



# THE SIERRA NEVADA WATERSHED IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

*Wildfires in the Sierra Nevada are getting bigger and more intense. Forests and meadows are stressed, compromising the Region's ability to filter and store water for use later in the year. Greenhouse gases are being released at a higher rate than previously expected due to drought and insect-related tree mortality, and high-intensity fire events.*

## Why is the Watershed Improvement Program needed?

A well-coordinated, comprehensive program that increases the pace and scale of restoration in the Sierra Nevada is necessary in order to address the conditions that currently exist and maintain the important benefits that the Region provides.

**By restoring and protecting the health of Sierra forests, streams, meadows, and soils, the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program will:**

- Reduce the risk and consequences of large, damaging wildfires
- Reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and stabilize carbon storage
- Improve and protect air quality
- Improve and protect the quantity and quality of water available year-round
- Improve and protect habitat for wildlife, fish, and plant species
- Improve local socio-economic conditions and public safety

**The Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program** is a large-scale restoration program designed to address ecosystem health in the Sierra Nevada in a holistic manner and encompass concerns including wildfire, water reliability, habitat, infrastructure, recreation, socio-economic, and public safety issues. This program will restore California's primary watershed through increased investment, needed policy changes, and increased infrastructure.

This effort is being organized and coordinated by the state's Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) and the federal United States Forest Service (USFS), in close partnership with other federal, state and local agencies, and diverse stakeholders.



*Photos courtesy of the U.S. Forest Service*

# HELPING CALIFORNIA MEET CLIMATE AND WATER GOALS

Increasing the pace and scale of restoration in the Sierra Nevada Region will help California meet a great number of California's priorities.

## THE CALIFORNIA WATER ACTION PLAN

Sierra watersheds and meadows are specifically identified in the California Water Action Plan as needing restoration. The Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program can be the tool that improves those conditions, and helps California **restore mountain meadows and forests, and manage our headwaters** for multiple benefits.

*60% of California's developed water supply originates in the Sierra.*

*Emissions from the Rim Fire equaled annual emissions from 2.3 million cars.*

Governor Brown has set ambitious greenhouse gas reduction goals for California that recognize the important role of forests and natural lands. However, one Rim Fire, or even one extreme fire season, can negate much of the progress made in other sectors working to achieve greenhouse gas emissions reductions. Restoring stressed watersheds through the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program will provide a myriad of co-benefits, including reducing the threat of **severe wildfires that release huge quantities of greenhouse gases** to the atmosphere.

## AB32 SCOPING PLAN

## THE NATURAL AND WORKING LANDS AND FOREST CARBON PLANS

Sierra watersheds are becoming net greenhouse gas emitters, rather than stable carbon sinks. The Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program encourages investment in watershed restoration activities identified in the Natural and Working Lands and Forest Carbon Plans that **reduce extreme wildfire risk, increase biomass utilization, improve carbon absorption and storage, and establish resilient forests** in the Sierra.

*Modeling estimates an average increase in wildfire emissions in CA by 24% by 2050 under current conditions.*

*Sierra forests store 1/2 of the state's total forest carbon.*

The Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program is taking steps now to address the risks identified in Safeguarding California and **restore our watersheds to a condition that will be more resilient to wildfire, drought, disease,** and severe storms expected in the future.

## SAFEGUARDING CALIFORNIA

## STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN

Watershed-level restoration directed through the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program will yield dividends for California, **including improved water quality, conservation of fish and wildlife habitat,** and enhanced biodiversity.

*60% of California's animal species call the Sierra Nevada home.*



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