

The Golden State's Economy Shines Brighter When Rural California is Thriving

California Economic Summit

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The resources, benefits, and opportunities of rural California are often overlooked, and the area underrepresented. While the Rural County Representatives of California's (RCRC) 36 member counties represent a population larger than 24 states, it's a challenge to be heard in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. The irony is that the entire state benefits when rural California is thriving.

Rural California is home to the precious natural resources that provide all Californians with an abundant source of clean water, clean air, wildlife habitat, and unsurpassed recreational opportunities. California's forests store and filter more than 60 percent of the state's water supply, and store massive amounts of carbon, assisting in the state's efforts to combat climate change.

Yet our rural communities continue to be ravaged by wildfires that threaten lives, communities, water resources, wildlife habitat, recreation, and rural economies. Infrastructure projects in California's rural communities struggle for funding, further placing these communities at an economic disadvantage, and putting valuable resources at risk. And the lack of access to broadband leaves many of California's rural communities unconnected, and in the dark.

RCRC recognizes the value that healthy rural economies bring to the state as a whole, and has invested significant resources and energy into addressing the need to "Elevate Rural California." RCRC has identified forest resiliency, infrastructure, and broadband as the top three issue areas of focus because of the immediate need and greatest benefit to residents, businesses, and economies of California's rural communities.

The following is a snapshot of the formalized economic development platform that RCRC has committed to on behalf of California:

Forest Resiliency

Identification of means to substantially alleviate future fire danger and restore wildlife habitats and natural watersheds while also creating opportunities for substantial investment and job creation in rural California.

Infrastructure

Identify programs and explore innovative funding options that will allow for access to funding sources that may reduce existing barriers to entry for financing rural infrastructure projects.

Broadband:

Work toward making “speed of commerce” service to rural California a reality.

RCRC is proud to work with the California Economic Summit on their Elevate Rural California program, and we are excited about the possibility that our collective commitment to this effort will effect real change in California. After all, the entire state benefits when rural California is thriving.

Rex Bohn is Chair of the Rural County Representatives of California and Humboldt County Supervisor.

<http://caeconomy.org/reporting/entry/golden-state-economy-shines-brighter-when-rural-california-is-thriving>