PACIFIC FOREST TRUST

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Pacific Forest Trust Recommendations for Actions to Support a Natural and Working Land "Big, Audacious Goal" for Climate

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Regional Climate & Water Resilience Framework

This plan ties together the Water Resiliency Portfolio, NWL Climate Goals, and California for All rural economic development efforts

Complete a comprehensive watershed resilience implementation plan for the region that supplies Oroville and Shasta/Trinity reservoirs. These are the backbone of our state water system, supplying the large majority of drinking and irrigated agricultural water, and the source of 80% of freshwater for San Francisco Bay/Delta. This will improve the security and reliability of our water supply, restore forests to improve fire behavior and carbon storage and buffer the climate impacts of more extreme storms and droughts. This landscape approach will also allow us to plan for climate adaptation, ensuring safe passage and migration for plants and wildlife as climate change forces them out of their current range.

We will build on and accelerate efforts already underway. In 2018 the Legislature called for a spatially explicit prioritization of watershed restoration needs for this region (see PRC §71365), and the CNRA has $2 million set aside for this work. We are going to accelerate this effort, creating an implementation plan that allows us to execute the comprehensive work across this 7+ million-acre region over the next 15 years. This plan builds on work already done in the region, and will allow us to plan for the workforce, permitting, stakeholder engagement and financing necessary to restore our most critical watersheds into the best possible condition to serve our needs in the coming century. This focused initiative will also drive sustainable employment in this region, supporting an estimated 7,000 good jobs working to prepare us for a more extreme and unpredictable climate.

Note: PFT will be providing a more detailed framework for implementing this regional effort (which we call Healthy Watersheds California) as part of our Water Resilience Portfolio in the coming week.

Statewide Goals for Forestlands

Conserve and maintain the forest land base for carbon rich climate resilience

- Increase the pace and scale of forest conservation, both managed and natural lands
- Reduce forest loss and fragmentation by 75% by 2030
- Prioritize forest restoration actions where the benefits are secured with a permanent commitment to climate smart, ecologically resilient forest management.
- Use working forest conservation easements to prevent conversion and fragmentation of forests and oak woodlands, AND to secure climate-resilient management in the future.
- Maximize the use of prescribed fire to reduce surface fuels and maintain forest structure.
- Gain agreement from federal land managers on long term outcomes from state investments in restoration
- Inventory existing state lands (DFW, Demonstration State Forests, Parks) and identify areas where an intervention is required to achieve stable, resilient carbon stocks (due to past management and fire exclusion). Implement all priority treatments on state lands by 2030.

More Specific Policy Opportunities:

1) **Incentive/Market-pull mechanisms:**
    A. **The Department of General Services shall implement procurement requirements (developed in conjunction with CNRA, CDFA, CalEPA) for all state purchased or supported food and fiber acquisitions to achieve, over time, 100% "carbon friendly/climate resilient":**
        i. From conserved, well-managed forests, with climate adaptive and resilience requirements above regulatory minimums;
        ii. From "carbon-friendly" farms and ranches (those that have increased carbon stores through organic or holistic range management certification or equivalent, and/or those which are conserved with permanent conservation easements)
        iii. Both i and ii above will need new definitions that set a meaningfully ambitious, but attainable, definition of "carbon friendly, climate resilient" farms and managed forests.
        iv. As a potential interim administrative action, add explicit climate-focused guidelines to the existing DGS "Buying Green Guide" for state procurement of food, wood and other products derived from natural and working lands.

    B. **Establish contracting requirements or preferential bid awards for all state building or other construction projects to incorporate low-carbon materials derived from natural and working lands. Prioritize projects with green infrastructure design and components (Examples include using well-managed**

watersheds to increase water storage, incorporating porous surfaces in paved areas to increase groundwater, and requiring swales with native plantings for flood control and enhanced carbon storage.) An example of this is the approach in *Public Contract Code §12400-12404*

i. Establish new requirements for the Department of General Services for projects undertaken by the state.

ii. Require as terms of the contract or solicitation when state funding or support is involved in a municipal, county, school, or other jurisdiction's project.

iii. For all state infrastructure funding programs, include a preference for a natural infrastructure approach in the rankings, standards, and criteria.

C. Require that a specified percentage of all state grants (transportation, conservation, water, etc.) be invested in a coordinated fashion to optimize impact in a handful of designated regions to maximize climate adaptation and resilience benefits.

i. Identify strategic "climate essential" regions (those with critical water resources, food production, or population centers that are most vulnerable under increased climate change stress)

ii. Establish (or endorse where a credible plan exists) a comprehensive planning, investment, and implementation framework that can guide actions towards adaptive, desired future conditions, aligning various state granting and purchasing programs with that plan.

D. Prioritize state grants to counties with climate responsive/adaptive general plans and land use practices that encourage intact larger forest and other natural and working landscape holdings, more focused building in already developed areas, and discourage growth in the WUI.

i. Additionally, restrict eligibility for state grants when a county has a General Plan that is too old, out-of-date, or fails to address natural resource fragmentation and degradation issues.

2) Establish a standardized mitigation program for land use conversion, subdivision and rezoning of resource lands to smaller ownership minimum acreages.

i) For conversion of current resource lands (forest, farm or range lands) to built or higher intensity uses that permanently lower carbon stocks, establish a mitigation fee that includes the consequences of both carbon emissions and the lost future sequestration.

ii) When subdividing larger ownerships, rezoning or otherwise causing land fragmentation, assess mitigation payments based on adverse impacts to climate resilience and adaptation capacity, including building entitlements conveyed.