

NEWS RELEASE

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Sierra Nevada Collaborative Groups Receive \$1.3 Million for Forest Restoration, Watershed Improvement, Jobs

(Auburn) – Two forest restoration collaborative organizations in the Sierra Nevada were awarded federal grants totaling \$1.3 million, the first award of a 10-year cycle of funding for ongoing forest management and watershed improvement projects. The grants were announced today by U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack in Washington, D.C.

The Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group (ACCG) received an award of \$730,000 this year and the Burney-Hat Creek Basins Project in Lassen County received \$605,000. The Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Act provided for a nationwide, competitive grant program, with the grant applications generated locally. Only 10 grants were awarded nationwide.

“This is exciting news for our partners working on behalf of the 23 million Californians who receive their drinking water from the Sierra Nevada, and for all of us who appreciate the beauty of these forests,” said Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Executive Officer Jim Branham. “These are collaborative organizations made up of people with diverse backgrounds and viewpoints about forest management. The progress they have made in coming together to agree on a plan for action has resonated all the way back to our nation’s capitol.”

The key components of the projects are to restore overgrown forests to ecological health, reduce the risk of large fires, create local jobs, protect and enhance wildlife and water supplies, and provide woody biomass for energy-producing facilities or value-added wood products created by local businesses. The funding will allow work currently underway by the ACCG, which has already treated hundreds of acres of unhealthy forestland, to expand significantly. The work primarily consists of thinning overgrown forests and restoring habitat, meadows and streams.

“We have overcome our differences and have started putting people back to work in the forest,” said Calaveras County Supervisor and former SNC board member Steve Wilensky, a key member with the ACCG. “As a result, our forests will be more resilient to catastrophic fire, and all the ecological damage that comes from such fires. We are excited with the news that funding will be available to us to continue this work, and enhance our economy.”

In the case of the ACCG, the work is being performed in the Mokelumne River Watershed, the source of 95 percent of East Bay Municipal Water District residents’

water. Forest restoration work is designed in part to enhance snow pack and prevent soil erosion; both key components to improving the yield and quality from Sierra watersheds.

"Through our partnerships with states, communities, tribes and others, we are committed to restoring our forests and bringing jobs to rural America," said Vilsack. "Whether the threat comes from wildfire, bark beetles or a changing climate, it is vital that we step up our efforts to safeguard our country's natural resources." (See [Secretary Vilsac's news release.](#))

The movement away from lawsuits and toward collaboration has led to federal funding. A third collaborative effort, the Dinkey Creek Landscape Restoration Project, located in Prather, east of Fresno, was funded in 2010.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy has made forest restoration its major focus during the past three years. The SNC has received support from every county in the Sierra, whose boards of supervisors have signed the Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative resolution. A [short video](#) about the SNFCI effort provides more detail.

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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 approximately \$40 million in grants for projects including fuel reduction, conservation easements and acquisitions, and watershed and habitat restoration. Funding for these projects comes from Proposition 84 passed by voters in 2006.

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