

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Sierra Nevada Conservancy awards \$3.1 million for projects that reduce tree mortality and protect watershed health**

**(AUBURN, Calif.)** – Today the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Governing Board approved \$3.1 million in grants for ten projects that will decrease wildfire risk, lessen tree mortality, and restore forest and watershed health in the Sierra Nevada region. Funding for these projects comes from Proposition 1, The Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014. This is the fifth set of awards made under the SNC’s [Proposition 1 grant program](#).

In addition to meeting the requirements of Proposition 1, the projects awarded support the goals and objectives of the [Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program](#), a large-scale restoration program designed to address ecosystem health in the Sierra Nevada. This program is being coordinated by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and the U.S. Forest Service, and is working to increase the pace and scale of restoration across the Sierra by increasing funding, addressing policy barriers, and increasing infrastructure needed to support restoration.

Sierra Nevada forests are facing a variety of challenges, and the need to increase the pace and scale of restoration across the Sierra Nevada region is more urgent than ever. According to the U.S. Forest Service, 102 million trees have died statewide since 2010. Ninety-five percent of those dead trees are in the Sierra Nevada region.

“Sierra forests are the source of more than sixty percent of California’s developed water supply, but these forests have experienced rapid and significant change,” says Jim Branham, Executive Officer for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. “The grants that were awarded by our board today are great examples of the kind of work we need to be encouraging across the entire Sierra to protect the source of California’s water.”

“It is important that we invest in projects like these through the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program because they help make our forests more resilient to insects, drought, large, damaging wildfires, and disease,” says Randy Moore, U.S. Forest Service Pacific Southwest Regional Forester.

The projects approved for funding include:

- **El Dorado County – Caples Creek Watershed Ecological Restoration Project, \$476,709**  
This grant to the El Dorado Irrigation District (EID) will complete forest management and restoration activities on 6,800 acres within the larger South Fork American River Watershed, which is the primary water supply for more than 110,000 people and businesses served by the EID. Project work will include prescribed fire, meadow restoration, and aspen enhancement, and will be implemented in partnership with the USFS, Eldorado National Forest over a four-year period.
- **Lassen County – Lassen Creek Watershed Restoration Project, \$250,000**  
This grant to the Honey Lake Valley Resource Conservation District will complete mechanical harvesting of small trees, hand thinning, pruning, mastication, and slash disposal on 250 acres across two privately owned properties located just north of the Lassen National Forest and within the Wildland-Urban Interface zone for the City of Susanville. This work is part of a larger 325-acre project, and will enhance past Honey Lake Valley RCD projects and projects that are planned or underway by the Lassen National Forest and Lassen County Fire Safe Council. Lassen Creek, the main drainage within this watershed and located within the project boundary, is a tributary to the Susan River, an important supply of agricultural water that drains into the 7,667-acre Honey Lake Wildlife Area wetland.
- **Madera County – Eastern Madera Wildfire Restoration Project, \$488,320**  
This grant to the Yosemite-Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council will complete high-priority conifer reforestation on 350 acres burned in the 2014 French Fire in Madera County. Activities will include removal of fire-killed trees, piling or burning of dead standing trees, and herbicide treatments on 225 acres. Following completion of this work, 350 acres will be replanted in accordance with U.S. Forest Service Region 5 guidelines. Reforestation will improve watershed conditions by restoring severely burned areas to forested conditions, thereby reducing sedimentation and turbidity within the headwaters and improving water quality for downstream users. This is a joint project between the Yosemite Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council and the Sierra National Forest Bass Lake Ranger District, has been identified as a Sierra National Forest priority, and is associated with a number of collaborative efforts including the Sustainable Forests and Communities Collaborative and Willow Creek Landscape Assessment.
- **Mariposa County – Gentry Creek Watershed Restoration Project, \$498,985**  
This grant to the Yosemite-Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council will treat approximately 300 acres of mixed-conifer timberland owned by 23 separate property owners, and is surrounded by U.S. Forest Service- and Bureau of Land Management-managed lands. The project area has suffered 80 percent visible bark beetle mortality, a figure that is expected to rise to 90 percent by 2017. The project will fall and remove all dead trees, and remaining slash will be masticated and spread on the forest floor. These activities will return the project area, which serves as the headwaters for Gentry Creek, a major tributary of the North Fork of the Merced River, to functional forest land that will aid in the protection of the downstream water supply.

- **Nevada County – Rice’s Crossing Preserve Nonindustrial Timber Management Planning Project, \$74,550**

This grant to the Bear Yuba Land Trust will complete a Nonindustrial Timber Management Plan for a 2,000-acre portion of the Rice’s Crossing Preserve, a 2,706 acre property owned by the Bear Yuba Land Trust. This project will guide future management actions that will reduce the threat of high-intensity wildfires, promote resilient and growing forests, and reduce the threat of watershed damage from erosion and large-scale tree mortality. The Preserve is located within both the North and Middle Yuba River watersheds, which eventually feed into the Feather River and eventually the Sacramento River to the Delta.

- **Placer County – Post-Fire Restoration in the Rubicon Watershed, \$359,838**

This grant to the Placer County Resource Conservation District will remove fire-killed trees and brush, restore approximately five acres of timber landings, and stabilize watershed slopes along a 13-mile stretch of the Rubicon River drainage between Hell Hole Reservoir and the Placer County Water Agency facilities at Ralston Afterbay. The entire project area burned at high severity in the 2014 King Fire. The project will be completed in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and a private landowner on 208.5 acres.

- **Plumas County – Genesee Valley Watershed Improvement Project, \$74,576**

This grant to the Plumas Audubon Society will complete wildlife and botanical surveys, a cultural resource inventory, and soils and hydrological analyses that will support the completion of environmental documentation on 618 acres on the Plumas National Forest and 221 acres on the privately owned Heart K Ranch. The work completed under this grant will support the next phase of forest thinning and underburning, which will incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge recommendations from the local Maidu people. Both properties are identified as priority project areas in the recently completed Genesee Valley Wildfire Restoration Plan. The project location is within Genesee Valley on Indian Creek, a significant tributary to the north fork of the Feather River.

- **Plumas County – Tásmam Kojóm Restoration Management Plan, \$73,312**

This grant to the Maidu Summit Consortium and Conservancy will help complete an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to support future implementation of the Tásmam Kojóm Land Management Plan on Tásmam Kojóm, a 2,326-acre parcel that includes a meadow, streams, springs, and overstocked mixed conifer forest, and is a culturally important place to the Mountain Maidu.

- **Sierra and Nevada Counties – Forest Health and Watershed Improvement through Noxious Weed Management, \$362,538**

This grant to the Truckee River Watershed Council will survey 18,000 acres for high-priority noxious weeds, remove infestations of weeds on 1,500 acres, and revegetate native grasses, forbs, and shrubs on 450 acres on U.S. Forest Service- and CA Department of Fish and Wildlife-managed lands in Sierra and Nevada counties. The project area was designated as high-priority due to the habitat values and threat from potential wildfire to the municipal water supply at Prosser, Boca, and Stampede Reservoirs.

- **Tuolumne County – The Lyons-South Fork Watershed Forest Resiliency Project, \$496,000**

This grant to the Tuolumne Utilities District will complete forest thinning and fuel reduction treatments on 200 acres within the Stanislaus National Forest in Tuolumne County. These treatments will enhance forest health and resiliency, reduce fire hazards, allow for this forest to better withstand ongoing drought and bark beetle attacks, and protect critical ditch and flume infrastructure which act as the primary drinking water conveyance system for 90 percent of the residents of Tuolumne County. This grant will complete a portion of a larger project covering 733 acres of forestland across multiple landowners within the South Fork of the Stanislaus River watershed.

To date, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy has funded 32 Proposition 1 projects totaling \$9,881,830 that support the restoration goals of the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program.

***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 nearly \$60 million in grants for projects that 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 and Proposition 1 passed by voters in 2014.*

*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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