



## PRESS RELEASE

### For Immediate Release

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### **Carman Creek Ecosystem Health Project**

Dense forests of even-aged trees often create a shadowless landscape when lacking sunlight and understory vegetation. If you live in or near the Sierra Nevada, you've witnessed this sight on countless occasions. Driving through the northern section of the Tahoe National Forest, where a forest health project was recently completed, one notices a slightly different backdrop. Dappled light makes its way to the forest floor, the line of sight now encompasses subtle contours in the landscape while small pockets of space offer room to breathe.

There are practical reasons for projects like the recently-completed Carman Creek Ecosystem Health effort that extend beyond aesthetics, however. By removing a significant amount of small trees and pruning lower limbs of larger trees, 148 acres of the forest is now more fire resistant and reduces the chance of becoming a catastrophic wildfire.

Another piece of the Carman Creek Ecosystem Health project, a creek restoration project to reduce erosion and restore natural stream flow processes, was implemented in the same vicinity north of Sierraville last summer. Over 100 years ago, railroad tracks accessed the abundant timber in the area. Streams were straightened to accommodate the railroad's need for a relatively linear path. Over time, these stream channels eroded significantly and became disconnected from the floodplain and meadows, reducing the stream's ability to spread its energy over a larger surface area. When a stream gets locked in a gully, it can become highly erosive and carry more and more of the stream bank on its journey, especially during storm events.

The four sections of creek work restored approximately 6,400 linear feet of stream and reconnected about 40 acres of floodplain to its stream channel. Some of the rehabilitation methods included rerouting degraded portions of the creek into natural historic channels, raising the bottom of the waterway with rock and sod riffles, and creating a rocked low-water crossing for a roadway in place of a culvert that was causing significant erosion issues.

A partnership effort of the Sierra Valley Resource Conservation District, the Tahoe National Forest, and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, the Carman Creek Ecosystem Health project is expected to improve forest and riparian health, increase fire resiliency and improve floodplain access resulting in overall improvement of meadow conditions. Other benefits of the project include improved water quality, enhanced habitat and forage for wildlife and grazers, and increased recreation potential.

In 2005, the first phase of the Carman Creek project worked to improve meadow function downstream of the current project. Last August, nearly 10 years after construction, the meadow

areas of the 2005 project looked especially good; they were green and lush even in the driest part of the summer during severe drought conditions.

The project area's gravel road, located northwest of Calpine, California on National Forest Road 71-04, is passable by most two-wheel drive vehicles in the dry season and connects the communities of Calpine and Portola. The area is used by residents for accessing fuel wood and recreating in many forms: hiking, mountain biking, hunting as well as bird and wildlife watching.

The Carman Creek Ecosystem Health project was funded by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy with Proposition 84 funds. The Sierra Nevada Conservancy initiates, encourages, and supports efforts that improve the environmental, economic and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region, its communities and the citizens of California. For more information about this project, please contact the Sierra Valley RCD at [\(530\)430-7780](tel:5304307780) or [sierravalleyrcd@gmail.com](mailto:sierravalleyrcd@gmail.com).

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3 photos attached.

**Captions:**

**Photo 1 of forest with slash pile:** Removing small trees and pruning lower limbs of large trees helps to make a forest more fire resilient by reducing the fuel load. The piles of slash are burned when conditions permit.

**Photo 2 of pre-project degraded creek:** Before the Carman Creek Ecosystem Health project, this small creek system had numerous ditch-type channels with significant erosion issues.

**Photo 3 of post-project stream bed through trees:** Post-project, the channel is raised and, in some places, uses historic remnant channels to flow. It is now able to access its floodplain, spreading energy over a greater surface area and causing less erosion.

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## Carman Creek Ecosystem Health Project Photos & Captions for Press Release



Removing small trees and pruning lower limbs of large trees helps to make a forest more fire resilient by reducing the fuel load. The piles of slash are burned when conditions permit.



Before the Carman Creek Ecosystem Health project, this small creek system had numerous ditch-type channels with significant erosion issues.



Post-project, the channel is raised and, in some places, uses historic remnant channels to flow. It is now able to access its floodplain, spreading energy over a greater surface area and causing less erosion.