



PACIFIC FOREST TRUST

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contacts:

Media inquiries:

Emma Hager, Communications Manager, Pacific Forest Trust

ehager@pacificforest.org (415) 561-0700, ex 30.

For project information:

Laurie Wayburn, President, Pacific Forest Trust

lwayburn@pacificforest.org (415) 561-0700, ex 14

In a win for securing California's future, crucial portion of its life-sustaining headwaters are permanently protected

Globally significant biodiversity hotspot with diverse conifer forests, wet meadows and pristine lakes and key California water supplies for millions from conservation of 10% of the upper Trinity River Headwaters

SAN FRANCISCO, CA—(AUGUST 5, 2024) — Almost 10%, or 11,000 acres, of the Upper Trinity River watershed, a critical source of California's water supply and home to globally significant biodiversity, has been protected through a unique \$15.5 million acquisition integrating both ecological protection and community development and funded by state and federal agencies.

The agreement, primarily supported by the state of California, marks a significant step in the state's efforts to safeguard its vital water resources, protect biodiversity and conserve ecologically important landscapes. The Pacific Forest Trust, a conservation organization, has purchased the land and transferred it to the Watershed Research and Training Center, a local nonprofit that will manage the property under a conservation easement held by Pacific Forest Trust.

“In addition to this project contributing to the ecologic and economic sustainability of Trinity County, this is especially important because the property is projected to maintain its biodiversity and water values even under climate change into the next century. It will provide a refuge for many species forced to migrate because of climate change, and continue to provide cool, clean water for millions of Californians in a warming world.”, said Laurie Wayburn, President of PFT.

The Wildlife Conservation Board awarded PFT \$12M at its May 2024 board meeting to complete the \$15.5M funding needed to make this acquisition. This is the first conservation endeavor that HUD has invested in, recognizing the community benefits to Trinity County of safeguarding this land.

This project fulfills the original agreement Pacific Forest Trust negotiated with Michigan-California Timber Company who had owned the property, which subsequently sold the property to New Forests, a timber investment management organization (TIMO) that committed to honoring the agreement. “Transferring Trinity Headwaters to the Pacific Forest Trust and Watershed Center,” said Jeff Briggs, New Forests’ Managing Director, North America, “means this iconic section of northern California will be protected forever, while we retain the adjacent forest area to sustainably manage for production and carbon outcomes.”

Conservation of the Trinity Headwaters is central to PFT’s strategy to create a vast, integrated network of protected headwaters forests in the Klamath-Cascade Region. It includes 4.5 miles of the Trinity River and over 50 miles of spring-fed tributaries that form the source of this major river, providing critical supplies to the federal Central Valley Project with water for millions of acres of farmland as well as cities as far away as San Diego. The conservation easement assures that the WRTC’s active management of the property is focused on climate resilience, habitat enhancement, increasing carbon sequestration, mitigating extreme wildfire risk, new outdoor recreation opportunities, and ensuring water for fish, agriculture, and communities—while generating jobs in the woods and other benefits for this economically disadvantaged region.

This project also helps California reach its ambitious 30x30 goals, which seek to protect 30% of the state by 2030 for biodiversity. Conservation of the Trinity Headwaters protects endangered wildlife and plants, some of which are found nowhere else in the world. Nearly 250 species—including the endangered northern spotted owl, Sierra Nevada red fox, Cascades frog and 33 rare plants—have become increasingly reliant on this region as they migrate in the face of climate change and will greatly benefit from having the Trinity Headwaters as a refuge and “super wild way” that assures connections within this landscape.

“We’re excited for the opportunity to demonstrate what exemplary community-based land stewardship can accomplish for climate resilience, water resources, wildlife and people: all guided by an innovative working forest conservation easement managed by our partners at PFT,” said Watershed Resource and Training Center (WRTC) Executive Director Nick Goulette.

“This acquisition will protect and improve the health and resilience of forests in one of the state’s most biodiverse regions,” said Jennifer Norris, WCB Executive Director. “Protecting this watershed will benefit native fish and water resources, sequester carbon, and provide critical habitat and connectivity for threatened and endangered species. The Trinity Headwaters project is a prime example of how partners like Pacific Forest Trust and WCB are collaborating to combat biodiversity loss and climate change.”

“The Trinity Headwaters project is a novel initiative that will have both ecological and community benefits, bolstering the local economy. It’s taken a lot of work, a lot of partnership, and some creative thinking to get this project off the ground – and I’m glad I could help bring home federal funding for Pacific Forest Trust to get the job done,” said California State Representative, Jared Huffman.

Working Forest Conservation Easements guide forest management and protect public trust values, such as water and wildlife, while keeping lands in private ownership and productive use, and on the tax rolls. They enable landowners and land trusts to work together as partners to safeguard the public benefits in perpetuity for far less than what it would cost to purchase lands outright for state or federal protection. Property owners can continue to earn forest revenues and make more investments in habitat enhancement and other stewardship needs.

#####

About Pacific Forest Trust

Since 1993, the Pacific Forest Trust has been dedicated to conserving and sustaining America's vital, productive forest landscapes. Working with forest owners, communities, and an array of partners, we advance innovative, incentive-based strategies to safeguard our nation's diverse forests. In so doing, we're ensuring forests continue to provide people everywhere—from rural communities to urban centers—with a wealth of benefits, including clean water, sustainably harvested wood, green jobs, wildlife habitat, and a livable climate.

About the Watershed Research and Training Center

The Watershed Research and Training Center is a non-profit organization located in the heart of Trinity County, California. They conduct the full gamut of land and watershed management services, lead state biomass and fire resilience partnerships, and through partnerships with communities, organizations, and public agencies, WRTC stewards the region's landscape, creates and sustains quality jobs, and connects people to the land and one another.