which initially raced up Mud Creek Canyon as a crown fire, transformed when it encountered areas where the forest had been thinned," Ron Ward, local landowner said. "In these treated areas, the flames dropped to the ground, making them far more manageable for CAL FIRE. Their hard work, combined with the Fire Safe Council's commitment to reducing the fuel load throughout Cohasset, played a crucial role in saving large portions of our community." (California Climate Investments, 2025)

The Butte Fire Safe I FRB, financed by mission-driven investors through the Blue Forest FRB Catalyst Facility, builds on these successes, scaling up treatments across a broader area to protect the last remaining unburned parts of Butte County and prevent future catastrophe. This FRB, supported through funding from PG&E and CAL FIRE grants, aims to protect communities and critical resources like the Oroville Dam and Feather River Watershed, which are vital to California's State Water Project and water supply system. PG&E's transmission and distribution lines run through the project area, meaning wildfire risk reduction also safeguards essential utility infrastructure. California Department of Water Resources is providing continued support for this and other FRBs in Northern California, helping to accelerate landscape-scale restoration across California's most wildfire-prone counties.

The FRB, co-developed by Blue Forest, the World Resources Institute, the USDA Forest Service, and the National Forest Foundation, is a financing mechanism that taps into private capital to finance forest restoration projects to protect communities, ecosystem benefits, and rural livelihoods. The provision of upfront capital, supported by contracted beneficiary commitments, allows for financial flexibility that accelerates the pace and scale of restoration activities as well as the ability to quickly pay local contractors.

"The Forest Resilience Bond gives the Butte County Fire Safe Council the flexibility to draw on FRB financing now while investing their reserve funds to generate additional resources for future projects," said Nicole Miller, Project Development Senior Manager at Blue Forest. "This creates a multiplier effect—enabling the Council to expand treatments across more acres, at a faster pace, to better protect communities and surrounding landscapes. Blue Forest is excited to partner with BCFSC to accelerate this critical work and build long-term resilience in Butte County."

Wildfire mitigation is not just about forest health—it's about protecting lives, livelihoods, and landscapes. The Butte Fire Safe I FRB represents a powerful collaboration between local organizations, state agencies, utilities, and private investors.

About Blue Forest:
Blue Forest is a conservation finance non-profit founded in 2015 that advances ecosystem restoration through scientific research, financial innovation, and collaborative partnerships. Since 2018, Blue Forest has managed investor capital through its flagship financial product, the Forest Resilience Bond (FRB), which deploys private capital to finance forest restoration projects to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire. More recently, Blue Forest established Blue Forest Asset Management (BFAM), an investment management platform connecting investors to compelling, mission-aligned opportunities in a broader set of asset classes beyond FRB projects, such as private equity and private credit investments.

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