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\$5.3 M AWARD FOR FOREST HEALTH AND FIRE RESILIENCY ACROSS SAN MATEO AND SANTA CRUZ COUNTIES

(Half Moon Bay and Capitola, CA- February 7, 2020) The Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs) of San Mateo and Santa Cruz Counties have been awarded two grants totaling nearly \$5.3 million for a collaborative regional effort to improve the health of local forests, reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire, and mitigate climate change.

The funds will be used to reduce potential wildfire fuel loads over 968 acres of forest, and to reforest 80 acres of private and public lands across the Santa Cruz Mountains. Partners involved in the project include Amah Mutsun Land Trust, Big Creek Lumber, California State Parks, Girl Scouts of Northern California, Peninsula Open Space Trust, San Mateo County Parks, Sempervirens Fund, Save the Redwoods League, and private landowners.

“Forests cross property lines, so collaborative efforts such as these are essential for restoring forest health,” states Lisa Lurie, Executive Director of the RCD of Santa Cruz County. “Through partnership, diverse interests are coming together to work towards common goals of reducing the risks of catastrophic wildfire while helping our forests to thrive.”

Activities will include reducing fuel loads in degraded forests, and removing unhealthy or dying trees, such as those affected by forest disease like Sudden Oak Death or drought. A focus will be to remove hazardous fuel loads to change extreme fire behavior across the landscape. Long-term maintenance and monitoring efforts will also be included in management plans to ensure sustainable benefits for the region.

The two projects, designed to enhance each other, are among 17 awarded statewide by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) for landscape-scale land management intended to restore and maintain healthy forests, conserve working forests, and enhance carbon storage. Funding for the grants comes from California's Cap-and-Trade Program, a component of the state's plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Support for preparing the grant application was

provided by San Mateo County Measure K funds, Peninsula Open Space Trust, and the California Department of Conservation forest health watershed coordinator grant program.

"This multi-million-dollar grant leverages our San Mateo County Measure K funds, promotes forest health at the landscape level, and addresses fire risk reduction for our communities," states San Mateo County Supervisor Don Horsley. "I see the benefit of working with the Resource Conservation District on resiliency in terms of carbon benefits and greenhouse gas reduction and appreciate the partnership with CAL FIRE, private property owners, and public land managers like state and county parks."

About Resource Conservation Districts: Resource Conservation Districts are public special districts that provide comprehensive, non-regulatory services to protect, conserve, and restore natural resources. Serving as local hubs for conservation efforts, RCDs across California work in partnership with landowners and managers, technical advisors, area jurisdictions, government agencies, and others. For more information visit www.sanmateorcd.org and www.rcdsantacruz.org.

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PROJECT PARTNERS

