RESILIENT Lands & Waters

CALIFORNIA HEADWATERS PARTNERSHIP

Taking a Partnership Approach Across All Lands

Tree mortality on the Sierra National Forest Photo: Steve Dunsky; U.S. Forest Service

Main Challenges

A century of fire suppression and other land management practices have led to overgrown forests. When coupled with an historic five-year drought, this has produced conditions conducive to insect infestation, resulting in more than 66 million dead trees in California. This crisis has shifted funding and resources from watershed restoration efforts to tree mortality response. As the number of dead and dying trees increases and expands to new areas, resources at all levels of government are inadequate to address long-term restoration. Some other main challenges include:

- Watershed restoration activities are needed on a very large scale.
- Existing operational infrastructure, including wood processing and biomass energy plants that process material from forest restoration activities, is not meeting the current demand.
- Environmental planning processes are lengthy, costly, and inefficient. Shifting to contracted NEPA planning is needed and not yet widespread. Most grants do not pay for planning.
- Standardized metrics to determine success of restoration are needed across all lands.
- Protecting multiple values, including water supplies, carbon storage, air quality, and habitat, in fire-dependent ecosystems.
- Lack of agreement on management approaches, objectives, and science among diverse stakeholders with different organizational missions and processes.

Lessons Learned

The California Headwaters Partnership values collaboration and coordination among partners and the public. Engagement of private landowners, tribes, nongovernmental organizations, and agencies must be a continuing emphasis in large-landscape restoration. Communication is crucial, and how we say things can be as important as what we say. Other lessons learned include:

- A multi-year perspective is needed to reach large-landscape restoration goals.
- Organizations may need to shift the traditional way of doing business to meet changing scope, complexity, and needs of forest and watershed management.
- Funding new approaches, implementing new contracting mechanisms, and building local capacity are essential to increasing the pace and scale of restoration across all land ownerships.

Taking a Partnership Approach...

Best Practices

Co-leading large-landscape restoration efforts creates the best products and the best outcomes. Other best practices include:

Use Lessons Learned

Coordinate and collaborate early in areas where forest and watershed health are vulnerable to climate change and other disturbance threats. For example, establish tree mortality taskforces in counties susceptible to future mortality. In addition, use all management tools, including managed fire, to reduce fuel loads, decreasing the risk of large, intense wildfires.

Fuel break completed under the Cohesive Strategy on the Eldorado National Forest

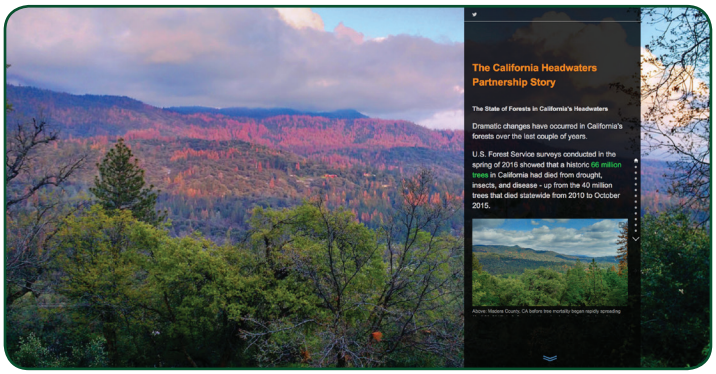
Training Opportunities to Improve "Soft" Skills and Build Expertise

Provide training to respond to changing needs. Examples include the Forest Service "Leaders as Conveners" Training for natural resource managers and partners, and the multi-partner Meadow Restoration Training, which teaches technical and soft skills to increase and leverage additional work through partnerships.

Sierra snowpack is an important source of water for California
Photo of Donner Pass, CA

Tell the Story

Share information in multiple forums and formats, using innovation and technology. The Esri Story Map tool was used to develop the California Headwaters Partnership Story to describe the current situation and efforts underway to increase the pace and scale of restoration.



The California Headwaters Partnership Story Map

Next Steps

Focus on implementing the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP):

- Complete watershed assessments on all lands, develop metrics, and begin pilot watershed analyses.
- Coordinate and communicate work products and progress with all partners.
- Develop the WIP information hub and use it as a communication tool.

Meadow Restoration Training Photo: American Rivers

For more information visit the Sierra Nevada Conservancy website at:

http://go.usa.gov/xkw3Q

Or the Forest Service website on California Headwaters Partnership at:

http://go.usa.gov/xkw3U

Scan code with smart device to visit the Forest Service website on California Headwaters Partnership

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