



# The Global ARC

*Global Action Research Center*

## Celebrating Sustainability Solutions in the Sierras Journey of the Global ARC 2010

**TOPIC:** *Improving watershed/forest health and resiliency; reducing the threat of catastrophic wildfire; and creating economic development opportunities in the rural communities of the Sierra Nevada.*

**Event Dates :** August 20, 21, 22, 2010

**Event Location:** [Camp Lodestar](#)  
6135 Blue Mountain Road  
Wilseyville, CA 95257  
(209) 293-4980  
[uccr.org/lodestar.htm](http://uccr.org/lodestar.htm)



### BACKGROUND:

This event builds upon the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, 3rd Annual Symposium: *Connecting the Dots, Wildfire, Forest Health, and Sustainable Rural Economies*  
<http://www.sierranevada.ca.gov/symposium.html>

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy is comprised of 25 million acres, all or part of 22 counties, 20 incorporated cities, 40 special districts and 212 communities. Today, many Sierra Nevada communities face several difficult problems including the threat of catastrophic wildfire, a decline in the health of surrounding forests and watersheds, and serious challenges to local economic sustainability. Understanding the relationship between these problems and challenges ("connecting the dots") is a major challenge for progressive community-based planning. Fortunately, there are many creative and forward-looking people making good things happen in the Sierras. The Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group, for example, is a great source of innovative sustainability solutions. The Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group is a diverse coalition of community-based organizations, tribes, public and private sector agencies. The Group is working to create new sustainable, community-based industrial and commercial development opportunities in Calaveras and Amador Counties.



## Solutions

The Calaveras stop on the Journey of the Global ARC will focus on the process model and solutions championed by the Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group. This includes community-based efforts to: (1) establish a skills training program, (2) create green jobs (using small wood and forest byproducts) for displaced timber workers and rural youth, and (3) develop infrastructure for turning forest materials into value-added commercial products and renewable energy (including the development of biomass co-generation facility that will provide enough renewable energy for 15,000 homes). The Group has plans to significantly scale up their projects and initiatives. They are “connecting the dots” in genuine community-based and collaborative ways that promise to usher in a new model for sustainable rural development locally, regionally and even globally.

## Local Host

### Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group

On this 3-day Journey stop we will learn from the leaders and participants of the Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group . Led by Calaveras County Supervisor Steve Wilensky, this Group is dealing with very serious problems found throughout the Sierra Nevada: watershed and ecosystem degradation, catastrophic wildfire danger, high unemployment, waste of forest material, the energy crisis and climate change. The Group is ambitious. They seek holistic and integrative solutions with an understanding of how local, regional and global forces interact. Participants in the Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group include the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, California Department of Fish and Game, Cal Fire, Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions (CHIPS), Sierra Forest Legacy, the Sierra Nevada Alliance, Sierra Business Council, Foothill Conservancy, Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch, and many other not-for-profit, public, private and tribal organizations.

*“The Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group, with its mix of public land managers, state-level authorities, forestry practitioners and contractors, and job training and environmental non-profits, is uniquely positioned to ensure the work taking place on these lands is sustainable from both an environmental and economic perspective, with the end result being job creation, firesafe communities, forest restoration and a renewed local economy within these critically important watersheds.” Paul Trianosky, Nature Conservancy Memo, October 13, 2009.*

## Overarching Themes and Questions

The workshops and other experiential learning venues we organize for this Journey stop will raise “connect the dot” type questions for group discussion. The objective is threefold: (1) to create a learning environment where knowledge sharing helps participants interrelate otherwise scattered pieces of the sustainability puzzle, (2) to generate useful material for the Global ARC’s solutions database and our digital library, and, (3) most importantly, to inspire and cross-fertilize progressive community-based approaches to planning that merges the power of science, business and art, including music, in powerful new ways. We aren’t starting from scratch. The Sierra Nevada Conservancy hosted a very productive round of community-based meetings throughout the region on October 9, 2009. The meetings were part of a Webposium (“Connecting the Dots: Wildfire, Forest Health, and Sustainable Rural Economies). Organizers of that Webposium see opportunities to develop and implement an integrated approach to impact investment that pools state, federal and private funds. There is a good archive of the Webposium from which to draw, including notes that address the following questions:

- Is it possible to reduce the risk of catastrophic fire in the Sierra Nevada in a manner that enhances and protects ecological values while creating sustained economic activity in its communities?
- How can collaborative, inclusive processes be used to achieve such outcomes?

- What models exist in the Region or elsewhere that can be used as the basis for implementing projects on the ground?
- Are there policies that need to be changed and/or implemented to encourage such an approach? How can existing climate change and energy policies be incorporated into the dialogue in order to support needed policy changes? <http://www.sierranevada.ca.gov/symposium.html>

Building upon the framework set out above, we will pay special attention to concerns about water and watersheds, as noted in the two questions below.

### 1. How does the fate of California's water supply and forest management interconnect?

Fire suppression in forest management has had the unintended consequence of making forests much denser in biomass. This increases the amount of water that the forest uses—perhaps as much as a million acres feet per year; thereby significantly impacting California's water supply. The additional biomass also increases the amount of highly combustible fuel in the forest thereby elevating the risk of catastrophic wildfire. When extreme fire events do happen you get a 'fire, flood, mud cycle.' This cycle damages the landscape in a number of ways that negatively impact water quality. Sustainable forest management and ecological restoration can avert this kind of systemic damage. *Source: Water Conservation District Brian Morris, cited in July 31, 2009 Water issue of Forest Focus.*

### 2. How can ecological restoration of rural watersheds upstream improve water quality for cities downstream

In California, about 60% of all the water that's supplied to the residents in California comes off or through the national forests via watersheds (US Forest Service, Ecological Restoration Podcast, May 18, 2009). USA Agriculture Secretary Vilsack recently emphasized the important relationship linking the fate of forested watersheds and water quality: "Our shared vision begins with restoration. Restoration means managing forest lands first and foremost to protect our water resources, while making our forests more resilient to climate change." (USDA Office of Communications, Press Release No. 0382.09). If degraded ecosystems upstream are restored, this can avert the need for otherwise unnecessary and expensive fixes downstream (an ounce of prevention being worth a pound of cure).

## Resources

Sierra Business Council. 1997. "Planning For Prosperity: Building Successful Communities in the Sierra Nevada." Sierra Business Council, Truckee, CA <http://www.sbcouncil.org/pdf/Planning%20for%20Prosperity.pdf>.

Winner of the American Planning Association's prestigious Daniel Burnham Award, Planning for Prosperity is designed to help decision-makers in the Sierra Nevada plan wisely and effectively for their communities' futures. The reference guide outlines principles which, together, provide a new, more effective framework for land planning in the Sierra, and also ensure the quality of the planning process itself.

Sierra Land Use Planning Directory  
Forest Watcher  
Forest Focus Episodes,  
Calaveras General Plan Update

Organizations to be invited? As part of, or in addition to the Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group .

### **Calaveras Community Action Project**

Mission Statement: A land use subgroup of EPFW, the Community Action Project was formed to promote community-based democracy in Calaveras County .... CAP will serve to facilitate the adoption of sustainable timber harvest practices in the county and the maintenance of a high quality of life both in the county and the region.

### **Calaveras Planning Coalition**

The mission of the Calaveras Planning Coalition is to promote public participation in land use and resource planning to ensure a healthy human, natural, and economic environment now and in the future.

### **Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center**

Mission statement: Identify threats to the environment, educate area residents about the threats, find feasible solutions, and advocate on behalf of those solutions.

### **Foothill Conservancy**

Mission Statement: To restore, protect, and sustain the natural and human environment in Amador and Calaveras Counties for the benefit of local residents. Current Work: We work on issues affecting the quality of life and natural environment in Amador and Calaveras counties, including: land use planning, restoration and protection of the Mokelumne River, hydroelectric project operation and re-licensing, sustainable economic development and community building, mining, forests, watershed restoration, and North Fork Mokelumne Wild and Scenic statusCommunity plan update

### **Sustainable Sierra Land Use Campaign**

The Sierra Nevada Alliance was founded in 1993 to protect and restore the natural environment of the Sierra Nevada for future generations while ensuring healthy and sustainable communities. The Alliance works with our network of more than 100 member groups that span the range to strengthen their individual efforts and lead regional efforts to protect John Muir's "Range of Light." In 2005, the Alliance created the Land Use Campaign program to advance sustainable land use planning in the Sierra. Working with dozens of grassroots land use groups across the region, the Sustainable Sierra Land Use Campaign strives to strengthen the skills and capacity of local advocates throughout the Sierra. We help local groups develop the tools of policy analysis, grassroots mobilization, media outreach and coalition-building to achieve better land use planning in their local communities. Our particular focus is on improving countywide general plans that are the primary blueprint for growth in the Sierra Nevada. Taken together, these local changes add up to major impacts across the region.

#### Goals of the Sustainable Sierra Land Use Campaign:

- 1. Protect working landscapes:** Maintain ranch, farming and timber lands in the Sierra and minimize conversion to rural sprawl.
- 2. Preserve lands important for wildlife, watersheds and ecosystem integrity.** Identify and protect important natural resource lands including wildlife habitat and migration corridors, riparian corridors, groundwater recharge zones, oak woodlands and unique plant communities.

**3. Maintain the historic town-centered pattern of Sierra communities:** Ensure that new development mirrors historic Sierra development patterns. Accommodate population growth by developing neighborhoods that use land efficiently, provide a range of housing types, and are town-centered, compact and walkable.

**4. Build a regional smart growth movement.** Work to ensure that every Sierra community has active, effective advocates to monitor local land use and take action on important issues. To achieve these goals, the Sustainable Sierra Land Use Campaign utilizes a two-part ‘breadth’ and ‘depth’ strategy. The breadth strategy involves supporting smart growth efforts throughout the range, by providing policy information, campaign resources, networking and trainings to advance efforts in every community. The ‘depth’ strategy involves identifying target areas where land use plans are likely to have the greatest impact on the region as a whole – and where local advocates lack capacity – and focusing our efforts to improve planning in those areas, hopefully creating model policies for the rest of the region. Sustainable Sierra Land Use Campaign contact Patricia Hickson at 530.542.4546 x 313 or [patricia@sierranevadaalliance.org](mailto:patricia@sierranevadaalliance.org)