



STATEMENT

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California-based Organizations Support Federal and State Investments to Support Water Quality and Quantity in Drought-Stricken California

[Audio](#)

SUNOL, Calif., June 25, 2015 — Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack yesterday joined Interior Deputy Secretary Mike Connor and California Secretary for Natural Resources John Laird to announce a new partnership focused on conserving and restoring the Sierra-Cascade California Headwaters, as part of President Obama's Resilient Lands and Waters initiative. Over the next two years, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Forest Service (FS) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will invest \$130 million in the partnership, which also includes the Interior Department, the State of California, non-profits, and private landowners. In total, the partnership will yield a minimum investment of \$210 million by all partners. The Sierra-Cascade California Headwaters provides 25 million Californians with drinking water and much of the water for irrigated agriculture in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys.

In addition to the partnership, USDA is announcing that \$13.7 million is available to California producers and ranchers through NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and approximately \$6 million remains available to drought-stricken communities through Rural Development's [Emergency Community Water Assistance Grants](#) (ECWAG), making nearly \$20 million available to drought-affected communities.

See USDA's full press release on this announcement, [Agriculture Secretary Vilsack Announces \\$150 Million, New Partnership to Support Water Quality and Quantity in Drought-Stricken California](#).

Several California-based organizations issued the following statements in support of yesterday's announcement:

"At a time when California is working to manage every drop of water amid record drought, we are pleased to see California's headwaters areas receive this designation as part of the Resilient Lands and Waters initiative. "This designation will elevate the importance of collaborative partnerships and help leverage opportunities to landscape-scale demonstrations and research. Given the severity of the drought and the risk of more destructive wildlife this summer, we must focus attention on these upstream headwaters areas and pursue strategies that can improve conditions water quality and supply conditions now." - Timothy Quinn, Executive Director, Association of California Water Agencies

"The Administration's Enhancing Climate Resilience program and its call for joint state and federal "all-lands work" is just what's needed to address the knotty problems associated with climate change, increasingly devastating fires and drought. The scale of our response has to match the scale of the challenge. Starting at the headwaters and

working our way down and including all the owners, managers, and beneficiaries is the only way we'll secure the investments and target the work needed to create landscape-scale resilience. The Sierra Institute looks forward to working with our many partners and being part of the "enhancing climate resilience" solution." - Jonathan Kusel, Ph.D., Executive Director, Sierra Institute for Community & Environment

"This designation really supports the call to action mirrored in the state's California Water Action Plan and our own Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program. California's headwaters are a critical piece of our water supply system, and there is an urgent need to work together to ensure that they remain as resilient as possible in the face of a changing climate." -Jim Branham, Executive Officer for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy

"I think this designation speaks to what will become THE water management business model of the 21st century. Collaboration from forest, to farm, to faucet is the only way forward. I'm looking to the CA Headwaters project to inspire my work in forest conservation and forest community development in the Trinity Watershed and beyond, and I'm confident that rural forest communities across the state are prepared to do the same." - Nick Goulette, Executive Director, Watershed Research & Training Center, Hayfork, Calif.

"Sierra Business Council (SBC) is thrilled about the California Headwaters Partnership designation, which recognizes the value of headwaters areas in providing critical resources and helps to knit together existing collaborative efforts, including SBC's own Sierra Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Partnership (Sierra CAMP). Sierra CAMP connects rural and urban decision-makers to achieve greater resilience and protection of resources benefitting both the source areas and the urban communities that depend on them. We look forward to participating in the California Headwaters Partnership to enhance the long-term health and sustainability of this critical resource area." – Steve Frisch, President, Sierra Business Council

"The drought has only compounded the already critical situation in the forests of California's Headwaters, especially on our federal public lands. This designation will assist in bringing urgently-needed resources to bear to complete forest restoration projects in these watersheds to restore fire resiliency to habitats, protect communities, prevent air quality deterioration, and help California continue to meet its AB 32 goals." - Patricia Megason, Executive Vice President, Rural County Representatives of California

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