



Critical Ecosystem In Danger, California's Primary Water Supply at Risk

Federal, state and regional stakeholders build Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program to address water, air, and climate in California

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SACRAMENTO, Calif.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--The Sierra Nevada Region is the source of more than 60 percent of the state's water supply. It provides drinking water for 23 million people and irrigation water to the nation's most fertile agricultural land. Climate change, large, damaging forest fires, and ongoing drought are placing this important region at risk, and the impacts to our forests, habitat, agriculture, public health, energy, and safety are far reaching. Failure to restore California's primary watershed is not an option.

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Today the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC), in partnership with the United States Forest Service (USFS), announced the launch of the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP). The WIP is a coordinated, integrated, collaborative program to restore the health of California's primary watershed through increased investment and needed policy changes.

"California's Sierra Nevada forests and watersheds are at a critical point. Failure to understand the urgency of the situation will have devastating impacts on California's economy, water supply and air quality," said Jim Branham, Executive Officer for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. "Decades of fire suppression, a changing climate and a shortage of forest restoration efforts have led to unhealthy conditions in many Sierra forests, the region where the majority of our state's drinking water originates."

The WIP is a large scale watershed restoration program designed to address a variety of ecosystem health issues in the Sierra Nevada. Restoring streams and meadows, improving habitat conditions, preserving working landscapes, restoring forest health, and improving local socio-economic conditions will be key outcomes of the WIP. Because forests link all of these issues, they are the first area of focus for the WIP.

"Forests are the critical starting point to successfully restore the Sierra Nevada Region and our primary watersheds," said Randy Moore, regional forester for the Pacific Southwest Region of the U.S. Forest Service. "We are proud to partner with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy to address this serious situation. The recent wildfires that have devastated this region, require us to act now so our forests in California will be healthier and more resilient in the future."

SNC, USFS and other key partners and stakeholders will meet today to discuss the urgent need to implement this program and develop an action plan for restoring the Sierra Nevada watersheds. The launch event and stakeholder discussion called "Save California: The Urgency to Restore our Primary Watershed" will begin at 1:00 p.m. at the East End Complex, 1500 Capitol Avenue, Sacramento. The public is welcome to attend. Register online [here](#).

For more information about water supply and regional sources in California, please visit our water maps here: <http://www.sierranevada.ca.gov/our-region/sierra-delta--connection>

About the Watershed Improvement Program

The Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) is a coordinated, integrated, collaborative program to restore the health of California's primary watershed through increased investment and needed policy changes. The WIP builds upon the broad consensus that more must be done to restore Sierra Nevada forests and watersheds. The pace and scale of science-based ecological restoration needs to dramatically increase in order to stem the tide of large, uncharacteristic wildfires and further degradation of these ecosystems. This comprehensive effort is being organized and coordinated by the state's Sierra Nevada Conservancy and the federal United States Forest Service, in close partnership with additional federal, state, and local agencies, and diverse stakeholders. For more information about the WIP please visit <http://www.sierranevada.ca.gov/wip>.

About the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Governing Board

Created in 2004, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is a state agency whose mission is to improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region. The SNC has awarded over \$50 million in grants for projects to protect and enhance the health of California's primary watersheds by improving forest health, remediating mercury contamination from abandoned mines, protecting critical natural resources and reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire. Funding for these projects came from Proposition 84 passed by voters in 2006.

The Sierra Nevada Region spans 25 million acres, encompasses all or part of 22 counties, and runs from the Oregon border on the north, to Kern County on the south. The Region is the origin of more than 60 percent of California's developed water supply. Additional information can be found at www.sierranevada.ca.gov.

About the Pacific Southwest Region of the United States Forest Service

Nearly half of the total 100 million acres in California is managed by the federal government. The Pacific Southwest Region of the US Forest Service manages 21 million acres of National Forest land in California and assists the State and Private forest landowners in California, Hawaii and the U.S. Affiliated Pacific Islands. Eighteen national forests are located in this region, in the North Coast, Cascade, and Sierra Nevada ranges and from Big Sur to the Mexican border in the south Coast range. Randy Moore has served as Pacific Southwest Regional Forester since October 2007. The Pacific Southwest Region is commonly referred to as Region 5 (R5).

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