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Joint Agency Symposium

Cliff Rechtschaffen, Senior Advisor, Governor’s Office
Richard Corey, Executive Officer, California Air Resources Board

Secretary Karen Ross, California Department of Food and Agriculture

Secretary John Laird, California Natural Resources Agency

To the leadership of the symposium and all panel members,

**Our planet is approaching catastrophic change due to CO2 emission. The resultant climate changes are impacting all life. So we have a global responsibility to respond. In California we have a climate resource to address this issue and that is our forests.**

When we value our resources, and the measures of our state’s contribution to the world, we so often point to food products from our agriculture sector, leadership in technology innovation, the vast oil and gas production, and advances in social and societal diversity. Measuring our productivity and livelihood, I see that we have overlooked the immense inventory of carbon that we hold in storage right here in California, and the tremendous ability to sequester more in the decades ahead. This is perhaps our greatest, global natural resource. Not only are we a food basket for the USA and beyond, we can turn that metaphor and say we are a carbon basket for the USA and beyond. This invaluable carbon resource, we must protect in consideration of all people, animals, cultures and nations throughout the world.

Today we are concerned daily with the challenges of drought, water shortages, fire and increasing Co2 emissions. **But, now rather shockingly what has been revealed is a severe drop in the amount of carbon stored in California’s forests and rangelands. Such information comes from the results of the 2014 study, *California Forest and Rangeland Greenhouse Gas Inventory Development.* A study commissioned by the Air Resources Board.**

How could the carbon storage of the great coastal redwood and Douglas-fir rain forest, the inland forests, and the Sierra be decreasing when the forest growth is historically so vigorous and regenerative? **The 2014 study concluded that the loss in forest carbon storage occurred from fire transitions and significantly from conversion and fragmentation of forest areas to other uses.** It is not unlike when our state woke up to the impacts of sub-divisions on our farms and agricultural lands and instituted protections to hold on to that resource.

So how can we be more effective in achieving Governor Edmund G. Brown’s greenhouse gas reduction goals? Right now we have a new and major source for revenue and programs available to reverse that challenge: AB32 Cap and Trade Revenues.

*(Page one of two)*

The most direct way to improve forest carbon sequestration and become positive in CO2 retention, as it had been for eons, is to set aside substantial amounts of acreage for conservation. Conservation easements and direct acquisitions can slow down and, in most cases, stop the conversions and fragmentations of forestlands. This is long term, in perpetuity, carbon storage.

**The present percentage of Cap and Trade revenues going directly to such forest conservation is barely 1/2 of 1 percent ($4 million to Forest Legacy of $850 million). Yet the forest is the major natural element, the major California resource that captures and holds CO2.**

CalFire is administrating the federal Forest Legacy and the state Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds. There is a long line of forest protection and carbon sequestering projects going un-funded. More money needs to go into the GGRF toward forestry, CalFire needs support and staffing to meet that increase, and that responsibility could be shared with other agencies. The CalFire federal forest legacy program allows for only 3 projects annually for all of California. Combining funds from both programs for particular projects happens often and limits the total acreage and ownerships to be conserved. GGRF funds for 2015 went to only 5 forest projects.

The investment of state bond funds for forest conservation, Prop 60 to Prop 84 is exhausted. Now, the Wildlife Conservation Board, the leader and most successful agency in forest conservation and protection needs to become a recipient of substantial Cap and Trade revenues. They have the staffing, experience, and success to administer such funds.

Not unlike the Amazonian and Indonesian forests that get international attention from slash and burn conversion, our own forests, have equal values to the entire planet’s atmosphere, and are presently being reduced, converted, and fragmented.

**Urgency calls for major increases in GGRF funding for protecting and increasing carbon sequestration by the conservation of California forest resources**.

Respectfully,

Rondal Snodgrass

*(Page two of two)*