

THE WILDFIRE CONSERVANCY  
**2024 ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM AGENDA**

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## Guest Speakers

**Dr. Matt Rahn, DrPH, JD, MS**  
**Director, Wildfire Conservancy**



Dr. Matt Rahn is currently serving as the Executive Director for the Wildfire Conservancy (a nonprofit research foundation) and the Founding Director and lead instructor for the Bachelor of Science in Wildfire Science and the Urban Interface at California State University San Marcos. With over two decades of experience in applied sciences and law, Dr. Rahn focuses on issues related to public safety, firefighter health and safety, and community resilience. Having earned both a Ph.D. and Juris Doctor in Law, he has helped bridge the gap between science and policy, supporting local, state, and federal programs in collaboration with lawyers, policymakers, elected officials, and scientists. His contributions to firefighting have created state and national benchmarks for wildland firefighter staffing, promoted advancements in protective equipment, reduced occupational exposures, and improved cardiac and heat related injuries. Dr. Rahn has also served as a City Council Member and Mayor for Temecula, California, and has served on multiple education, transportation, land use, and public safety boards and commissions.

**Terry McHale**  
**Partner/Legislative Advocate, Aaron Read & Associates**



Terence McHale joined Aaron Read & Associates after serving as Director of the California Fire Foundation and Consultant to the California State Assembly Committee on Fire, Police and Emergency Services. Terry has worked with a wide range of clients, writing and lobbying hundreds of pieces of legislation. Terry has been given the Director's Achievement Award on behalf of CAL FIRE, the President's Award from the California Dental Hygienist's Association (CDHA), the President's Special Award from the California Athletic Trainer's Association (CATA), and the Floyd Hudson Award for Outstanding Contributions to the California Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR). Terry has interviewed and written stories about such interesting Californians as Clint Eastwood, Willie Brown, Kareem Abdul Jabbar, Willie Mays, Gary Condit, Senator John Burton and Governors Pete Wilson and Gray Davis. Terry is a graduate of UCLA. He and his wife Terri, have three adult children and two grandchildren.

**Bryan Ormond, PhD**  
**Assistant Professor, North Carolina State University**



As a researcher at NC State University's Textile Protection and Comfort Center (TPACC), Dr. Ormond has focused on developing test methods, standards, equipment, and ensembles for first responders and military personnel to address protection from chemical, particulate, and thermal hazards. His most recent research has centered on reducing firefighter exposure to toxic chemicals through developing particulate-blocking PPE, assessing gear cleaning methods, evaluating on-scene decontamination methods, investigating trade-offs in exposure and performance with PFAS and non-PFAS turnout gear, and assessing performance of respiratory protection for wildland firefighters.





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**Jeff Burgess, MD**

**Director, Firefighter Health Collaborative Research Program, University of Arizona**



Dr. Burgess is a Professor and Director of the Firefighter Health Collaborative Research Program at the University of Arizona Zuckerman College of Public Health. He received his MD from the University of Washington in 1988, an MS in Toxicology with a Concentration in Industrial Hygiene from the University of Arizona in 1993 and an MPH in Environmental Health from the University of Washington in 1996. He previously worked as an Emergency Medicine physician, Medical Toxicologist and Occupational and Environmental Medicine physician. He has worked on research with firefighters for over 30 years, focused on cancer risk and prevention since 2015. Dr. Burgess is also Director of the national multicenter Fire Fighter Cancer Cohort Study (FFCCS), funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other organizations, which includes two FEMA-funded studies working collaboratively with wildland firefighters.

**Christopher Dicus, PhD**

**Coordinator, Wildland Fire and Fuels Management Program, California Polytechnic State University**



Dr. Chris. Dicus is a Professor and Coordinator of the Wildland Fire and Fuels Management Program at California Polytechnic State University. Dr. Dicus is the past President of the Association for Fire Ecology (an international scientific society), is Coordinator of the Wildland-Urban Interface Module of the California Fire Science Consortium, and sits on the Board of Directors of the San Luis Obispo County FireSafe Council. Dr. Dicus' expertise lies in reducing risk of structural loss in the wildland-urban interface and in how various fuel treatments impact wildland fire behavior. Dr. Dicus is a Certified Senior Fire Ecologist and a California Registered Professional Forester. In addition to his scholarly work, he regularly serves as an expert witness in wildfire-based litigation and in governmental proceedings. Further, he frequently provides media interviews for TV, radio, and print outlets, including the BBC, FOX Weather, NPR, USA Today, New York Times, Los Angeles Times, and San Francisco Chronicle.

**Frank Frievalt**

**Director, Wildland Urban Interface Fire Institute, California Polytechnic State University**



Chief Frievalt (ret.) has served since 1979 with Special District, City, County, State, and Federal fire agencies in roles from Firefighter to Fire Chief. He holds a M.S. from Oklahoma State University in Fire and Emergency Management Administration, and currently serves as Director of the Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Institute at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. Frank is an SME for the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation Wildfire Advisory Council, and previously served as a Senior Policy Advisor to the Western Fire Chiefs Association, with an emphasis on the development of resilient Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) communities. His work is grounded in aligning key stakeholders around a core set of parcel and community level mitigations that will disrupt the fire pathways which lead to conflagration. He is pursuing the actuarial valuation of risk mitigations, for both the public and private sectors, because we share the same desired outcome, minimizing property loss to the peril of wildfire.





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**Derek Urwin, PhD, MS**

**Engineer, Los Angeles County Fire Department and Assistant Adjunct Professor of Chemistry & Biochemistry, University of California Los Angeles**



Derek Urwin, MS is a Ph.D. candidate in chemistry at UCLA and has been a fire fighter for 15 years. A member of Los Angeles County, CA Local 1014, he began his fire service career with Miami-Dade Fire Rescue. He currently serves as an engineer with the Los Angeles County Fire Department. He works collaboratively with academic researchers on the Fire Fighter Cancer Cohort Study and is a member of California State Fire Training's Behavioral Health and Cancer Awareness Curriculum Development Cadre. In addition, he has served as a live fire training and roof operations instructor with the Los Angeles County Fire Department. His doctoral research examines how carcinogenic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) found on the fire ground damage DNA.

**Mike Wilson, PhD, MPH, CIH**

**Senior Safety Engineer, Research and Standards, Cal/OSHA**



Dr. Wilson is a senior safety engineer and CIH with the Cal/OSHA Research and Standards Health Unit. He previously was director of the Labor Occupational Health Program at UC Berkeley and national director for occupational and environmental health with the BlueGreen Alliance. Before returning to graduate school at the UC Berkeley School of Public Health, Dr. Wilson worked for 13 years as a firefighter, paramedic and EMT with the City of Salinas and County of Santa Cruz. He also served with FEMA Task Force 4, based at the Oakland Fire Department, and as a rescue crewman with the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, Station Monterey.

**Atousa Ghoreichi**

**Head of Corporate Reputation, and Global PR for James Hardie Building Products**



Atousa Ghoreichi is responsible for Global PR for James Hardie Building Products, a leader in exterior home products and design solutions. In her current position, Atousa plays a vital role in supporting the overall global organization and promoting and amplifying the James Hardie value proposition. Atousa joined James Hardie two years ago as the Senior Vice President of North America Marketing, PR, & Communications leading marketing, digital, brand, media relations, and strategic communications for North America. With Atousa at the helm, James Hardie debuted a first of its kind partnership with Magnolia Home and a comprehensive consumer-facing campaign that has helped launch James Hardie into households across the country. Her storytelling skills have helped to position the brand as a leader in the digital space, and her impact extends beyond the marcoms function to influence business development, sales, strategic partnerships, and organizational culture. Over her twenty-year career, Atousa's ideas have driven progressive transformation to meet the evolving needs of business and the changing world. Atousa earned a Bachelor of Science from Syracuse University S.I. Newhouse School of Communications and a master's degree in international marketing from the University of Maryland. Atousa spends her time between her home in Los Angeles and Washington DC.



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**Seren Taylor**  
**Vice President, Personal Insurance Federation of California**



Seren Taylor serves as Vice President for the Personal Insurance Federation of California. He represents PIFC's member companies before the California State Legislature and California State government agencies and departments on personal lines property-casualty insurance issues including auto, home, flood, and earthquake insurance sold to individuals. Prior to joining PIFC, Mr. Taylor was a key senior staff person for leaders in the California State Senate and Assembly for nearly twenty years. During his work at Staff Director for the Senate Republican Fiscal Office and the Deputy Caucus Chief for the Assembly Republican Caucus Mr. Taylor took the lead role in advising the leadership on all major state policy and fiscal issues. He is a highly respected bi-partisan problem solver who successfully negotiated California's historic Global Climate Change legislation (known as "Cap and Trade") as well as the state's constitutional "Rainy Day Fund" (Proposition 2) approved by voters in 2014 to protect the state budget from economic downturns and revenue volatility.





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## The Wildfire Conservancy Staff

**George Broyles, MS**  
**Wildfire Conservancy**



George began his US Forest Service career on the Black Hills National Forest in South Dakota. He has over 30 years of experience in natural resource management with emphasis on fuels, prescribed and wildland fire management. He has managed large smoke and noise exposure studies on wildland firefighters across the US. As a project manager for the USFS National Technology and Development Program his emphasis was on wildland firefighter safety and health and technology and equipment development. He has served on Type 1, 2 and 3 Incident Management teams in the Rocky Mountain, Pacific Northwest and California geographic areas. He retired from the Forest Service in 2021. George currently serves as a Program Associate with The Wildfire Conservancy. George received a Masters Natural Resource from Utah State University and a B.S in Sociology with Political Science Minor from Black Hills State University.

**Rick Swan**  
**Wildfire Conservancy, International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF)**



33 years at CAL FIRE – Deputy Chief, (Retired) San Luis Obispo, with Program experience in Operations, Aviation, Camp, Paramedic and Fire Marshal and has over 30 years of union leadership for CAL FIRE IAFF Local 2881 representing over 7000 men and women of CAL FIRE. Rick was responsible for developing knowledge, codes/standards and provide field education and training within the fire service so that fire fighters can recognize and control their safety and health concerns for seven years for the International Association of Fire Fighters. This includes the planning, logistics, content and curriculum development, instructor development, and project management for FEMA grants and has over 10 years of experience managing the development and distribution of fire fighter health and safety programs. Rick has been a speaker on Fire Fighter Health and Safety at fire service conferences and symposia. He is a member of several National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and International Organization of Standards (ISO) committees for over 20 years and chairs the NFPA Correlating Committee for Fire and Emergency Services Protective Clothing and Equipment and ISO TC 94/SC 14 WG 3 Protective Clothing for Firefighters for Wildland Firefighting Committees.

**Kelcey Stricker, DrPH, MS**  
**Health and Safety Director, Wildfire Conservancy**



Dr. Stricker is the Director of Health and Safety for the Wildfire Conservancy. She focuses on research questions regarding health and safety issues affecting firefighters as well as communities who are affected by wildfire. She has a background in environmental sciences and spent 19 years working in air quality, water quality, fire ecology and lands management. Her current projects include researching occupational exposures and cancer risk, respiratory protection and health, and PPE and dermal decontamination challenges in wildland firefighters. She also works to understand functional and behavioral barriers to implementation of health promoting interventions and developing policies and procedures to improve firefighter health and safety. Dr. Stricker received her BS in Biology from San Diego State University in 2004, her MS in Ecology from Cal State San Marcos in 2015 and her Doctorate in Public Health from the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill in 2023.





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**Ms. Morgan Gray Condit**  
**Director of Strategic Communications and Outreach**



Ms. Gray Condit is the Strategic Communications Director for the Wildfire Conservancy. Her focus for the Conservancy is on outreach, public relations, and strategic communications with agencies and decision makers in both the public and private sectors. Her experience also includes working for California State Assemblyman Health Flora's 2022 campaign.





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## California State Legislators

**James Gallagher**  
**California State Assembly Minority Leader**



James Gallagher earned his Bachelor of Arts degree at UC Berkeley before completing an Assembly Fellowship in Sacramento and earning a law degree at UC Davis, where he graduated at the top of his class. James began practicing law in 2007 and is a partner in his family's fifth generation rice and walnut farming operation. In 2008, James was elected to the Sutter County Board of Supervisors, where he served until his election to the State Assembly. In 2017, he became the Republican Caucus Chairman of the California General Assembly. James has represented California's Third Assembly District since 2014, serving as Minority Leader since 2022.

**Kelly Seyarto**  
**Member of the California State Senate**



Kelly Seyarto is a retired firefighter who began his career as a Firefighter/Paramedic for the Inglewood Fire Department and retired at the rank of Battalion Chief from the Los Angeles County Fire Department in 2015, after a 35 year career. In 1989, Kelly earned a Bachelor of Science degree in fire protection administration and technology from California State University, Los Angeles. In 1996, Kelly earned a Master of Public Administration degree from California State University, Long Beach. Kelly was first elected to the Murrieta, Ca City Council in 1997 and served through 2006. Kelly declined to run for reelection in 2006 but returned to serve the City of Murrieta again in 2016. He was selected to serve as the Mayor of Murrieta in 2000, 2003, 2006, and 2019. Kelly also served as a member of the California State Assembly from 2020 until his election to the California State Senate in 2022.

