

The Forest Water Connection

The Sierra Nevada Region



California's Primary Watershed: The Sierra Nevada

- More than 60% of the state's developed water supply
- All or part of the drinking water for 23 million people
- Major source for agriculture
- Urban water source, e.g.
 - San Francisco → 85% from Tuolumne watershed
 - East Bay → 90% from Mokelumne Watershed
- More than half of the inflow to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta



It Just Doesn't Bubble Up Out of the Ground



- Watershed health is important to protecting the source of California's water
- Catastrophic fire presents the greatest threat to our water
 - Water Quality
 - Sedimentation
 - Water Quantity



Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative

- SNC sponsored regional initiative to address forest and community health in an integrated fashion.
- Bring parties together to focus on what we agree on, not those things that separates us.
- All 22 counties, numerous water agencies, ACWA and many other interests -- including environmental community and forest products industry -- have endorsed the initiative.

Opportunities Exist

- Many communities are focusing on reducing the risk and consequence of large damaging fires, while improving their economic well-being through local collaborative efforts.
- Examples include the Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group, Burney-Hat Creek and Eastern Madera, Fresno and Mariposa Counties.
- There are 15 Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) planning efforts underway in the Sierra Nevada -- Forest health and upper watershed issues should get more attention.

Critical Factors for Success

We Can't Just Turn Off the Faucet!

- Tell our story more effectively to decision makers at the state and federal level.
- Provide sound information to support necessary actions such as forest, meadow and riparian restoration.
- Openly address the need for “downstream” beneficiaries to share in the investment needed for these activities.

Denver, Santa Fe` and Beyond

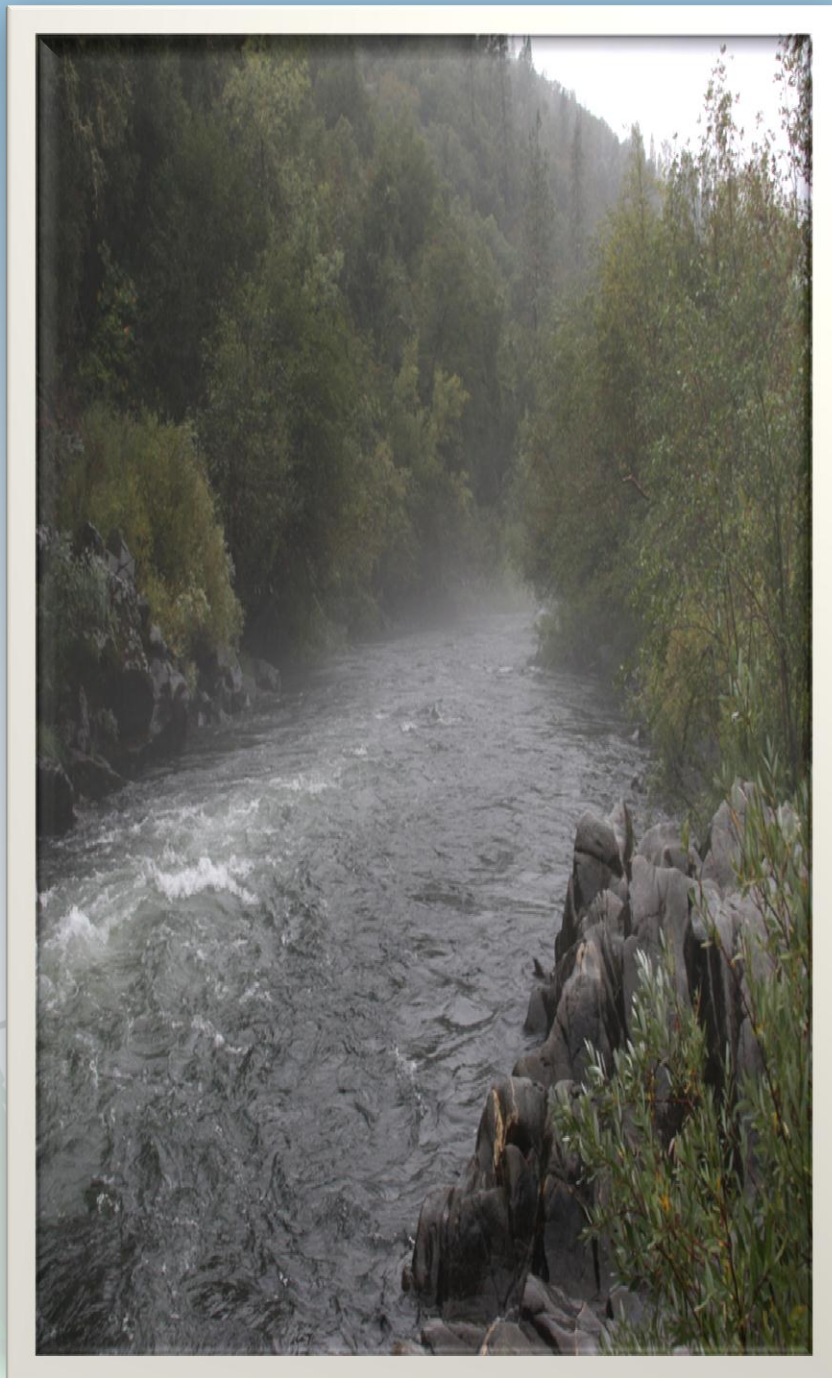
❖ Denver

- 2002 Hayman fire resulted in more than \$70m in direct costs to Denver Water Agency. This resulted in a 5 year partnership with the US Forest Service to restore 38,000 acres, costs shared equally.

❖ Sante Fe`

- City determined the cost to retain the restored forest condition to be approximately \$4.3 million, an average of \$200,000 per year. In contrast, the avoided cost that would result from a 7,000 acre fire in the watershed was estimated at \$22 million

Mokelumne Watershed Environmental Benefits Program



- Goal: Reduce the risk of catastrophic fire and improve ecological function in the Mokelumne Watershed
- Quantify the costs and benefits of increasing the number of acres treated by identifying costs avoided through watershed restoration efforts
- Identify strategic investment for restoration of the Mokelumne upper watershed

A Key Issue Remains: Better Defining and Understanding the Relationship of Healthy Forests and California's Water Future

- We need to have quantification of the impacts of catastrophic fire on water infrastructure here in California.
- We need to have better answers to the question of how does forest management relate to water yield and the timing of runoff.

