MOUNTAIN TOWNS 2030

SV26 SESSION ONE-PAGER
CLIMATE SOLUTIONS SUMMIT · SUN VALLEY, IDAHO

PANEL · WED, OCT 14 · 8:25-9:00 AM

Ridgelines to Rooflines: The Wildfire Conversation

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Wildfire may be the only preventable catastrophe, and this panel worked from ridgelines to rooflines: forest thinning, fuel breaks, home hardening and how to pay for it. Panelists differed on where to start, but agreed towns need every layer, prioritized with data and paid for by everyone who benefits.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. **Healthy forests are firefighters.** In Washington, thinning from 165 to 60 trees per acre was done two months before a fire, which then stopped six feet from a lodge.
2. **Prioritize, don't do random acts of mitigation.** Tools like Vibrant Planet and XyloPlan model where treatment cuts community risk most, given your budget and the values you need to protect.
3. **Beneficiaries can pay for forest work.** Blue Forest's Forest Resilience Bond fronts capital that water utilities, agencies and companies repay: $50 million across 12 projects.
4. **It's often the stuff around a home that ignites it.** Cars, firewood, decks, boats and batteries burn hot enough to overwhelm hardened siding and vents. Thousands of code-built homes burned in LA.
5. **Vent mesh may be the cheapest fix.** A not-yet-public California analysis suggests properly fitted vent mesh could be the top preventable fix for saving homes, and it's cheap.

WHAT LOCAL OFFICIALS CAN DO

- ☐ **Plan for the whole fireshed.** Coordinate federal, state, tribal and private land on thinning, prescribed fire, fuel breaks and home hardening.
- ☐ **Target mitigation with risk modeling.** Pick treatments by budget and values at risk (homes, lives, bridges, utilities), not only where willing owners raise their hands.
- ☐ **Stack funding from downstream beneficiaries.** Water and electric utilities and businesses (even a bottler downstream) helped American Forests turn about $1M of federal money into roughly $20M.
- ☐ **Pursue shared stewardship agreements.** With federal capacity cut, agencies are giving partners authority to do the work; American Forests is on almost 40 national forests.
- ☐ **Build social license.** Agencies call lack of social license the biggest barrier. Local leaders can explain why forests left unburned for 100+ years are too dense and need thinning.
- ☐ **Clear the zone around structures.** Move vehicles, firewood, furniture and batteries away from buildings, and fit ember-resistant vent mesh. CAL FIRE now tracks burned vehicles on damaged properties.
- ☐ **Count every benefit.** Water, snowpack, carbon and avoided reservoir sediment bring more payers to the table. Even a lower-income town's natural infrastructure is valuable.

BY THE NUMBERS

24M vs. 2M
Lake Tahoe Basin trees today vs. historical density

$50M
Forest Resilience Bond capital deployed, 12 projects

100M+ acres
Fuels treatment needed on U.S. lands

9
Western states whose forests now emit net carbon

~70%
California mills and bioenergy plants lost

59
Homes Frontline protected in the LA fires

WATCH OUT FOR

- ! Statter warned not to overpromise: in 80 to 100 mph winds fuel work falls short, thinning can grow grass, and under 1% of fuel projects ever meet a wildfire.
- ! Insurers aren't funding mitigation yet: their models can't yet measure local work well enough to price risk. Blue Forest brings insurers in as investors, not funders.

RESOURCES

Blue Forest (Forest Resilience Bond and forestry investment fund)
blueforest.org

American Forests (shared stewardship on almost 40 national forests)
americanforests.org

Vibrant Planet (Land Tender risk modeling)
vibrantplanet.net

FireSmart Community Pilot Playbook
Tahoe Fund guide to using technology to find the mitigations that matter most

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