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Burney-Hat Creek Basins Project to Receive \$605,000

Feb. 15, 2012

Susanville, Calif.... U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack last week announced the Burney-Hat Creek Basins Project will receive a substantial grant under the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration (CFLR) program.

The CFLR program is part of an accelerated restoration strategy underway on national forests and grasslands across the nation. Its overarching goal is to increase the pace of restoration on national forest lands and to create jobs in forest-dependent communities.

The Basins Project, envisioned by the Burney-Hat Creek Community Forest and Watershed Group (BHCCFWG), is slated to receive \$605,000 in funding in 2012. The BHCCFWG is comprised of a number of partners, including Todd Sloat representing the Fall River Resource Conservation District (RCD), Hat Creek District Ranger Kit Mullen representing the Lassen National Forest, and more than a dozen others. The project focuses on 369,000 acres of Burney and Hat Creek watersheds and the communities dependent on this landscape. It involves public and private land and a diverse collaborative partnership group.

The Shasta Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) was the initiator of the idea of implementing a “legacy” project - a project that would involve the establishment of a collaborative to implement a landscape-level project to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire, improve resiliency and forest health, and improve socioeconomic conditions.

In 2009, the RAC launched the project, supporting first an evaluation of local social and economic conditions, and how those conditions were linked to landscape health. Second, the Shasta RAC supported a stakeholder assessment, which involved interviews of more than 35 stakeholders, including representatives of the following groups: environmental, fire safe/services, fishing and the recreation service industry, independent forest contractors, Forest Service and other agencies, local ranches, private industrial timberland managers, the Pit River Tribe, and local mill and cogeneration facilities.

Restoration in the Basins Project is designed to increase the resiliency of the landscape, reduce extreme fire risk, and improve forest health and diversity that sustains habitats necessary for a variety of wildlife species, including the California spotted owl. The project will also improve degraded streams and meadows that have a reduced ability to buffer flood flows, produce clean water, and provide vital aquatic habitat to a diminished, yet prized and economically-important, fishery.

The BHCCFWG was also recently recognized for its efforts when it was selected as the recipient of the U.S. Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region Regional Forester’s Honor Award in the “Ecological Restoration - All Lands” category. Regional Forester Randy Moore presented the group with the award at a November 30, 2011, ceremony in Sacramento. The awards recognize

outstanding service by Forest Service employees and partners - those who have achieved exceptional results because of their dedication, leadership, and hard work.

“The Burney-Hat Creek Community Forest and Watershed Group is an outstanding example of how people from a wide diversity of interests and backgrounds can come together to benefit our local communities and the environment,” said Jerry Bird, Lassen National Forest Supervisor.

BHCCFWG efforts span multiple land ownerships within or adjacent to Lassen National Forest, and include the Lower Hat Creek, Whittington, and Burney Gardens projects. The Shasta RAC also funded the designs for these projects, the first of many planned.

“The Burney Gardens Project is an inspirational example of innovative and successful collaboration,” said BHCCFWG member and District Ranger Kit Mullen.

“The collective scope of the Burney Gardens, Whittington, and Lower Hat Creek restoration projects demonstrates how BHCCFWG efforts in the Burney and Hat Creek watersheds stand as a model for true ‘All Lands’ planning and management that will restore important landscapes and benefit the communities that depend upon them,” added Mullen.

Some of these benefits include:

- restored and improved hydrologic function, water quality, and ecological services;
- reduction of fuels, leading to increased fire protection for communities and forest lands;
- added employment opportunities;
- restored rare habitat for migrating and resident wildlife; and
- movement toward sustainable forests and sustainable communities.

More information on the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration (CFLR) program, including the Burney-Hat Creek Basins Project, may be found at <http://www.fs.fed.us/restoration/CFLR/index.shtml>.

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