

# End of Year Report for 2025

## The Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center



*Photo by Dan Souza*

**This report shares some of CSERC’s critical efforts and achievements over the past year, thanks to the support of members and foundations that care about our iconic region and its water, wildlife, and wild places.**

### **OUR IMPACT FOR THE LOCAL REGION FAR OUTWEIGHS OUR SIZE**

For more than 35 years, CSERC has prioritized watchdog monitoring, wildlife surveys, meadow assessments, and a wide range of other kinds of fieldwork that enable our staff to be highly knowledgeable about complex issues and on-the-ground conditions.

Among organizations that do forest, water, and wildlife advocacy in the Sierra Nevada, CSERC is unique because we combine our year-round fieldwork with intensive engagement in stakeholder groups, networking with the media, and the testimony and written comments that we submit for every key environmental issue arising within our vast region. This report briefly highlights examples of CSERC’s efforts in 2025 that made a meaningful difference.

## RESPONDING TO UNPRECEDENTED NATIONAL LEVEL THREATS

Never under any previous administration have there been so many major blows in a single year to national conservation policies, federal land agencies, and long-established management plans. Staffing at BLM and the Forest Service was slashed. The **Roadless Rule** that protects wild, roadless areas was targeted for elimination. Protection for **Endangered Species** was weakened, and the Forest Service's priority shifted to maximizing timber outputs.

CSERC responded to the reduced capacity of the Forest Service and the Park Service by ramping up our watchdog monitoring in the national forest and in Yosemite National Park.

We monitored 14 logging projects across the region, increased our meadow assessments (monitoring 57 meadows), and located and reported illegal trash dump sites, severely eroded forest roads, livestock trespass violations, and other problems. Because of our ramped-up monitoring we were able to provide photos and updates to newspapers and online media. We also shared our forest monitoring discoveries with other environmental advocacy groups that aren't able to do their own fieldwork to assess forest conditions or to document issues of concern.



## ACHIEVING SUCCESSES AMIDST A DIFFICULT TIME

In addition to ramping up our watchdog fieldwork and meadow monitoring, there are other key achievements worth emphasizing. We increased our highly important **wildlife photo-detection surveys for rare wildlife species** due to there being only one wildlife biologist left for the entire Stanislaus Forest. **Our surveys enabled us to get photo detections of the rare Pacific fisher** (below) in areas where fishers had never been photographed previously.

**We set a new record by organizing and leading 18 restoration workdays with 70 volunteers.** We collected seeds and replanted denuded areas, removed invasive weeds, built fences to protect meadows, and rehabilitated an interpretive nature trail. Both the Park Service and Forest Service praised those efforts.

Despite pressure to reduce environmental protection measures in **the massive MAC Project** that is being developed for 250,000 acres of national forest land, CSERC helped ensure that the Amador Calaveras Consensus Group (ACCG) kept pivotal agreements in the final version of the giant Project. While the MAC Project has not yet been formally approved, those key agreements (if maintained) **will protect old growth trees, roadless areas, critical habitat, and vegetation sensitive to herbicide use across 150 square miles of logging treatments.**



# ADVOCATING FOR WATER AND RIVERS

The political power and influence of major water interests is daunting, but the need for balanced, ecologically positive water management is critical. CSERC partnered with Yosemite Rivers Alliance, fishing groups, and others in attempts to get the State Water Board and federal FERC officials to require **higher minimum flows to be left in the Tuolumne River and other local rivers**. Just preparing for testimony at a key Water Board hearing required two CSERC staff to spend days digging through hundreds of pages of technical study data to prepare for testifying.

CSERC filed a Freedom of Information Act request and obtained “internal information” from the Turlock Irrigation District about its **massive weather modification program** that uses airplanes to seed clouds with silver iodide to purportedly increase rainfall across the mountain region. CSERC also attended local water board sessions, IRWM watershed stakeholder meetings, and other opportunities to advocate for water quality or the critical needs of salmon in the lower segments of local rivers. **Advocating for keeping enough water in rivers for threatened salmon populations was a priority** in our river planning efforts.



## DEFENDING WILD AREAS – A KEY PART OF CSERC’S MISSION

CSERC was the only environmental group that engaged in Calaveras Big Trees State Park’s town hall meetings and monitored the Park’s prescribed burns. In the national forest, we found an alarming number of inappropriately marked old growth trees at risk of being logged due to PG&E plans to extend road access out into a wild area. We reported to the Forest Service about cattle impacts in a Research Natural Area that’s off limits to grazing. We also monitored Wilderness meadows to find where livestock violations affected meadow habitat. We worked hard, pressing to keep logging and new roads out of wild roadless areas.

In Yosemite National Park, we did the highest level of watchdog monitoring that we’ve ever done. We provided the media with photos of closed restrooms, over-flowing parking lots, and vehicle impacts to vulnerable resources. We had more than 50 separate contacts with Park staff during the year – some related to our restoration workdays, but others attempting to press the Park to implement management strategies to reduce traffic jams and congestion.

CSERC staff members on their own time explored the region’s Wilderness and roadless areas to assess conditions and to report to agency officials what we found. We even set up cameras in wild, high-elevation areas in attempts to get photos of wolves that may be moving through remote areas as wolves expand their territories across forested regions of the State.



# Strategic contacts made by CSERC in 2025

## State and federal contacts

County supervisors, planning commissioners, planners	51
Yosemite National Park	52
U.S. Forest Service, BLM, USFWS	221
Regional and State Water Boards	7
SNC, CAL Fire, DFW, and other State agencies	47
State legislators or Congressional representatives	3

## CSERC contacts with industry officials or representatives

Timber industry and livestock interests	68
Utility districts – officials/staff	45

## Contacts with collaborative groups, scientists, citizens, activists

Stakeholder collaborative groups, members, or facilitators	202
University and agency scientists	11
Sierra Club/Audubon/Defenders of Wildlife/Yosemite Rivers Alliance/others	392
Concerned citizens who contacted CSERC for support or advice	139
Lawyers assisting CSERC	18

## Media contacts with newspaper reporters, radio, TV, etc. 81

**Total direct contacts documented by CSERC staff **1,336****

**Total times when members of the staff participated in meetings, hearings, and field sessions **324****

