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***** PRESS RELEASE *****

Environmental Protection Agency awards \$2.48 million grant for the Portola Federal Nonattainment Area to reduce smoke impacts and improve public health

The Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District has been approved for a \$2.48 million grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) to reduce air pollution from residential woodstoves. The grant is part of the U.S. EPA's 2015 Targeted Air Shed Grant Program intended to improve air quality in areas of the U.S. with the highest levels of pollution.

In January 2015, the U.S. EPA designated the City of Portola and surrounding parts of Plumas County as a federal nonattainment area for the annual PM2.5 health-based standard. PM2.5 is the fine particle pollution found in smoke. Studies indicate that the main source of smoke in Portola is from residential woodstoves and fireplaces.

U.S. EPA grant funds will be administered by the Air District and the California Air Resources Board for a five-year voluntary residential wood stove replacement program to encourage owners to replace older wood stoves with cleaner burning devices and significantly improve air quality and public health in the Portola area. New, cleaner burning devices are more efficient, too, which will help area residents save fuel, time and money.

"We encourage Portola area residents to take advantage of this program to swap out their old wood stoves," said Jared Blumenfeld, EPA's Regional Administrator for the Pacific Southwest. "Heating their homes with more efficient wood and propane heaters will improve the local air quality."

The Air District will be partnering with the City of Portola, Plumas Family Resource Center, the USDA, Liberty Utilities, and the California Air Resources Board.

Kurt Karperos, Deputy Executive Officer of the California Air Resources Board, said "This grant will make it possible to clean up the major source of fine particle pollution in the Portola area. Replacing old stoves with new, cleaner-burning and more efficient models will improve local air quality."

The District will also be relying on the local woodstove retailers of Wolf Creek Stoves and Quincy Hot Spot to assist with the program.

Portola City Manager, Robert Meacher stated, "The City will work with the Air Board to get this program rolled out as soon as funds become available in early 2016. This issue has been a priority for this and previous City Councils, and City staff understands the need to address this issue not only from a public health stand point, but also from a quality of life issue, as more and more people look to our City and region as a great place to live where you want to play."

Portola City Mayor, Michelle Gault added, "The City has been working with the Air District for many years to develop a plan to reduce smoke levels from woodstoves. The City passed an ordinance that requires old woodstoves to be replaced upon the sale of a home. This ordinance was combined with a \$1,000 rebate for residents to replace old woodstoves with more efficient, clean burning appliances. However, in many cases, it is still too difficult for residents to make up the difference to purchase a new woodstove. This grant will take into consideration a resident's income and provide up to the full amount needed to purchase a new stove. This is exactly what the City needed in order to reach the goal of cleaner, healthier air which will continue for generations. "

Sharon Thrall, Plumas County Supervisor and Chair of the Air District stated, "This important grant provides funding to help Portola residents with older wood stoves move to cleaner burning alternatives for keeping their families warm through the winter with less effort, lower fuel costs and less smoke."

The District plans to begin the program in early 2016 and will be publishing further details of the program on its website at www.myairdistrict.com. Interested residents can also contact the Air District at **530-832-4067**.