

Forestland Conditions Snapshot

- California's forests cover 33% of the state's 100 million acres.
- About 10 million acres of the state's forestland are owned by individuals, with nearly 90% of these forest holdings totaling less than 50 acres.
- About two-thirds of Californians rely on water from the state's headwater forests.
- 129 million trees have died since 2010, creating an ongoing tree mortality crisis.
- Over the past 80 years, forests have been changing in response to fire suppression, climate change, an influx of invasive species and increasing development.

Sources: California's Comprehensive Climate Adaptation Strategy, Tree Mortality Task Force, CAL FIRE State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet.

Collaborative action is key to making large-scale forest health improvements

Calf brandings, barn raisings and farmers helping neighbors with harvest have long been part of life in rural California.

Today the concept of pooling resources to help each other continues. For forestland owners, however, the need to work together is becoming increasingly urgent.

That means greater willingness to find collaborative solutions that cross ownerships, as well as increased sharing of equipment and expertise; as well as staying involved in local forest-health solutions.

Forestry experts say this collaboration is essential if the state's nearly 33 million acres of forestland—about 10 million of those acres privately owned—is going to be returned to healthy, fire-resilient conditions.

Wildfire is an increasing threat across the nation, but last year CAL FIRE said California experienced more than 9,100 wildfires—a number of them intense and catastrophic—across 1.2 million acres.

Because the scope of decline in forest health is severe and wildfire hazards are increasing, cooperation is needed on a much larger scale than in past decades.

Treatments need to be implemented regardless of who owns the land—private owners or government entities.

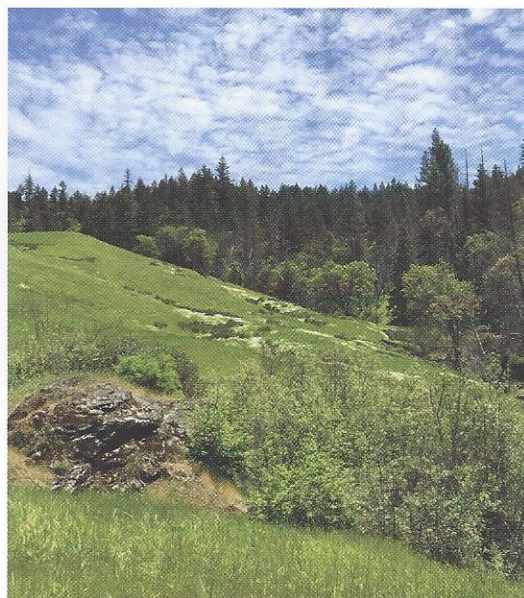
“This approach helps promote grass roots, cooperative institutions, such as watershed councils,” said Jonathan Kusel, Sierra Institute founder and executive director.

Kusel discussed cross-boundary solutions for improved forest health during the May meeting in Sacramento of the Sierra to California All-Lands Enhancement program (SCALE).

Collaborative forest improvement organizations like SCALE have sprung up across the state as the need for a larger framework to conduct landscape-scale forest health improvements has increased.

The Sierra Institute notes that given the variety of wildland and urban forest ecosystems, along with varied land ownership patterns, there's no single prescription that will restore forest health statewide. Plans need to be tailored to the landscape and local communities.

Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions (YSS) is a col-



Improving the vitality and function of California forestland is a top priority for landowners and the public. This healthy meadow and forest scene is near Ruth Lake in Trinity County. Source: Robert W. Coupe.

laborative formed in 2010 to increase the pace and scale of restoration to prevent large wildfires in the Stanislaus National Forest.

The collaborative was in its early stages of development in 2013 when the Rim Fire devastated the region and shifted the focus of YSS from a preventative approach to a reactive one.

Since then the group has implemented several habitat restoration projects with the help of a large volunteer base and has raised \$4.5 million for habitat restoration.

The YSS collaborative model is an approach that can be replicated in other forested areas. Information about YSS is online at: <https://bit.ly/2IQEYT9>.

The Northern California Prescribed Fire Council also uses a collaborative framework for private landowners, state and federal agencies, academic institutions, tribes and coalitions to expand responsible use of prescribed fire in Northern California. See story on page 6.

The council is online at <https://bit.ly/2KBEflF>

The state's "Safeguarding California Plan" also provides a framework for action to improve forest health. The plan is online at: <https://bit.ly/2nrXhSB>.