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## **Pioneering California Law Recognizes Forest Watersheds as Part of State's Water Infrastructure**

### **West Coast Infrastructure Exchange (WCX) Plays Vital Role in Legislation's Passage**

Portland, Oregon (December 7, 2016)

This fall, California Governor Jerry Brown signed AB 2480: a significant step towards preserving and maintaining key sources of California's water supply. AB 2480 is a triumph for the Pacific Forest Trust, a national leader in forest conservation and restoration, which spearheaded the bill's introduction and worked tirelessly for its passage. It also highlights how the West Coast Infrastructure Exchange (WCX)--through its expertise and relationships--can provide essential predevelopment assistance that advances innovative infrastructure efforts.

For the first time, AB 2480 recognizes watersheds--especially those that feed Shasta and Oroville reservoirs and the vast majority of California's State Water Project and Central Valley Project--as water system infrastructure and critical components of California's water system, just like traditional built infrastructure such as dams, levees, and canals.

The law acknowledges that these watersheds are critical to preserving and maintaining clean drinking water for over 28 million Californians as well as 85 percent of the freshwater to San Francisco Bay and irrigation for over 8 million acres of farmland. It establishes the policy framework for an essential multi-billion dollar investment in watershed conservation and restoration for watersheds feeding the Oroville and Shasta reservoirs, which are predicted to remain wetter and cooler than other parts of California as climate change continues, making them even more vital to the state's water security.

Prior to the passage of AB 2480, California had policies and systems in place to maintain built water infrastructure such as dams, levees, and canals, but no mechanism for ensuring the function of the natural infrastructure essential to providing clean, plentiful water. "This law will make sure that the source of our water is treated just like other basic infrastructure that Californians depend on, such as roads, dams, and power supplies," said Laurie Wayburn, PFT President and sponsor of AB 2480. "We can now move forward on putting a comprehensive system in place to restore and conserve these landscapes that are so critical to a safe and secure water supply."

## **Pacific Forest Trust calls WCX predevelopment work "invaluable"**

Regarding WCX's contribution to the passage of AB 2480, Wayburn said, "*The West Coast Infrastructure Exchange's expertise and connections have proved invaluable as we work to build resilience and secure California's water future in the face of climate change.*"

WCX supported passage of this pioneering and innovative effort by completing an initial feasibility analysis of financing options created by treating watersheds as part of California's infrastructure. This feasibility analysis helped frame PFT's discussions with legislators and key stakeholders--i.e. it enabled PFT to speak confidently about the prospect of financing billions of dollars of watershed restoration and protection efforts based on AB 2480's policy framework. As AB 2480 gained momentum, WCX arranged for pro bono legal and financial analysis that shaped legislative strategy and will guide future efforts to achieve the bill's goals.

"We can solve many of our country's infrastructure challenges, build world-leading infrastructure and provide better value for taxpayers if we take advantage of opportunities for innovation," said WCX Executive Director Jonathan Trutt. "AB 2480 is the perfect example of the kind of pioneering infrastructure effort that predevelopment assistance from WCX can help catalyze. We stand ready to make the same assistance to support innovative local, state, or regional infrastructure efforts across California, Washington, and Oregon."

About WCX:

*WCX is a non-profit organization created by the three West Coast States to spur infrastructure innovation that maximizes long-term public value. In addition to predevelopment assistance, it provides the public sector with training on Performance-Based Infrastructure (PBI), a project delivery method that combines design, construction, and long-term maintenance responsibilities into a single performance-based contract.*

Learn more at [www.westcoastx.org](http://www.westcoastx.org)