

Pilot project to study impacts of forest management on Yuba watershed

By **Yuba County Water Agency** - May 17, 2018, 09:14:19 AM

MARYSVILLE, Calif. May 17, 2018 – A healthier, thinner forest reduces fire risk significantly, also protects water quality and can improve water quantity. The Yuba watershed is realizing all of those benefits, through a pilot project of the Forest Resilience Bond with Blue Forest Conservation and the World Resources Institute. The Yuba County Water agency will partner in effort with a \$1.5 million cost-share contribution to help fund the planned restoration project.

The agency's board of directors today approved the cost-share contribution, which will fund various forest management techniques and allow researchers to study the effects on the watershed. The pilot project protects 15,000 acres within the north Yuba watershed. The restoration cost for the project is expected to be about \$4.6 million.

"As we learned all too well last year with the Cascade Fire, the risk in the Yuba County is far too great," said YCWA Vice-Chairman Randy Fletcher. "If this pilot project works, it could mean really big things for our ability to reduce the fuel load by thinning the forest in a healthy, responsible way, thereby significantly reducing the fire risk to our residents, and bringing great benefits to the Yuba watershed."

The U.S. Forest Service and National Forest Foundation, through funding provided by the Resilience Bond, will deploy various forest management techniques, including different types of forest thinning, meadow restoration, prescribed burns, and invasive plant treatment. Researchers will then monitor the impacts on water content and quality in the watershed, providing critical data to quantify exactly how forest health benefits watersheds, which will spark additional investment in forest management techniques in the future.

The board unanimously supported this project due to its benefits for Yuba County's water quantity, healthier forest, air quality, economy and environment, Fletcher said.

"This is a private financing mechanism for forest health, which will be effective in increasing the pace and scale of treatment for this project and across the Yuba watershed," said Blue Forest Conservation Co-Founder Zach Knight. "We hope this project can serve as a template for the entire state for funding forest restoration work."

The Forest Resilience Bond deploys private capital to help make forests more resilient in climate by investing in restoration projects that protect forest health and mitigate

drought risk. The pilot project will actually take place in Sierra County, but the plan will directly benefit Yuba County. If the pilot is successful, the planned second phase much larger area, within the Yuba County boundary, near New Bullards Bar Dam and

“Yuba County Water Agency continues to lead the way in all aspects of water challenge Fletcher. “We are likely to be the first community to reach the state’s requirement for levees to be certified at the 200-year level, and now we could be the first watershed to get healthy as well. The future of our county depends on water, and I continue to and plan for that bright future.”

The current participants involved in the north Yuba watershed pilot project include:

- U.S. Forest Service
- Sierra Nevada Conservancy
- National Forest Foundation
- Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation
- Brownstein Hyatt, Farber Schreck
- World Resources Institute
- The Rockefeller Foundation
- Sierra Nevada Research Institute
- Orrick
- Encourage Capital
- Natural Capital Project and Water in the West at Stanford

