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Sierra Pacific Foundation to donate \$1.1 million for Whiskeytown Environmental School rebuild and student support

Redding, CA – To support the return of a Shasta County tradition, the Sierra Pacific Foundation is donating \$1.1 million toward rebuilding Whiskeytown Environmental School. The Foundation is contributing \$750,000 to WES Community for the rebuild of the housing units that were damaged and deemed unusable after the 2018 Carr Fire, as well as \$350,000 to Shasta County Office of Education to support camper costs for students participating in the week-long overnight program.

“On behalf of the Board of WES Community, we are deeply appreciative of this generous gift to aid in the rebuilding of student housing at Whiskeytown Environmental School and provide assistance with student tuition,” Dr. Melinda Kashuba said. “When fully operational, WES reaches 90% of the children in Shasta County. This gift underscores the commitment of Sierra Pacific Foundation to invest in area youth by ensuring that every child has an opportunity to go to WES and experience hands-on, science education outside the classroom. Our community is strengthened by this legacy of learning.”

“I am humbled by the engagement of Sierra Pacific Foundation and our local community in this effort,” said Josh Hoines, Superintendent of the Whiskeytown National Recreation Area. “The National Park System, including Whiskeytown, are exceptional classrooms for outdoor education. Education reflects a whole community, and the generous nature of this community raises our collective ability to create an outdoor education for generations of children to come.”

“We are incredibly grateful to the Sierra Pacific Foundation for this generous donation, which will move us closer to re-opening our residential program,” said Shasta County Schools Superintendent Judy Flores. “Many Shasta County residents went to WES as children, and later their own children and grandchildren attended WES. We can’t wait to resume that wonderful community tradition.”

“Through this donation to Whiskeytown Environmental School, we are not only investing in the future of our youth, our community and our crew members, but also upholding the significance of outdoor education for the youth of our community,” said Carolyn Emmerson Dietz, Sierra Pacific Foundation President. “By rebuilding WES, we are ensuring future generations can experience this educational resource, helping empower young minds to become stewards of our environment.”

Whiskeytown Environmental School, founded in 1970, is a residential outdoor science school serving the greater Shasta County community. The 2018 Carr Fire surrounded WES, destroying some student cabins and leaving the rest unusable. Although half-day field labs have been offered, no children have experienced the residential environmental education program offered by WES since 2018. To date,

through WES Community's Grow Back Stronger capital campaign, \$2.28 million of the estimated \$4.5 million needed to rebuild student housing has been raised. Another \$2.21 million has been raised toward the additional funding of up to \$10.5 million needed for other portions of the rebuild, including the amphitheater, new safety/administration building, infrastructure, and more. The overall project total is estimated to be up to \$15 million.

The school, which operates in partnership with the Shasta County Office of Education and the National Park Service, has served more than 134,000 students since its inception and is beloved by generations of residents. Many students who attend WES are enrolled in under-served schools, making the WES residential experience a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for many children.

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***Whiskeytown Environmental School Community (WES Community)** is the non-profit organization that supports Whiskeytown Environmental School. WES Community raises funds for the educational mission of Whiskeytown Environmental School and the rebuilding of the campus that was burned in the 2018 Carr Fire as the official philanthropic partner with the National Park Service in this endeavor.*

***Shasta County Office of Education** provides the staff and educational programming for Whiskeytown Environmental School.*

*The **Sierra Pacific Foundation** is the philanthropic organization founded by the Emmerson family in 1979. The Foundation contributes to youth activities and other organizations in the communities where Sierra Pacific Industries operates, including having donated over \$5 million in 2022. Additionally, the Foundation provides scholarships to qualified, dependent children of Sierra Pacific Industries' crew members that are attending colleges, universities and trade schools, including awarded over \$521,000 in scholarships to 169 students for the 2023-2024 school year.*