

# NEWS RELEASE

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## Third week of September marked as Sierra Nevada Watershed Protection Week

**(Auburn)** – The region that provides more than 60 percent of California’s developed water supply received special attention in Sacramento today. Assembly Member Brian Dahle (R - Bieber) authored Assembly Concurrent Resolution 22 which establishes the third week of September as “Sierra Nevada Watershed Protection Week.” The measure passed both houses of the legislature without a dissenting vote.

The Sierra Nevada region is California’s primary water source, provides habitat for over 500 species, is a world renowned recreation destination, and stores massive amounts of carbon, helping to address climate change. However, many forests in the Sierra are overgrown and at risk for large, damaging wildfires. Large, high-severity wildfires are resulting in the release of millions of metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions. Abandoned mines from the Gold Rush continue to release toxins, such as mercury, in to Sierra streams, impacting water quality and fish habitat as far downstream as the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and the San Francisco Bay. And the ongoing drought has led to an increase in insects and disease in the Sierra and the death of an estimated 7.4 million trees.

“The creation of Sierra Nevada Watershed Protection Week brings much needed attention to the challenges that the Sierra Nevada region is facing,” says Jim Branham, Executive Officer for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. “It also highlights efforts being undertaken to protect and restore all of the benefits that the Sierra provides.”

There is growing consensus that more must be done to increase restoration in the Sierra Nevada, but a number of funding and policy-related barriers need to be addressed in order to restore Sierra forests and watersheds to a healthier state. Recently the California Natural Resources Agency, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy formalized a commitment to support the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program - a coordinated effort to restore the health of the Sierra Nevada Region. This commitment is just one step that the state is taking to proactively address drought and climate change in the Sierra, and reduce the risk for large, damaging wildfires.

During Sierra Nevada Watershed Protection Week, the Governor’s Wall at the Capitol will feature a display on water and its inseparable connection to the resources that are important to California Native American Tribes. The display is sponsored by the California State Tribal Liaisons. The Sierra Nevada Conservancy’s annual Great Sierra

River Cleanup will also take place during Sierra Nevada Watershed Protection Week. On Saturday, September 19, volunteers will show their support for clean watersheds by removing trash from the rivers, lakes, and streams of the Sierra Nevada Region. This event, in conjunction with California Coastal Cleanup Day, serves to promote clean waterways from the source to the sea.

For more information about current conditions in the Sierra Nevada, or the events mentioned above, visit [www.sierranevada.ca.gov](http://www.sierranevada.ca.gov).

***About the Sierra Nevada Conservancy***

*Created in 2004, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is a state agency whose mission is to improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region. The SNC has awarded over \$50 million in grants for projects to protect and enhance the health of California's primary watersheds by improving forest health, remediating mercury contamination from abandoned mines, protecting critical natural resources, and reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire. Funding for these projects came from Proposition 84 passed by voters in 2006.*

*The Sierra Nevada Region spans 25 million acres, encompasses all or part of 22 counties, and runs from the Oregon border on the north, to Kern County on the south. The Region is the origin of more than 60 percent of California's developed water supply.*

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