



Land Use & Housing Committee

July 30, 2009

Rural-Urban Connections Strategy: Forest Management Issues Overview

Issue: This item offers a brief overview of the issues that will be addressed in the forest management topic, which is part of the Rural-Urban Connections Strategy project.

Recommendation: None, this item is informational.

Discussion: As the RUCS team begins to study forest management, staff is asking the committee to provide input and guidance on issues to be included in working papers. A consultant will help convene stakeholders and develop reports on current conditions, innovations, and implementation. The issues to be addressed include:

- **Wildland-Urban Interface.** Development can fragment or reduce habitat, introduce invasive species displacing native flora and fauna, impact recreation areas, increase fire suppression and hence fuel load and fire severity, increase erosion which reduces water quality, and increase dumping, trespassing and other types of encroachment.
- **Hydrology and Watershed Management.** A forest's ability to absorb, filter, and supply water is correlated with how it is managed. Overgrowth, fire, roads, development, insects, and disease can affect stream flows, riparian habitat, water quality, flooding, and the region's reliance on Sierra water supply.
- **Fire.** The frequency and severity of fires in the Sierra Nevada have been on the rise. These fires cause the loss of life and property, increase runoff and foul waterways, damage or destroy valuable timber, release carbon into the atmosphere, and are expensive to fight.
- **Climate Change.** Changes in precipitation patterns and rising temperatures are forecasted to lead to reductions in water supply and drier summer conditions, which may increase fire risk.
- **Carbon Sequestration.** Our forests support fast growing conifers that absorb large amounts of carbon dioxide. Proper management can sustain or increase this function. Carbon trading markets are an economic opportunity already being tested at a few sites in the region.
- **Energy Production.** Forests produce a large amount of biomass that can be converted to energy and create economic opportunity. Cogeneration currently produces electricity; future cellulosic fermentation can produce ethanol.
- **Timber Harvest.** Harvest volumes in the Sierras have steadily declined since the late 1980s. Clear cutting, road building, habitat, and other impacts, along with increased regulations and international competition have reduced harvests and greatly impacted timber-related rural economies.
- **Recreation.** Forests provide a number of recreational opportunities, which connect urban residents with the region's rural assets and are an important component of rural economies.
- **Regulations.** Regulations and permitting affecting forest management address issues such as timber harvest, water and air quality, wildfire, habitat, recreation, and archeological sites.

Approved by:

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