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News Release

Release No. 0186.15

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DOI, USDA, EPA, NOAA and USACE announce additional Resilient Lands and Waters Initiative sites to prepare natural resources for climate change

Sites in northern and central California and Montana selected to showcase climate resilience approach

WASHINGTON, June 24, 2015 - The Department of the Interior (DOI), Department of Agriculture (USDA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) today recognized three new collaborative landscape partnerships across the country where Federal agencies will focus efforts with partners to conserve and restore important lands and waters and make them more resilient to a changing climate. These include the California Headwaters, California's North-Central Coast and Russian River Watershed, and Crown of the Continent.

Building on existing collaborations, these Resilient Lands and Waters partnerships – located in California and Montana/British Columbia – will help build the resilience of valuable natural resources and the people, businesses and communities that depend on them in regions vulnerable to climate change and related challenges. They will also showcase the benefits of landscape-scale management approaches and help enhance the carbon storage capacity of these natural areas.

The selected lands and waters face a wide range of climate impacts and other ecological stressors related to climate change, including drought, wildfire, sea level rise, species migration and invasive species. At each location, Federal agencies will work closely with state, tribal, and local partners to prepare for and prevent these and other threats, and ensure that long-term conservation efforts take climate change into account.

These new Resilient Lands and Waters sites follow President Obama's [announcement](#) of the first set of Resilient Landscape partnerships (southwest Florida, Hawaii, Washington and the Great Lakes region) at the 2015 Earth Day event in the Everglades.

Efforts in all Resilient Lands and Waters regions are relying on an approach that addresses the needs of the entire landscape. Over the next 18 months, Federal, state, local, and tribal partners will work together in these landscapes to develop more explicit strategies and maps in their programs of work. Developing these strategies will benefit wildfire management, mitigation investments, restoration efforts, water and air quality, carbon storage, and the communities that depend upon natural systems for their own resilience. By tracking successes and sharing lessons learned, the initiative will encourage the development of similar resilience efforts in other areas across the country.

For example, in the California Headwaters, an area that contributes greatly to state's water supply, the partnership will build upon and unify existing collaborative efforts to identify areas for restoration that will help improve water quality and quantity, promote healthy forests, and reduce wildfire risk. In California's North-Central Coast and Russian River Watershed, partners will explore methods to improve flood risk reduction and water supply reliability, restore habitats, and inform coastal and ocean resource management efforts. In Montana, extending into British Columbia, the Crown of the Continent partnership will focus on

identifying critical areas for building habitat connectivity and ecosystem resilience to help ensure the long-term health and integrity of this landscape.

"From the Redwoods to the Rockies to the Great Lakes and the Everglades, climate change threatens many of our treasured landscapes, which impacts our natural and cultural heritage, public health and economic activity," said Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell. "The key to making these areas more resilient is collaboration through sound science and partnerships that take a landscape-level approach to preparing for and adapting to climate change.

"As several years of historic drought continue to plague the West Coast, there is an enormous opportunity and responsibility across federal, state and private lands to protect and improve the landscapes that generate our most critical water supplies," said Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack. "Healthy forest and meadows play a key role in ensuring water quality, yield and reliability throughout the year. The partnerships announced today will help us add resiliency to natural resource systems to cope with changing climate patterns."

"Landscape-scale conservation can help protect communities from climate impacts like floods, drought, and fire by keeping watersheds healthy and making natural resources more resilient," said EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy. "EPA is proud to take part in the Resilient Lands and Waters Initiative.

"Around the nation, our natural resources and the communities that depend on them are becoming more vulnerable to natural disasters and long-term environmental change," said Kathryn Sullivan, Ph.D., NOAA Administrator. "The lands and waters initiative will provide actionable information that resource managers and decision makers need to build more resilient landscapes, communities and economies."

"The Army Corps of Engineers is bringing our best scientific minds together to participate in this effort. We are working to ensure that critical watersheds are resilient to changing climate," said Jo-Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works. "The Army Corps' participation in this effort along with our local, state and federal partners demonstrates our commitment to implement President Obama's Climate Action Plan in all of our missions."

The Resilient Lands and Waters initiative is a key part of the Administration's [Climate and Natural Resources Priority Agenda](#), a first of its kind, comprehensive commitment across the Federal Government to support resilience of America's vital natural resources. It also directly addresses Goal 1 of the [National Fish Wildlife and Plant Climate Adaptation Strategy](#) to conserve habitat that supports healthy fish, wildlife, and plant populations and ecosystem functions in a changing climate.

When President Obama launched his [Climate Action Plan](#) in 2013, he directed Federal agencies to identify and evaluate approaches to improve our natural defenses against extreme weather, protect biodiversity and conserve natural resources in the face of a changing climate. The Climate Action Plan also directs agencies to manage our public lands and natural systems to store more carbon.

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