



# Media Release

## Addressing Vital Erosion Control after Carr Fire Focus of \$9 million in State Water Board Funding

*Native Seeds Must Take Root Before Rains Come To Limit Environmental Calamity*

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**SACRAMENTO** – Following the massive Carr Fire that roared through Shasta and Trinity counties this past summer, staff for the regional and state water boards are racing to implement vital erosion control measures before the start of the rainy season.

The State Water Board will use \$2.3 million in state grant funds and is seeking \$6.4 million in federal funds via the California Office of Emergency Services to fast-track erosion control on five key creeks near Keswick Dam on the Sacramento River just north of Redding. The State Water Board approved this at its meeting in early October.

Staff are focusing the funding where it's most needed. "The Carr Fire was so extensive that it just wasn't logical to apply erosion control measures over the whole area," said Clint Snyder, the assistant executive officer for Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Central Valley Water Board) based out of the Redding office. "We had to be precise and apply our efforts and available funding to locations most at risk."

### As Devastation Spread, Recovery Planning Began

While the fire burned 229,651 acres in late July and August, darkening the skies for hundreds of miles and causing untold harm to wildlife, state and regional water boards staff were already planning for how they would respond.

Because of the fire's size and severity, officials from several state agencies quickly began work to assess the burn area and coordinate erosion control planning, utilizing the geographic information system (GIS) to analyze data and determine which areas would be most suitable for erosion control treatments.

Forecasters have projected possible El Nino conditions with above-average rainfall this winter. While rains *during* a fire event are a boon, heavy rains afterward are something to dread.

The race against time is an effort to beat the impending downpours and grow vegetation quickly enough to build roots that hold the soils in place. Without adequate root development,

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there would be little to prevent massive amounts of sediment – and possibly chemical compounds -- from sliding into the streams.

At-risk locations include those considered significant for the ailing chinook salmon population during three seasonal migrations – fall, late fall and winter runs. These five tributaries of the Sacramento River -- Rock Creek, Middle Creek, Salt Creek, Jenny Creek and Carter Creek -- are critical spawning and rearing habitat for chinook salmon.

These chinook salmon populations had already been struggling from the chronic drought conditions in recent years. In 2013, there were about 32,500 fall run chinook in the Sacramento River. By 2016, those numbers plummeted to about 4,000 and in 2017 the count was halved to just over 2,000. Threatened winter run chinook populations declined from just under 6,000 fish in 2013 to about 800 in 2017.

Excessive sediment would likely harm salmon spawning habitat. If the salmon have already laid eggs, new sediment settling atop gravel spawning nests, called redds, could prevent eggs from hatching. Furthermore, salmon that have yet to lay eggs would likely struggle to find suitable gravel beds if they are blanketed by thick sediment.

The State Water Board will manage the grant money in conjunction with Western Shasta Resource Conservation District (RCD) to begin erosion control efforts over a projected 1,640 acres where sloping terrain and fire-damaged vegetation are prime conditions for imperiling nearby streams.

Once voluntary agreements have been reached with landowners in the targeted areas, workers will deploy a variety of erosion control techniques to stabilize soils in those watersheds. The erosion control work on private property will be done free of charge to property owners.

That effort is expected to start in the next few weeks.

“We are requesting the cooperation of all landowners contacted by the Western Shasta RCD. It’s an all hands-on deck situation throughout the winter and spring,” Snyder said.

“There’s only so much time. We’ll be working to get these erosion control measures in place as soon as possible. Time is everything.”

