



Board of Directors and Officials

Scott Ratterman (CCWD) – President
Barbara Balen (TUD) – Vice President
Jim Holmes (County of Placer) – Secretary
Lori Anzini (EID) – Treasurer
Mike Lee (PCWA) – Director
Lori Parlin (County of El Dorado) – Director
Sue Hoek (County of Nevada) – Director
Don Blaser (YWA) – Director
Susan Peters (AWA) – Director

Dave Breninger, retired (PCWA) – Governmental Affairs Official
Tom Cumpston – Legal Counsel

Justin Caporusso – Executive Director

MCWRA FOREST MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

The Problem

Over 100 years of suppressing wildfires and changing climate have produced overgrown forests and catastrophic mega wildfires that are impacting communities, degrading California's headwaters' water quality, water infrastructure, and forest resources in Sierra Nevada watersheds, and creating a toxic smoke health hazard throughout the state. Severe mega wildfires release tons of greenhouse gases and eliminate the ability of forests to absorb and store atmospheric carbon. Climate change will continue to exacerbate the problem as a result of increasing droughts, temperatures, and wildfires. Immediate action by the State and Federal Governments and private landowners is needed to shift to land management actions that reduce mega wildfire risk and restore fire-adapted landscapes.

Statewide Benefits of Healthy Headwaters

California's Sierra Nevada mountain region provides water supplies for three quarters of all Californians, and accounts for the majority of the state's overall water supply. Yet, there exists a significant lack of recognition and funding for proper forest management to manage these critical headwater resources. Local, small regional water purveyors cannot and should not be expected to solely tackle this responsibility given the overall statewide benefit realized from this water supply and other values of resilient forests. Through education and advocacy, MCWRA will continue to promote statewide policies and pursue funding for programs and projects that protect Sierra Nevada's forested watersheds, and support the following:

- Improved water quality and quantity
- Enhanced habitats, ecosystems, recreation, and watersheds
- Lower risks to rural communities, public safety, and infrastructure
- Reduced impacts of wildfire, toxic smoke, and climate change
- Creation of resilient forests and communities
- Increased carbon sequestration

Forest Management and California's Headwaters

More than 75 percent of California's water originates in the Sierra Nevada-Cascade watersheds. Healthy, resilient forests are vital to maintain adequate quality and quantity of source water supply and clean air for local, regional, and statewide needs. California is facing a wildfire and forestry crisis. The hazardous fuel build-up in our overgrown forests is massive and catastrophically dangerous. Climate change is leading to increased mega wildfires, droughts, tree mortality, impacts on communities, huge quantities of Greenhouse Gases, and toxic smoke that impacts all Californians. Sustained State and Federal investment and major changes in forest management are needed to protect the millions of acres of at-risk forestland.

Benefits of Restoring Healthy, Fire-Adapted Forests

- Protects against severe mega wildfires
- Protects water quality
- Protects water infrastructure and statewide water supply
- Protects utility infrastructure
- Protects community safety
- Protects air quality and reduces health hazards from toxic wildfire smoke
- Protects soil productivity and prevents soil erosion and reduces flooding
- Increases biodiversity and protects old-growth tree stands
- Prevents release of large quantities of carbon dioxide from mega wildfires
- Sustains forests as long-term carbon sinks and prevents forests from being converted to low carbon sequestration brush fields by severe wildfire
- Mitigates climate change by accumulation of carbon in healthy forests

MCWRA SUPPORTS

Declaration of a Wildfire Emergency

- Declare a wildfire emergency throughout the Sierra Nevada region on State and Federal lands due to the threat of catastrophic mega wildfires and their impacts upon people, infrastructure, air, and water supplies. This will streamline planning, funding, and legal barriers, and help accelerate the pace and scale of fuels management activities.

Shift to Large-Scale Forest Management

- Shift to large-scale regional forest resilience projects and programs. Shift away from small, scattered projects.
- Support large landscape-scale removal of ground and ladder fuels and safe controlled burning.
- Make forests resilient to severe wildfire and drought.
- Integrate indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge of wildfire in planning and management of forest projects and policies to promote resilient forest ecology.
- Establish and maintain regional fuel breaks to protect communities and infrastructure.

Increased and Ongoing Funding for Forest Management

- Provide \$1B (one billion dollars) annually to Sierra Nevada MCWRA member counties to achieve the “One Million Acres Per Year” Vegetative Treatment action of the 2020 California/USFS Shared Stewardship Agreement for Forests & Rangelands to reduce the threat of mega wildfires and maintain fuel breaks and resilient forests.
- Support five-year block grants for forest hazardous ground and ladder fuel removal work to reduce wildfire threat and protect water quality and supply.

Streamlined Environmental Review

- Streamline environmental review and permitting processes to enable increased pace and scale of forest resilience projects.
- Eliminate duplicative California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and associated regulations and environmental documentation for projects funded by state or federal agencies (SB 901).
- Allow CEQA or NEPA Categorical Exclusions/Exemptions and streamlined or waived permit requirements for removal of hazardous fuels on projects up to 100,000 acres.
- Reform laws that unreasonably impede forest resilient projects.

Biomass Market Development

- Incentivize fuels reduction projects through increased market for biomass products.
- Develop and promote programs and investments in industries and infrastructure for biomass products, including grants, 20-year contracts, and state and federal tax incentives for production of forest biomass products.

Increased Controlled Burning

- Increase safe controlled low severity burning or “prescribed fire” to re-establish fire adapted and resilient forests.
- Support specialized full-time permanent employees in prescribed fire teams and equipment dedicated solely to preparation and firing operations for controlled burning.
- Support funding for safe prescribed fire training, equipment, and facilities.
- Support incentives and/or workforce solutions to recruit and retain federal firefighters.
- Support update of local, state, and federal air quality regulations to permit low severity controlled prescribed fire.

Developing and Cultivating Partnerships

- Encourage partnerships with indigenous communities, collaboratives, non-governmental organizations, state and local governments, and private landowners to provide funding, planning, and administration of forest management projects.

Set Forest Management Priorities

- Prioritize vulnerable communities, water source watersheds, and power infrastructure in planning and building large fuel breaks and their maintenance.
- Support existing state and federal plans that achieve forest management priorities.

Adopted: 02/20/2024