

Stewardship Council announces donation of land to the United States Forest Service



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NORTHERN CALIFORNIA – The Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council announces the first transfer of PG&E-owned watershed land to the United States Forest Service.

The lands' conservation values will also be monitored and protected by a conservation covenant that is now held by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy.

This land transfer, finalized on Oct. 9, 2014, is the first of several anticipated land transfers from PG&E to the USFS.

It is among the many land donations that will be made by Pacific Gas and Electric Co. to qualified public entities, nonprofit organizations, and American Indian entities in furtherance of PG&E's Land Conservation Commitment.

The nonprofit Stewardship Council was created to implement this commitment through a stakeholder-driven Land Conservation Program designed to ensure 140,000 acres of California's pristine watershed lands – currently owned by PG&E – are permanently conserved for the public good.

The 151-acre parcel, is referred to as the "Deer Creek planning unit," and is located in Tehama County about 25 miles north of Chico.

It is entirely surrounded by the Lassen National Forest and is adjacent to the Ishi Wilderness Area. The site reaches an elevation of approximately 2,500 feet at its highest point, and provides important outdoor recreation, cultural resources, and wildlife habitat within the canyons of Deer Creek.

These lands eventually will be incorporated into existing USFS management plans and managed and protected consistent with the federal lands surrounding them.

Deer Creek runs through the center of the property and provides important habitat for spring run Chinook salmon, western pond turtle, and foothill yellow-legged frog.

The USFS has recommended federal Wild and Scenic River designation for Deer Creek, including the segment that runs through the property.

This land also serves as a gateway to a variety of recreation activities, including backpacking, hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, fishing, and whitewater boating.

"The Deer Creek transaction represents years of work by the Stewardship Council board and staff, with valuable input from a wide variety of stakeholders," says Art Baggett, president of the Stewardship Council board of directors. "This is among the first of many important milestones that the Stewardship Council plans to achieve in carrying out its important mission of protecting and enhancing watershed lands and uses."

"The US Forest Service is grateful to be entrusted with the stewardship of this special place," says Dave Hays, Lassen National Forest, Forest Supervisor. "Working together with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, and all our other partners, we'll manage and protect this unique place—now and into the future."

As the conservation covenant holder, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy has worked with a diverse set of landowners in the Sierra including the USFS since it was created in 2004. "We look forward to working with the USFS to ensure that the conservation values and recreational uses at the Deer Creek property remain in perpetuity," says Sierra Nevada Conservancy Executive Officer Jim Branham.

The Stewardship Council was established in 2004 as part of a settlement agreement between PG&E and the California Public Utilities Commission.

The board of directors includes appointees from state and federal agencies, water districts, tribal and rural interests, forest and farm industry groups, conservation organizations, the California Public Utilities Commission and PG&E.

The Stewardship Council is charged with ensuring more than 140,000 acres of watershed lands located across the state are conserved and enhanced to provide a broad range of beneficial public values.

To learn more about the organization and its work, visit www.stewardshipcouncil.org.

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