



# Media Release

## State Water Board Funds To Be Used For Vital Erosion Control After Record-setting Mendocino Complex Fire

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**SACRAMENTO** -- With erosion threats to Clear Lake looming following the largest wildfire in California history, the State Water Board and Lake County Resource Conservation District (RCD) are poised to jump-start native plant restoration and limit the environmental damage.

The State Water Board's \$605,000 grant will pay for erosion control work in strategic locations within the 459,000 acres ravaged by the Mendocino Complex Fire, including the charred landscape in watersheds tied to Clear Lake, the primary drinking water source for thousands of residents. An additional \$70,000 in Water Board funds will pay for laboratory analysis of creek water flowing to Clear Lake.

The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Central Valley Water Board) worked with the Lake County Resource Conservation District (RCD) to obtain the funding from the State Water Board.

"We're racing to get these erosion controls in place before the rain hits," said Andrew Altevogt, assistant executive officer for the Central Valley Water Board in Sacramento. noting that he is counting on cooperation from landowners contacted by the Lake County RCD to get the erosion control work going as soon as possible.

While a fire of that magnitude causes massive immediate damage to the vegetation and wildlife, a second wave of potential problems makes the waterways especially vulnerable. Without new roots and plant growth holding the soil in place, strong winter rains could create enough runoff to trigger significant erosion, leading to turbidity in the water. The runoff could also carry enough nutrients, metals and organic carbon to affect drinking water and impact aquatic life.

Field work on the erosion control is expected to begin in the next two weeks, possibly enough time to beat the winter downpours.



The Lake County RCD will use the grant to install and maintain erosion and sediment control best management practices, or BMPs, in critical areas identified by Central Valley Water Board staff and the RCD. This work will focus on reducing erosion from affected roads and burned landscapes in areas tributary to Clear Lake.

These areas are in the Middle Creek, Scotts Creek, and Manning Creek watersheds. The Lake County RCD will contact property owners in targeted areas to obtain permission for workers to install the BMPs. The work will include spreading straw mulch, cleaning or repairing damaged culverts, and other actions to reduce sediment transport. The erosion control work on private property will be done free of charge to the property owners.

The State Water Board also provided \$70,000 in emergency funding to analyze water quality in the burned area. Water samples will be collected by staff from Lake County Water Resources and the Big Valley Band of Pomo Indians through the wet season from creeks around Clear Lake that were impacted by the fire. Data from this work will help alert drinking water purveyors about pollutants entering Clear Lake and prioritize areas for additional BMP installation. The data will also help researchers better understand future algae blooms that could impact drinking water purveyors and other lake users next summer.

### **Key Points:**

- \$675,000 total funding, broken down as \$605,000 for the erosion control work and \$70,000 to analyze water quality
- Central Valley Water Board working with the Lake County Resource Conservation District (RCD)
- Erosion control best management practices: spread straw mulch, clean/repair damaged culverts, other actions to reduce sediment erosion
- Erosion control work to focus on Middle Creek, Scotts Creek, and Manning Creek watersheds.
- Work on private property will be done free of charge
- Mendocino Complex Fire is two wildfires that burned within miles of each other near Clear Lake in Northern California
- The fires were reported in late July, were fully contained by mid-September but continued to smolder late into the month

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