

Financing Montane Meadow and Aspen Restoration to Safeguard Critical Headwater Habitat and Recreation Areas

Forest Resilience Bond to finance montane meadow restoration, areas rich in biodiversity, and vital for California's summer water storage

DOWNIEVILLE, CA, UNITED STATES, September 9, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Blue Forest](#), the South Yuba River Citizens League ([SYRCL](#)), and the Tahoe National Forest have launched the [Yuba Aspen and Meadow | Forest Resilience Bond \(YAM | FRB\)](#) to restore montane meadow and stream systems at the headwaters of the North Yuba River in California's Lost Sierra. This FRB, grounded in the relationships formed through the North Yuba Forest Partnership and made possible through its comprehensive planning efforts, is accelerating restoration across a vast landscape, creating a rich mosaic of forest and meadow ecosystems that sustain biodiversity, reduce wildfire risk, and strengthen long-term forest resilience.

Nestled in the Gold Lakes Basin region, one of the area's most beloved destinations for mountain biking, hiking, camping, fishing, and wildlife viewing, these meadows and streams serve as vital natural infrastructure.

Meadows cover just two percent of the Sierra Nevada, yet they are lifelines for the region. They store snowmelt, filter water, lock away carbon, and shelter endangered species like the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog and willow flycatcher. Aspen stands are even rarer, covering less than



Mountain bikers in the YAM | FRB landscape



Partners on YAM | FRB landscape

one percent of Sierra forests, yet they hold some of the richest biodiversity in the mountains. The root systems in both aspen and meadows store water, slow spring runoff, and keep streams flowing for communities downstream. Both habitats are under growing threat as warming temperatures turn snow to rain, speed up snowmelt, and compound decades of damage from historic mining, other land uses, and fire suppression policies. Without restoration, these natural water



Fishing on the YAM I FRB landscape

banks—and the life they support—could disappear, jeopardizing community water supplies, degrading the trails and landscapes that draw visitors and sustain towns like Downieville, and eroding the biodiversity that underpins healthy ecosystems and local livelihoods.

“SYRCL is thrilled to work with Blue Forest to launch this FRB,” said Alecia Weisman, SYRCL’s Watershed Science Director. “This bond will bolster our vital meadow and aspen restoration work in the headwaters of the North Yuba, with ecosystem benefits ranging from increased late season flows to improved habitat quality and enhanced wetted fire breaks. This FRB will support SYRCL’s ability to contribute to key goals of the North Yuba Landscape Resilience Project focused on protecting water supplies and restoring watershed function. Meadow and aspen habitats are crucial components of healthy forests and watersheds, and this FRB brings these ecosystems into the spotlight, increasing efficiency on active restoration projects that SYRCL has been cultivating for several years.”

The Yuba Aspen and Meadow I FRB will restore nearly 600 acres of meadows, streams, and aspen across Packer and Salmon Creek, Haskell Peak Meadows, and Church Meadow. Restoration is tailored to each site to create resilient landscapes that protect water, wildlife, and communities:

Thin conifers to reduce wildfire risk, open the canopy, and regenerate aspen—supporting wildlife and biodiversity.

Install beaver dam analogs and wood structures to slow streams, raise groundwater, and expand wetlands, boosting late-summer flows and aquatic habitat.

Remove barriers and regrade eroded channels to restore natural water flow, reconnect floodplains, store more water, improve fish passage, and enhance habitat for native fish, amphibians, and birds.

Revegetate with native plants to stabilize banks, provide habitat, and capture more carbon in

soils.

The YAM I FRB builds on years of collaboration and trust established through the North Yuba Forest Partnership and the Yuba I and Yuba II FRBs. The North Yuba Forest Partnership is a diverse group of nine organizations that are collaboratively planning, implementing, and funding forest restoration across the North Yuba River watershed. These foundational partnerships created the relationships, technical expertise, and momentum needed to bring another FRB to fruition. By leveraging this network, SYRCL, Blue Forest, Yuba Water Agency, and their partners are accelerating the pace and scale of restoration across the Yuba watershed, an area at extreme risk of wildfire, while strengthening the long-term capacity to care for these landscapes.

“Partnerships are the backbone of the Forest Resilience Bond model,” said Nicole Miller, Blue Forest’s Project Development Senior Manager. “The trust and collaboration developed through the North Yuba Forest Partnership and earlier FRBs have been instrumental in expanding restoration efforts into montane meadows and aspen. These relationships allow us to act quickly, align resources, add critical implementation capacity, and deliver impact at a scale that matches the urgency of wildfire and climate risk in the Sierra Nevada.”

Financed by mission-driven investors through the Blue Forest FRB Catalyst Facility, the YAM I FRB addresses cash flow constraints tied to traditional grant funding. This FRB, supported by funding from the Yuba Water Agency and California Wildlife Conservation Board, enables the expansion of SYRCL's restoration efforts while partnering with local Indigenous crews from the Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe to offer habitat restoration training opportunities.

The FRB, co-developed by Blue Forest, the World Resources Institute, the USDA Forest Service, and the National Forest Foundation, is a financing mechanism that taps into private capital to finance forest restoration projects on public lands to protect communities, ecosystem benefits, and rural livelihoods. The provision of upfront capital, supported by contracted beneficiary commitments, allows for financial flexibility that accelerates the pace and scale of restoration activities as well as the ability to quickly pay local contractors.

The Yuba Aspen and Meadow I FRB demonstrates how innovative financing can transform restoration in the Sierra Nevada, allowing work to happen faster and at a larger scale than traditional funding allows. By providing upfront capital and flexible support, the FRB enables critical meadow, stream, and aspen restoration that protects water supplies, enhances wildlife habitat, and strengthens the landscapes that communities downstream rely on for drinking water, recreation, and livelihoods. Through collaboration with local partners and Indigenous crews, this project not only restores ecosystems but also invests in people, ensuring that both forests and the communities that depend on them are more resilient.

Blue Forest is a conservation finance non-profit founded in 2015 that advances ecosystem restoration through scientific research, financial innovation, and collaborative partnerships.

The South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL) is the leading voice for the protection and restoration of the Yuba River watershed.

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