

State grant funds forest thinning near West Point

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Phase II of project to thin 200 acres by 2017

Several hundred acres of dense forest east of West Point will be thinned over the next three years thanks in part to a Sierra Nevada Conservancy grant that the agency's board approved Sept. 4.

The conservancy, which is part of the California state government, will provide \$185,000 toward reducing fire hazard and improving the health of 200 acres of forest between Lily Gap Road and the Mokelumne River Canyon.

The site is managed by the federal Bureau of Land Management. The 200 acres slated for thinning and brush burning are the second phase of the larger 420-acre Lily Gap Forest Health Project.

According to a report by the conservancy, the area has not burned in many years, resulting in a forest dense with underbrush that carries the risk of causing a catastrophic fire.

Crews last year finished work on the first phase of the Lily Gap project by thinning 157 acres of nearby forest, also on BLM land.

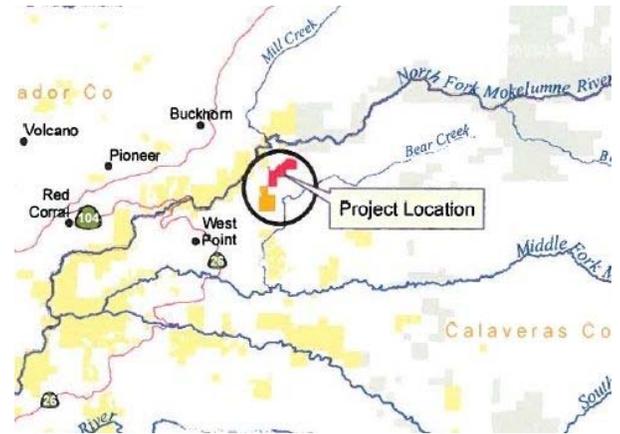
The thinning and restoration work is intended to return forests to the approximate conditions that existed before widespread fire suppression began a century or more ago.

The results are visible on the portion already completed. Instead of dense manzanita and other undergrowth, the forest is now park-like, with large conifers standing amid a relatively open forest floor.

The forest restoration work yields relatively few large saw logs, according to a staff report. Any saw logs that are harvested will be sold to help offset the cost of the project. Project managers will also look for opportunities to sell wood chips for electricity generation and other uses.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy grant pays most of the \$197,450 cost for the work.

The thinning is expected to begin by October 2015 and continue periodically through December 2016. The final brush pile burning and cleanup is expected in late winter and early spring of 2017.



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SOURCE: Sierra Nevada Conservancy
Overgrown land managed by the Bureau of Land Management will be restored to more park-like conditions using grant funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy.