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The Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Resolution

**As Approved by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy
Governing Board on June 3, 2010**

Overview

Today, many Sierra Nevada communities face a number of important challenges, including ecologically unhealthy forests, the threat of large damaging fires and the need for sustainable local economies. Understanding the relationship between these issues, and acting to address them, holds the potential for an important and perhaps unprecedented opportunity. Through sound stewardship of our Sierra forests, a healthy ecological system can be restored and remain intact with the involvement of members of the Sierra communities. These stewardship activities can provide jobs and revenue to support diverse and robust communities, building upon the existing infrastructure and creating new opportunities.

The following resolution represents a commitment on the part of signatories to work together to identify, initiate and support actions necessary to achieve the long-term environmental, economic and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region. The Initiative will primarily focus on issues relating to public lands in the Region, while recognizing the importance of private lands in achieving the overall objectives.

Resolution

Whereas, the Sierra Nevada Region is California's principal watershed and the origin of 65 percent of the state's developed water supply; serves as one of the state's premiere recreation and tourism destinations for more than 50 million visitor days each year; provides between one-third and one-half of the state's annual timber harvest; produces nearly three-quarters of the state's hydroelectric power; is home to two-thirds of the state's bird and mammal species, half of the state's plant species, and more than 600,000 humans;

Whereas, much of the Sierra Nevada forestlands are in an ecologically unhealthy condition, including public lands managed by the federal government;

Whereas, while fire is an important part of the ecosystem and can have a positive ecological impact, large damaging fires in the Sierra Nevada can result in a wide variety of negative impacts including loss of life and property, adverse human health impacts from poor air quality, reduced recreational and tourism opportunities and other significant economic impacts;

Whereas, large damaging fires result in degraded water and air quality, and altered wildlife habitat;

Whereas, many Sierra Nevada forests are showing signs of declining biodiversity;

Whereas, large damaging fires result in reduced amounts of carbon stored in the forests and cause significant emissions of greenhouse gases;

Whereas, projected increases in temperatures due to a changing climate combined with the unhealthy condition of portions of the forest will likely result in larger, more frequent and more damaging fires in the future;

Whereas, land management agencies, Fire Safe Councils and other entities are engaged in ongoing efforts to reduce the risk of large damaging fires with many efforts focused on the urban wildland interface, the need for additional investment for these types of activity is evident;

Whereas, many Sierra communities continue to struggle with economic vitality and sustainability even beyond the current national economic conditions, with unemployment rates in many Sierra counties significantly higher than the national and state's average;

Whereas, traditional economic activity related to wood products has been in decline in recent decades signaling a need to diversify local economies by protecting existing infrastructure while promoting new economic opportunities at the appropriate scale;

Whereas, the State of California has established aggressive goals to increase the amount of energy supplied from renewable sources, including biomass energy;

Whereas, sustainable forest stewardship can result in improved ecological health of forests, including sufficient habitat conditions, increased carbon storage, continued recreational use and high water quality;

Whereas, sustainable forest management can result in a reliable supply of biomass that could be converted to renewable energy in a sustainable manner, as well as a variety of wood products, including dimensional lumber and "value added" products, creating an opportunity for locally based economically sustainable jobs:

Therefore, we declare that it is our intent to work collaboratively, constructively and in a transparent manner, with state and federal agencies, local and tribal governments, the environmental/conservation community and, the private sector, to improve the environmental, economic and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region by:

- Identifying, supporting, and implementing actions that will reduce the risk of large damaging fires in our forests and wildlands and in our communities;
- Identifying, supporting, and implementing actions that will result in ecologically healthy forests and watersheds, protecting habitat and species, water supply and water and air quality, and the long-term sequestration of carbon in plants and soil;
- Identifying, supporting, and implementing actions that will create ecologically and economically sustainable local jobs and economic activity resulting directly and indirectly from sustainable forest stewardship activities, including but not limited to, biomass energy, biofuels, "value added" wood products, dimensional wood products, other commercial wood products and the activities necessary to produce these products;
- Identifying, supporting, and implementing actions that will result in protection and restoration of plant and wildlife habitat through increased resiliency, diversity and species composition post treatment;
- Identifying, supporting, and implementing policies, investment and technical support that will assist in achieving these objectives;
- Identifying, supporting, and applying current research and science to assist in achieving these objectives.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy will coordinate this initiative through the use of a collaborative, inclusive process. Progress will be measured and reported on an ongoing basis.

Signed,



Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI)

Q: What is the Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative?

A: It is a proposed new effort of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) designed to restore public forests to ecological health, reduce the threat and consequences of large damaging fires and contribute to sustainable local economies. The SNC believes that achieving broad consensus on the application of science-based forest management practices is a critical issue for the Sierra Nevada, and that the need for action is urgent.

SNFCI seeks to have the following impacts:

- protect and restore forests and habitats;
- reduce the risk and consequences of large, damaging fires;
- improve water quality and natural storage;
- create employment and economic vitality in the Sierra Nevada;
- promote biomass energy; and
- protect and enhance the production of a variety of wood products resulting from sustainable forest management.

SNFCI includes a Regional focus and locally-based efforts. The Regional effort will focus on policy, investment, and science and research issues that affect the success of the Initiative. Local collaborative efforts will focus on approaches and actions that best meet the local situation, including forest management and related economic development. In all cases SNC will work closely with the federal land management agencies who are ultimately responsible for making decisions affecting these issues.

Q: What is happening now, and what is proposed for the future?

A: A century of fire suppression and decades of conflict between multiple stakeholders regarding forest and habitat issues on public lands has resulted in lawsuits, limited forest management and larger, damaging fires in the Sierra Nevada. These conflicts, combined with other issues, have led to the closing of dozens of saw mills, mostly in the central and southern Sierra. Given that forest management projects have frequently been tied to lumber production, the loss of this wood production infrastructure has contributed to forest overgrowth and the suffering of local economies and ecosystems. The goal of SNFCI is to identify

ways to protect traditional infrastructure while developing new business opportunities created by ecologically sound forest management.

The SNC has been meeting with many stakeholders involved in these issues, learning from the experience of local efforts, and believes that there is significant interest in collaborating, and a real opportunity to reach consensus on essential actions to be taken. By focusing on actions that the various parties can agree on, the SNC sees an opportunity for significant progress and building a foundation for success.

Q: Why the focus on public forests? How will private forest lands be addressed?

A: The SNC believes it can be most effective in addressing issues facing public forests, based on its close working relationship with the federal land management agencies, the US Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service. While SNFCI does not focus on private lands, consideration will be given at all levels as to the role private lands play in achieving ecological health and improving local economic conditions.

Q: Who benefits from this process?

A: The beneficiaries are all Californians, as healthier forests contribute to the Sierra Nevada's most valuable natural asset: water (65 percent of California's developed water supply originates in the Sierra Nevada). The Sierra ecosystem would also benefit, including species whose habitats have been damaged by large fires. SNFCI would lead to more jobs related to forest management and restoration and production of biomass energy and wood products, critical in a Region where unemployment is nearly double the state average in some locations. Finally, a reduction in large damaging fires would reduce the threat to human life and property.

Q: Why now? Is the fire situation in the Sierra Nevada getting worse?

A: According to State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection's 2010 Strategic Fire Plan, the three largest fire years since 1950 have all occurred within the last 10 years. In the 2000s, forest fires significantly increased in annual acres burned, averaging nearly 200,000 acres per year, or four times the average from the previous four decades. As more Californians have settled in the "wildland-urban interface" of our forests, the threat to life and property—and to the forests themselves—has increased dramatically. The Regional Forester for the US Forest Service has indicated a desire to increase "treatment" of national forests in California from approximately 100,000 to 500,000 acres annually. Projections relative to a changing climate suggest the situation will only worsen, absent a different course of action.

Q: How do these large damaging fires impact water and air quality?

A: The negative impacts of large and damaging fires include the following: erosion and siltation, which impact water quality for fish, wildlife and humans;

sedimentation in waterways and reservoirs which reduces water storage capacity; and the loss of shade from the forest canopy, which impacts the timeframe for the melting of the Sierra Nevada snowpack (the anticipated consequences of a changing climate could make this issue more important).

The large, damaging fires that are occurring in the Sierra Nevada contribute a significant amount of pollutants that affect many Californians. Unlike prescription fires or managed fires outside of the wildland-urban interface that are used to achieve forest health and mimic historic conditions, many of today's fires start in or near the wildland-urban interface and burn hotter and larger, resulting in significant adverse impacts. These very large fires can more than double the amount of smoke going into the air from a given acre of forest, and concentrate all that smoke into a few days time instead of spreading the smoke emissions out over weeks. Air quality impacts are much more intense and widespread as a result. Recent studies have found that emergency room visits for asthma nearly double when the public is impacted by wildfire smoke. Furthermore, Sierra Nevada forests sequester more carbon per acre than the Amazon rainforest. Unmanaged forest fires not only release stored carbon into the atmosphere, they burn up the very forests that sequester carbon.

Q: Does this mean all fire is bad and should be eliminated from the Sierra Nevada?

A: No. Fire is a part of the ecosystem, however under current conditions throughout much of the Sierra Nevada, wildfire is having more negative consequences than positive. The use of prescribed and managed wildfire should be encouraged where appropriate, and one of the outcomes of ecologically healthy forests will be the increased opportunity for using fire as a management tool.

Q: What is the SNC's role?

A: The SNC will work with a Regional Coordinating Council to identify and address issues affecting forest health, fire and related economic development. Generally speaking, the Council will focus on policy, investment and science and research issues that affect the success of the SNFCI. The SNC will also work to catalyze stakeholders to address these important issues in the Sierra Nevada by helping local collaborative efforts to convene, identify issues, develop projects and secure funds to implement projects and processes in local areas in support of the Initiative's goals. SNC's role is not to determine specific forest management practices and principles or local economic development strategies, but rather to assist parties within the region in achieving collaboratively developed objectives.

Q: How do I learn more about this initiative?

A: Information about SNFCI, including the text of the SNFCI Resolution, can be found at www.sierranevada.ca.gov/snfc.html.

Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI)

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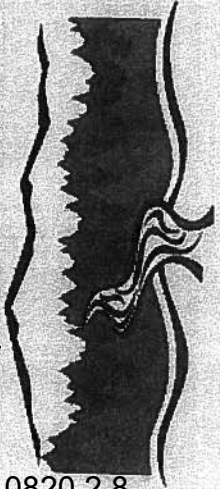
Lynn Campbell

Mt. Lassen Area Representative

Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative

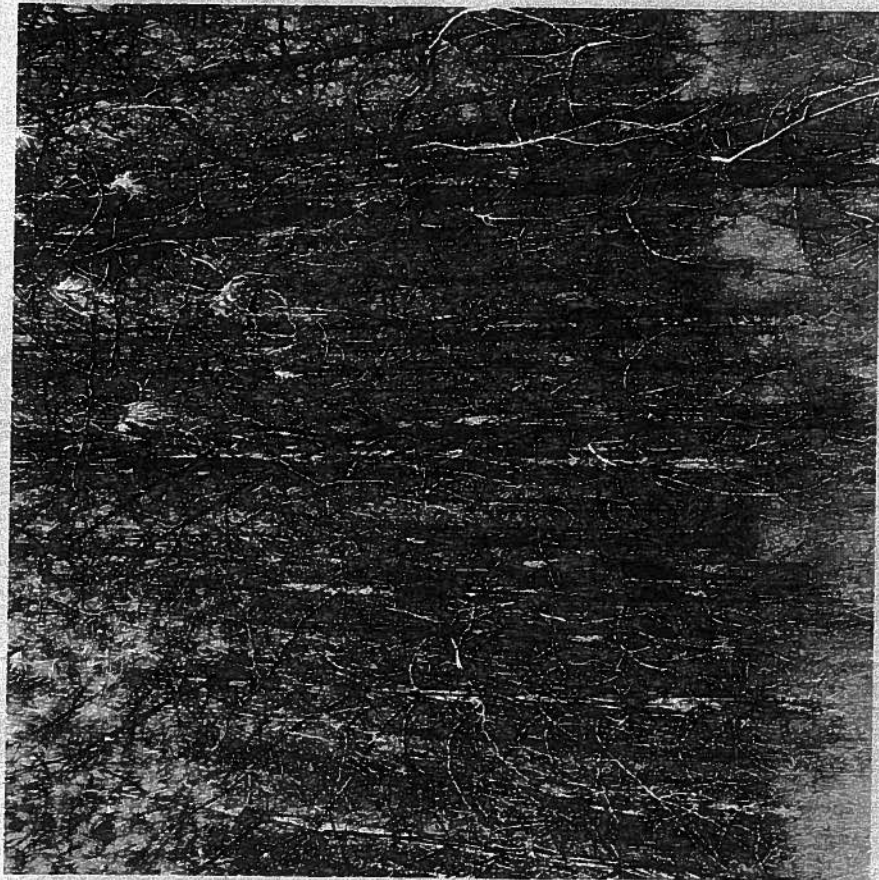
- Encouraging ecologically healthy forests and watersheds, thereby protecting and enhancing habitat and water quality and quantity while reducing the risk of large damaging fires; and
- Fostering sustainable local economic activity in the Region through increasing the sustainable production of renewable biomass energy, and a variety of wood products.

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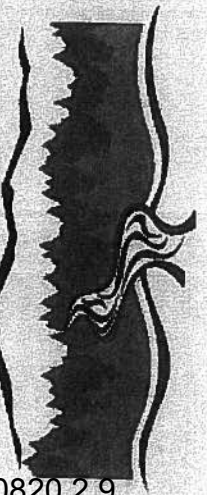


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Untreated & Treated Forest Area



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Calaveras County

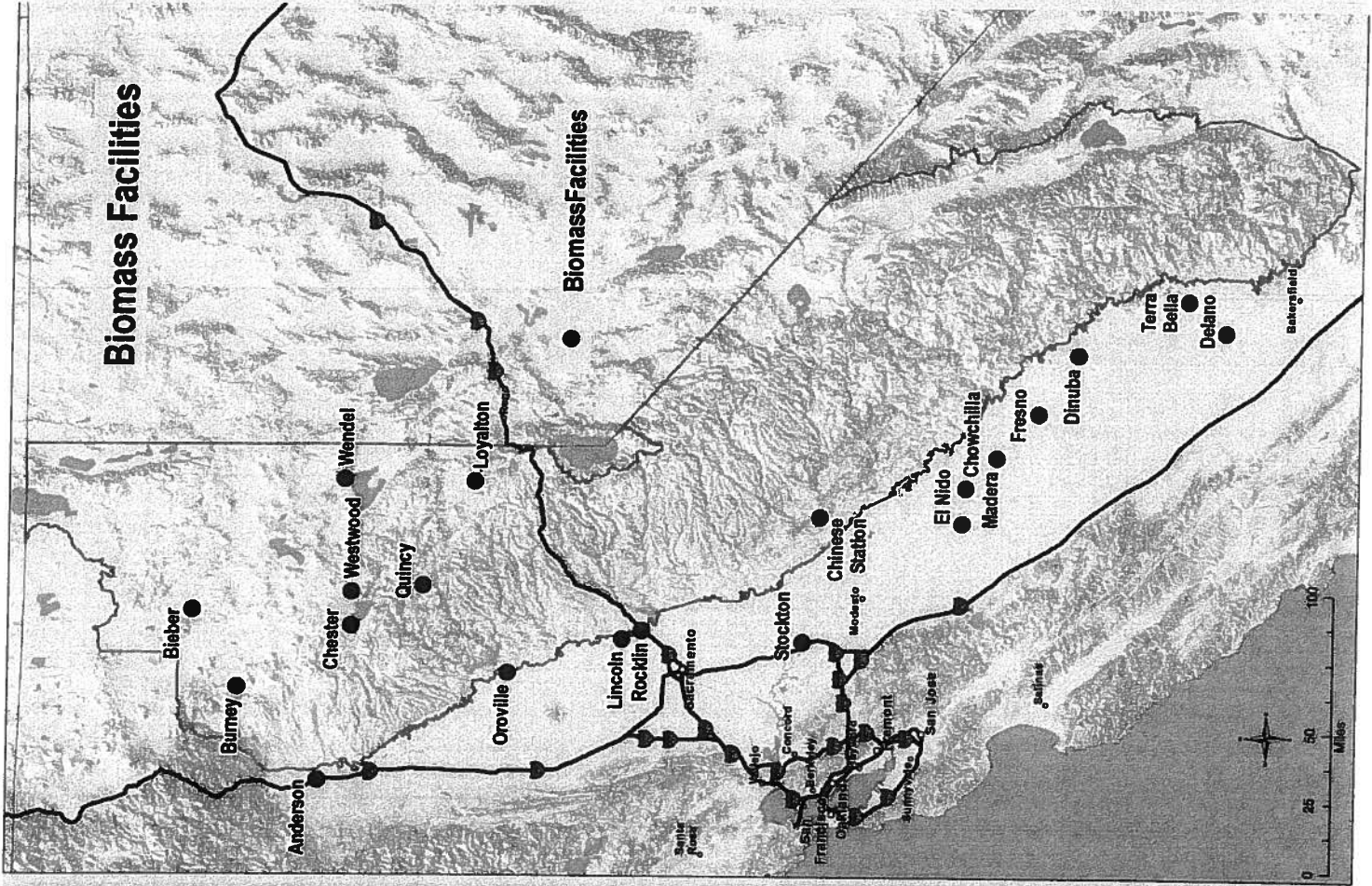
Key outcomes for the Region and state

- Protection of water quality and increasing natural water storage in the Sierra, the origin of 65 percent of the state's developed water supply;
- Preservation and creation of long-term, "good-paying" jobs in Sierra communities;
- Reduction of air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions from large damaging fires;
- Protection and enhancement of key habitats for a variety of threatened and endangered species; and
- Maximization of sequestration of carbon in Sierra Forests.

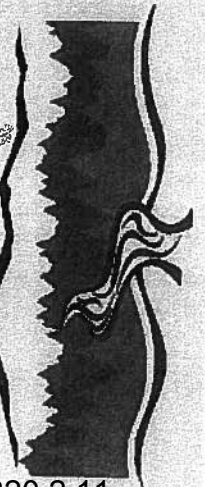
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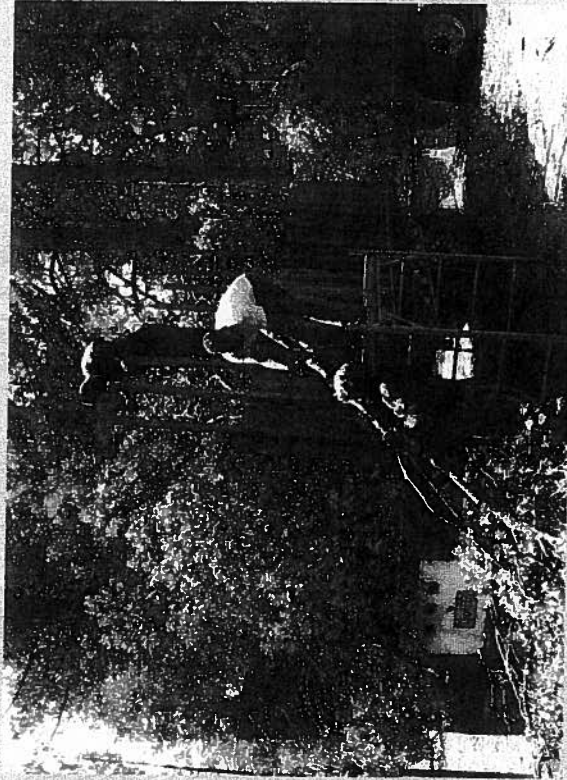
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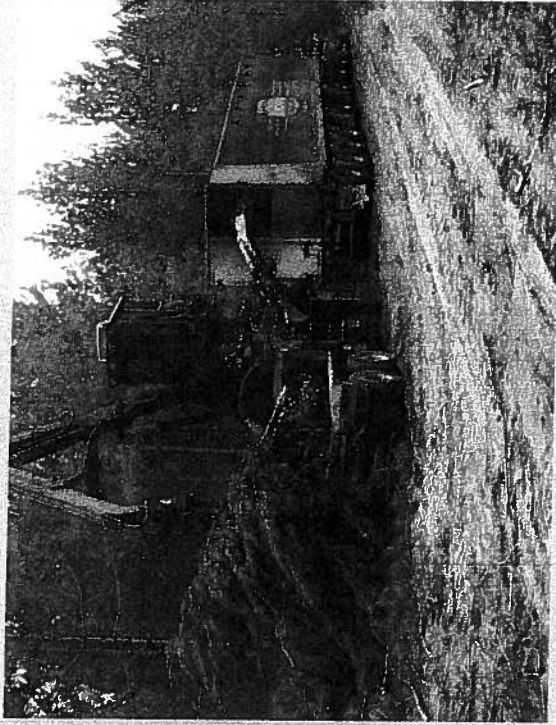
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Job Creation Potential

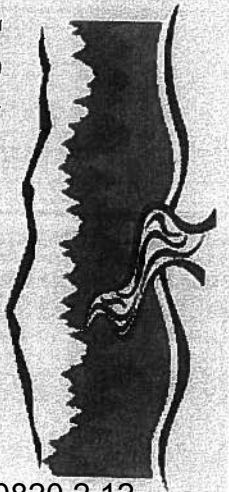


Fuels Treatment: Thinning



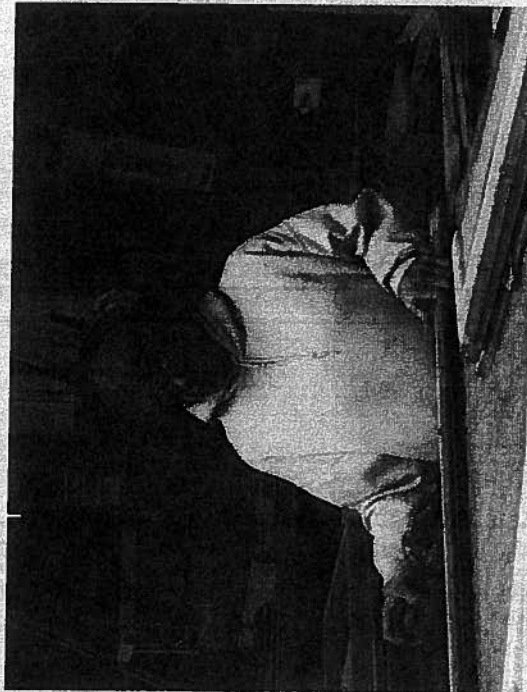
**Biomass material transport
to facility**

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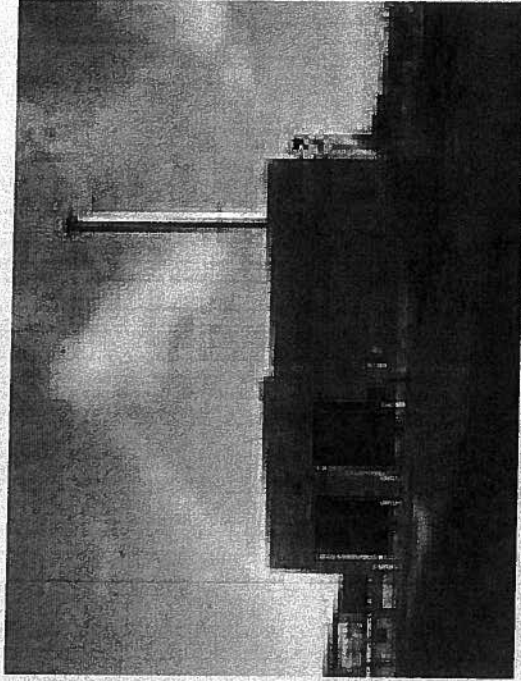


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Job Creation Potential Continued:

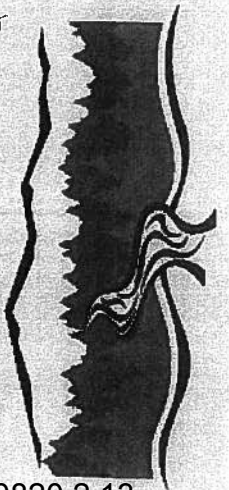


**Solid Wood Product:
Molding & Flooring**



**Clean, woody biomass
energy plant**

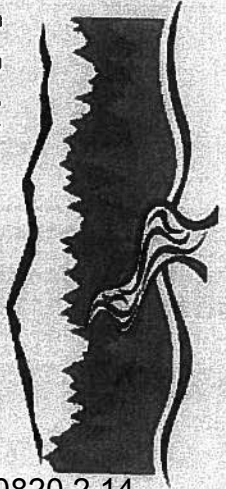
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SNC's Efforts to Create Sustainable Models

- Collaborative fuels treatment project work.
- Funding NEPA/CEQA, CWPPs, fuels reduction projects.
- Supporting/establishing contractor's cooperative.
- Assisting/securing funds for business incubation to support local operators for start-up processing businesses.
- Assisting in securing funds for market analysis to identify supply and demand needs for the Region.

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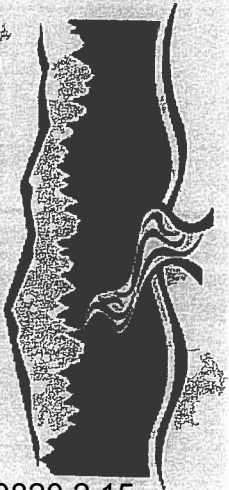


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SNC's Role

- Convene, facilitate and mediate diverse stakeholder groups;
- Assist in establishing the Regional Coordinating Council;
- Help create a Sierra-wide network of organizations and entities who are communicating and updating key information for one another on a regular basis; and
- Remain a neutral third party to help build common visions consistent with our mission and program goals.

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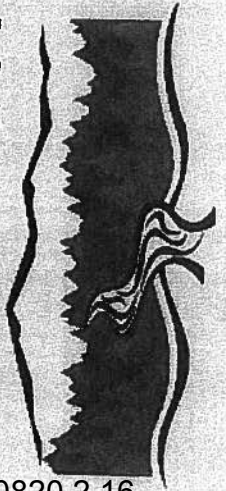
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Regional Coordinating Council Purpose

Support Regional components of Initiative:

- Conduct policy analysis and make recommendations;
- Advise on fund raising and strategic investment;
- Provide a Sierra-wide communication network;
- Monitor current science and research; and
- Track emerging technology.

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Regional Coordinating Council Potential Composition

Diverse geographic representation and expertise including:

- Governmental agency representatives and local elected officials;
- Nonprofit organizations;
- Industry representatives; and
- Research and science advisors

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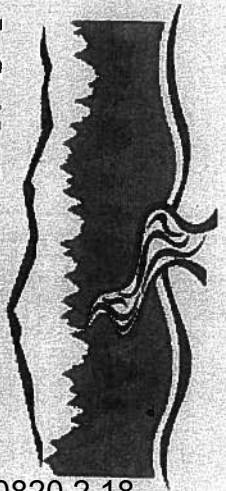


RESOLUTION SIGNATURES

Demonstration of support for:

“We declare that it is our intent to work collaboratively, constructively and in a transparent manner, with state and federal agencies, local and tribal governments, the environmental/conservation community and, the private sector, to improve the environmental, economic and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region”

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Challenges and Opportunities

- Working with existing forest management efforts and striving for a collaborative, Regional approach.
- Progress shown already:
 - Level of participation in local collaboratives; and
 - Federal agencies support for collaborative processes

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In Conclusion:

- This initiative allows the SNC to support stakeholders in addressing one of the most critical issues of the Region.
- It allows the SNC to assist stakeholders in addressing the health of the Sierra Nevada in a manner including: environment, economy and social-well being.
- SNC is committed to supporting this Initiative to achieve success.
- Diverse, local and Regional involvement in a collaborative process is critical for everyone's success.

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Thank You for Your Time and Consideration!

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