Prescribed Fire in California

Lenya Quinn-Davidson, University of California Cooperative Extension
“How do you prescribe burn a million acres in California? With a million landowners.” Chris Paulus Rx Fire Academy workshop today.
Cultural Fire Management Council
Klamath Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (TREX)
Butte PBA & Plumas Underburn Cooperative
Policy Changes

- State-Certified Burn Boss Program (SB1260)
- Gross Negligence Liability Law (SB332)
- Prescribed Fire Claims Fund (SB926/trailer bill)
CA State-Certified Burn Boss (CARX) Program
Changing liability standards to increase Rx fire

- **Strict Liability**: Liable for any damages in any situation
- **Undefined Liability**: ?
- **Simple Negligence**: Liable if proven negligent
- **Gross Negligence**: Liable if proven grossly negligent

More conducive to prescribed fire

Map from Wonkka et al. 2015

Map showing the distribution of liability in the U.S., with states color-coded for Gross negligence, Simple negligence, Strict liability, and Undefined.
CA Prescribed Fire Claims Fund

- $20 million set aside in state wildfire budget in 2021
- Now...how to operationalize the fund?
- Critical decisions
  - Who has access to the fund?
  - How do we accommodate cultural burning?
  - Maximum claims?
  - How do we cover damages beyond the maximum claim amount? (Engage private insurers?)
Thank you!

Lenya Quinn-Davidson
lquinndavidson@ucanr.edu