



PRESS RELEASE for Immediate Release

CALFIRE • Mid Klamath Watershed Council • Karuk Tribe
Six Rivers National Forest • Pacific Southwest Research Station
Klamath National Forest • The Nature Conservancy • Happy Camp Fire Safe Council
Salmon River Restoration Council • Orleans-Somes Bar Fire Safe Council

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CALFIRE Awards \$5 Million to Western Klamath Restoration Partnership to Fight Climate Change by Restoring Fire at the Landscape Scale

Orleans, CA - CALFIRE awarded \$5 million, as part of its Forest Health Initiative, to the Western Klamath Landscape Fuels Reduction and Forest Health Project, managed by the Western Klamath Restoration Partnership. The project is part of California's Climate Investments (CCI), a statewide program that puts billions of state dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment—particularly in disadvantaged communities.

Key Western Klamath Restoration Partnership (WKRP) players that collaborated together for this award include the Karuk Tribe, Mid Klamath Watershed Council (MKWC), Six Rivers National Forest (SRNF), Klamath National Forest (KNF), Pacific Southwest Research Station (PSW), U.S. Forest Service Remote Sensing Lab, Salmon River Restoration Council (SRRRC), and Orleans – Somes Bar and Happy Camp Fire Safe Councils, and the Lomakatsi Restoration Project.

Nolan Colegrove, District ranger for the SRNF, credited the critical role of partners in securing these funds. "The entire effort would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of many individuals coming together to work collaboratively toward a common goal and shared values," he said.

The WKRP, formed in 2013, is a collaborative group committed to restoring healthy fire processes and resilient landscapes that can adapt to increasing challenges of climate change and wildland fire severity. The WKRP encompasses a 1.2 million-acre planning area in Karuk aboriginal territory, some of it to be treated with this CALFIRE funding. The WKRP planning area also spans both the Klamath and Six Rivers National Forests.

The Karuk Tribe has nurtured collaborative relationships with federal partners and initiated development of local, non-profit organizations to increase capacity for river and forest-based restoration. These efforts are actively addressing the increasing impacts of fire exclusion and recent extreme wildfires.

Corinne Black, a hydrologist with the SRNF, described her experience working with the Tribe, "It has been very rewarding to have had such a productive and long-term working partnership" she said. "Our

partnership began around 2001, and I believe having had this history of working together helped make the WKRP the strong collaborative that it is today.”

Broad partnerships spanning the local to national level have pushed the WKRP forward—a fact captured by the group’s co-founder and Deputy Director of the Karuk Dept. of Natural Resources (Karuk DNR), Bill Tripp. “This project is a great example of how federal, tribal, state, NGO and other collaborative programs can align. It will take all of us working together to address the hard truths of our age.” Tripp said.

In the wake of one of the worst fire seasons in history, CALFIRE and the state of California are investing in groups working to protect the state’s forests from the increasing impacts of wildfire. They hope the funding can help reduce the risk these “campaign fires” pose to a forests’ ability to absorb, store, and mitigate atmospheric carbon.

Forest health programs like California’s Climate Investments (CCI) acknowledge climate change impacts are exacerbating things such as worsening drought conditions, accumulation of hazardous fuels, and bug infestations. This program also calls attention to the culture of misplaced fear around “good fire”, which limit managers’ abilities to use it as an effective and relatively inexpensive tool toward landscape resiliency.

The CCI grant will fund WKRP’s Somes Bar Integrated Fire Management Project (SBIFMP), as well as one of the largest prescribed fire training exchanges (TREX) in the nation—a program led by The Nature Conservancy.

The WKRP embodies an innovative effort combining traditional ecological knowledge with western science for fire management. Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) strategies were developed over thousands of years by indigenous communities to maximize diversity, resiliency, and resource production. Western science can enhance TEK and help inform its application given present day realities.

Proposed treatments seek to reduce wildfire risk, restore fire processes and ecosystem function, protect existing carbon, and increase carbon storage at the landscape scale. The WKRP is working to protect communities and to allow fire managers more options to manage wildfires for resource objectives.

The CALFIRE grant to WKRP partners will accelerate the group’s forward momentum. With such a large landscape and expansive list of partners, the group recognizes that it has work to do on many fronts. The group and the CCI grant work are located in the rural communities of Orleans-Somes Bar, Salmon River, and Happy Camp. In each community, work focuses on different fire management strategies that redefine fire management in many of its present-day applications. At the root, these strategies create defensible space around entire communities so wildfires can be managed more frequently for resource objectives in the surrounding wildland areas.

MKWC Director Will Harling described widespread implications of the award. “The work funded through this CALFIRE CCI grant is a road map for solving many of California’s rural fire problems, while simultaneously promoting carbon sequestration at the landscape scale.”

The CCI award aids the WKRP in accomplishing its ambitious set of objectives by catalyzing a project that can demonstrate the benefits of prescribed fire through the SBIFMP. The upcoming TREX event, Oct. 1-13, provides critical training to local crews to conduct controlled burning and helps to establish a

capable local workforce to implement projects like the SBIFMP. Both TREX and the SBIFMP incorporate key involvement of private landowners, so that projects get implemented across public and private property boundaries.

“This is how we will learn to use prescribed fire as a meaningful tool in the wildland-urban interface again,” Harling said.

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