

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Agreement Reached on Forest Management Issues With Passage of Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Resolution** *Fire prevention, environmental protection, jobs and energy production chief goals*

**Markleeville (Alpine Co.)** — In a decision that marks the beginning of an exciting new era of collaboration in the Sierra Nevada around forest management issues, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Governing Board today unanimously voted to launch an initiative to promote forest health, create jobs, increase biomass energy production, and reduce fire risk in Sierra forests.

The board, which includes six elected county supervisors from the Sierra Nevada region, adopted a resolution that had the support of local elected officials, environmental groups and wood products organizations, as well as many other interested in addressing the issue in a different manner. The action effectively launches the SNC's Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative, designed to find collaborative approaches to reducing the overgrowth of public forestlands.

"For the past several decades people have been fighting about how best to manage the public forestlands in the Sierra Nevada, to the point where our forests are dangerously overgrown and in poor health," said Jim Branham, Executive Officer of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. "Today we can proudly acknowledge a new era of dedication and cooperation to help improve the forest environment and our local economies."

Branham said that the Initiative focuses on public forest lands and indicated that the SNC will work with a coordinating council at the regional level to identify key policy, funding and scientific issues essential for success. Regional efforts will be made to support on-the-ground solutions that need to be based on site specific conditions. Similar efforts in other areas have used a collaborative process with a group of diverse interests to work with land managers to identify the appropriate management needed for sustainable forests and economies. Branham noted this is the approach the SNC will pursue as well.

Materials removed from the forests can be used for dimensional lumber, wood specialty products (wood stove pellets, decorative bark, fence posts, etc.) or used for fuel in clean-burning biomass energy plants.

"I am encouraged by the Conservancy's leadership on this issue," said Sierra County Supervisor and SNC Board Member Bill Nunes. "We need to take action now if we are to avoid the large damaging fires that are bad for our environment, our communities and the state as a whole."

Branham said the SNC will now be seeking support for this initiative from local governments, environmental organizations, the wood products industry, community organizations and others interested in the issue. They will also work closely with the federal land managers in determining how these efforts can work to improve forest health and community vitality.

“Sixty-five percent of our state’s water originates in the Sierra Nevada region,” said Board Chair B. J. Kirwan, a resident of Los Angeles County. “Large fires result in a variety of adverse impacts to our water supply. Taking care of our watersheds is essential to the long-term supply of high quality water for domestic and agricultural use throughout California.”

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***About the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Governing Board***

*Created in 2004, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy is a state agency whose mission is to improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region. In its first five years, the SNC, which receives no general fund tax dollars, has awarded nearly \$30 million in grants for projects ranging from fuels reduction to trail improvements, and conservation easements to watershed restoration. Funding for these projects comes from Proposition 84 passed by voters in 2006.*

*The SNC Governing Board meets quarterly around its Region, which spans 25 million acres, encompasses all or part of all of 22 counties and runs from the Oregon border on the north to just southeast of Bakersfield.*