2026 UC ANR Cooperative Extension Position (Specialist)

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Position title: UCCE Specialist in Coastal Forest Ecology and Management

Headquarter location and coverage area: This position will be based at either the UCSC Department of Environmental Studies and Natural Reserves, *OR* the UCB Department of Environmental Science, Policy, and Management and Berkeley Forests. The position will have statewide responsibilities for coastal forests in California.

Position overview: The successful candidate will hold a PhD with an emphasis in forestry, natural resources, environmental science, ecology, or a closely related field and will have experience with forest research and management. This position will provide research support across the entire range of coast redwood and drier coastal mixed-evergreen forest systems found in California. These systems are highly susceptible to impacts from climate change, wildfire, and invasive pests and pathogens. Research priorities could include silvicultural research for production in conjunction with industrial forestlands as well as management practices for protected forestlands where habitat conservation, recreation, and maintenance of ecosystem services are priorities.

Justification: Needs: Coastal forest ecosystems are ecologically and economically important to California. Their unique assemblage of species supports high plant and wildlife biodiversity, record carbon storage, and supports water resources, while sustainable timber harvest and recreational activities generate hundreds of millions of dollars in annual economic activity for communities. Both coastal redwood and coastal mixed-evergreen forest systems are highly susceptible to impacts of climate change, wildfire, and invasive pests and pathogens. Research in coastal forests is lacking because there is ***no Cooperative Extension Specialist*** focused on these forests and limited research capacity from state and federal partners. As a result, California land managers lack access to place-based science to inform stewardship decisions and respond to emerging threats. Research needs are diverse and interwoven, ranging from silviculture, forest management, coast ecology, to conservation management.

Outcomes/Impact: This position will address the Natural Ecosystems and Working Landscapes and Climate Change challenge areas in UC ANR's Strategic Vision 2040. The Specialist will conduct research and outreach to prevent and mitigate the impact of endemic and invasive pests

and diseases on both native habitats and working lands; provide guidance for management strategies that promote wildfire resilience; and work with community-based organizations and agencies to help plan for, respond to, and recover from climate change–fueled disasters. The Specialist will contribute to three condition changes: (1) Increase ecosystem resilience to extreme weather and change in climate, particularly associated with wildfire and forest pest and disease outbreaks, (2) Increase ecological sustainability of agriculture, working landscapes, and natural ecosystems in mixed-use landscapes that support timber production, recreation, and conservation, and (3) Increased stability, efficiency, and profitability of agriculture and working landscapes, supporting sylvicultural tools currently lacking in coastal forests.

Extension: The Specialist will collaborate with county-based Advisors, federal and state partners, local community groups, and landowners to develop and extend science-based guidance for coastal forest systems. In addition to the existing network of UC academics, the Specialist may partner with local Resource Conservation Districts, watershed groups, and public agencies to deliver workshops, field tours, and training programs with novel practices to address ever changing economic, climate, and wildfire conditions impacting coastal forests. The specialist may also integrate and build on current statewide extension efforts, including the Forest Stewardship Program, California Naturalist, and the Fire Network, to advance capacity for landowners, managers, and policymakers to sustainably manage public and private forestlands.

Research: The Specialist will conduct research on coastal forest management and threats. The Specialist may focus on experimental testing of silvicultural tools for hazardous fuels reduction and other practices integral to managing complex forest systems. Such experiments would build on the ongoing Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges (TREX) network, developing carbon and water flux towers, and ongoing studies at the Jackson and Soquel State Demonstration Forests. Similarly, forest health and fuels reduction research would build on long-term research at the UCSC Forest Ecology Research Plot (FERP), the UC Big Creek and Santa Cruz Mountain Reserves, and on lands owned by Save the Redwoods League. The Specialist would enable needed long-term, replicated manipulative experiments to complement current work driven by observational studies. This could include developing practices and appropriate planting stock for restoration to support rapid large-scale post-fire reforestation. Challenges common across industrial and wildland coastal forests include maintaining healthy and fire-resilient forests in the face of climate change and emergent pests. A Specialist could also explore management practices through an economics lens that integrates across private, public, and non-profit stakeholders and consumer perceptions and values.

UC ANR network: This position was the top-ranking position for the Forest and Upper Watershed Program Team and for the Environmental Studies Dept. This position could be housed at either UCB or UCSC, with distinct strengths and rationale for each. By focusing on the coastal forest region, the specialist could be an important link among key California universities and forest advisors working in those regions. UCSC provides a uniquely integrated research environment that blends interdisciplinary research in forest ecology, ecosystems sciences, environmental restoration, ag- and forest-tech engineering, environmental policy, and environmental economics. It is home to the UCSC FERP, a 40-acre research forest with two decades of individual-based and phenological forest monitoring data, set to become a replicated

experimental plot for research on prescribed fire. The FERP serves as testing grounds for next-generation engineering work in robots, remote sensing, and sensor networks in collaboration with the UCSC AgTech Alliance and the GIS program. UCSC has a robust and growing group of extension specialists with expertise in hydrology, drones, and economics, and close collaborations with the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band. UC Berkeley is home to a large and cross-disciplinary department, Environmental Science, Policy, and Management (ESPM). Embedded within ESPM is a nationally-accredited forestry program that offers B.S. and Master of Forestry degrees, with several associated faculty and specialists that study forests. This combination of forest-focused expertise along with access to a network of interdisciplinary colleagues can provide exceptional resources for a new specialist. UCB researchers have ongoing research projects at Jackson Demonstration State Forest. Staff and faculty at Cal Poly Humboldt and UCB are working to collaborate with Tribes in north-coast counties. Research collaborations between Berkeley Forests and CAL FIRE Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP) include a new 4-year MOU that can offer research funding and monitoring opportunities. Researchers at Berkeley Forests frequently provide policy and management advice to members of the California Senate, Assembly, and Board of Forestry. Berkeley Forests provides an existing program for a new specialist to leverage in order to conduct research and extension.

Network external to UC ANR: The specialist would work with private, public, and non-profit stakeholders. This will include both large and small industrial forest companies in coastal California including Green Diamond, Mendocino Redwood Company, Humboldt Redwood Company, Redwood Empire, and Big Creek Lumber. Private and non-profit protected forested areas in coastal counties provide needs and opportunities for coastal forest management research; small non-industrial landowners cumulatively own a great amount of land in these counties. The specialist would provide an important collaborative link among ANR advisors and regional forest and fire faculty and researchers at Cal Poly SLO, San José State University, UC Santa Cruz, UC Berkeley, and Cal Poly Humboldt, Berkeley Forests, and UC Nature reserves.

Support: If placed at UCSC, the Specialist will be provided office and lab space in the Environmental Studies Department, with access to a wide range of state-of-the art instrumentation, field and lab equipment, and research infrastructure including nutrient analyzers, chromatographs, spectrophotometers, mass spectrometers, microscopes, microbiological and molecular facilities, GIS computational facilities, field vehicles, the UCSC FERP, and a forested Campus Natural Reserve. UCSC is highly collegial, with considerable shared equipment and interdisciplinary collaboration within and across programs. The UCSC AES is committed to providing research funding for our Specialists as possible given budget constraints. If placed at UCB, ESPM would seek to find available office and laboratory space.

Other support: The Specialist will seek research funding from NSF, USFS, USDA, USGS, CDFA and other federal and state funding sources. The Specialist will compete for grants in these programs, with or without on- and off-campus colleagues as appropriate. The Specialist will also be expected to compete for research funds available from UC ANR.