



Millions for Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group Forest Project

Feb. 3, 2012 by Alex George

A coalition of 42 agencies in Amador and Calaveras counties has been chosen to receive a \$730,000 grant annually for 10 years to work on forest restoration.

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced Thursday that the [Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group Cornerstone Project](#) is receiving part of \$40 million budgeted under the USDA's [Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration](#) (CFLR) program and is one of only 10 national projects in 2012 to receive funding.

"We have devoted a lot of attention to the restoration of our nation's forests and we know the impact they play in our communities," [Vilsack](#) said in a conference call with reporters. "Today we are making sure these forests are being managed properly with a focus on improving the health of forests to protect water and wildlife, as well as providing jobs for rural communities."

The strategy is designed to expand the number of forest acres treated to 20 percent over the next three years and increase the pace of active forest management. Such initiatives include reducing the fuel by producing electricity from biomass, forest thinning and road decommissioning.

The Cornerstone Project was formed to address a number of needs in the Sierra forests, including restoring meadows, watersheds, and streams, reducing the risk of fire to lives and property, restoring forest structure and creating sustainable jobs as a product of a re-tooled forest economy. Supervisor [Steve Wilensky](#), who has been working on the project for seven years, said the project could provide more than 200 jobs within Amador and Calaveras counties.

"We have been training crews in environmental restoration as well as fire technician training with the [Bureau of Land Management](#)," Wilensky said. "It has the possibility to return many people to work in stewardship and forest restoration. It will have an enormous economic impact in these two counties."

Jobs could include hand crews for thinning and prescribed burns, drivers for chip and log trucks, and a variety of other service jobs such as mechanics and general laborers. Wilensky said the Cornerstone Project was formed as community-based collaborative between 42 local agencies and groups - including the [Miwok](#) people, [Sierra Foothill Conservancy](#) and [Sierra Nevada Conservancy](#). It is one of two groups in Northern California to receive funding. The other is the [Burney - Hat Creek Basins](#) project in [Lassen National Forest](#), which has been awarded a \$605,000 grant.