

Introduction

As called for in the Administration's *Priority Agenda for Enhancing the Climate Resilience of America's Natural Resources*, Federal agencies worked with state, local, and tribal partners over the past six months to select a suite of geographic areas that will demonstrate the feasibility, practice, and benefits of landscape-scale management approaches toward building climate resilience through the use of existing, cooperative, inter-agency institutions and partnerships (see attached Q&A). These *Resilient Lands and Waters* represent a range of scales, geographies, and ecological stressors such as fire, sea-level rise, changing ocean conditions, and drought, and will focus on multiple community and ecosystem needs, such as coastal resilience, protecting drinking water for urban areas, improving wildlife habitat connectivity, and preventing threats like wildfire and invasive species.

The first set of *Resilient Landscape* partnerships (southwest Florida, Hawaii, Washington and the Great Lakes region) was announced by President Obama at the 2015 Earth Day event in the Everglades. Today's second tranche include three locations in California and Crown of the Continent, and all have strong state and local support. Each of these areas has committed to identify and map by October, 2016, initial priority areas for conservation, restoration, or other investments, to build resilience in vulnerable regions, enhance carbon storage capacity, and support management needs, and to follow upon those efforts by developing landscape-scale resilience strategies to assist in advance planning and management activities. Identifying such priority areas will benefit wildfire management, mitigation investments, restoration efforts, water and air quality, carbon storage, and community resilience.

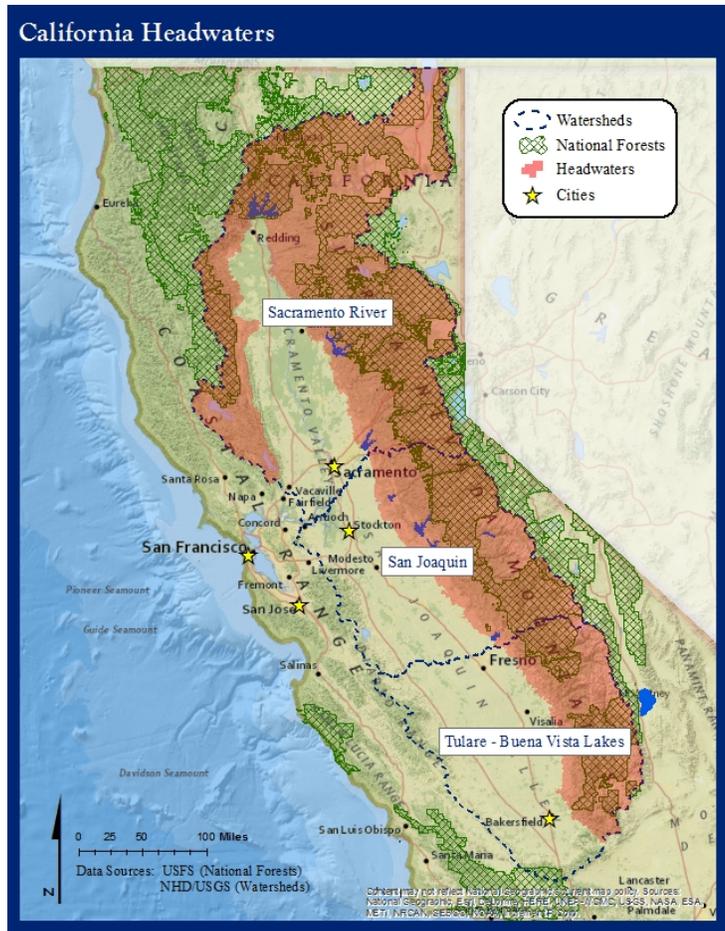
The goal of the *Resilient Lands and Waters Initiative* is to put a national spotlight on these important efforts and demonstrate that by organizing at a landscape scale, Federal, state, tribal, and local partners are able to improve their ability to plan for the future and address climate impacts that respect no jurisdictional boundaries. By tracking the successes and lessons-learned from these efforts, this initiative will encourage the development of similar resilience efforts in other areas where such strategies may provide a path forward that advances conservation, restoration, and sustainable development in a rapidly changing environment.

NOTE: Selection as a Resilient Lands and Waters geographic area is not a formal designation that confers special legal or regulatory significance, but rather highlights the partnerships on the ground and builds upon the work of existing landscape-scale collaboratives nationwide in order to demonstrate and advance the resilience benefits of this type of approach to planning and management. As well, many of these areas provide enhanced opportunities for developing and demonstrating tools, much like the Western Governors Association's Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool, that help inform and guide investments and management across a landscape scale, increase certainty for development proponents, and increase the likelihood of success for conservation efforts. This initiative is a non-regulatory approach to planning in advance to enhance resilience.

California Headwaters Partnership (USFS*, CA*, DOI) *-co-lead agency/entity

Identifying areas for restoration and conservation at a landscape scale to improve our water quantity and quality, promote healthy forests, and reduce wildfire risk.

The California Headwaters contribute greatly to the state’s water supply; for example, the Sierra-Cascade watersheds provide drinking water to 25 million people, almost two-thirds of the California population, and the majority of water for irrigated agriculture. The California Headwaters Partnership will take a watershed and landscape-level approach to restoration and will be jointly led by a state and federal planning committee: CA Natural Resources Agency (CNRA); CA Departments of Conservation, Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), Forestry and Fire Protection (CALFIRE), and Water Resources (CDWR); the CA Wildlife Conservation Board (CWCB); the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC); the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service (USFS) and Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS); and the US Department of Interior (DOI) Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), National Park Service, and Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).



The California Headwaters Partnership builds upon the many existing collaboratives, providing the opportunity to unify these efforts across the California Headwaters landscape. For example, the SNC and USFS recently launched the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) across a large portion of the California Headwaters landscape to restore the health of California’s primary watershed through coordinating funding and addressing policy barriers across “all lands.” The WIP is organized to coordinate efforts to maximize opportunities connected to existing and future programs, for example, the California Water Action Plan (CNRA, CA Department of Food and Agriculture, CA Environmental Protection Agency), the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (USDA/DOI), and the Western Watershed Enhancement Program (BOR/USFS).

The planning committee agencies and its many partners and stakeholders have several ongoing activities in the region that will inform efforts. A number of active collaboratives are functioning in the Headwaters area, focusing on watershed and forest issues. Examples include: Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC; DOI), Integrated Regional Watershed Management groups (CDWR and Roundtable of Regions), Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) projects (USFS), Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs), and many others. In addition, the California Forest Watershed Alliance, a group of state/national organizations, focuses on forest and watershed restoration, and includes the Rural County Representatives of CA, the Association of CA Water Agencies, the CA Forestry Association, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and the CA Farm Bureau Federation. The Sierra Business Council also sponsors the Sierra Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Partnership (CAMP) which joins governmental, business, and community leaders in the Sierra with their counterparts in downstream communities to protect the reliability of water, energy, recreation, and other headwaters resources for urban population centers. Sierra CAMP is one of five such regional collaboratives supported by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research. Further, the Klamath Cascade Advisory Council focuses on watershed conservation and restoration across all lands and includes the Pacific Forest Trust, the CDFW, CALFIRE, USFS, FWS, NRCS, local RCDs, University of California Extension, SNC, industrial and non-industrial private landowners, consulting foresters, and county and business representatives.

The California Headwaters Partnership will build upon and unify these and other existing collaborative efforts to identify and map areas for conservation, restoration, increased drought resilience, and maintenance needs (for example, the Strategic Growth Council – California Biodiversity Council Integrated Regional Planning Initiative). All stakeholders and governments, including scores of Native American Tribes within the region, share in the desire to reduce the risk of wildfire and restore healthy forests in the headwaters of California. These efforts will provide the information needed to improve water quantity and quality, protect important wildlife habitat, and provide jobs to local communities. Some of the specific implementation goals that will be supported by this effort include:

- Restoring meadows through removal of invasive species and improvement of hydrologic function to enhance groundwater recharge; e.g., CDFW awarded \$6 million dollars in its first year of grants from state cap-and-trade revenues.
- Restoring stream channels and maintaining roads to reduce sediment, slow flood water, improve habitat, and increase groundwater recharge; e.g., California will implement a \$200 million instream flow program using 2014 water bond funds.
- Restoring forest health to improve snow and water capture and storage, enhance habitat function, and stabilize greenhouse gas emissions; e.g., CALFIRE will award \$42 million in grants for forestry projects designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

- Preventing further forest fragmentation and degradation, for example through working forest conservation easement programs at CALFIRE, the CWCB, and several California land trusts.
- Enhancing forest resilience to reduce the risk of high severity wildfire and allow a more natural fire regime through reduction of uncharacteristic fuel loads; e.g., the USFS plans to reduce forest fuels on 20,000 acres per year in the 3 CFLRP projects.
- Strengthening collaborative actions to help maintain and develop the capacity of local communities and reduce wildfire risks to communities and natural resources.
- Improving fish and wildlife habitat health and function; e.g., an effort by a California LCC considered future environmental conditions in developing adaptation strategies and actions for ecosystems that will benefit species and habitats.

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