



Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority

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Forest Health Projects Reducing Risk of Catastrophic Wildfire

The Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority in collaboration with Blue Forest Conservation initiates novel funding approach to expand forest health projects to improve forest resilience to wildfire and protect communities, water quality, and supply

As it enters its fifth year developing and implementing forest health projects on the Stanislaus and El Dorado National Forests, the [Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority \(UMRWA\)](#) is initiating work with conservation finance non-profit [Blue Forest Conservation](#) on development of a [Forest Resilience Bond](#).

“The scale of the problem is so large that we need to employ multiple paths to get this work done. UMRWA and Blue Forest see the development of a Forest Resilience Bond as an important future funding mechanism to make our forest healthier and our communities safer,” said John Coleman, UMRWA board president.

Project activities will focus on thinning overgrown forests within the Stanislaus and El Dorado National Forests, with particular attention to areas along roadways where wildfires are most likely to ignite. Meadow restoration to improve water quantity and quality is also a likely component of future project activities.

“Blue Forest is thrilled to collaborate with UMRWA. Ecological forest restoration can reduce the risk of large damaging wildfires to communities and forests while protecting water resources, air quality, private property, insurance, and avoiding carbon emissions, in short, saving all members of the community money,” said Nick Wobbrock, Co-founder and COO of Blue Forest. “Financial instruments, like the Forest Resilience Bond, that enable investment in natural infrastructure are key to building landscape scale resilience in the face of unnaturally devastating wildfires and climate change.”

Over 4,000 acres of overgrown forests have been treated or under contract for completion since UMRWA entered into a Master Stewardship Agreement with the US Forest Service in 2016. The Forest Resilience Bond is a novel financing tool that will engage private funding sources to expand this work by extending infrastructure finance to natural infrastructure, our forested watersheds. Currently, the primary funding sources for UMRWA’s projects have been state and federal grants. Earlier this year, UMRWA initiated a two-phased Forest Projects Plan to prioritize projects and complete permitting for a large area of the Mokelumne River watershed. UMRWA hopes to have up to 50,000 acres or more permitted within two years at the completion of the second phase of this effort. The Forest Resilience Bond would fund first-phase projects which could be implemented as early as 2022.

Blue Forest’s work with UMRWA will build on its success with Yuba Water Agency where one Forest Resilience Bond has been at work since 2018 protecting 15,000 acres on the Tahoe National Forest. A second larger bond is currently in development on the Tahoe that will address an additional 30,000 acres.

UMRWA Members

Alpine County • Alpine County Water Agency • Amador County • Amador Water Agency • Calaveras County • Calaveras County Water District • Calaveras Public Utility District • East Bay Municipal Utility District • Jackson Valley Irrigation District

UMRWA is a joint powers authority comprised Amador, Calaveras and Alpine counties and six water districts, including Alpine County Water Agency, Amador Water Agency, Calaveras County Water District, Calaveras Public Utility District, East Bay Municipal Utility District and Jackson Valley Irrigation District. UMRWA was created in 2000 and was approved in 2009 by the California Department of Water Resources as the regional water management group for the Mokelumne-Amador-Calaveras Integrated Regional Water Management Region, which includes major portions of Amador, Calaveras and western Alpine Counties.

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