



Unprecedented effort to combat risk of catastrophic wildfire announced

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YUBA CITY, Calif. — One year after the devastating Camp Fire sparked, a diverse group of land, water and environmental managers who have not always seen eye to eye announced a commitment to work together to immediately execute a plan to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire in the North Yuba watershed.

"It's truly unprecedented," said Willie Whittlesey, assistant general manager of the Yuba Water Agency. "It's a dire situation. Our forest management practices have backfired over the last 100 years of aggressively suppressing fire. It has disrupted the natural cycle."

The announcement Thursday includes a Memorandum of Understanding for nine different agencies, groups and organizations to thin and restore 275,000 acres of forest on a pace and scale that will prioritize community safety, forest health and resilience.

Those groups include the U.S. Forest Service, the Yuba Water Agency, The Nature Conservancy, the South Yuba River Citizens League, Nevada City Rancheria, the National Forest Foundation, Blue Forest Conservation, the Comptonville Community Partnership and Sierra County.

"We've had really huge fires the last three or four years in Northern California, and we don't want to have that happen in the North Yuba watershed," said Melinda Booth, executive director of the South Yuba River Citizens League.

The Yuba Water Agency said the timing of Thursday's announcement one year after the Camp Fire is coincidental. The agency said it does highlight the critical need to work collaboratively to reduce the risk of future megafires.