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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Placer Watershed Forum

Water Quality Starts at the Top

AUBURN -- Leaders of government and private industry gathered Thursday evening (Apr. 29) in Auburn to share thoughts on how Placer County water quality can be preserved through good land management.

Sponsored by the Placer County Water Agency, the public forum attracted an audience of about 120 people to a meeting held at the The Ridge Golf Club where they heard from seven expert speakers, asked questions and viewed a number of exhibits.

The program was opened in Auburn by PCWA General Manager David Breninger and moderated by Sierra Nevada Conservancy Executive Director Jim Branham, both of whom emphasized the importance of a healthy watershed.

Expert speakers included:

- **Tom Quinn**, Forest Supervisor of the Tahoe National Forest, who traced U.S. National Forest Service water policy back more than 100 years. He said a view of water as a “non-market resource” has given way to today’s “ecosystem services” philosophy. “Watershed restoration is a big emphasis on the forest right now,” said Quinn.

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Interestingly, the forest supervisor touched on his organization's budgetary shortfalls and suggested that some day downstream water users may be seen as a source of funding for upstream watershed/water quality protection efforts.

- **Brett Storey**, Senior Management Analyst with Placer County, who described the county's ongoing effort to find ways that wood waste in the forest can be used to create energy and alcohol-based fuel (ethanol). The program, which has drawn interest from business, investment and environmental groups, would situate biomass processing sites in local areas, said Storey, who cited water quality improvement, less fire danger, less air pollution and the creation of jobs as benefits.

- **Chris Fischer**, District Ranger of the American River Ranger District, who spoke of his district's adaptive management strategies including tree thinning, removal and stocking patterns to direct and control wildfire. Foresters see a healthier forest and watershed as a result of newer, science-based management practices, he said.

- **Tim Feller**, District Manager for Sierra Pacific Industries, a wood products firm with 150,000 acres of forestland, including 25,000 acres in Placer County, who spoke of his firm's stewardship and innovative efforts in watershed management. "Water is a big factor in forest economics," said Feller, who noted that today's logging practices have become much more sensitive to watershed health.

- **Mike Brenner**, Local District conservationist for the Natural Resource Conservation Service, who opened his remarks with an old Chinese proverb, "Those who rule the mountain will rule the rivers." Brenner provided a historical perspective on conservation and outlined his organization's work in helping private landowners with good stewardship of their own land.

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- **Matthew Reischman**, Pre-Fire Division Chief and Unit Forester with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), who talked about the woodland/urban land interface and focused on wildfire issues fuel reduction needs on public and private lands.

- **Mark D'Ambrogi**, Fire Chief for the City of Auburn, emphasized defensible space needs around homes, fire safe standards, fuel modification and management, community education and the work of his department and others in the ongoing American River Canyon Shaded Fuel Break project.

Exhibitors at the forum included the Sierra Business Council, Protect American River Canyons, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, CABY Watershed Group, California State Parks, U.S. Forest Service, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, local Fire Safe Councils, Placer County and the Placer County Water Agency.