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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AGREEMENT REACHED TO BEGIN LONG CANYON WATERSHED PROTECTION PROJECT

Auburn, Calif. (August 5, 2024) — Placer County Water Agency took a major step toward watershed sustainability Thursday when it approved an agreement to reduce fire risk across 16,500 acres in the Eldorado National Forest.

The PCWA Board of Directors voted Aug. 1 to undertake the Long Canyon Watershed Protection Project in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service along Long Canyon Creek, an important tributary to the Rubicon River, an essential part of the PCWA watershed.

The Long Canyon Project will use proven forest health and fuels reduction treatments on 6,200 acres in an area near other public and private forest health projects that together provide landscape-level wildfire resilience. The work will likely include clearing overgrown forest through commercial thinning, hand and specialized thinning, mastication and chipping, as well as reforestation and prescribed fire treatments.

The agreement clears the way to begin project planning and environmental documentation, at an estimated total cost of \$1.4 million. Almost half that cost, or \$657,500, is funded by a grant from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, an Agency of the State of California, which has been extremely supportive of our work.

“We’re thrilled to get this project underway, continuing PCWA’s commitment to protect our water supply and reduce fire risk in our watershed,” said Board Chairman Robert Dugan. “In addition, the project will improve habitat by returning this 6,200 acres of forest to a tree density more like historical conditions, when catastrophic fires were rare.”

A century of well-intentioned firefighting in the Sierra Nevada has left forests overgrown. As a result, fires are more likely to bloom into disastrous events that endanger our water supply.

PCWA learned from the devastating King Fire in 2014 that much more work is needed to reduce fire risk. The King Fire burned 97,000 acres in the American River watershed, causing erosion that damaged PCWA facilities and threatened water quality.

To prevent another such event, PCWA began the [French Meadows Forest Restoration Project](#) in 2019 with the U.S. Forest Service, private landowners and others. The project is an ecologically-based approach to reducing fire risk on 28,000 acres near PCWA's French Meadows Reservoir. The French Meadows Project will soon reach a successful conclusion, and PCWA intends to continue the work with the Long Canyon Project.

In other news: On July 23, 2024, PCWA officially began delivering water to 107 customers in the community of Dutch Flat. This marks the conclusion of a consolidation agreement with the Dutch Flat Mutual Water Co. that dates back to 2016.

And on July 16, 2024, PCWA signed a funding agreement to consolidate the Shady Glen Community Water System. The agreement with the state of California totals \$4.5 million to cover costs to serve Shady Glen from the PCWA system.

PCWA's [Consolidations Program](#) helps small water systems that can no longer afford to upgrade old infrastructure or comply with new regulations. When both parties agree, PCWA develops a plan to serve the smaller system, with all costs borne by those new customers — often with help from grants. No costs are borne by existing PCWA customers.

In the case of Dutch Flat, PCWA received a grant from the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, which itself is funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and State Water Resources Control Board.

The next regular meeting of the PCWA Board of Directors is Thursday, Aug. 15, 2:00 PM, at the PCWA Business Center, 144 Ferguson Road, in Auburn. PCWA board meetings are open to the public.

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About PCWA

Placer County Water Agency is the primary water resource agency for Placer County, California, with a broad range of responsibilities including water resource planning and management, retail and wholesale supply of drinking water and irrigation water, and production of hydroelectric energy.