



PACIFIC FOREST TRUST

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CA Assembly Votes to Recognize Forests as Part of State's Water System
Legislation requires source watersheds to be acknowledged as infrastructure

(SACRAMENTO, California) The California Assembly took an important first step yesterday to preserve and maintain the source of the state's water supply. Assembly Bill 2480, authored by Assemblymember Richard Bloom (D-Santa Monica), requires recognition of key watersheds that feed Shasta and Oroville dams as state infrastructure and a critical component of California's water system. These five source watersheds provide 80 percent of the state's reservoir capacity, supplying drinking water for over 25 million people, and provide irrigation for eight million acres of farmland.

"The health of the land that surrounds California's rivers, lakes and streams is critical to a clean and reliable water supply," said Laurie Wayburn, President of Pacific Forest Trust. "Regrettably, these lands have been degraded due to development, drought and other impacts of climate change, imperiling water security for millions of Californians."

Currently, California has policies and systems in place that maintain built water infrastructure such as dams, levees, and canals. However, the state has no policies or systems for ensuring the function of natural water infrastructure, which is essential to providing clean, plentiful water. Watershed restoration and conservation can increase water quality and quantity, as well as improve flow regulation—both reducing peak flooding and holding water later into summer seasons.

"This law will make sure that the source of our water is treated just like other basic infrastructure that Californians depend on, such as roads, dams and power supplies," said Wayburn. "It is time to redefine California's water systems to include these landscapes that are so critical to a safe and secure water supply."

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