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News Release

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For Immediate Release

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Prescribed Fire Northwest of Kirkwood will Kickoff Caples Ecological Restoration Project

Placerville, Calif. - The Eldorado National Forest will burn 169 acres approximately four miles northwest of Kirkwood next week if weather conditions allow as part of a multi-year ecological restoration project in partnership with El Dorado Irrigation District (EID) and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC). A total of 8,800 acres will be burned over the next 10-15 years to decrease the risk of wildfire in the biologically diverse Caples Creek watershed that provides a vital community water supply for 110,000 people in EID's service area. The area to be burned next week (Unit A1) is located on a ridge in the upper watershed near Buck Pasture and Hay Flat.

"The lightning fires that have occurred in this part of the forest over the last 100 years have been suppressed leading to higher fuel loading and tree density," said Forest Supervisor Laurence Crabtree. "We need to reintroduce fire under moderate conditions so a future wildfire won't cause ecological damage to this important watershed."

Forest staff from the Placerville and Amador Ranger Districts began collaborating with EID on restoration plans for the Caples Creek watershed in 2010. Since then, EID has received

two grants from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy in support of this project. A grant for \$75,000 to complete the environmental analysis was awarded in 2012, and a grant for \$476,709 was awarded in 2016 to implement prescribed fire activities across 4,400 acres of the larger project area over the next several years. In addition to prescribed fire, the implementation grant will fund meadow and aspen restoration activities.

"This is critical to maintaining EID's water supplies within the South Fork American River Watershed," said Dan Corcoran, Environmental and Water Resources Manager for EID. "Caples Lake and the Caples Creek watershed provide both high quality drinking water and renewable hydroelectric power for the citizens of our region. In addition, there are large heritage trees in the mixed conifer stands as well as meadows, aspen and other hardwoods, American marten, Northern goshawk, and California spotted owl habitat. It's an exceptional recreation area for hiking, fishing, hunting and equestrian use. These are all resources we must work together to protect."

The Caples Ecological Restoration Project is aligned with the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program, an interagency effort led by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and the U.S. Forest Service to restore forest and watershed health across the Sierra Nevada region. Caples Creek delivers a large amount of water to the South Fork American River which supplies domestic and agricultural water for a large portion of El Dorado County.

"This work in the Caples Creek watershed supports the goal of creating resilient landscapes to protect the water, carbon storage, wood products, habitat and recreation values that our Sierra Nevada forests provide," says Jim Branham, Executive Officer for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. "It is important that we invest in projects like this that improve the health of our forests."

Approximately 40 firefighters will conduct the upcoming prescribed fire using hand ignition within established control lines. Short term smoke is expected and may be present in the Lake Tahoe Basin, Carson City, or Reno given the prevailing southwest winds. Smoke may also occur in Kirkwood, Kyburz, Strawberry and Meyers due to the tendency for smoke to settle with cool air at night. Smoke sensitive individuals are encouraged to reduce their exposure by avoiding smoky areas, closing windows, or staying indoors.

Updates on the Caples Prescribed Fire will be posted on Twitter at www.twitter.com/eldoradoNF. For more information about the Caples Ecological Restoration Project, please visit the [project pages](#) on the forest website.

For location details, see the following maps:

[1\) Caples Ecological Restoration Project](#)

[2\) Caples Prescribed Fire Burn Units](#)

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