

Regional

State Issues Nearly \$2 Million in Grants to Build Local Capacity to Protect and Restore State Forests

By [California Department of Conservation](#) - March 21, 2019, 04:16:52 PM

SACRAMENTO March 21, 2019 – Eight organizations have received \$1.85 million in grants to hire watershed coordinators who will build local capacity to improve forest health, the Department of Conservation (DOC) announced today.

“Healthy forests are essential to reduce catastrophic wildfires, supply clean water, and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions,” DOC Director David Bunn said. “Watershed coordinators can play a major role in ensuring the health of our forests by promoting collaboration, integrating watershed management efforts, and supporting local activities that restore resilience to forest lands.”

Local projects will support the state’s [Forest Carbon Plan](#) and [Executive Order B-52-18](#) and help achieve the California Global Warming Solutions Act’s goal of reducing California’s greenhouse gas emissions 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030.

Just as the state is divided into counties, it is also divided into watersheds: the geographic areas that channel rain and snow into creeks, streams, lakes, and rivers. Watershed coordinator positions will be funded for two years in project areas that encompass about 31,000 square miles within 26 counties – from Modoc County in the northeast, to coastal areas from southern Humboldt County to San Luis Obispo County, and to Madera, Tulare, and Fresno counties in the inland central part of the state.

The [Forest Health Watershed Coordinator Grant Program](#) is funded by the California Environmental License Plate Fund and administered by DOC. Areas identified by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection as being most at risk of catastrophic wildfires were given priority for the grants. The recipients, headquarters location, and amount of funding each received:

- ◆ Resource Conservation District of Butte County, Oroville, \$217,564.
- ◆ Sierra Resource Conservation District, Auberry (Fresno County), \$235,000
- ◆ South Yuba River Citizens League, Nevada City (Nevada County), \$234, 995
- ◆ Humboldt County Resource Conservation District, Eureka, \$231,900
- ◆ Tuolumne River Trust, San Francisco, \$235,000
- ◆ Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County, Capitola, \$234,959
- ◆ Pit Resource Conservation District, Bieber (Lassen County), \$235,000
- ◆ Sierra Institute for Community and Environment, Taylorsville (Plumas County), \$228,2645

"Each grant application received highlighted good local projects and collaboration," said Keali'i Bright, director of DOC's Division of Land Resource Protection. "Our ability to protect forested lands depends on strong local leadership, and this fantastic response underscores the need for continued support."

The strategy of funding watershed coordinators to organize efforts at the local level has an outstanding track record. DOC provided grants from 2000-2015. A study of that program by the Sierra Institute for Community and Environment indicated that every dollar spent to hire a coordinator leveraged more than seven times that investment in the development of watershed management plans and restoration projects. The study also found that that forest health and watershed health are inextricably linked.

"The return on investment in watershed and forest health has been impressive, and California's commitment to these issues is strong," DOC Director Bunn said, noting that the Natural Resources Agency and DOC recently announced **\$20 million in block grants** for local and regional projects to improve forest health and increase fire resiliency.

DOC's Division of Land Resource Protection also manages programs that map land-use changes in California, permanently conserve important farmland, help reduce development pressure on agricultural and open-space land, and provide assistance to California's Resource Conservation Districts. It also works with the Strategic Growth Council on the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program and the Transformative Climate Communities Program, and with the High Speed Rail Authority on the Agricultural Land Mitigation Program.