

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,