



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

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**Sierra Pacific Industries to Retool Sawmill at Sonora, California  
Will Create 130 Jobs**

**Anderson and Sonora, CA** – In a Joint Announcement, Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) and the Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority (TCEDA) today announced that SPI is making a major investment in Tuolumne County by retooling its sawmill in Sonora, updating an older mill that closed there in 2009. This facility, when completed, will incorporate state-of-the-art technology to produce lumber from a wider array of log sizes than was possible under the older configuration. Remodeling of the old plant is expected to begin by mid-July, and the updated facility is planned for operation in May of 2011. This announcement does not impact the SPI cedar fencing mill in Chinese Camp, which currently employs about 80 people.

“We are investing in the future of this community,” said SPI area manager Ryan Land. “Lumber markets have improved modestly and by increasing the range of acceptable log sizes we will be able to bring family-wage jobs back to this area,” he added. SPI continues to invest in its forests and mills to grow more trees and enhance productivity while protecting the environment and creating jobs,” Land went on to say. He added that Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority director Larry Cope has worked cooperatively with SPI to retool the mill and restore jobs to the community.

The Sonora mill closed in July 2009 amid weakness in the lumber market, reduced timber harvests on nearby national forest lands, and increasing state regulatory burdens. In addition, the plant was configured to only accept larger-diameter logs. “When combined, these factors left us no choice but to close the plant,” said Land. At that time about 130 employees were affected by the closure. About that same number of employees will be hired when the retooled plant begins production in 2011.

SPI spokesman Mark Pawlicki stated, "Retooling this mill will help California meet its own demand for wood products, rather than importing lumber from faraway places with lower environmental standards." "The time has come when more of the lumber needed in this state can be produced in California's mills," he added.

Retooling of the mill will be managed by Sierra Pacific Industries. It is anticipated that SPI will hire local workers to help with the project.

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Sierra Pacific Industries is a third-generation family-owned forest products company based in Anderson, California. The firm owns and manages nearly 1.9 million acres of timberland in California and Washington, and is the second largest lumber producer in the United States. Sierra Pacific Industries is committed to managing its lands in a responsible and sustainable manner to protect the environment while providing quality wood products and renewable power for consumers.

The Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority (TCEDA) promotes the County of Tuolumne, including the City of Sonora, as a dynamic business location and provides business with essential information needed when locating or expanding business in the Sierra - Mother Lode Area of California.

TCEDA's mission is to facilitate a local economy that is innovative, resilient and diverse, by assisting in business formation, developing a skilled workforce, supporting local businesses, and attracting innovative companies to Tuolumne County.

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