



December 9 – 10, 2015 Board Meeting

Best Western Plus
Sonora Oaks Hotel &
Conference Center
19551 Hess Avenue
Sonora, CA 95370

Board Meeting AGENDA

December 9 - 10, 2015
South Central Subregion



DECEMBER 9, 2015

Board Tour

1:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Members of the Board and staff will participate in a field trip to explore issues and activities related to wildfire recovery and resiliency in the South Central Subregion. Members of the public are invited to participate in the field tour but are responsible for their own transportation and lunch. The tour will start in the main parking lot of the Best Western Plus Sonora Oaks Hotel & Conference Center located at 19551 Hess Avenue in Sonora, CA, 95370.

Reception

5:30 – 7:00 p.m.

Following the Board tour, Boardmembers and staff will attend a reception open to the public. The reception will be held at the Sonora Inn located at 160 South Washington Street, Sonora, CA, 95370.

DECEMBER 10, 2015

Board Meeting

8:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

*Best Western Plus Sonora Oaks
Hotel & Conference Center
19551 Hess Avenue
Sonora, CA 95370*

(End time is approximate)

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Oath of Office for New Boardmembers**
- III. Roll Call**
- IV. Closed Session (this portion of the meeting is not open to the public.)**
Evaluation of the performance of the Executive Officer by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Board. (Government Code, Section 11126, subdivision (a)(1).)

RESUME OPEN SESSION APPROXIMATELY 9:30 A.M.

- V. Approval of September 3, 2015, Meeting Minutes (ACTION)**
- VI. Public Comments**
Provide an opportunity for the public to comment on non-agenda items.
- VII. Board Chair's Report**

VIII. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

- a. Administrative Update
- b. Policy and Outreach Update
- c. Report on the Butte Fire
- d. Miscellaneous Updates

IX. Deputy Attorney General's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

X. Election of Chair and Vice Chair (ACTION)

The Board will elect a Chair and Vice Chair for 2016.

XI. 2016 Board Meeting Schedule (ACTION)

The Board will review and approve a schedule for Board meetings for calendar year 2016.

XII. SNC Strategic Action Plan (ACTION)

The Board may act to approve the SNC Strategic Action Plan.

XIII. 2014-15 Annual Report (ACTION)

Staff will provide an outline of plans to produce the 2014-15 Annual Report. The Board may provide direction and act to authorize staff to proceed with the production of the Annual Report.

XIV. 2015-16 Proposition 1 Grant Awards (ACTION)

The Board may take action on recommended grants to be awarded under the 2015-16 Proposition 1 Grant Program. Staff will present the following projects and their related California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documents to the Board for Action:

- Project #[828](#), Hirschman's Pond Forest Health Project, with Notice of Exemption from CEQA
- Project #[832](#), Diamond Mountain Watershed Restoration Project (USFS), with Notice of Exemption from CEQA
- Project #[835](#), Magalia Forest Health Management Project, with Notice of Exemption from CEQA
- Project #[843](#), Oak Creek Watershed Restoration Project, with Notice of Exemption from CEQA
- Project #[845](#), Big Tree Creek Watershed Forest Restoration, with Notice of Exemption from CEQA

XV. Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program Regional Strategy (ACTION)

The Board may act to adopt the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Plan Regional Strategy.

XVI. Natural Disaster Resiliency Competition Grant (INFORMATIONAL)

Staff will brief the Board on the SNC's involvement on a grant application by the State Housing and Community Department to secure funding for activities related to create resiliency in the landscape affected by the Rim Fire.

XVII. Boardmembers' Comments

Provide an opportunity for members of the Board to make comments on items not on the agenda.

XVIII. Public Comments

Provide an opportunity for the public to comment on non-agenda items.

XIX. Adjournment

Meeting Materials are available on the SNC Web site at www.sierranevada.ca.gov. For additional information, or to submit written comment on any agenda item, please contact Ms. Armstrong at (530) 823-4700, toll free at (877) 257-1212, via email at tristyn.armstrong@sierranevada.ca.gov, in person or by mail at 11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205, Auburn, CA, 95603. If you need reasonable accommodations, please contact Ms. Armstrong at least **five (5) working days** in advance, including documents in alternative formats.

Closed Session: Following, or at any time during the meeting, the Board may recess or adjourn to closed session to consider pending or potential litigation, property negotiations, or personnel-related matters.
Authority: Government Code Section 11126, subdivision (a)(1).

Board Meeting MINUTES

September 3, 2015
Paradise Elks Lodge
1100 Elk Lane
Paradise, CA 94969



I. Call to Order

Board Chair BJ Kirwan called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

II. Roll Call

Present: Jerry Bird, Louis Boitano, John Brissenden, Burt Bundy, Pam Giacomini, Ron Hames, Allen Ishida, Bob Johnston, BJ Kirwan, Jennifer Montgomery, Este Stifel (Bob Kirkwood and Todd Ferrara joined the meeting after it was called to order.)

Absent: Eraina Ortega and Woody Smeck

III. Approval of June 4, 2015, Meeting Minutes (ACTION)

ACTION: Boardmember Louis Boitano moved, and Boardmember Pam Giacomini seconded, a motion to approve the June 4, 2015, meeting minutes. The minutes were approved with 9 aye votes from the voting members (Brissenden abstaining, Kirkwood and Ferrara not present).

IV. Public Comments

Mike Peevers of Terra Fuego Resource Foundation introduced himself to the Board and stated he was looking forward to hearing about all the good work the Conservancy is doing.

V. Board Chair's Report

Board Chair BJ Kirwan commented on the field tour held the previous day and thanked everyone for their participation. Kirwan announced to the Board that they will perform an annual performance review of Executive Officer Jim Branham in closed session at the December Board meeting and asked for Boardmember participation in the review process.

VI. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

Executive Officer Jim Branham introduced new members of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) staff: Andy Fristensky, the Mt. Lassen Area Manager, and Randi Jorgensen, the Mt. Whitney Area Manager.

a. Administrative Update

Administrative Services Chief Amy Lussier announced the hiring of new Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) staff: Patrick Eidman, Grants Coordinator in the Auburn office; Michael Pickard, South Central Subregion Area Representative working out of the Mariposa office; and Kristy Hoffman, North Region Area Representative, to be located in Quincy, CA. One last vacancy

will be advertised in October, and this position will be a policy position located in the Auburn office.

The current fiscal year budget has been passed and SNC will be complying with a cost-savings reduction of \$310,000, due to the Environmental License Plate Fund (ELPF) shortfall. One area cost savings could be found is SNC's contract with the Department of General Services for accounting services, which has increased to \$176,000.00 per year. In response, the Department of Finance and the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) will be working on behalf of all the State Conservancies to reduce the contract amount spent for accounting services.

Branham added that additional resources were pursued through the state budget change proposal process to support the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP), but were not successful. The SNC continues to get positive messages from CNRA about resolving the ELPF budget issues with the hope of eliminating the need for annual budget savings.

b. Policy and Outreach Update

Angela Avery, Regional Policy and Programs Chief, provided an update on policy activity within SNC. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) released a White Paper and an associated policy document in early August titled *The Carbon Implications of Fuel Reduction and Ecological Restorations in the Sierra Nevada*. The SNC and partners are reviewing the paper and developing responses to ensure that the policy issues important to the SNC and the Region are represented.

Avery provided a brief legislation update noting that staff continues to track state and federal legislation relevant to the SNC, and any major developments will be reported to the Board as they come up. Assembly Member Brian Dahle's bill AB590, dealing with biomass, died in legislation earlier this week - a disappointment to the SNC. Also, the SNC has signed on as a non-voting member to the Sierra Climate and Adaptation Mitigation Partnership (CAMP). Avery reported Assembly Concurrent Resolution 22-Sierra Watershed Protection Week - passed, designating the third week of September as Sierra Watershed Protection Week. The Sierra Watershed Protection week will overlap with the Great Sierra River Cleanup.

Brittany Covich, Public Information Officer for SNC, provided the Board with the communications portion of the report. Covich displayed a picture of the WIP logo and shared a series of Virtual Billboards that were created in partnership with the United States Forest Service (USFS). Covich noted that the billboards have been tied to the SNC WIP Web page and have increased traffic to the site by 50%. Covich also shared that The National Weather Service and other organizations have been using virtual billboards to shift

their messaging to focus on forest conditions and weather impacts on severe damage fire areas.

The Board engaged in a brief discussion of other online apps and functionality, and acknowledged the virtual billboard campaign as an excellent messaging tool.

Branham recognized Covich for her tremendous effort in improving SNC communications.

c. SNC Tribal Consultation Policy

Julie Griffith Flatter, Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) and Tribal Coordinator, provided background on the SNC Tribal Consultation Policy which was developed in response to an Executive Order issued by Governor Brown in 2011. Working closely with the Governor's Tribal Advisor, as well as CNRA, SNC developed the policy to meet the needs and requirements of the Executive Order. The policy was distributed to the 42 tribes in the Region for comment. The SNC received two "no comment" responses.

Griffith-Flatter reported that the Tribal Consultation Policy was utilized in seeking tribal input on the SNC Strategic Action Plan currently under development. She also noted that moving forward, the development of tribal policies and initiatives would take place in coordination with the Grant Program.

The Board engaged in a brief discussion about the degree of involvement tribes have historically had with SNC grant programs and had a short conversation about the changes in eligible tribal applicants between the Proposition 84 and Proposition 1 statutes.

d. Proposition 1 Grant Update

Assistant Executive Officer, Bob Kingman, gave a Proposition 1 Grant Program update, noting that SNC's Proposition 1 Grant Guidelines, approved by the Board in June, had been reviewed and approved by CNRA and were now available on the Bond Accountability and SNC Web sites. Kingman reminded the Board that the first solicitation period for Proposition 1 Grants ended September 1 and that funding recommendations would be brought forward at the December 2015 and March 2016 Board meetings. He informed the Board that the SNC had received a total of 20 applications representing \$5.5 million in requests and that the evaluation and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) processes would begin immediately. Kingman also provided a breakdown of the applications received: 13 of the 20 applications were for Category 1 projects and the remaining were for Category 2 projects; 14 applications are from the Mt. Lassen Area and six from the Mt. Whitney Area.

The Board engaged in a discussion about pros and cons of state-level efforts to coordinate Proposition 1 grant applications. Boardmember Burt Bundy asked if there is any effort to coordinate the various deadlines, as each agency has established different deadlines. Kingman responded that there is some coordination happening between the various agencies and that this issue has been raised. Boardmember Jennifer Montgomery responded to the question of timing by stating Placer County is going to apply for Proposition 1 funds and they actually see a benefit to the staggering of due dates.

e. Miscellaneous Updates

Branham apprised the Board that SNC continues to have issues funding projects on Federal lands due to challenges with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and CEQA requirements. He noted that Kingman is working with state agencies, our Deputy Attorney General, and CNRA legal counsel to develop solutions.

Branham then described an effort lead by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research and the State Housing and Community Development Department. The two, working with partners, are seeking a Housing and Urban Development Grant from the Federal government to restore resiliency in the Rim Fire burn area. SNC has been participating in the effort, which could yield a large grant with tremendous opportunity.

Branham reminded the Board that communications with the State Insurance Commissioner and insurance companies continue and noted that the companies are looking for opportunities to be advocates for state and federal agencies on watershed health issues.

VII. Deputy Attorney General's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

Deputy Attorney General Christine Sproul has been working closely with Assistant Executive Officer Bob Kingman and CNRA on CEQA/NEPA issues. Sproul further stated that the USFS has done quite a bit of NEPA work done by the USFS in relation to the Rim Fire Restoration Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will assist in CEQA compliance for projects funded by SNC and other state agencies. Boardmember Bob Johnston asked Sproul to update the Board on the draft Office of Planning and Research (OPR) CEQA Guidelines. Sproul has not yet had time to review these guidelines. She plans to provide an update to the Board in December.

VIII. SNC Strategic Action Plan (INFORMATIONAL)

Angela Avery, Policy and Outreach Division Chief, presented a draft SNC Strategic Plan for Board review, feedback, and guidance noting that staff will bring the final Strategic Plan and a draft Action Plan for Board approval in December. The Board was given an update on the four proposed programs:

Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program, Proposition 1 Grant Program, Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Program, and Recreation and Tourism, and Avery described the processes used to identify those programs. Avery posed two questions to the Board regarding the Strategic Plan: 1) Are the four proposed programs the appropriate programs for SNC over the next four years? 2) Are the strategies identified for the four proposed programs appropriate?

Boardmember Pam Giacomini asked why the preservation of ranch and agriculture lands was no longer a program focus area. Avery assured the Board that although ranching and agriculture would not be a specific area of focus, it would remain an ongoing activity likely addressed in more detail as the WIP takes more shape. Executive Officer Jim Branham added that as the WIP develops at the watershed level, ranch and agricultural lands issues will be incorporated. Boardmember Jennifer Montgomery noted that the Strategic Plan and WIP take a holistic approach and these issues will be addressed. Boardmember Burt Bundy indicated he would like to see ranching and agricultural lands called out in the implementation portion of the Plan.

Boardmember Bob Kirkwood indicated he would like to see a more emotional appeal in the document rather than using "state and bureaucratic" wording.

Boardmember Allen Ishida asked if the Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) program would fit under forest restoration programs. Avery advised that while it was a program of its own, there was no funding currently dedicated to this area.

Boardmember Louis Boitano indicated that AML issues are very important in his county, given the high number of abandoned mines.

The Board was informed that the draft Strategic Plan would be revised to incorporate Boardmember and public comments and brought back to them for review and approval in December, for implementation beginning in January 2016.

IX. Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (INFORMATIONAL)

Executive Officer Jim Branham provided a copy of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the CNRA, SNC, and USFS. The purpose of this MOU is to communicate the working relationship all signing Agencies will have to carry out the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program. Boardmembers Jerry Bird and Todd Ferrara provided acknowledgement and thanks to Angela Avery and staff for their instrumental role in getting the MOU signed. Branham stated that this document will be shared with partner agencies and used as a marketing tool.

The WIP Project Coordinator, Mandy Vance, updated the Board on coordination efforts with partner agencies. As part of these efforts, SNC will host a WIP Webinar on October 8. Vance asked the Board to forward this invitation to

anyone who may be interested in participating in this event. We will use the webinar time to update partners and provide an online WIP endorsement. Vance thanked absent Boardmember Woody Smeck for the coordination of conversations with the National Park Service (NPS). As a result of these conversations with NPS, SNC received an invitation to present the WIP at the Southern Sierra Land Managers meeting this fall. Vance also thanked Boardmember Este Stifel for coordination efforts at the Bureau of Land Management to conduct a pilot assessment in the Mother Lode District.

Boardmember Jerry Bird provided an update on a Meadows Restoration collaboration underway between USFS, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and Sierra Pacific Industries. This opportunity is a Proposition 1 grant opportunity with the group looking at two types of grant proposals they can submit. Bird provided the group with a handout that provided a summary and review of grant opportunities that the collaboration group will consider.

Boardmember Ron Hames noted the exclusion of USFS Region 4 in our WIP efforts, stating that half of his county falls in the Region 4 Area. Executive Officer Jim Branham responded that he had been in contact with the Forest Supervisor on the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest to ensure that they will be included in WIP efforts

Boardmember Jennifer Montgomery thanked Vance for her work on “getting the word out about the WIP.” Montgomery also encourages SNC to reach out to Alliance of Regional Collaboratives for Adaptation.

X. Policy-Related Science and Research Overview (INFORMATIONAL)

Executive Officer Jim Branham introduced SNC’s Regional Science Coordinator, Nic Enstice. Branham provided a brief summary of the work that Enstice has been focused on over the past few months. Branham let the Board know that these science reports will be ongoing items presented to the Board from time to time.

Enstice presented an overview of his staff report to Boardmembers. Topics discussed in the presentation included: comparison of carbon emissions between low- and high-severity fires and relationships to air quality, challenges of forest regeneration after intense fire, the majority of emissions from high-intensity fires will come over the future years, smoke plume activity and predictions of where smoke will travel, and water quantity and forest management.

Boardmembers Bob Johnston and Este Stifel asked if any conclusions had been drawn from these studies and how they could be used. Stifel concluded that the value of the Sierra Nevada is in its trees. She also indicated that many of the images and facts shared in the presentation should be widely shared among the public. Boardmembers Bob Kirkwood and Jerry Bird commented on the effects

on snowpack and about studies being undertaken by the Bureau of Reclamation and Professor Roger Bales.

Public Comment – Chris Wright, Calaveras County Supervisor, asked Enstice if PG&E had been consulted during the hydro-electric capacity study. Enstice indicated not directly by SNC.

XI. Boardmembers' Comments

Boardmember Allen Ishida acknowledged the ongoing issue of dead trees in Sierra forests. Ishida stated that with over 10 million dead pine and cedar trees in the forests, there is a real problem, especially on private lands where the cost to remove these dead trees cannot be covered. Ishida talked about the substantial erosion damage that will occur when the state finally receives a significant amount of rain. Boardmember Bob Kirkwood asked Ishida if he thought the science study information presented by SNC may be useful information to share with water agencies so they can understand the impacts of these fires on their watersheds.

Boardmember BJ Kirwan complimented SNC staff for the outstanding work and presentations.

XII. Public Comments

Butte County and Paradise Fire Safe Council Boardmember Tom Kelly addressed the efforts of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), which is working with local fire departments and fire safe councils to coordinate efforts with local property owners for cleanup of property to prevent catastrophic fires.

Tuolumne County Supervisor Sherri Brennan provided an update on the Rim Fire restoration efforts, noting that significant harvesting of burned material has occurred on private lands, while little has been removed from public lands. At this time the infrastructure has been saturated which has contributed to over 70,000 acres of moderate to extreme burned forests being left untreated. She encouraged the Board and SNC to continue to assist in finding the nexus between the NEPA and CEQA processes, as it is a real issue relating to Rim Fire restoration efforts.

XIII. Adjournment

Board Chair BJ Kirwan adjourned the meeting at 11:50 a.m. The next meeting will be in Tuolumne County on December 2 & 3.

NOTE: the December meeting was later rescheduled for December 9 & 10.

Current Status – Budget

The Environmental License Plate Fund (ELPF) which pays for staff, programs, and operations, continues to be tight this year due to the ELPF shortfall. As requested by the Natural Resources Agency, SNC will not be spending \$310,000 of our ELPF allotment. We are being very strategic about all budget decisions and are having frequent budget meetings to ensure we are staying on top of spending. Not filling all of our positions at the beginning of the fiscal year has given us \$124,271 in salary savings that will be put towards the \$310,000 cost savings. The remaining cost savings will come from tightening up all possible line items in General Expense. The current status of SNC's 2015-16 budget can be viewed on page two of this report.

Staff has been busy preparing reports and responding to drills from the Department of Finance (DOF) to build the 2016-17 budget to be released by the Governor on January 10. At this time it is unclear whether or not the ELPF fund will rebound in 2016-17 and how we will be affected.

Current Status – Human Resources

The human resources (HR) staff has been extremely busy with paperwork, orientation, and training for all the new staff. To add to the busyness, we are down one HR analyst as Jennifer Barnes welcomed a new baby boy on September 11. Jennifer will be out on maternity leave until January.

SNC's final vacancy (Kim Carr's position, with modifications) for a Policy Analyst on the Policy and Outreach team was advertised on October 15. We plan to hold interviews in November, and have a new staff member in place by the end of the calendar year. The current SNC organizational chart can be viewed on page three of this report.

Current Status – Accounting

For the last few years the state has been preparing to release a new financial system that will incorporate budgeting, accounting, procurement, and cash management. The new system is called The Financial Information System for California (FI\$Cal). SNC is in Wave Two of the roll out for the new system and we went live on August 12. The new system has required all Admin staff to attend extensive training and completely change all of our current business processes related to budgets, accounting, and procurement. Unfortunately, it's been a rough start: no bills have been paid through the system at the time of this writing. Urgent bills have been paid through the regular processing with the State Controller's Office. Although the learning curve is extensive, we do believe in the long run this system will make it possible to bring accounting functions in house, which could eliminate the Interagency Contract with Contracted Fiscal Services that costs approximately \$176,000 a year.

Recommendation

This is an informational item only; no formal action is needed by the Board at this time, although Boardmembers are encouraged to share their thoughts and comments.

**2015-16 SNC BUDGET
 as of October 2015**

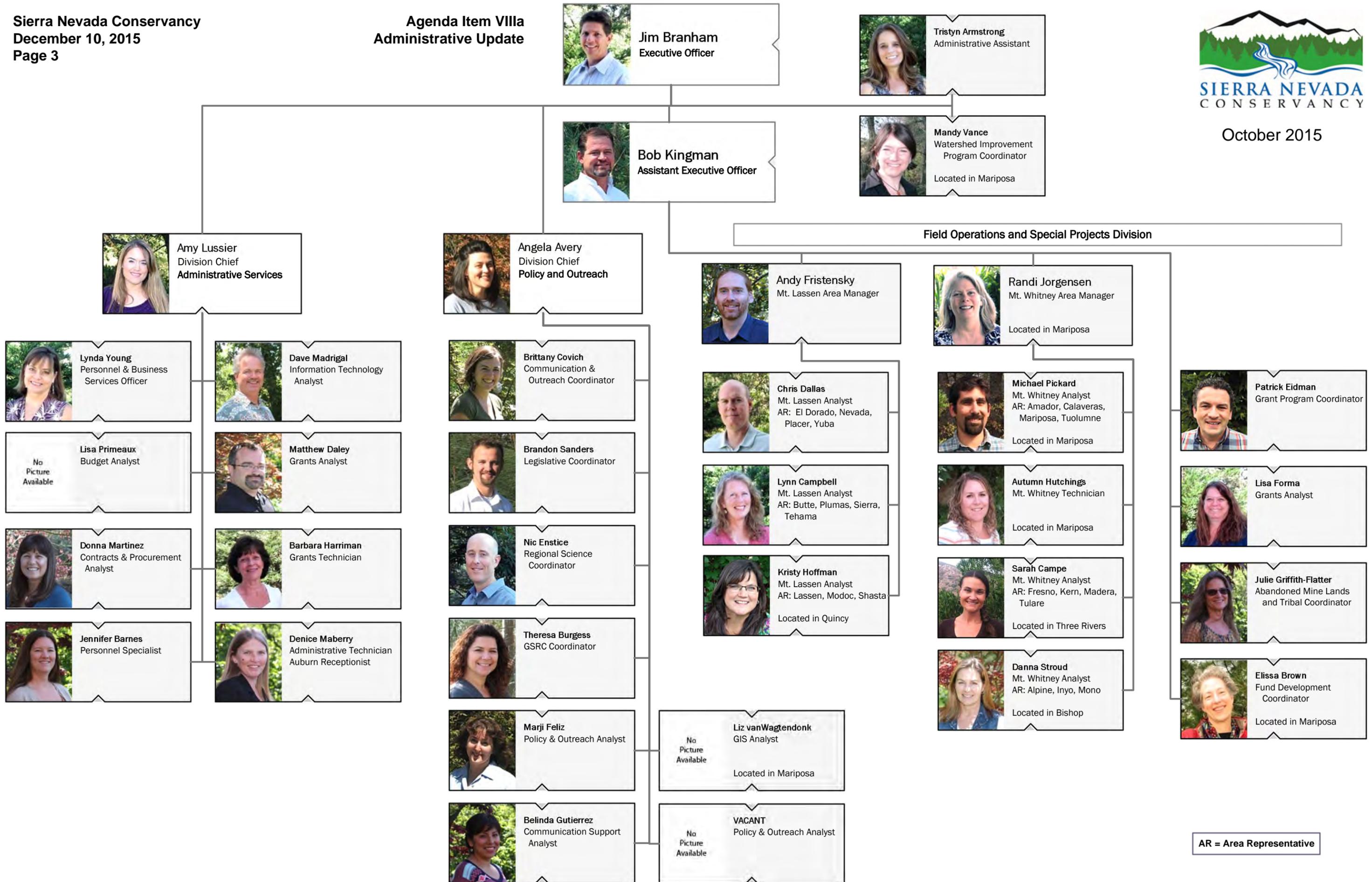
Environmental License Plate Fund (ELPF) Support Budget			
	<i>Budget</i>	<i>Expended thru October</i>	<i>%</i>
ELPF Appropriation	\$ 4,476,000		
ELPF Cost Savings Drill	\$ (310,000)		
Total ELPF Support Budget	\$ 4,166,000		
SALARIES & STAFF BENEFITS	\$ 2,876,827	\$ 855,242	30%
Operating Expenses & Equipment			
GENERAL EXPENSE (includes printing, communications & postage)	\$ 105,692	\$ 28,352	27%
TRAVEL	\$ 79,000	\$ 12,037	15%
TRAINING	\$ 20,000	\$ 1,497	7%
FACILITIES	\$ 280,069	\$ 67,737	24%
UTILITIES	\$ 18,600	\$ 1,985	11%
CONTRACTS - INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT (includes CFS \$176,000, Prop 1 CEQA/NEPA Reviews \$130,915, DGS \$11,710, SCO \$2,680, Legal Svcs \$25,000, SPB \$4,000, CalHR \$5,700)	\$ 356,005	\$ 188,765	53%
CONTRACTS - EXTERNAL (includes Altum \$26,448)	\$ 81,215	\$ 26,448	33%
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	\$ 60,045	\$ 4,283	7%
PRO RATA (control agency costs)	\$ 260,955	\$ -	0%
VEHICLE OPERATIONS (includes vehicle insurance)	\$ 27,592	\$ 2,735	10%
Total Operating Expenses & Equipment	\$ 1,289,173	\$ 333,839	26%
Total Personal Services & OE&E Expenditures	\$ 4,166,000	\$ 1,189,081	29%

Prop 1 Support Budget			
	<i>Budget</i>	<i>Expended thru October</i>	<i>%</i>
Prop 1 Appropriation	\$ 207,000		
SALARIES & STAFF BENEFITS	\$ 200,000	\$ 52,759	26%
Operating Expenses & Equipment			
GENERAL EXPENSE			0%
TRAVEL	\$ 7,000		0%
Total Operating Expenses & Equipment	\$ 7,000	\$ -	0%
Total Personal Services & OE&E Expenditures	\$ 207,000	\$ 52,759	25%
Prop 84 Support Budget			
	<i>Budget</i>	<i>Expended thru October</i>	<i>%</i>
Prop 84 Appropriation	\$ 150,000		
SALARIES & STAFF BENEFITS	\$ 150,000	\$ 45,307	30%
Operating Expenses & Equipment			
GENERAL EXPENSE			0%
TRAVEL			0%
Total Operating Expenses & Equipment	\$ -	\$ -	0%
Total Personal Services & OE&E Expenditures	\$ 150,000	\$ 45,307	30%
Prop 1 Local Assistance			
	<i>Budget</i>	<i>Expended thru October</i>	<i>%</i>
Prop 1 Appropriation	\$ 10,000,000	\$ -	0%

Agenda Item VIII
 Administrative Update



October 2015



AR = Area Representative

Background

In addition to continued activity in support of the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (See [Agenda Item XV](#)), staff continues to engage in legislative/policy and outreach/communications efforts with goals of raising the profile of the Sierra Nevada, educating legislators and key-decision makers about the value the Region has to the entire state, and identifying new sources of funding for the Region.

Current Status

Meetings and Legislative Actions

\$150 million in potential new funding for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) became a possibility with the October 16 filing of a new water bond initiative proposal – The Water Supply Reliability and Drought Protection Act of 2016 – submitted by Dr. Jerry Meral of the National Heritage Institute (NHI). The total amount of the bond is \$4.895 billion and the funding for SNC is identified in the Watershed improvement for Water Supply and Water Quality enhancement chapter.

Following actions by the Attorney General and Secretary of State, NHI will work to collect signatures later this year to qualify the bond for the November 2016 ballot. A draft copy of the bond language is attached ([Attachment A](#)).

In early November, the SNC partnered with CAL FIRE to bring legislative staff on a tour of the areas impacted by the Butte fire. At the time of this writing, preparations were still underway, though the day is expected to be quite informative and to help increase awareness among decision-makers in Sacramento as to the widespread impact these types of fire events continue to have on key resources.

Staff has continued to engage with the Sierra Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Partnership (CAMP), including participation in a listening session hosted by Sierra CAMP and Sierra Business Council in Truckee during the month of October. Representatives from the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) presented on the Safeguarding California Climate Adaptation Plan, and fielded questions and commentary from a variety of Sierra Nevada Stakeholders. The discussion was productive in that it conveyed to the CNRA representatives the critical importance of the Region and its associated values to downstream beneficiaries. Staff will stay engaged in the Safeguarding California process, including participation in workshops in Sacramento and possibly providing feedback and input on the draft revision to the plan in November.

Additionally, Sierra CAMP approached the SNC with a request to review and provide input on their Sierra Nevada Climate Adaptation & Mitigation Strategy. This document is the result of Sierra CAMP involvement with the Climate Solutions University, and focuses primarily on forests, water, and ways those resources can adapt to a changing climate. The document was very well-done, and incorporates the work SNC is doing through WIP and the Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative.

Outreach and Communications

Staff continues to focus on supporting the communications needs of the WIP, and on keeping SNC activities and issues highlighted on social media. In late September, SNC's Facebook page reached a milestone of 800 likes, and currently SNC's Twitter account is nearing 500 followers.

Social media continues to provide SNC with opportunities to reach new audiences and connect SNC's messaging with current events. Throughout fire season, staff shared news clips and research related to the broad impacts of fire in the Sierra on California, and on Regional fire-related trends. For example, in mid-September, the Sierra Nevada reached an unfortunate milestone of a million acres burned in the current decade. At the time, seventy percent of those acres burned in just 10 of the 386 wildland fires that had been recorded in the Region. To illustrate this significant event, staff developed visuals to mark the milestone and posted them on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). These posts attracted the attention of a Sacramento Bee Reporter, and resulted in a follow up interview and [story tied to the Butte Fire](#).

Since the last SNC Board Meeting, three new blog posts have been added to the Sierra Wildfire Wire. The Sierra Wildfire Wire mailing list currently has 245 subscribers, and includes representatives from various state agencies, federal agencies, legislative representatives and their staff, and Regional partners, conservation representatives, and industry contacts.

In late October, staff assisted the continued efforts of the Filmmakers Collaborative to develop a more in-depth feature for PBS on [The Fire Next Time](#) - a documentary outlining the changes in fire behavior in the Sierra and the challenges the Region is facing as a result of past land management practices and climate change. Executive Officer Jim Branham was interviewed and staff connected the filmmakers with additional spokespeople in the Region.

Great Sierra River Cleanup

The 7th Annual Great Sierra River Cleanup, held on September 19, 2015, was another great success. Over 4,500 volunteers cleared over 102 tons of trash from over 325 miles of river. As in previous years, this event was held in partnership with the California Coastal Cleanup Day. But, unlike previous years, the 2015 event complemented recent efforts in Sacramento – the passage of Assembly Concurrent Resolution (ACR) 22, authored by Assembly Member Brian Dahle (R - Bieber). ACR 22 established the third week of September as “Sierra Nevada Watershed Protection Week.” It both brings attention to the challenges that the Sierra Nevada region is facing and highlights the work being done to protect and restore all of the resources the Sierra provides to the State.

Deep appreciation goes out to the thousands of volunteers, dozens of local community groups, and our supporters at the California Coastal Commission, the California

Conservation Corps, Sacramento Municipal Utility District, Sierra Pacific Industries, Pacific Gas & Electric, Mountiansmith, and Danner Boots. The Great Sierra River Cleanup would not be possible without the hard work of these individuals and organizations.

As part of SNC efforts to focus work per the Strategic Action Plan which will be approved by the Board at this meeting (See [Agenda Item XII](#)), staff will be evaluating the annual event to determine the best way to move forward in future years.

Current Sierra Nevada Research

For decades, the conversation about forests and their contribution to greenhouse gas cycles has characterized forests as a sink, or a positive, in our quest to reduce global greenhouse gas levels. This, however, may be a dangerous presumption because forest and atmospheric carbon interactions are very dynamic.

The SNC is working with partners including CAL FIRE, the United States Forest Service (USFS), and the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to develop a Science Synthesis paper related to the role forests play in California's effort to combat climate change. The synthesis will summarize current scientific understanding about the state of Sierra Nevada forests as they relate to carbon storage and greenhouse gas emissions, and will make recommendations on which forest characteristics yield the greatest carbon storage benefits if treated. The report will provide important information for the ongoing discussions about appropriate uses of Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund monies in the forest sector.

The final paper is expected in November and will be shared with the Board at this meeting if it is complete.

Next Steps

Staff will continue to identify and implement legislative, outreach, and communications activities in support of SNC programs and activities.

Recommendation

This is an informational item only; no formal action is needed by the Board at this time, although Boardmembers are encouraged to share their thoughts and comments.

Agenda Item VIIIb

Attachment A

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1.

Division 36 (commencing with Section 86000) is added to the Water Code, to read:

DIVISION 36. The Water Supply Reliability and Drought Protection Act of 2016

CHAPTER 1. Short Title

86000. This division shall be known and may be cited as the Water Supply Reliability and Drought Protection Act of 2016.

CHAPTER 2. Findings and Declarations.

86001. The people find and declare the following:

(a) California's historic drought raises serious questions about the long-term reliability of our current water supplies. The drought underscores the need to use our existing water supplies more efficiently and increase investments in our water infrastructure.

(b) California's water situation requires a comprehensive plan to provide for the water needs of people, agriculture and the environment. This division will help provide a more reliable water supply by reducing waste, increasing the amount of water available to meet our needs, and improving water quality. This measure also provides additional protection for our communities from floods.

(c) This division will implement cost effective methods of water development and conservation to meet California's present and future water needs in a changing climate, including capture of urban drainage and stormwater runoff, groundwater and brackish water desalting, water recycling, water conservation, and watershed management, restoration, enhancement and protection.

(d) The water supply and quality investments provided by this division will be matched by agencies and grant recipients, more than doubling the effectiveness of the funding provided.

(e) Agencies implementing this division will give high priority to cost effective projects, and to the most durable and most environmentally beneficial projects. Funding will go to projects which contribute to implementation of the Governor's Water Action Plan, whose goal is to increase the resiliency of the California water system and California communities.

(f) Every Californian has a right to safe drinking water. This division will help achieve that goal.

(g) This division provides a fair and reasonable distribution of funds directly and indirectly benefitting every region of the state.

(h) This measure provides short and long term cost effective actions to address the water shortages caused by the recent drought, and will help prepare local communities for future droughts. Droughts reduce water supplies for people, agriculture and the environment. This division will help meet the

water needs of people, agriculture, and the environment and make California more resilient in the face of a changing climate.

(i) By improving the health and water productivity of watersheds, communities will become more self-reliant with respect to water supply and local environmental quality will be increased.

(j) By removing invasive plants such as yellow starthistle, giant reed and tamarisk, water supply will be increased and habitat for fish and wildlife will be improved.

(k) Communities can be devastated by floods when droughts end. We can make better use of floodwaters by capturing waters that are not needed for the environment and putting them to use in our communities and on our farms. By providing funds to intelligently manage our watersheds and flood plains, this measure will also help avoid flood damage, improve fish and wildlife habitat, remove pollutants from our water supply, and improve the environment. Better flood plain management may allow improved operation of upstream reservoirs for water supply purposes.

(l) Droughts often lead to severe fire conditions, which can lead to significant erosion, reduced water quality and impacts to water infrastructure. This measure provides funding to manage forests and watersheds to reduce fire danger, mitigate the effects of wildfires on water supply and quality, and to improve the quality and quantity of water coming from those watersheds.

(m) Special consideration will be given to projects that employ new or innovative technology or practices, including decision support tools that support the integration of multiple strategies and jurisdictions, including, but not limited to, water supply, wildfire reduction, habitat improvement, flood control, land use, and sanitation.

CHAPTER 3. Definitions

86002. Unless the context otherwise requires, the definitions set forth in this section govern the construction of this division, as follows:

(a) "Delta" means the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta as defined in Section 85058.

(b) "Department" means the Department of Water Resources.

(c): "Desalination" means removing salt and other contaminants from polluted groundwater or other inland sources of water containing salts, including brackish water.

(d) "Disadvantaged community" has the meaning set forth in subdivision (a) of Section 79505.5, as it may be amended.

(e) "Economically distressed area" has the meaning set forth in subdivision (k) of Section 79702, as it may be amended

(f) "Finance committee" means the Water Supply Reliability and Drought Protection Finance Committee created by Section 86182.

(g) "Fund" means the Water Supply Reliability and Drought Protection Fund of 2016 created by Section 86169.

(h) "Groundwater sustainability agency" means an agency defined in subdivision (j) of Section 10721.

(i) "Integrated regional water management plan" means a comprehensive plan for a defined geographic area that meets the requirements of Part 2.2 (commencing with Section 10530) of Division 6, as that part may be amended.

(j) "invasive plant" means a terrestrial or aquatic plant not native to California of no or negligible agricultural value which does any of the following; displaces native plants, threatens native plant biodiversity, harms agricultural or rangeland productivity, degrades wildlife habitat, contributes to fire hazard, or uses more water than the plants it displaces.

(k) "Conservation Actions on Private Lands" means projects with willing landowners that involve the adaptive and flexible management of natural resources in response to changing conditions and threats to habitat and wildlife. These investments and actions are specifically designed to create habitat conditions on private lands which, when managed dynamically over time, contribute to the long-term health and resiliency of vital ecosystems and enhance wildlife populations.

(l) "Nonprofit organization" means an organization qualified to do business in California and exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of Title 26 of the United States Code.

(m) "Preservation" means rehabilitation, stabilization, restoration, development, and reconstruction, or any combination of those activities.

(n) "Protection" means those actions necessary to prevent harm or damage to persons, property or natural resources or those actions necessary to allow the continued use and enjoyment of property or natural resources and includes acquisition, development, restoration, preservation and interpretation as interpretation is defined in subdivision (i) of Section 75005 of the Public Resources Code.

(o) "Public agency" means a state agency or department, special district, joint powers authority, city, county, city and county, or other political subdivision of the state.

(p) "Restoration" means the improvement of physical structures or facilities and, in the case of natural systems and landscape features includes, but is not limited to, projects which improve physical and ecological processes including but not limited to erosion control; sediment management; the control and elimination of invasive species; prescribed burning; fuel hazard reduction; fencing out threats to existing or restored natural resources; meadow, wetland, riparian, and stream restoration; and other plant and wildlife habitat improvement to increase the natural system value of the property. Restoration projects shall include the planning, monitoring and reporting necessary to ensure successful implementation of the project objectives.

(q) "State board" means the State Water Resources Control Board.

(r) "State General Obligation Bond Law" means the State General Obligation Bond Law (Chapter 4 (commencing with Section 16720) of Part 3 of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code).

(s) "Stormwater" and "dry weather runoff" are defined as in Section 10561.5.

(t) "Stormwater Resource Plans" are defined as in Part 2.3 (commencing with Section 10560) of Division 6.

Chapter 4. Accountability.

86003. (a) The Natural Resources Agency shall provide for an independent audit of expenditures pursuant to this division no less than every three years. The secretary of the Natural Resources Agency shall publish a list of all expenditures pursuant to this division not less than annually, in written form, and shall post an electronic form of the list on the Natural Resources Agency's Internet Web site.

(b) The Department of Finance or the Controller, or the California State Auditor at the direction of the Legislature may conduct an audit of the expenditures of any state agency receiving funding pursuant to this act.

(c) The state agency issuing any grant with funding authorized by this division shall require adequate reporting of the expenditures of the funding from the grant.

Chapter 5. Capture and Use of Urban Runoff and stormwater

86050. (a) The sum of five hundred million dollars (\$500,000,000) is appropriated from the fund to the state board for projects to capture and use urban dry weather runoff and stormwater runoff. All grants made pursuant to this section by the state board for construction projects must be to counties or cities or a city and county with responsibility for flood control or management.

(b) The sum of thirty million dollars (\$30,000,000) is appropriated from the fund to the California Tahoe Conservancy for projects to capture and use dry weather runoff and stormwater runoff in the Tahoe Basin pursuant to Title 7.42 (commencing with Section 66905) of the Government Code.

(c) The sum of forty million dollars (\$40,000,000) is appropriated from the fund to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for projects to capture and use dry weather runoff and stormwater runoff pursuant to Division 23 (commencing with Section 33000) of the Public Resources Code in the area defined in paragraph (2) of subdivision (d) of Section 86080.

(d) The sum of thirty million dollars (\$30,000,000) is appropriated from the fund to the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy for projects to capture and use dry weather runoff and stormwater runoff pursuant to Division 22.8 (commencing with Section 32600) of the Public Resources Code.

(e) Funds spent pursuant to this section shall be used for competitive grants for projects that develop, implement, or improve multi-benefit projects identified and prioritized in Stormwater Resource Plans adopted by the state board consistent with Part 2.3 (commencing with Section 10560) of Division 6, as that part may be amended, and shall include as many as possible of the following benefits: use Best Management Practices that improve environmental quality to capture and treat stormwater or dry weather runoff for beneficial uses; remove pollutants from the captured and treated runoff; create or restore habitat or parkland to capture and treat stormwater or dry weather runoff for beneficial uses ;

store, infiltrate or use the captured and treated runoff to augment local water supplies; create or restore native habitat, trails, park land or other natural open space; reduce urban heat islands, and provide other public recreational opportunities. Projects that include wetlands and native habitat or project elements designed to mimic or restore natural watershed functions shall be given the highest priority.

86052. Projects funded pursuant to subdivision (a) of Section 86050 must be consistent with an Integrated Regional Water Management Plan for that region, if one has been adopted. This section does not apply to a project in an area which has an adopted Stormwater Resource Plan.

86054. (a) Each agency receiving funds pursuant to this chapter shall require at least a fifty percent (50%) cost share by recipients of grant funds pursuant to this chapter, but may eliminate or reduce the matching requirements for that portion of projects primarily benefiting disadvantaged communities or economically distressed areas.

(b) Projects funded by this section must comply with water quality policies or regulations adopted by the state board or the regional water quality control board with jurisdiction.

(c) Project costs may include development of decision support tools, data acquisition, and geographic information system data analysis to identify and evaluate the benefits and costs of potential stormwater capture and reuse projects.

(d) Preference shall be granted to projects that divert stormwater or dry weather runoff from storm drains or channels and put it to beneficial use. Projects may also prevent stormwater and dry weather runoff from entering storm drains or channels.

(e) (1) Each agency receiving funds pursuant to this chapter shall allocate at least thirty-five percent (35%) of the funds they receive for projects that benefit disadvantaged communities. Of this thirty-five percent, at least half shall be for projects within disadvantaged communities.

(2) Of the funds allocated to the state board by this chapter, the state board may spend up to fifty million dollars (\$50,000,000) for grants to eligible entities as defined in Section 86166 to develop Stormwater Resource Plans. The state board shall give priority to grant applications for the development or refinement of Stormwater Resource Plans that are metric-driven and use a watershed scale.

(f) In implementing this chapter, each agency receiving funds pursuant to this chapter shall consult with the Natural Resources Agency regarding the integration and prioritization of the habitat, park land, open space, recreational and public use components of stormwater and dry weather runoff capture and reuse projects, and shall seek assistance from the Natural Resources Agency in the review and scoring of proposed projects.

86056. Entities eligible to receive funds as defined in subdivision (a) of Section 86166 may apply for funds available pursuant to this chapter.

86057. Funds allocated pursuant to this Chapter may be granted to an eligible applicant for single or

multiple small-scale projects that are consistent with Chapter 6.5 of Division 2 of the Fish and Game Code, regardless of whether that Chapter is still in effect.

Chapter 6. Water recycling and desalination

86060. The sum of four hundred million dollars (\$400,000,000) is appropriated from the fund to the state board to award grants to public agencies on a competitive basis for wastewater recycling projects. Grants pursuant to this section may be made for all of the following:

(a) Water recycling projects, including, but not limited to, treatment, storage, conveyance, and distribution facilities for potable and nonpotable recycling projects.

(b) Dedicated distribution infrastructure to serve residential, commercial, agricultural, fish and wildlife habitat, and industrial end-user retrofit projects to allow use of recycled water.

(c) Pilot projects for new potable reuse and contaminant removal technology.

(d) Multibenefit recycled water projects that improve water quality.

(e) Multibenefit recycled water projects that protect and restore wetland and other wildlife habitat.

86062. The sum of four hundred million dollars (\$400,000,000) is appropriated from the fund to the state board to award grants on a competitive basis for desalination of brackish groundwater, and other brackish water desalination projects which do not directly affect riparian habitat, estuaries, coastal bays, coastal lagoons, or ocean waters of California as defined by the State Board. Grants pursuant to this section must comply with the requirements of this section, and may be made for all of the following:

(a) Treatment, storage, conveyance, and distribution facilities. Projects may remove contaminants in addition to salts, but shall be primarily constructed and operated to remove salt.

(b) Distribution infrastructure to serve residential, commercial, agricultural, fish and wildlife habitat, and industrial end-user retrofit projects to allow use of desalted water.

(c) Multibenefit salt removal projects that improve water quality.

(d) Technical assistance and grant writing assistance related to specific projects for disadvantaged communities and economically distressed areas.

(e) Multibenefit salt removal projects that provide water supply for wetland and other wildlife habitat.

86064. No grant made pursuant to this chapter shall exceed fifty percent (50%) of the cost of the project, but this requirement may be eliminated or reduced for that portion of projects that primarily serve disadvantaged communities and economically distressed areas.

86066. Projects funded pursuant to this chapter shall be selected on a competitive basis with priority given to the following criteria:

- (a) Water supply reliability improvement.
- (b) Water quality and ecosystem benefits related to decreased reliance on diversions from the Delta or from local rivers and streams, and benefits related to attainment of beneficial uses and water quality objectives in local receiving waters.
- (c) Public health benefits from improved drinking water quality or supply.
- (d) Cost-effectiveness, based on the amount of water produced per dollar invested, and other cost-effectiveness criteria adopted by the state board.
- (e) Energy efficiency and greenhouse gas emission impacts.
- (f) Water supply or water quality improvements benefitting disadvantaged communities.
- (g) Protection and restoration of fish and wildlife habitat, as well as provision of a reliable water supply for fish and wildlife.

Chapter 7. Water Conservation

86070. The sum of three hundred million dollars (\$300,000,000) is appropriated from the fund to the department for the following purposes:

- (a) (1) A statewide turf removal rebate program, providing financial incentives to public and private property owners to convert their irrigated or watered landscaping to drought tolerant plantings, including appropriate low water using plants. The department shall set a maximum amount each applicant can receive, and shall allow greater incentives to low-income homeowners who could not otherwise afford to participate in the landscape water conversion program. No less than seventy five percent (75%) of the funds shall be spent on programs benefitting residential property owners. The department shall make awards to nonresidential applicants on the basis of cost effectiveness with respect to water supply.
- (2) The most cost effective projects and those projects that provide the greatest environmental benefits based on the state investment shall receive highest priority for funding. Environmental benefits shall include, but not be limited to, planting appropriate drought resistant native and other plants, reduction in consumptive water use, and increased availability of water for environmental benefits.
- (3) The Department shall not reject or reduce eligibility to residents residing in service areas which have previously offered turf removal rebate programs as long as the resident was not a participant in the program.
- (4) The department shall cooperate with eligible agencies and the California Public Utilities Commission to develop an on-bill repayment mechanism to pay for the consumer's share of the landscape conversion project.

(b) (1) For competitive grants on a matching basis to eligible agencies to reduce leaks in their water distribution systems, eliminate leaks in the water systems of their customers if the agency determines that customer leak detection and elimination is a cost effective way to improve the agency's water supply and provides a public benefit, and install instrumentation to detect leaks at residential, institutional and commercial properties. The department shall make awards on the basis of cost effectiveness with respect to water supply. Agencies receiving grants pursuant to this subdivision shall give highest priority to leak detection and elimination programs in disadvantaged communities and economically distressed communities.

(2) No grant award pursuant to this subdivision shall exceed fifty percent (50%) of the cost of the project except for a grant award that primarily benefits residential property owners in a disadvantaged community or an economically distressed community.

Chapter 8. Watershed improvement for Water Supply and Water Quality enhancement

86080. The sum of one billion eight hundred and sixty million dollars (\$1,860,000,000) is appropriated from the fund to protect, restore and improve the health of watershed lands, including forest lands (including redwoods and sequoias), meadows, wetlands, chaparral, riparian habitat and other watershed lands, including lands owned by the United States, in order to protect and improve water supply and water quality, reduce fire danger consistent with the best available science, mitigate the effects of wildfires on water quality and supply, increase flood protection, or to protect or restore riparian or aquatic resources. Funds shall be allocated as follows:

(a) one hundred fifty million dollars (\$150,000,000) to the fund established by Section 33355 of the Public Resources Code for the protection and restoration of Sierra Nevada watersheds pursuant to Division 23.3 (commencing with Section 33300) of the Public Resources Code.

(b) sixty million dollars (\$60,000,000) to the fund established by Section 66906.9 of the Government Code for the protection and restoration of watersheds of the Lake Tahoe Basin, pursuant to Title 7.42 commencing with Section 66905 of the Government Code. Funds shall be spent for the implementation and to further the goals and purposes of the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program, pursuant to Article 6 of Chapter 1.692 of Division 5 (commencing with Section 5096.351) of the Public Resources Code.

(c) one hundred million dollars (\$100,000,000) to the account established pursuant to Section 31164(a) of the Public Resources Code for the protection and restoration of watersheds of the San Francisco Bay Area, pursuant to Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (commencing with Section 31160).

(d) one hundred forty five million dollars (\$145,000,000) for the protection and restoration of watersheds of Los Angeles, Ventura and Orange Counties as follows:

(1) fifty million dollars (\$50,000,000) to the fund established pursuant to Section 32616(b) of the Public Resources Code for the watersheds of the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers pursuant to Division 22.8 (commencing with Section 32600) of the Public Resources Code.

(2) fifty million dollars (\$50,000,000) to the fund established pursuant to Section 33215 of

the Public Resources Code for watersheds of the Santa Monica Mountains, including those of Santa Monica Bay, Upper Los Angeles River and upper Santa Clara River pursuant to Division 23 (commencing with Section 33000) of the Public Resources Code, and the watersheds defined in subdivision (c) of Section 79570.

(3) twenty million dollars (\$20,000,000) to the account established pursuant to Section 31179(a) of the Public Resources Code for the protection and restoration of watersheds of the Santa Ana River pursuant to Chapter 4.6 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (commencing with Section 31170).

(4) twenty five million dollars (\$25,000,000) to the fund established pursuant to Section 32574(b) of the Public Resources Code for the protection and restoration of the Baldwin Hills and Ballona Creek watersheds pursuant to Division 22.7 (commencing with Section 32550) of the Public Resources Code.

(e) forty million dollars (\$40,000,000) to the fund established pursuant to Section 32657 of the Public Resources Code for the protection and restoration of watersheds in San Diego County pursuant to Division of 22.9 (commencing with Section 32630) of the Public Resources Code.

(f) one hundred thirty five million dollars (\$135,000,000) to the trust fund established pursuant to Section 31012(a) of the Public Resources Code for the protection and restoration of coastal watersheds pursuant to Division 21 (commencing with Section 31000) of the Public Resources Code. First priority for projects will be areas not covered by subdivisions (c) or (d).

(g) ninety million dollars (\$90,000,000) for the protection and restoration of the watersheds of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers as follows:

(1) forty million dollars (\$40,000,000) to the fund established pursuant to Section 32360(b)(1) of the Public Resources Code for Delta restoration pursuant to Division 22.3 (commencing with Section 32300) of the Public Resources Code.

(2) twenty million dollars (\$20,000,000) to the fund established pursuant to Section 32536 of the Public Resources Code for the protection and restoration of the upper San Joaquin River Watershed pursuant to Division 22.5 (commencing with Section 32500) of the Public Resources Code.

(3) thirty million dollars (\$30,000,000) to the Wildlife Conservation Board for grants for watershed and riparian habitat protection and restoration projects that are consistent with Chapter 10 (commencing with Section 5840) of Division 5 of the Public Resources Code.

(h) three hundred and forty million dollars (\$340,000,000) to the Secretary for Resources for projects pursuant the California River Parkways Act of 2004 (Chapter 3.8 (commencing with Section 5750) of Division 5 of the Public Resources Code). The Secretary shall allocate at least seventy-five percent (75%) of these funds for projects that benefit disadvantaged communities.

(i) one hundred million dollars (\$100,000,000) for projects consistent with subdivision (a) of Section 79735, with half the funds appropriated pursuant to Division 23 and half pursuant to Division 22.8 of the Public Resources Code.

(j) two hundred forty million dollars (\$240,000,000) to the California Wildlife Conservation Board for the following

(1) for the protection and restoration of the watersheds of the Sacramento, Smith, Eel, and Klamath Rivers and other rivers of Marin, Sonoma, Mendocino, Humboldt and Del Norte Counties, pursuant to Chapter 4 of Division 2 (commencing with section 1300) of the Fish and Game Code.

(2) for protection and restoration of oak woodlands and rangelands pursuant to Division 10.4 (commencing with Section 10330) of the Public Resources Code and Article 3.5 (commencing with Section 1360) of Chapter 4 of Division 2 of the Fish and Game Code.

(3) for acquisition and restoration of riparian habitat, migratory bird habitat, anadromous fisheries, wetland habitat and other watershed lands pursuant to Chapter 4 of Division 2 (commencing with Section 1300) of the Fish and Game Code.

(4) Grants made pursuant to paragraphs (2) and (3) may include funding to help fulfill state commitments to implement Natural Community Conservation Plans adopted pursuant to Chapter 10 of Division 3 (commencing with Section 2800) of the Fish and Game Code, and to large scale regional Habitat Conservation Plans adopted pursuant to 16 USC Chapter 35.

(k) twenty five million dollars (\$25,000,000) to the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy for the protection and restoration of the Coachella valley watershed pursuant to Division 23.5 (commencing with Section 33500) of the Public Resources Code.

(l) one hundred fifty million dollars (\$150,000,000) to the Department of Parks and Recreation for protection and restoration of watershed lands within units of the State Parks System, with high priority to redwood and other forest land important to protecting river and stream flows and quality. In addition to other purposes authorized pursuant to this section, the Department of Parks and Recreation may allocate funds to improve and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of State Park water supply and wastewater treatment systems.

(m) sixty million dollars (\$60,000,000) to the Department of Conservation for watershed restoration and conservation projects on agricultural lands, rangelands, and forested lands.

(i) At least thirty percent (30%) of the funds shall be used for grants pursuant to Section 9084 of the Public Resources Code.

(ii) At least sixty five percent (65%) of the funds shall be used for the purposes of Division 10.2 (commencing with Section 10200) of the Public Resources Code.

(o) one hundred million dollars (\$100,000,000) to the California Ocean Protection Council for projects that: (1) reduce the amount of pollutants that flow to beaches, bays, coastal estuaries, and near-shore ecosystems; and (2) projects that protect coastal and near-shore ocean resources from the impacts of

rising sea levels, storm surges, ocean acidification and related hazards, including, but not limited to, increasing the resiliency of near-shore ocean habitats. Projects may include, but are not limited to, projects that protect or restore beaches, coastal estuaries and watersheds, bays, and near-shore ecosystems including marine protected areas.

(p) fifty million dollars (\$50,000,000) to the California Natural Resources Agency for projects relating to water, including ecosystem restoration projects, that fulfill the obligations of the State of California in complying with the terms of Chapters 611, 612, 613, and 614 of the Statutes of 2003, which were enacted to facilitate the execution and implementation of the Quantification Settlement Agreement, including restoration of the Salton Sea.

(q) five million dollars (\$5,000,000) to the Delta Science Program as described in Section 85280.

(r) fifty million dollars (\$50,000,000) to the department for Urban Streams Restoration Program competitive grants pursuant to Section 7048. The department shall allocate at least seventy-five (75%) of these funds for projects that benefit disadvantaged communities.

(s) twenty million dollars (\$20,000,000) to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection for grants for urban forestry projects that manage, capture or conserve stormwater, recharge local groundwater supplies or improve water supplies or water quality through infiltration, sediment management and erosion control pursuant to the California Urban Forestry Act, Chapter 2 (commencing with Section 4799.06) of Part 2.5 of Division 1 of the Public Resources Code.

86083. Consistent with the other requirements of this chapter, funds spent pursuant to this chapter may be used for grant programs. With the exception of funds allocated to grant programs, funds may also be used directly by the state agency receiving the funds to implement watershed improvement projects consistent with this chapter. In making grants pursuant to this chapter, agencies shall give high priority to applications which include cost sharing, and to grants that benefit disadvantaged and economically distressed areas.

86084. (a) For a project to be eligible for funding pursuant to this chapter, the project shall have water supply or water quality benefits, or ecosystem benefits relating to rivers, streams, forests, meadows, wetlands or other water related resources for approximately 20 years, or such time as is commensurate with the best practices for the type of project as maintained by the agency, applicant or some other entity.

(b) (1) Funds appropriated pursuant to this Chapter may be used for protection and restoration of forests, meadows, wetlands, riparian habitat, coastal resources, and near-shore ocean habitat; to acquire land and easements to protect these resources and avoid development that may reduce watershed health, and to take other measures that protect or improve the quality or quantity of water supplies downstream from projects funded in whole or in part by this Chapter. Forest restoration projects, including but not limited to hazardous fuel reduction, post-fire watershed rehabilitation, and forest management and tree planting using appropriate native plants shall be based on the best available science regarding forest restoration and must be undertaken to protect and restore ecological values and to promote forest conditions that are more resilient to wildfire, climate change, and other disturbances.

(2) Fuel hazard reduction activities on US Forest Service lands in the Sierra Nevada and similar forest types shall be generally consistent with United States Forest Service General Technical Report 220 as it may be updated.

86085. Any entity receiving funds pursuant to this chapter which expends funds on private lands shall secure an agreement or interest in the private lands to assure the purpose of the expenditure is maintained for such time as is commensurate with the best practices for the type of project.

86086. (a) (1) A local public agency or nonprofit organization that receives funding pursuant to this chapter to acquire an interest in land may use up to twenty percent (20%) of those funds to establish a trust fund that is exclusively used to help pay for the maintenance and monitoring of that interest in land.

(2) A local public agency or nonprofit organization that acquires an interest in land with money from this chapter and transfers the interest in land to another public agency or nonprofit organization shall also transfer the ownership of the trust fund that was established to maintain that interest in land.

(3) This section does not apply to state agencies.

(b) If the local public agency or nonprofit organization does not establish a trust fund pursuant to subdivision (a), the agency or organization shall certify to the state agency making the grant that it can maintain the land to be acquired from funds otherwise available to the agency or organization.

(c) The interest from the trust fund shall be used only to monitor the implementation of a project, and maintain a project and its water supply and water quality benefits implemented pursuant to this chapter.

(d) If the interest in land is condemned or if the local public agency or nonprofit organization determines that the interest in land is unable to fulfill the purposes for which money from this chapter was expended, the trust fund and any unexpended interest are appropriated to the agency that provided the money. The funds returned to the agency may be utilized only for projects pursuant to this chapter.

86087. Funds allocated pursuant to this Chapter may be granted to an eligible applicant for single or multiple small-scale projects that are consistent with Chapter 6.5 of Division 2 of the Fish and Game Code, regardless of whether that Chapter is still in effect.

86088. By April 30, 2017, the Natural Resources Agency shall recommend provisions for grant approval guidelines to each state agency that receives an appropriation pursuant to this chapter in order to ensure appropriate consistency of the guidelines. Each agency shall consider the recommendations of the Natural Resources Agency as they adopt their own guidelines.

86089. Agencies receiving funds pursuant to this chapter shall give high priority to projects which benefit the native fishes of California.

Chapter 9. Land and Water Management for Water Supply Improvement.

86090. The sum of one hundred million dollars (\$100,000,000) is appropriated from the fund to the California Wildlife Conservation Board for the purpose of awarding competitive grants to public agencies and non-profit organizations to improve the quality of public and private rangelands, wildlands, meadows, wetlands, riparian areas and aquatic areas for the purpose of increasing groundwater recharge and water supply from those lands, and for improving water quality consistent with protecting and restoring ecological values. Local, state and federal agencies and nonprofit organizations which own rangelands, wildlands, meadows, riparian areas and aquatic areas, or which coordinate public and private efforts to carry out the purposes of this chapter are eligible to receive funding pursuant to this chapter.

86091. Funds allocated pursuant to this chapter may be granted to an eligible applicant for single or multiple small-scale projects that are consistent with Chapter 6.5 of Division 2 of the Fish and Game Code, regardless of whether that chapter is still in effect.

86092. Grants pursuant to this chapter may be made for the purpose of invasive plant control and eradication, restoration of riparian habitat, meadows and wetlands, and other projects that improve the flow of water from the lands, reduce the use of water by invasive plant species, or improve water quality. Projects shall restore, improve or protect fish and wildlife habitat to be eligible for funding.

86094. In making grants pursuant to this chapter, the California Wildlife Conservation Board shall give highest priority to projects which are most cost effective in producing improved water supply or water quality, and which provide the greatest fish and wildlife benefits. The California Wildlife Conservation Board shall give high priority to projects which include matching funds, and to projects which benefit disadvantaged and economically distressed communities.

86098. For a project to be eligible for funding pursuant to this chapter, the project shall have water supply or water quality benefits or both for approximately 20 years or such time as is commensurate with the best practices for the type of project. A project such as the removal of invasive plants to increase water supply shall only be funded if the applicant guarantees that the land from which plants will be removed will be maintained for at least 20 years or such time as is commensurate with the best practices for the type of project.

86099. (a) (1) A local public agency or nonprofit organization that receives funding under this chapter may use up to twenty percent (20%) of those funds to establish a trust fund that is exclusively used to help pay for the maintenance of the funded project.

(2) A local public agency or nonprofit organization that undertakes a project with money from this division and can no longer maintain the project shall transfer the ownership of the trust fund to another public agency or nonprofit organization that is willing and able to maintain that project.

(3) This section does not apply to state agencies.

(b) If the local public agency or nonprofit organization does not establish a trust fund pursuant to subdivision (a), the agency or organization shall certify to the state agency making the grant that it can maintain the land in an appropriate condition for 20 years, or such time as is commensurate with the best practices for the type of project after the project is undertaken using funds otherwise available to the agency or organization.

(c) The interest from the trust fund established from the funds available pursuant to this section shall be used only to maintain a project and its water supply and water quality benefits implemented pursuant to this chapter.

(d) If the interest in land is condemned or if the local public agency or nonprofit organization determines that the interest in land is unable to fulfill the purposes for which money from this chapter was expended, the trust fund and any unexpended interest are appropriated to the agency that provided the money. The funds returned to the agency may be utilized only for projects pursuant to this chapter.

86099.1 In implementing this chapter, the Wildlife Conservation Board may provide incentives to landowners for conservation actions on private lands or use of voluntary habitat credit exchange mechanisms.

Chapter 10. Flood Management for Improved Water Supply

86100. (a) The sum of one hundred million dollars (\$100,000,000) is appropriated from the fund to the Central Valley Flood Protection Board for:

(1) Enlargement and environmental enhancement of existing floodways and bypasses within the jurisdiction of the Central Valley Flood Protection Board, and

(2) Improvement of flood control facilities and environmental enhancement within the jurisdiction of the Central Valley Flood Protection Board.

(b) To be eligible for funding under this section, a project shall provide (1) reduced flood risk, reduced liability or reduced maintenance responsibility for state agencies or local flood control districts or both; and (2) net improvement of habitat for native fish and wildlife. The Central Valley Flood Protection Board shall provide additional priority for projects that provide multiple benefits that may include increased groundwater storage, improved water supply resilience, expanded public access along rivers, enhanced commercial and recreational fisheries, enhanced recreational opportunities, or enhanced riparian and floodplain habitat.

(c) The Central Valley Flood Protection Board shall give preference to those projects that primarily benefit disadvantaged communities or economically distressed areas and include benefits for ecosystem restoration, and shall give preference to projects that include matching funds, including matching funds from other state agencies.

(d) The Central Valley Flood Protection Board may make grants to public agencies and non-profit organizations to implement this section.

(e) The Central Valley Flood Protection Board may use up to \$1 million (\$1,000,000) of these funds to develop a programmatic permit for projects that meet the criteria described in paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section.

86101. (a) The sum of one hundred million dollars (\$100,000,000) is appropriated from the fund to the department for grants to local agencies on a fifty percent (50%) matching basis to repair or reoperate

reservoirs whose principal purpose is flood control. Grantees must demonstrate that the proposed repair or reoperation will allow water stored in those reservoirs which would otherwise have to be discharged downstream to be put to beneficial use. No funds shall be used to raise the height of any dam.

(b) To be eligible for funding under this section, a project must provide substantial increases in recreational opportunities, such as trails along river channels, and significant net improvements to fish and wildlife habitat in and adjacent to the river channel downstream of the reservoir and, to the extent compatible with safe reservoir operation, within the reservoir. At least ten percent (10%) of project costs shall be allocated to these recreational and habitat purposes. The funds to carry out these purposes shall be allocated by the department directly to a state conservancy if there is a conservancy with jurisdiction over the area of the project. If there is no conservancy, the Natural Resources Agency River Parkways program shall contract with an eligible entity to carry out these purposes. The agency operating the reservoir being repaired or reoperated shall approve the recreational and habitat elements of the project and shall not charge any fees for review, plan check, permits, inspections or any other related costs associated with the project, and shall provide permanent operation and maintenance of the entire project, including the habitat and recreational elements. Projects may include grants to eligible agencies as defined in Section 86166 to implement this paragraph.

(c) Grants made pursuant to this section may be for the purpose of seismic retrofit.

(d) No grants made pursuant to this chapter shall be for reservoir maintenance or sediment removal from the reservoir or upstream of the reservoir, except as necessary to complete projects authorized under paragraphs (a), (b), and (c).

(e) Applicants must agree to permanently operate and maintain projects paid for by funds provided by this section.

(f) First priority shall be given to projects which benefit disadvantaged communities.

(g) Projects to assist in the reoperation of flood control reservoirs shall increase water supply for beneficial uses through the purchase and installation of water measuring equipment, acquisition of information systems, technologies and data to improve reservoir management

86105. The sum of two hundred million dollars (\$200,000,000) is appropriated from the fund to the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority to provide matching grants for flood management, wetlands restoration, and other projects consistent with Article 2 (commencing with Section 66704.5) of Chapter 5 of Title 7.25 of the Government Code. For purposes of this section, matching funds may include funds provided by local governments, regional governments, the federal government, private parties, or other funds raised by the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority. No grant shall exceed fifty percent (50%) of the cost of the project.

86106. (a) (1) A local public agency or nonprofit organization that receives funding under this chapter to acquire an interest in land may use up to twenty percent (20%) of those funds to establish a trust fund that is exclusively used to help pay for the maintenance and monitoring of that interest in land.

(2) A local public agency or nonprofit organization that acquires an interest in land with money from this chapter and transfers the interest in land to another public agency or nonprofit organization shall also transfer the ownership of the trust fund that was established to maintain that interest in land.

(3) This section does not apply to state agencies.

(b) If the local public agency or nonprofit organization does not establish a trust fund pursuant to subdivision (a), the agency or organization shall certify to the state agency making the grant that it can maintain the land to be acquired from funds otherwise available to the agency or organization.

(c) If the interest in land is condemned or if the local public agency or nonprofit organization determines that the interest in land is unable to fulfill the purposes for which money from this chapter was expended, the trust fund and any unexpended interest are appropriated to the agency that provided the money. The funds returned to the agency may be utilized only for projects pursuant to this chapter.

Chapter 11 Groundwater Sustainability and Storage

86110. The sum of two hundred thirty million dollars (\$230,000,000) is appropriated to the department for projects and programs that support sustainable groundwater management consistent with Chapter 2.74 of Division 6 (commencing with Section 10720). The funds shall be used for competitive grants that advance sustainable groundwater management through implementation of groundwater sustainability plans and projects that protect, enhance, or improve groundwater supplies.

86111. (a) Of the funds authorized by section 86110, one hundred eighty million dollars (\$180,000,000) shall be available for

(1) Groundwater recharge and storage projects including but not limited to groundwater recharge and storage projects; planning of facilities such as feasibility studies and environmental compliance; distribution systems, and monitoring facilities. No grant made pursuant to this section shall exceed \$20 million dollars (\$20,000,000).

(2) Projects that implement groundwater sustainability plans pursuant to Part 2.74. Projects eligible for funding include but are not limited to feasibility studies, environmental compliance, engineering work used to develop groundwater use and sustainable yield for specific projects, and innovative decision support tools.

(b) Of the funds authorized by section 86110, fifty million dollars (\$50,000,000) shall be available for matching grants to groundwater sustainability agencies to develop groundwater sustainability plans pursuant to subdivision (k) of Section 10721. No grant shall exceed one million dollars (\$1,000,000), and no groundwater sustainability agency shall receive more than one grant.

86112 (a) The department shall give priority for funding pursuant to this chapter to the following in equal priority:

(1) Groundwater basins designated by the department as critically overdrafted basins;

(2) Groundwater basins with documented water quality problems, land subsidence, impacts on surface streams or groundwater dependent ecosystems, or other undesirable results as defined by subdivision (w) of section 10721.

(b) The department shall consider the following criteria when awarding grants:

(1) The potential of the project to prevent or correct undesirable results due to groundwater use.

(2) The potential of the project to maximize groundwater storage, reliability, recharge or conjunctive use.

(3) The potential of the project to support sustainable groundwater management.

(c) Local agencies, including groundwater sustainability agencies shall be eligible for funds.

(d) For purposes of awarding funding under this chapter, a local cost share of not less than fifty percent (50%) of the total costs of the project shall be required. The cost-sharing requirement may be waived or reduced for projects that directly benefit a disadvantaged community or economically distressed areas, or for projects specifically designed to restore ecosystems dependent on groundwater.

(e) No grant may be made unless the California Department of Fish and Wildlife certifies that harm done to fish or wildlife as a result of the project will be mitigated to ensure any potential impacts are less than significant.

(f) Eligible projects may include such infrastructure improvements as improved canal and infiltration capacity.

Chapter 12. Water for wildlife

86120. (a) The sum of one hundred million dollars (\$100,000,000) is appropriated from the fund to the California Wildlife Conservation Board (hereinafter in this Chapter referred to as “the Board”) to acquire water from willing sellers to improve conditions for fish and wildlife in streams, rivers, wildlife refuges, wetland habitat areas and estuaries. The Board may arrange for acquisition, long-term lease agreements, or transfer of water rights if it determines such actions are beneficial to wildlife conservation. The Board may sell, transfer, or store water purchased pursuant to this section, including water acquired as provided in paragraphs (1) and (2) of subdivision (c) of this section if the Board finds that the sale, transfer or storage will not cause harm to fish and wildlife. In years when the Board does not require the water for fish and wildlife purposes, the Board may sell the water and use the proceeds to achieve conservation purposes authorized by this section. Ecosystem benefits shall be consistent with and complement those required by applicable environmental mitigation measures or regulatory compliance obligations in effect at the time the funds from this division are made available for the project.

Each year, the Board shall consult with the regulatory, wildlife and water management agencies entrusted with current decision-making on water needs for the environment (including but not limited to the State Water Resources Control Board, Department of Fish and Wildlife, the department, U.S. Fish

and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the United States Bureau of Reclamation) to assure the water acquired pursuant to this section is allocated to meet the priority flow needs of the Delta and its tributaries. The California Wildlife Conservation Board shall also consult with nonprofit organizations. The use of this water shall not compromise or interfere with the State Board update or implementation of its Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan; however, the Board may allocate assets secured in this program to help satisfy environmental flow requirements under that Plan.

(b) Notwithstanding Section 13340 of the Government Code, the proceeds of any water sales pursuant to this section by the Board are appropriated directly to the Board without regard to fiscal year, and shall be used only for the purpose of this section, and may not be appropriated by the Legislature.

(c) (1) If a permanent dedication of water is completed using funds expended pursuant to this chapter it shall be done in accordance with Section 1707 if the state board certifies that the water is in addition to water that is required for regulatory requirements as provided in subdivision (c) of Section 1707. Funds expended pursuant to this division may be used for the purpose of initiating the dedication as a short term or temporary urgency change, that is approved in accordance with Section 1707 and either Chapter 6.6 (commencing with Section 1435) of, or Chapter 10.5 (commencing with Section 1725) of, Part 2 of Division 2, during the period required to prepare any environmental documentation and for approval of permanent dedication.

(2) Transfers using funds expended pursuant to this chapter that require State Board review, shall be made in accordance with Sections 1735, 1736, and 1737, if applicable, and if the State Board, after providing notice and opportunity for a hearing, approves such a petition. Funds expended pursuant to this chapter shall prioritize long-term and permanent transfers. Long-term transfers shall be for a period of not less than 10 years. Any water transfers for the benefit of subdivision (d) of Section 3406 of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (Title 34 of Public Law 102-575), shall be for a period of not less than 10 years, including renewable transfer agreements totaling not less than 10 years in the initial period and first renewal period.

(3) The acquisition of water using funds expended pursuant to this chapter shall only be used for projects that will provide fisheries, wildlife or ecosystem benefits.

86121. The sum of fifty million dollars (\$50,000,000) is appropriated from the fund to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for the purpose of improving water supply and water quality conditions for fish and wildlife on private lands. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife may provide incentives to landowners for conservation actions on private lands or use of voluntary habitat credit exchange mechanisms. Such incentives shall be designed to be appropriately flexible and responsive to the highly variable amounts of water required by fish and wildlife.

86122 The sum of one hundred million dollars (\$100,000,000) is appropriated from the fund to the California Wildlife Conservation Board for coastal and central valley salmon and steelhead fisheries restoration projects. The California Wildlife Conservation Board shall give priority to projects that contribute to the recovery of listed salmon and steelhead species, to enhancing commercial and recreational salmon fisheries and to achieving the goals of Chapter 8 of Part 1 of Division 6 (commencing with Section 6900) of the Fish and Game Code.

861223. The sum of one hundred million dollars (\$100,000,000) is appropriated from the fund to the California Wildlife Conservation Board for projects to protect migratory birds through habitat acquisition, easements, restoration, or other projects, and to provide water for wildlife refuges and wildlife habitat areas to fulfill the purposes identified in the Central Valley Joint Venture Implementation Plan, as it may be amended, including:

(a) Projects to implement this section which may include conservation actions on private lands.

(b) Protection and restoration of riparian and wetland habitat in the Sacramento Valley, including the Butte, Colusa, Sutter, and Yolo Basins, and the Feather River watershed.

(c) Other eligible projects include, but are not limited to, the California Waterfowl Habitat Account for the purposes of implementing the California Waterfowl Habitat Program pursuant to Article 7 (commencing with Section 3460) of Chapter 2 of Part 1 of Division 4 of the Fish and Game Code, the California Landowner Incentive Program of the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Permanent Wetland Easement Program of the California Wildlife Conservation Board, the establishment or enhancement of waterfowl nesting and other wildlife habitat cover on fallowed lands including projects authorized pursuant to Section 1018, and the Inland Wetlands Conservation Program described in Division 2, Chapter 4.3 of the Fish and Game Code.

Chapter 13 Funding for Water Measurement

86130. The sum of twenty five million dollars (\$25,000,000) is appropriated from the fund to the state board for: (1) purchase and installation of water measuring equipment to better measure streamflow and water diversions, (2) acquisition of information systems, technologies, and data that improve the board's ability to manage water resources including, but not limited to, reducing adverse impact of droughts; and (3) grants to local agencies and nonprofit organizations for the purposes of this section. In making grants to local agencies, preference shall be given to projects which include cost sharing, and to projects which facilitate improved groundwater management in priority basins as designated by the department pursuant to Section 10720.7.

CHAPTER 14. Conservation Corps

86140 The sum of thirty million dollars (\$30,000,000) shall be available to the California Conservation Corps for projects to protect, restore, and improve the health of watershed lands, including forest lands, meadows, wetlands, chaparral, riparian habitat and other watershed lands. Projects may include, but are not limited to, regional and community fuel hazard reduction projects on public lands, invasive species removal, and stream, river, and riparian restoration projects. The California Conservation Corps shall allocate at least fifty percent (50%) of the funds pursuant to this section for grants to certified local conservation corps or other programs certified by the California Conservation Corps for the purposes of this section. Projects shall improve water quality, water supply reliability, or riparian or watershed health.

CHAPTER 15. Safe Drinking Water

86150. The sum of two hundred million dollars (\$200,000,000) is appropriated from the fund to the state board for expenditures, grants, and loans for projects that improve water quality for, or help

provide clean, safe, affordable, and reliable drinking water to disadvantaged communities pursuant to Sections 79721, 79722, and 79724. Funds may be expended as follows:

(a) (1) for projects serving disadvantaged communities pursuant to Sections 79721, 79722, and 79724, as well as projects to provide disadvantaged communities access to adequate, clean, safe, affordable and reliable water in schools, day care centers, health clinics, parks, and in disadvantaged households and communities not currently served by public water systems, or which are served by public water systems which fail to provide water that is found safe to drink by the state board.

(2) The state board may expend funds for grants and direct expenditures to fund emergency and urgent actions and projects to ensure that safe drinking water supplies are available to all Californians. Grants and expenditures made pursuant to this paragraph shall not exceed \$1,000,000 per project. Eligible projects include, but are not limited to:

(A) Improvements in existing water systems necessary to prevent contamination or provide other sources of safe drinking water including replacement wells.

(B) Establishing connections to an adjacent water system.

(C) Design, purchase, installation and initial operation costs for water treatment equipment and systems.

(3) If the governor declares a state of emergency because of threats to public health and safety with respect to a safe drinking water supply problem, direct expenditures for the purposes of this section shall be exempt from contracting and procurement requirements to the extent necessary to take immediate action to protect public health and safety.

(b) For wastewater treatment projects pursuant to Section 79723, as well as wastewater improvement projects serving disadvantaged households with failing septic systems which threaten the quality of groundwater or surface supplies used for urban, agricultural, or fisheries purposes.

(c) For technical assistance to disadvantaged communities for specific projects. The state board shall operate a multidisciplinary technical assistance program for disadvantaged communities.

CHAPTER 16. General Provisions

86151. In projects involving voluntary habitat restoration, each agency administering provisions of this Division shall encourage interagency coordination and the use of efficient project approval and permitting mechanisms, including but not limited to the provisions of Chapter 6.5 of Division 2 of the Fish and Game Code (regardless of whether that chapter is still in effect) and programmatic permits for voluntary habitat restoration, so as to avoid project delays and maximize the amount of money spent on project implementation.

86151.1 Projects designed to primarily protect migratory birds through acquisition, easements, restoration or other projects shall be consistent with the plans and recommendations established by the federal Migratory Bird Joint Venture partnerships that encompass parts of California.

86151.2 Any agency providing funds to disadvantaged or economically distressed areas may provide funding to assist these communities in applying for that funding, including technical and grant writing assistance for specific projects. These funds may be provided to nonprofit organizations assisting these communities.

86151.3. Any agency receiving funds pursuant to this division may contract for the services of resource conservation districts pursuant to Section 9003 of the Public Resources Code.

86151.4. Agencies may count in kind contributions up to twenty five percent (25%) of the total project cost as part of cost sharing. Agencies may count the value of the donated land in a bargain sale as part of cost sharing.

86151.5. Agencies considering proposals for acquisition of lands shall also consider the ability of the proposed final owner of the land to maintain it in a condition that will protect the values for which it is to be acquired, and to prevent any problems that might occur on neighboring lands if the land is not properly managed.

86151.6 Trust funds established pursuant to Sections 86086, 86099, and 86106 shall be managed pursuant to the requirements of the Uniform Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act (Part 7 commencing with Section 18501) of Division 9 of the Probate Code).

86152. Agencies shall, to the extent practicable, quantify the amount of water generated for human and environmental use resulting from proposed expenditures they make pursuant to this division. Agencies shall, to the extent practicable, quantify the improvement in the quality of water generated for human and environmental use resulting from proposed expenditures they make pursuant to this division.

86153. To the extent consistent with the other provisions of this division, statewide agencies making grants pursuant to this Division shall seek to allocate funds equitably to eligible projects throughout the state, including northern and southern California, coastal and inland regions, and Sierra and Cascade foothill and mountain regions.

86154. To the extent consistent with the other requirements of this division, agencies making grants pursuant to chapters 5, 6, 11 and 15 of this division shall seek to make those grants consistent with the provisions of the applicable Integrated Regional Water Management Plan.

86155. Notwithstanding any other provision of this division, no local public agency with a population of less than 100,000 and an average household income of less than one hundred fifty percent (150%) of the state average household income may be required to provide matching funds of more than thirty-five percent (35%) for a grant for a project entirely within their jurisdiction. State agencies making grants to these local public agencies may provide funding after discrete parts of the project are completed, if in the determination of the state agency requiring the local public agency to wait for payment until the project is completed would make the project infeasible.

86156. Any repayment of loans made pursuant to this division, including interest payments, and interest earnings shall be deposited in the fund and shall be available for the purposes of the chapter which authorized the loan.

86157. Funds provided pursuant to this division, and any appropriation or transfer of those funds, shall not be deemed to be a transfer of funds for the purposes of Chapter 9 (commencing with Section 2780) of Division 3 of the Fish and Game Code.

86158. (a) If a state agency is carrying out a project pursuant to this division, up to ten percent (10%) of funds allocated for each program funded by this division may be expended for planning, monitoring and reporting necessary for the successful design, selection, and implementation of the projects authorized under that program. An eligible entity receiving a grant pursuant to this division may also receive sufficient funds for planning, monitoring and reporting necessary for the successful design, selection, and implementation of the projects authorized under that program. This section shall not otherwise restrict funds ordinarily used by an agency for “preliminary plans,” “working drawings,” and “construction” as defined in the annual Budget Act for a capital outlay project or grant project.

(b) Permit and plan check fees and reasonable administrative fees and costs related to managing construction shall be deemed part of construction costs. Project costs allocated for project planning and design, and administrative costs (where such administrative costs directly relate to the projects) shall be identified as separate line items in the project budget.

86159. Notwithstanding Section 16727 of the Government Code, funding provided pursuant to Chapters 5, 8, 9 and 10 may be used for grants and loans to nonprofit organizations to repay financing described in Section 22064 of the Financial Code related to projects that are consistent with the purposes of those chapters.

86160. Not more than a total of five percent (5%) of the funds allocated to any state agency under this division may be used to pay for its costs of administering programs and projects specified in this division or costs for the same purposes that are specified in other measures.

86161. (a) Water quality monitoring data shall be collected and reported to the state board in a manner that is compatible and consistent with surface water monitoring data systems or groundwater monitoring data systems administered by the state board. Watershed monitoring data shall be collected and reported to the Department of Conservation in a manner that is compatible and consistent with the statewide watershed program administered by the Department of Conservation.

(b) State agencies making grants or loans pursuant to this division may authorize additional specific expenditures specifically for compliance with local, state and federal permitting and other requirements.

(c) Up to one percent (1%) of funds allocated for each program funded by this division may be expended for research into methods to improve water supply and water quality relevant to that program.

86162. (a) Prior to disbursing grants or loans pursuant to this division, each state agency that receives an appropriation from the funding made available by this division to administer a grant or loan program under this division shall develop and adopt project solicitation and evaluation guidelines. The guidelines shall include monitoring and reporting requirements and may include a limitation on the dollar amount of each grants or loans to be awarded. If the state agency has previously developed and adopted project solicitation and evaluation guidelines that comply with the requirements of this division, it may use those guidelines.

(b) Prior to disbursing grants or loans, the state agency shall conduct three public meetings to consider public comments prior to finalizing the guidelines. The state agency shall publish the draft solicitation and evaluation guidelines on its web site at least 30 days before the public meetings. One meeting shall be conducted at a location in northern California, one meeting shall be conducted at a location in the central valley of California, and one meeting shall be conducted at a location in southern California. Agencies without jurisdiction in one or more of these three regions may omit the meetings in the region or regions within which they do not have jurisdiction. Upon adoption, the state agency shall transmit copies of the guidelines to the fiscal committees and the appropriate policy committees of the Legislature.

(c) At least 45 days prior to soliciting projects pursuant to this division, a state agency administering funds pursuant to this division shall post an electronic form of the guidelines for grant applicants on its website. Project solicitation and evaluation guidelines shall only include criteria based on the applicable requirements of this division.

(d) Nothing in this division restricts agencies from enforcing and complying with existing laws.

86163. Each project funded from this division shall comply with the following requirements

(a) The investment of public funds pursuant to this division will result in public benefits that address the most critical statewide needs and priorities for public funding, as determined by the agency distributing the funds.

(b) In the appropriation and expenditure of funding authorized by this division, priority will be given to projects that leverage private, federal, or local funding or produce the greatest public benefit. All agencies receiving funds pursuant to this division shall seek to leverage the funds to the greatest extent possible, but agencies may take into account the limited ability to cost share by small public agencies, and by agencies seeking to benefit disadvantaged communities and economically distressed areas.

(c) A funded project shall advance the purposes of the chapter from which the project received funding.

(d) In making decisions regarding water resources pursuant to this division, state and local agencies will use the best available science to inform those decisions.

(e) To the extent practicable, a project supported by funds made available by this division will include signage informing the public that the project received funds from the Water Supply Reliability and Drought Protection Act of 2016.

(f) To the extent feasible, projects funded with proceeds from this division will promote state planning priorities consistent with the provisions of Section 65041.1 of the Government Code and sustainable communities strategies consistent with the provisions of subparagraph (B) of paragraph (2) of subdivision (b) of Section 65080 of the Government Code.

(g) To the extent feasible, watershed objectives for private lands included in this division should be achieved through use of conservation easements and voluntary landowner participation, including, but not limited to, the use of perpetual conservation easements pursuant to Division 10.2 (commencing

with Section 10200) and Division 10.4 (commencing with Section 10330) of the Public Resources Code, voluntary habitat credit exchange mechanisms, and conservation actions on private lands.

86164. Funds provided by this division shall not be expended to pay the costs of the design, construction, operation, mitigation, or maintenance of Delta water conveyance facilities. Those costs shall be the responsibility of the water agencies that benefit from the design, construction, operation, mitigation, or maintenance of those facilities.

86165. (a) This division does not diminish, impair, or otherwise affect in any manner whatsoever any area of origin, watershed of origin, county of origin, or any other water rights protections, including, but not limited to, rights to water appropriated prior to December 19, 1914, provided under the law. This division does not limit or affect the application of Article 1.7 (commencing with Section 1215) of Chapter 1 of Part 2 of Division 2, Sections 10505, 10505.5, 11128, 11460, 11461, 11462, and 11463, and Sections 12200 to 12220, inclusive.

(b) For the purposes of this division, an area that utilizes water that has been diverted and conveyed from the Sacramento River hydrologic region, for use outside the Sacramento River hydrologic region or the Delta, shall not be deemed to be immediately adjacent thereto or capable of being conveniently supplied with water therefrom by virtue or on account of the diversion and conveyance of that water through facilities that may be constructed for that purpose after January 1, 2014.

(c) Nothing in this division supersedes, limits, or otherwise modifies the applicability of Chapter 10 (commencing with Section 1700) of Part 2 of Division 2, including petitions related to any new conveyance constructed or operated in accordance with Chapter 2 (commencing with Section 85320) of Part 4 of Division 35.

(d) Unless otherwise expressly provided, nothing in this division supersedes, reduces, or otherwise affects existing legal protections, both procedural and substantive, relating to the state board's regulation of diversion and use of water, including, but not limited to, water right priorities, the protection provided to municipal interests by Sections 106 and 106.5, and changes in water rights. Nothing in this division expands or otherwise alters the state board's existing authority to regulate the diversion and use of water or the courts' existing concurrent jurisdiction over California water rights.

(e) Nothing in this division shall be construed to affect the California Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (Chapter 1.4 (commencing with Section 5093.50) of Division 5 of the Public Resources Code) or the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. Sec. 1271 et seq.) and funds authorized pursuant to this division shall not be available for any project that could have an adverse effect on the values upon which a wild and scenic river or any other river is afforded protections pursuant to the California Wild and Scenic Rivers Act or the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

(f) Nothing in this division supersedes, limits, or otherwise modifies the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Reform Act of 2009 (Division 35 (commencing with Section 85000)) or any other applicable law, including, but not limited to, Division 22.3 (commencing with Section 32300) of the Public Resources Code.

(g) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any agency acquiring land pursuant to this division may make use of the Natural Heritage Preservation Tax Credit Act of 2000 (Division 28 (commencing with Section 37000) of the Public Resources Code).

86166. (a) Applicants eligible to receive grants and loans pursuant to this division are public agencies, resource conservation districts, nonprofit organizations, public utilities, mutual water companies, public water systems as defined in subdivision (h) of section 116275 of the Health and Safety Code, federally recognized Indian tribes, federal agencies owning land in California, and state Indian tribes listed on the Native American Heritage Commission's California Tribal Consultation List. Agencies shall give priority to eligible applicants with experience in planning, designing, and developing the types of projects receiving funding from the agencies, or which have access to consulting help in these areas.

(b) (1) To be eligible for funding under this division, a project proposed by a public utility that is regulated by the Public Utilities Commission or a mutual water company shall have a clear and definite public purpose and the project shall benefit the customers of the water system and not the investors.

(2) To be eligible for funding under this division, an urban water supplier shall have adopted and submitted an urban water management plan in accordance with the Urban Water Management Planning Act (Part 2.6 (commencing with Section 10610) of Division 6).

(3) To be eligible for funding under this division, an agricultural water supplier shall have adopted and submitted an agricultural water management plan in accordance with the Agricultural Water Management Planning Act (Part 2.8 (commencing with Section 10800) of Division 6).

(4) In accordance with Section 10608.56, an agricultural water supplier or an urban water supplier is ineligible for funding under this division unless it complies with the requirements of Part 2.55 (commencing with Section 10608) of Division 6.

86167. Where feasible, projects funded pursuant to this division may use the services of the California Conservation Corps or certified community conservation corps, as defined in Section 14507.5 of the Public Resources Code. Public agencies receiving funding under this division shall give additional priority to projects that involve the services of the California Conservation Corps or a certified community conservation corps, or other programs employing at risk youth in conservation or restoration projects where the programs have demonstrated expertise and experience in conservation or restoration implementation and management.

86168. Each state agency that receives an appropriation of funding made available by this division shall be responsible for establishing and reporting on the state's bond accountability website each of the following: metrics of success, metrics for benefitting disadvantaged communities and economically distressed areas, progress in meeting those metrics, status of projects funded under this division, and all uses of the funding the state agency receives under this division.

86169. The proceeds of bonds issued and sold pursuant to this division (excluding the proceeds of any refunding bonds issued in accordance with Section 86192) shall be deposited in the Water Supply Reliability and Drought Protection Fund of 2016, which is hereby created in the State Treasury. Notwithstanding Section 13340 of the Government Code moneys in the fund are continuously

appropriated without regard to fiscal year for the purposes of this division in the manner and for the purposes set forth in this division.

86170. Chapter 3.5 (commencing with Section 11340) of Part 1 of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Government Code does not apply to the development or implementation of programs or projects authorized or funded under this division.

86170.1. If a state conservancy is established to provide grants to local agencies and nonprofit organizations to protect and restore the Lower American River, then funds pursuant to paragraph (3) of subdivision (g) of Section 86080 shall be appropriated to that conservancy.

86171. (a) Funds provided by this division shall not be used to support or pay for the costs of environmental mitigation.

(b) Funds provided by this division shall be used for environmental enhancements or other public benefits.

(c) Notwithstanding paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section, the costs of mitigation of the environmental impacts directly related and limited to expenditures under this division may be paid for by funds provided by this division.

86172. Every entity implementing this division shall give highest priority to funding projects which combine relatively high cost effectiveness, durability, and enhanced environmental quality.

86174. Acquisitions pursuant to Chapters 8, 9, and 12 of this division shall be from willing sellers only.

86176. (a) Unless otherwise specified by this division, a state agency expending funds or approving a grant pursuant to this division for projects considered to be capital outlay must find that the benefits of the capital outlay expenditure or grant shall last for at least 20 years or such time as is commensurate with the best practices for the type of project being funded.

(b) A state agency expending funds or approving a grant pursuant to this division shall give highest priority to projects which provide benefits for at least 20 years. No state agency expending funds or approving grants pursuant to this division shall expend more than ten percent of the funds on planning purposes unrelated to specific capital outlay projects or projects which provide benefits for less than 10 years.

86179. The requirement that a project be cost effective does not require a full benefit/cost analysis.

CHAPTER 17. Fiscal Provisions

86180. (a) Bonds in the total amount of four billion eight hundred ninety five million dollars (\$4,895,000,000), or so much thereof as is necessary, not including the amount of any refunding bonds issued in accordance with Section 86192 may be issued and sold to provide a fund to be used for carrying out the purposes expressed in this division and to reimburse the General Obligation Bond Expense Revolving Fund pursuant to Section 16724.5 of the Government Code. The bonds, when sold, shall be and constitute a valid and binding obligation of the State of California, and the full faith and

credit of the State of California is hereby pledged for the punctual payment of both principal of, and interest on, the bonds as the principal and interest become due and payable.

(b) The Treasurer shall from time to time sell the bonds authorized by the committee pursuant to Section 86182. Bonds shall be sold upon the terms and conditions specified in one or more resolutions to be adopted by the committee pursuant to Section 16731 of the Government Code.

86181. The bonds authorized by this division shall be prepared, executed, issued, sold, paid, and redeemed as provided in the State General Obligation Bond Law (Chapter 4 (commencing with Section 16720) of Part 3 of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code), and all of the provisions of that law, as that law may be amended, apply to the bonds and to this division and are hereby incorporated in this division as though set forth in full in this division, except subdivisions (a) and (b) of Section 16727 of the Government Code to the extent that those subdivisions conflict with any other measure of this division.

86182. (a) Solely for the purpose of authorizing the issuance and sale pursuant to the State General Obligation Bond Law (Chapter 4 (commencing with Section 16720) of Part 3 of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code) of the bonds authorized by this division, the Water Supply Reliability and Drought Protection Finance Committee is hereby created. For purposes of this division, the Water Supply Reliability and Drought Protection Finance Committee is the “committee” as that term is used in the State General Obligation Bond Law.

(b) The finance committee consists of the Director of Finance, the Treasurer, and the Controller. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any member may designate a representative to act as that member in his or her place for all purposes, as though the member were personally present.

(c) The Treasurer shall serve as chairperson of the finance committee.

(d) A majority of the finance committee may act for the finance committee.

86183. The finance committee shall determine whether or not it is necessary or desirable to issue bonds authorized by this division in order to carry out the actions specified in this division and, if so, the amount of bonds to be issued and sold. Successive issues of bonds may be authorized and sold to carry out those actions progressively, and it is not necessary that all of the bonds authorized to be issued be sold at any one time.

86184. For purposes of the State General Obligation Bond Law, “board,” as defined in Section 16722 of the Government Code, means the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency.

86185. There shall be collected each year and in the same manner and at the same time as other state revenue is collected, in addition to the ordinary revenues of the state, a sum in an amount required to pay the principal of, and interest on, the bonds each year. It is the duty of all officers charged by law with any duty in regard to the collection of the revenue to do and perform each and every act that is necessary to collect that additional sum.

86186. Notwithstanding Section 13340 of the Government Code, there is hereby appropriated from the General Fund in the State Treasury, for the purposes of this division, an amount that will equal the total of the following:

(a) The sum annually necessary to pay the principal of, and interest on, bonds issued and sold pursuant to this division, as the principal and interest become due and payable.

(b) The sum that is necessary to carry out the provisions of Section 86189, appropriated without regard to fiscal years.

86187. The board may request the Pooled Money Investment Board to make a loan from the Pooled Money Investment Account in accordance with Section 16312 of the Government Code for the purpose of carrying out this division less any amount withdrawn pursuant to Section 86189. The amount of the request shall not exceed the amount of the unsold bonds that the committee has, by resolution, authorized to be sold (excluding any refunding bond authorized pursuant to Section 86192) for the purpose of carrying out this division. The board shall execute those documents required by the Pooled Money Investment Board to obtain and repay the loan. Any amounts loaned shall be deposited in the fund to be allocated in accordance with this division.

86188. Notwithstanding any other provision of this division, or of the State General Obligation Bond Law, if the Treasurer sells bonds that include a bond counsel opinion to the effect that the interest on the bonds is excluded from gross income for federal tax purposes under designated conditions or is otherwise entitled to any federal tax advantage, the Treasurer may maintain separate accounts for the bond proceeds invested and for the investment earnings on those proceeds, and may use or direct the use of those proceeds or earnings to pay any rebate, penalty, or other payment required under federal law or take any other action with respect to the investment and use of those bond proceeds, as may be required or desirable under federal law in order to maintain the tax-exempt status of those bonds and to obtain any other advantage under federal law on behalf of the funds of this state.

86189. For the purposes of carrying out this division, the Director of Finance may authorize the withdrawal from the General Fund of an amount or amounts not to exceed the amount of the unsold bonds that have been authorized by the committee to be sold (excluding any refunding bond authorized pursuant to Section 86192) for the purpose of carrying out this division less any amount borrowed pursuant to Section 86187. Any amounts withdrawn shall be deposited in the fund. Any moneys made available under this section shall be returned to the General Fund, with interest at the rate earned by the moneys in the Pooled Money Investment Account, from proceeds received from the sale of bonds for the purpose of carrying out this division.

86190. All moneys deposited in the fund that are derived from premium and accrued interest on bonds sold pursuant to this division shall be reserved in the fund and shall be available for transfer to the General Fund as a credit to expenditures for bond interest, except that amounts derived from premium may be reserved and used to pay the cost of bond issuance prior to any transfer to the General Fund.

86191. Pursuant to Chapter 4 (commencing with Section 16720) of Part 3 of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code, the cost of bond issuance shall be paid out of the bond proceeds, including premiums, if any. To the extent the cost of bond issuance is not paid from premiums received from the sale of bonds, these costs shall be shared proportionately by each program funded through this division by the applicable bond sale.

86192. The bonds issued and sold pursuant to this division may be refunded in accordance with Article 6 (commencing with Section 16780) of Chapter 4 of Part 3 of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government

Code, which is a part of the State General Obligation Bond Law. Approval by the voters of the state for the issuance of the bonds under this division shall include approval of the issuance of any bonds issued to refund any bonds originally issued under this division or any previously issued refunding bonds. Any bond refunded with the proceeds of refunding bonds as authorized by this section may be legally defeased to the extent permitted by law in the manner and to the extent set forth in the resolution, as amended from time to time, authorizing such refunded bonds.

86193. The proceeds from the sale of bonds authorized by this division are not “proceeds of taxes” as that term is used in Article XIII B of the California Constitution, and the disbursement of these proceeds is not subject to the limitations imposed by that article.

SECTION 2. Section 1 of this act shall take effect immediately upon approval by the voters of the Water Supply Reliability and Drought Protection Act of 2016, as set forth in that section at the November 8, 2016, statewide general election. In order to fund a water supply reliability and drought protection program at the earliest possible date, it is necessary that this act take effect immediately.

SECTION 3. Conflicting provisions

(a) The provisions and intent of this Act shall be given precedence over any state law, statute, regulation or policy that conflicts with this section, and the policy and intent of this Act shall prevail over any such contrary law, statute, regulation or policy.

(b) If this division is approved by the voters, but superseded by any other conflicting ballot division approved by more voters at the same election, and the conflicting ballot division is later held invalid, it is the intent of the voters that this Act shall be given the full force of law.

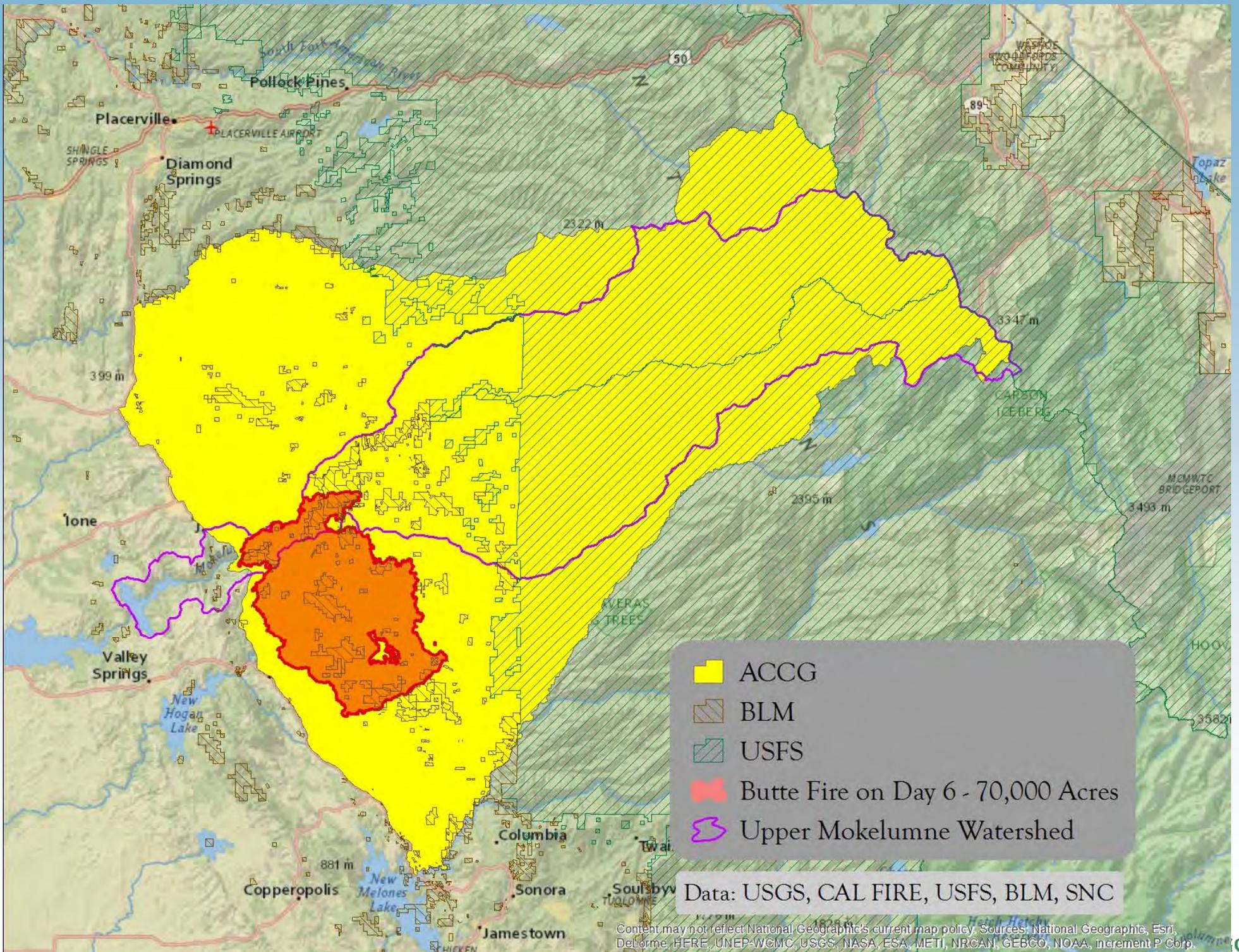
(c) If any rival or conflicting initiative regulating any matter addressed by this Act receives the higher affirmative vote, then all non-conflicting parts of this measure shall become operative.

Section 4. If any provision of this Act or the application thereof is held invalid, that invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of this Act that can be given effect without the invalid provisions or applications, and to this end the provisions of this Act are severable.

Agenda Item VIIIc

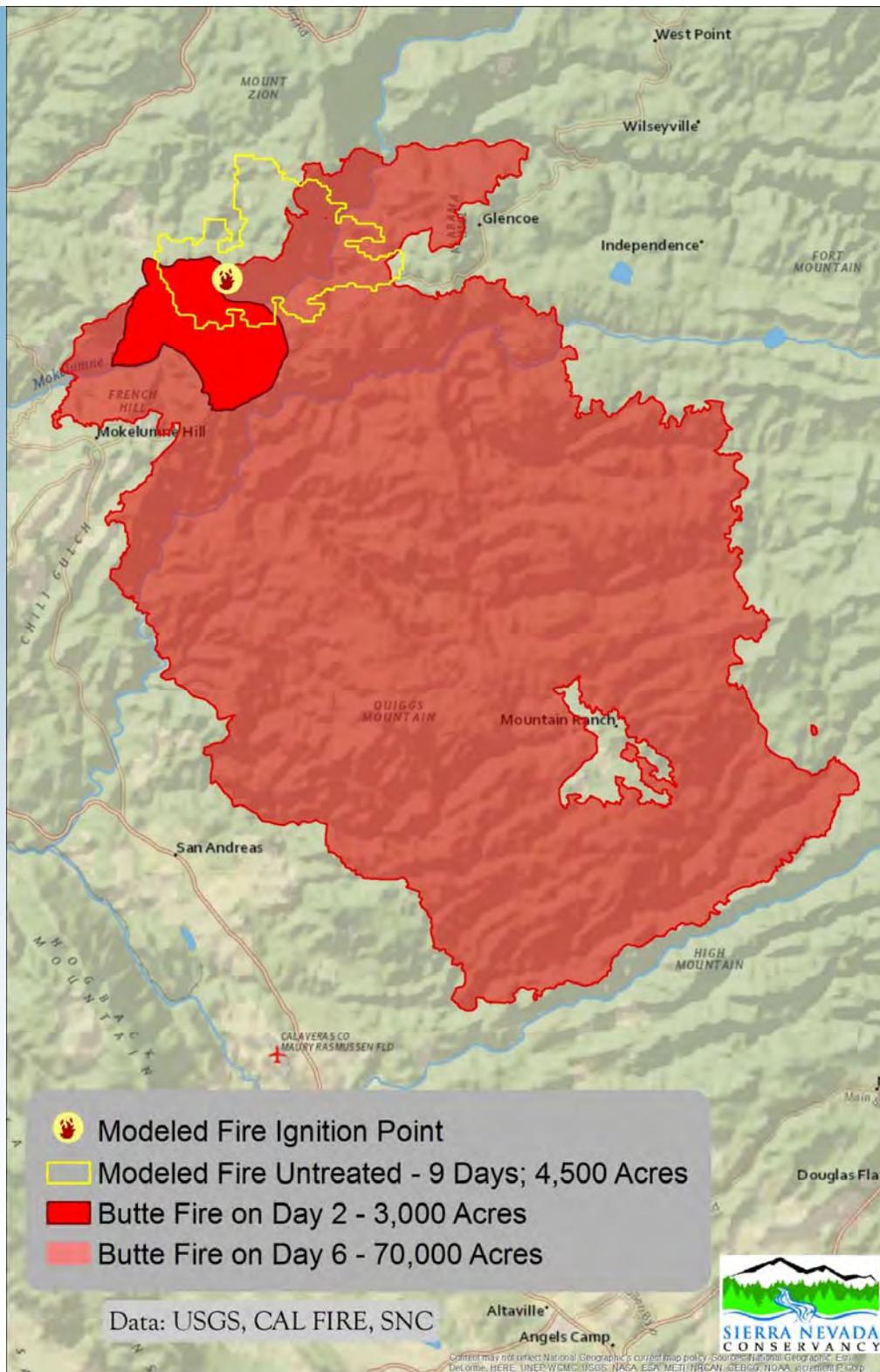
Executive Officer's Report

Presented by:
Jim Branham

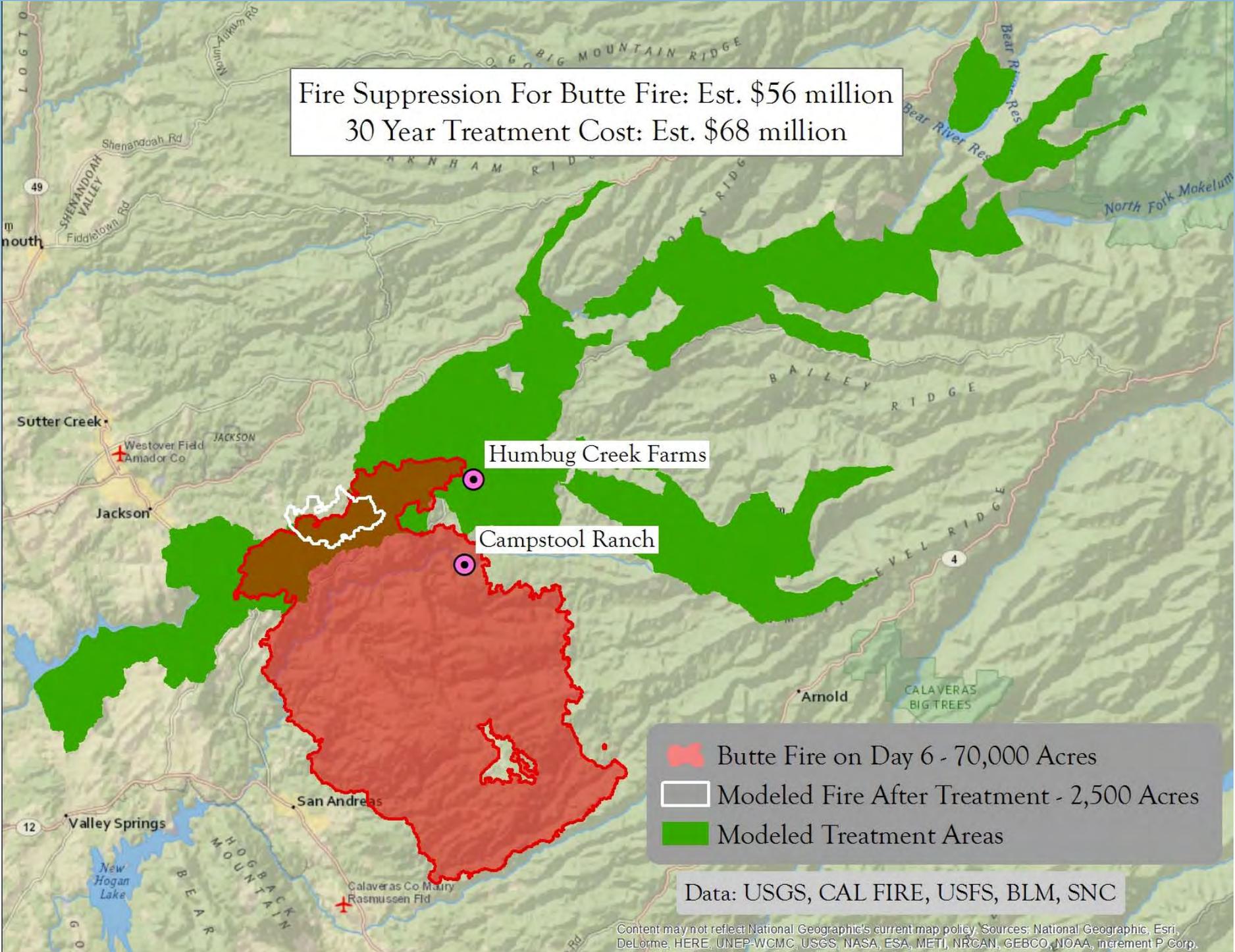


- ACCG
- BLM
- USFS
- Butte Fire on Day 6 - 70,000 Acres
- Upper Mokelumne Watershed

Data: USGS, CAL FIRE, USFS, BLM, SNC



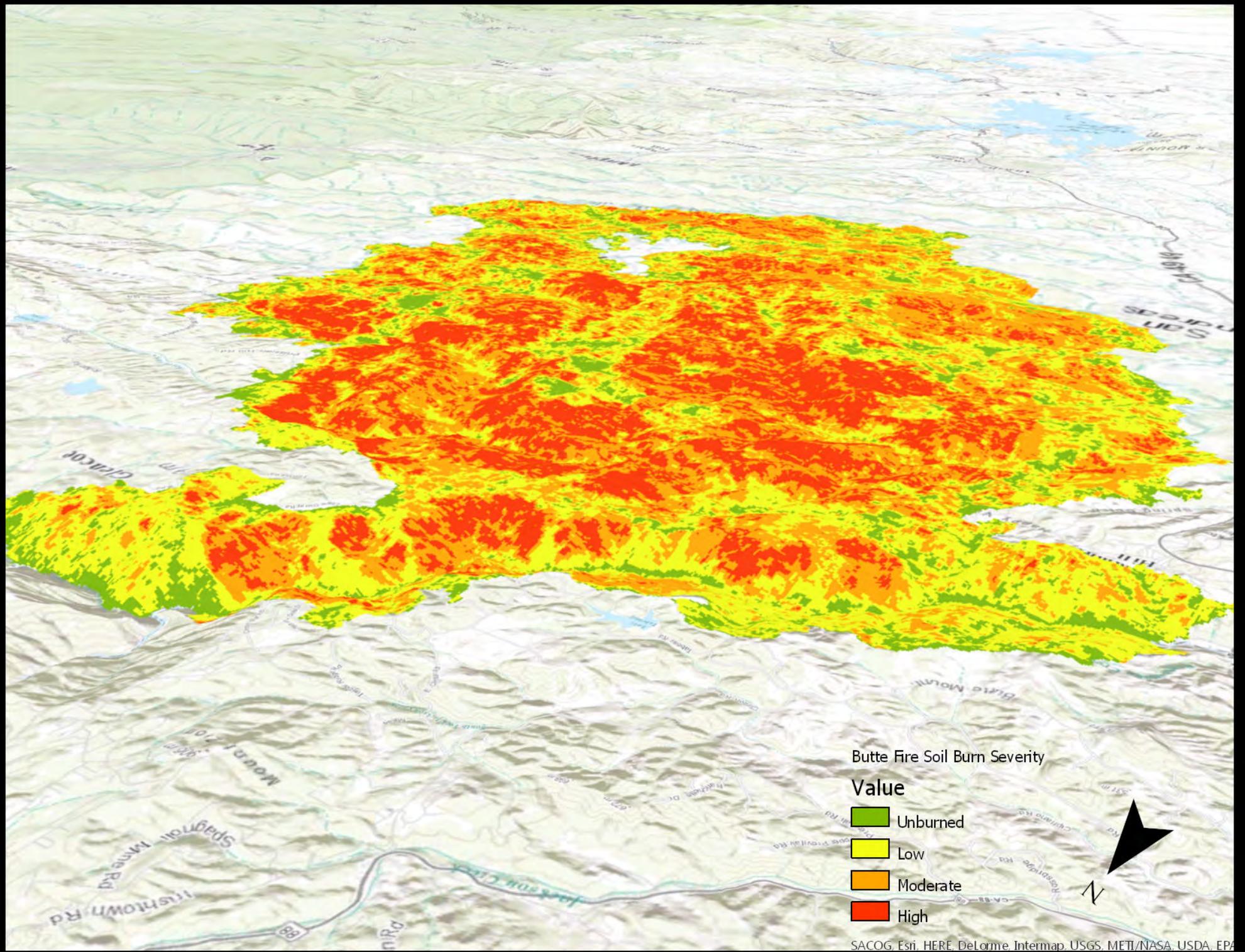
Fire Suppression For Butte Fire: Est. \$56 million
30 Year Treatment Cost: Est. \$68 million



- Butte Fire on Day 6 - 70,000 Acres
- Modeled Fire After Treatment - 2,500 Acres
- Modeled Treatment Areas

Data: USGS, CAL FIRE, USFS, BLM, SNC

Content may not reflect National Geographic's current map policy. Sources: National Geographic, Esri, DeLorme, HERE, UNEP-WCMC, USGS, NASA, ESA, METI, NRCAN, GEBCO, NOAA, increment P Corp.



Butte Fire Soil Burn Severity

Value

- Unburned
- Low
- Moderate
- High

Butte Fire Initial Damage Estimates

[Home](#) » [Aq Sectors](#) » [Timber](#)

California wildfires cause nearly \$2 billion in damage



Published:
October 15, 2015 8:33AM



Andrew Seng/The Sacramento Bee via AP In this Sept. 12 photo, fire crews run night operations and controlled burnings in an attempt to contain a wildfire in Sheep Ranch, Calif. An insurance company says California's two largest wildfires this year caused \$2 billion in damage.

[Buy this photo](#)

An insurance company found the Valley Fire in Lake, Sonoma and Napa counties caused at least \$1.5 billion in damage.

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — An insurance company says two massive wildfires that burned up parts of Northern California did nearly \$2 billion in damage, among the costliest blazes the Golden State has ever seen.

The Sacramento Bee reports that a report by insurance company Aon Benfield found the Valley Fire in Lake, Sonoma and Napa counties caused at

least \$1.5 billion in damage. Damage in Calaveras and Amador counties from the Butte Fire was estimated to cost \$450 million.

The report shows about \$925 million of the Valley Fire damage is covered by insurance, making it the fifth-worst wildfire insurance disaster in state history.

The fires burned more than 200 square miles and killed six people.

The Oakland Hills Fire of 1991 was California's most expensive, with damage covered by insurance costing \$2.67 billion when adjusted for inflation.



CALIFORNIA OCTOBER 15, 2015

2 California wildfires cause nearly \$2 billion in damage

BY JANIE HAR
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Two massive wildfires that burned up parts of Northern California, killing six people and forcing the evacuation of thousands of people, did nearly \$2 billion in damage, according to a global insurance company.

A report by London-based Aon Benfield found a wildfire in Lake County caused at least \$1.5 billion in damage while damage from another fire in Calaveras and Amador counties was estimated at \$450 million.

The two fires, started days apart in September, burned more than 200 square miles and killed six people. The fire in Lake County, about 90 miles north of San Francisco, destroyed nearly 2,000 structures, including some 1,300 homes.

Aon associate director Steve Bowen said Thursday that the estimates could increase, even as the state enters what is considered peak fire season.

"These are tentative numbers," he said. "I would not be surprised if these get adjusted upward."



Photo courtesy of CAL FIRE



09/26/2015 15:56



Humbug Creek Farms

Content may not reflect National Geographic's current map policy. Sources: National Geographic, Esri, DeLorme, HERE, UNEP-WCMC, USGS, NASA, ESA, METI, NRCAN, GEBCO, NOAA, increment P Corp.

Background

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) has met quarterly throughout the Region since June 2006. In 2012, the Governing Board approved an ongoing schedule that provides for the March meetings to be held in Sacramento annually. The other three quarterly Board meetings are held in the Region, rotating between Subregions. The SNC Board meetings in the Region include a field tour on Wednesday afternoon and the Board meeting on Thursday.

Current Status

The SNC will continue to hold its March Board meetings in Sacramento. The focus for 2016 will be on the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program.

Next Steps

The following schedule is proposed for 2016:

- March 2 & 3, Sacramento
- June 1 & 2, North Subregion
- September 7 & 8, East Subregion
- December 7 & 8, Central Subregion

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board approve the proposed schedule for 2016.

Background

In September 2011, the Board adopted a Strategic Plan which established objectives for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) and laid out the strategies the organization would employ in meeting those objectives. Action Plans based on the Strategic Plan are used to identify the specific initiatives and activities planned for a 12- to 18-month period, based on available resources and existing opportunities and conditions. The Board approved the most recent Action Plan in June 2014.

Also in June 2014, the Board directed staff to refocus and increase efforts related to healthy forests, in recognition of the dire conditions and urgent need for action in many of the forests in the Sierra Nevada. In response to that direction, staff developed the [Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative \(SNFCI\) Action Plan](#), which was approved by the Board in September 2014. The same month, the SNC released the [State of the Sierra Nevada Forests](#) report, which identifies the wide range of forest and watershed benefits that are at risk, impediments to expanding forest restoration, potential solutions to these challenges, and a framework for addressing these issues. Based on the information in the State of the Sierra report and the SNFCI Action Plan, the Board approved the development of the [Watershed Improvement Program](#) (WIP) at its March 2015 meeting.

In June 2015, staff obtained approval from the Board for the SNC to continue to operate under the 2014-15 Action Plan through December 2015. Staff also solicited Board and public comment on a draft proposal for revising the Strategic Plan and developing a new Action Plan. Staff subsequently prepared a Draft 2016-19 Strategic Action Plan (SAP) containing a Strategic Plan component only (no Action Plan), and reflecting the prioritization of the Sierra Nevada WIP and the new Proposition 1 Grant Program. Two secondary programs included in the Draft SAP are Abandoned Mine Lands and Regional Recreation and Tourism.

Staff reviewed the Draft SAP with a Board committee comprised of Boardmembers John Brissenden and Jennifer Montgomery, and posted it to the SNC web site for a 30-day public review period from August 13 to September 11. In addition, staff requested input from Regional tribes according to SNC's then-draft Tribal Consultation Policy, and solicited Board comment on the Draft SAP at the September Board meeting. Three comment letters were received ([Attachment A](#)) from the public during the comment period, and several Boardmembers provided input at the Board meeting. No tribes requested consultation.

Current Status

All of the comments received during the comment period have been considered and addressed in the final draft of the SAP ([Attachment B](#)). The most substantive changes to the document were based on SNC Governing Board feedback provided at the September 2015 Board meeting.

Additional revisions included: the Draft 2016-19 strategies were modified, and actions to be implemented from January 2016 to June 2017 were added. Finally, the original

concept of a SAP comprised of two separate components, a Strategic Plan component and an Action Plan component, has been discarded in favor of a more integrated format that should be easier to follow. Using the new format, the Draft SAP lists proposed actions for each program immediately after the strategies for that program.

Summary of Substantive Changes to Draft Strategic Action Plan

- The Overview and Context (pp. 5-7) and the Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) description (pp. 8-9) have been revised to more clearly indicate the reasoning behind the SNC's strengthened focus on healthy forests and healthy watersheds.
- A WIP coordination strategy has been added to reflect the importance of that body of work in executing the WIP.
- "Ranching and agricultural lands" has been added to the list of important WIP policy areas.
- The WIP Restoration Implementation focus area has been renamed the Restoration Needs Identification and Implementation focus area, and its strategies have been streamlined for greater clarity.
- Language has been inserted to reflect the desirability of private investment in woody biomass-to-bioenergy facilities.
- An additional strategy has been included in the Grant Program, Proposition 1 Implementation focus area, to reflect the need to implement grant process improvements.
- The sections of the document that cover SNC effectiveness, ability to address rapid-response projects and general on-going activities were refined and updated.

Actions

Staff has formulated January 2016-June 2017 actions based on the programs and strategies proposed in the 2016-19 Draft SAP. Despite the narrowed focus of the new SAP, the primary challenge faced in formulating draft actions continues to be developing a realistic scope in terms of what the organization can accomplish over the next 18 months. The breadth of the SNC's mission, the varied needs of the Region, and the enthusiasm of stakeholders and staff in terms of all the ways the SNC can contribute to meeting those needs, continue to require some discipline on the part of staff in setting forth a set of activities that can reasonably be accomplished. In addition, these draft actions put a tremendous emphasis on the importance of working with partners to accomplish all of the objectives that are so important to the Sierra Nevada.

Resource Needs

Staff has developed a high-level workload and resource analysis related to the actions included in the Draft SAP. The analysis is based on best estimates of the needs of each action given the current scope, and may change as more detailed plans are developed. Nevertheless, it serves a valuable purpose in helping to perform a "reality check" on the level of activity outlined in the draft actions, and will also help in developing initial staffing and budget plans for the coming year.

These estimates only include resources that would be allocated directly to a program, and do not include baseline activities that support all programs, such as contracting or information technology. They also do not include time spent by the Executive Office to provide oversight on the programs or fund development activities undertaken on behalf of the programs, e.g., staff time that may be spent identifying and seeking additional, outside funding to support project activities. Nor do the estimates include administrative activities that support all aspects of SNC operations. Finally, the estimates of potential external resources do not include external resources that will be used to support the programs in 2016-17, only those dedicated in the current FY.

Program	Estimated Staff Commitment January 2017 to June 2019	Estimated External Resources Fiscal Year 2015-16
Watershed Improvement Program Support	50%	\$ 75,000
Grants	40%	\$167,500
CEQA Consulting		\$131,000*
Technical Evaluator		\$ 10,000
EasyGrants Annual Contract		\$ 26,500
Abandoned Mine Lands	5%	\$ 0
Recreation and Tourism	5%	\$ 15,000**

*contract paid in full in FY 2015-16 actually covers work through FY 2016-17

**pending identification of additional funding from partners

Next Steps

Working with partners, staff will move forward in implementing the 2016-17 actions, once approved by the Board. Staff will update the Board at future Board meetings on the progress of, or significant changes in, the actions included in the SAP.

At the March 2016 Board meeting, staff will report progress on completing the actions included in the 2014-15 Action Plan.

The next set of actions will be developed and brought to the Board in June 2017, and will cover the period from July 2017-June 2018.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board approve the proposed Sierra Nevada Conservancy 2016-19 Strategic Action Plan, including the January 2016-June 2017 actions, after reviewing and providing any modifications or comments. Staff further recommends that the Board direct staff to take the necessary actions for successful implementation of the Strategic Action Plan.

Agenda Item XII

Attachment A

Alpine Fire Safe Council



Alpine Fire Safe Council
PO Box 67
Markleeville, CA 96120
(530)-694-1879

www.alpinefiresafecouncil.org

Providing community leadership, resources and a forum to improve wildfire preparedness in eastern Alpine County.

Directors

Kris Hartnett, Chair
Markleeville

Steve Yonker, Vice-Chair
Woodfords

Tom Sweeney, Treasurer
Woodfords

David Griffith, FSC Board
Woodfords

Karrie Baker, FSC Board
Woodfords

Nani Ellis, FSC Board
Markleeville

Carol Daum, FSC Board
Woodfords

Terry Hughes, Fire Chief
E. Alpine Fire & Rescue

Staff

Kris Hartnett, Coordinator
Markleeville

Erin Dobyns, Administrator
Markleeville



Jim Branham, Executive Officer
Sierra Nevada Conservancy
SAPComments@sierranevada.ca.gov

Re: Draft 2016-19 Strategic Action Plan

Dear Mr. Branham,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's (SNC's) Draft 2016-19 Strategic Action Plan. At its August 31st meeting, the Alpine Fire Safe Council voted to submit these comments.

We believe that there is one additional area that the SNC can look to for funding improvements to forest health that will advance the goals of the SNC's Watershed Improvement Program, and that this should be part of the SNC's Strategic Action Plan.

As pointed out in the SNC's State of the Sierra Nevada's Forest report there is not sufficient funding for programs to restore our forests to a healthy condition, and the consequences of not restoring our forests to a healthy condition include declining watershed health, increased risk of catastrophic wildfire, reduced capacity to ameliorate climate change, and reduced water supply, among others. But, private investment could help if it were allowed and encouraged to participate. We are thinking specifically of investment in woody biomass-to-bioenergy facilities, which could pay for some of the needed fuels reduction and forest thinning. Private investment in woody biomass-to-bioenergy facilities will not solve the problems with forest and watershed health everywhere, but in some places it could significantly advance the goals of the SNC's Watershed Improvement Program that otherwise would not be advanced due to lack of funds.

In view of the above we suggest the following modifications to the draft strategic plan:

1. Pages 10 & 11, Watershed Improvement Program, Strategies, Policies bullet point 4. Add the following: 2012 California Bioenergy Action Plan.
2. Page 11, Watershed Improvement Program, Strategies, Restoration Implementation, Phase 1, bullet point 4. Add the following: "and the availability of biomass as feedstock for biomass-to-bioenergy facilities."
3. Page 11, Watershed Improvement Program, Strategies, Restoration Implementation, Phase 2, 2nd bullet point. After "Cultivate new funding streams," insert "including private investment."
4. Page 12, Watershed Improvement Program, Strategies, Funding 1st bullet point. After "Coordinate with other agencies," insert "and private investors."

Should you or your staff have any questions please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned or David Griffith at dGriffith.9@gmail.com.

Respectfully submitted,

Alpine Fire Safe Council
Per: Kris Hartnett, Chair



COUNTY OF ALPINE
Board of Supervisors

September 1, 2015

Jim Branham, Executive Officer
Sierra Nevada Conservancy
SAPComments@sierranevada.ca.gov

Re: Draft 2016-19 Strategic Action Plan

Dear Mr. Branham,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's (SNC's) Draft 2016-19 Strategic Action Plan. At its September 1st meeting the Board of Supervisors voted to submit these comments.

We believe that there is one additional area that the SNC can look to for funding improvements to forest health that will advance the goals of the SNC's Watershed Improvement Program, and that this should be part of the SNC's Strategic Action Plan.

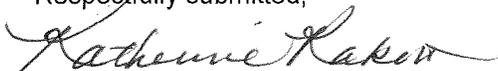
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4. Page 12. Watershed Improvement Program, Strategies, Funding 1st bullet point. After "Coordinate with other agencies," insert "and private investors".

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please contact County Administrative Officer Carol McElroy if you have any questions. Ms. McElroy can be reached via email at cmcelroy@alpinecountyca.gov or by phone at 530-694-2287.

Respectfully submitted,


Katherine Rakow, Chair
Alpine County Board of Supervisors

COUNTY OF EL DORADO

330 Fair Lane
Placerville, CA 95667
(530) 621-5390
(530) 622-3645 Fax

JAMES S. MITRISIN
Clerk of the Board



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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SHIVA FRENTZEN
District II
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District III
MICHAEL RANALLI
District IV
SUE NOVASEL
District V

September 1, 2015

Mr. Jim Branham
Executive Officer
Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205
Auburn, CA 95603

RE: Sierra Nevada Conservancy – Draft Strategic Action Plan

Dear Mr. Branham,

The El Dorado County Board of Supervisors is pleased to submit its support for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Draft Strategic Action Plan. Our Board appreciates the efforts of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy to develop a Strategic Action Plan that focuses its planning efforts on issues that are of critical importance to the counties and communities within the Conservancy's service area.

Specifically, our Board fully supports the Conservancy's identifying the Watershed Improvement Program and the Proposition 1 Grant Program as priority programs within the Strategic Plan's planning efforts.

The goal of the Watershed Improvement Program to restore the health of the Sierra Nevada watersheds while implementing fuel treatment projects will reduce wildfire risks. This program is a perfect example of the Conservancy's collaborative efforts throughout the region that seek to protect the great natural resources within the Sierra Nevada.

While our County is fully supportive of the Conservancy's efforts and the programs identified within the Draft Strategic Action Plan, our County would like to make sure that these efforts do not infringe on the rights of current mining operations. Our Board did receive comments of concern from county residents regarding the protection of mining rights as part of our Board's review and discussion of the Draft Strategic Action Plan.

The County of El Dorado looks forward to being actively involved as the Sierra Nevada Conservancy implements the Draft Strategic Action Plan.

Sincerely,

Brian K. Veerkamp
Chairman, El Dorado County Board of Supervisors

Agenda Item XII

Attachment B

Draft Strategic Action Plan



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About the Sierra Nevada Conservancy

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is a California state agency created by bipartisan legislation ([AB 2600](#)) and signed into law in 2004. The SNC has a broad mission based on the understanding that the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region (Region) and its rural communities are closely linked, and that the Region would benefit from an organization providing strategic direction and bringing attention and resources to the Region to better understand and meet its needs.

Introduction

Document Overview

This Strategic Action Plan (Plan) contains descriptions of the four programs the SNC will focus on from January 2016 through June 2019. The Plan identifies strategies to implement each program and address the statutory goals associated with each program. The Plan also identifies specific actions to implement the strategies associated with each of the four programs, based on available resources and existing opportunities and conditions.

Over the life of the Plan, there will be three separate sets of actions. The set of actions included in this document covers the 18-month period from January 2016 through June 2017. Each subsequent set of actions will cover a 12-month period, with the final set covering July 2018 through June 2019.

Context

The scope of the Plan has been determined in response to SNC Governing Board direction to narrow the focus of SNC activities, as well as an environment of new budgetary restrictions that has constrained SNC resources.

Consideration of Other State Plans

This Plan builds upon and integrates a number of state efforts, including:

- [California Water Action Plan](#) and its [Implementation Report](#)
- [Safeguarding California Climate Adaptation Plan](#) and [Assembly Bill 32 Scoping Plan Updates](#)
- [Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund Investment Plan Updates](#) and [Guidelines Development](#)
- [California State Wildlife Action Plan](#)
- [California Water Plan](#)
- [California Fire Plan](#)
- [Forest and Rangelands Assessment](#)
- [Forest Carbon Plan](#) (under development)
- [Bioenergy Action Plan](#)

Background

SNC Vision

The SNC's vision for the future is that the magnificent Sierra Nevada Region enjoys outstanding environmental, economic, and social health, with vibrant communities and landscapes sustained for future generations. In this vision:

- Rich and diverse natural, physical, and living resources are protected and conserved.
- Healthy, diverse, and economically sustainable local communities thrive, prepared for and protected from natural disasters.
- Californians value and invest in healthy watersheds that provide high-quality water, spectacular scenery, and important wildlife habitat.
- Sustainable working landscapes provide environmental, economic, and social benefits to the Region.
- The Region's cultural, archeological, and historical resources are preserved, visited, and treasured.
- Healthy and sustainable tourism, recreation, and commercial activities are valued and encouraged.
- The role of the forest in sequestering and storing carbon and reducing greenhouse gas emissions is recognized and enhanced.

SNC Mission

The mission of the SNC is to initiate, encourage, and support efforts that improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region, its communities, and the citizens of California.

Service Area

The SNC's service area – stretching from Modoc County in the north to Kern County in the south – covers 25 million acres and all or part of 22 counties. Comprising 25 percent of California's total land area, it is the largest conservancy region in the state. The jurisdiction includes the mountains and foothills of the Sierra Nevada range, the Mono Basin, Owens Valley, the Modoc Plateau, and a part of the southern Cascade Range, including the Pit River Watershed. The statute establishing the SNC divides the Region into six smaller Subregions.

The Sierra Nevada is an extraordinary resource of Regional, statewide, national, and even global significance. It is the state's principal watershed, supplying more than 60 percent of California's developed water supply. The Sierra also sustains 60 percent of California's animal species and almost half of its plant species, including the world's largest living thing: General Sherman, a Giant Sequoia. In addition to providing water for the state, the Sierra supplies up to half of California's annual timber yield and 15 percent of the state's power needs, holding an untapped potential to increase its contribution to California's green energy portfolio. Its forests and agricultural lands are uniquely suited to help reduce the warming impact of a changing climate by removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and storing it in tree trunks, branches, foliage,

roots, and soils. The Sierra hosts more than 50 million recreational visits per year and is home to more than 600,000 residents in 200+ local communities – communities that depend in large part on natural resources for economic sustainability, job creation, recreation, and preservation of the community character and viewsheds that are unique to the Sierra Nevada Region.

Governance

The SNC is governed by a 16-member Board, with 13 voting members divided almost evenly between seven state-level appointments and six local seats filled by members of county Boards of Supervisors in each of the SNC's six Subregions.

The members include:

- Secretary for Natural Resources Agency (or his or her designee)
- Director of Finance (or his or her designee)
- Three members of the public appointed by the governor
- Two members of the public, one each appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly and the Senate Rules Committee
- Six county supervisors whose districts are within the Region, each representing one of the six Subregions
- Three non-voting liaison advisers: one each from the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management

Program Description

In accordance with the statute establishing the SNC, all agency activities are based on the principles of balance, cooperation, and equity. The statute requires that the SNC:

- Support efforts that advance environmental preservation and the economic and social well-being of Sierra residents in a complementary manner.
- Work in collaboration and cooperation with local governments and interested parties in carrying out the SNC's mission.
- Make every effort to ensure that, over time, SNC funding and other efforts are spread equitably across each of the various Subregions and among the program areas, with adequate allowance for the variability of costs associated with individual Subregions and types of projects.

Program Areas

The SNC serves the Sierra Nevada Region by providing a focal point for action and helping to develop and promote a Regional identity for the Sierra as a whole. The SNC does that, in part, by providing funding for local and Regional projects and offering technical and other assistance for collaborative efforts in cooperation with nonprofit, tribal, and government partners at all levels. The SNC's activities fall under seven legislatively mandated program areas, including:

- Increasing the opportunity for tourism and recreation in the Region
- Protecting, conserving, and restoring the Region's physical, cultural, archaeological, historical, and living resources

- Aiding in the preservation of working landscapes
- Reducing the risk of natural disasters, such as wildfire
- Protecting and improving water and air quality
- Assisting the Regional economy through the operation of the SNC's program
- Enhancing public use and enjoyment of lands owned by the public

Current Funding Sources

The SNC's budget is made up of funds from three sources:

- The California Environmental License Plate Fund, which serves as the primary source for staff and operations funding.
- Proposition 84, The Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coast Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Proposition 84). Proposition 84 allocated \$54 million in bond funds to the SNC. (Note: most of these funds have been expended.)
- Proposition 1, The Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Bond Act of 2014 (Proposition 1). Proposition 1 allocated \$25 million in bond funds to the SNC.

SNC Guiding Principles

The SNC is guided in its operations by a number of principles developed as part of its initial strategic planning process:

Operations

- The SNC conducts operations openly. Decision-making is transparent, and the SNC always strives to improve communications throughout the Region.
- The SNC strives to maintain neutrality so all interested parties are provided an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from the SNC's activities.

Key Objectives

- The SNC seeks to "add value" and build upon existing community and Regional efforts.
- The SNC brings a Regional focus to the issues of the Sierra Nevada, collecting and sharing information across the Region and communicating the benefits and contributions of the Region.
- The SNC encourages community-based solutions and assists communities with technical expertise, information, and resources necessary to achieve local solutions.
- The SNC uses the best available information and science in making decisions, identifying opportunities to fill information and technical gaps, and building on and expanding community information.
- The SNC informs and educates the public throughout the Region and the state about the substantial benefits the Sierra Nevada provides to all Californians, including providing clean water for many uses outside the Sierra, and the importance of protecting and enhancing the environmental well-being of the Region.

- The SNC strives to identify and implement activities that result in integrated environmental, economic, and social benefits rather than “either or” outcomes.

Implementing Programs

- The SNC develops program priorities considering the input received through community outreach efforts and seeks to meet community needs.
- The SNC is flexible in implementing its programs, recognizing the need to act based on opportunity, available funding, local and Regional differences, and statewide interest.
- The SNC gives priority to multi-benefit projects and integrated activities (those that address more than one of the SNC’s program objectives).
- The SNC encourages projects and activities that leverage other organizations’ (government, private, and nonprofit) competencies and funding.
- The SNC evaluates projects considering what is occurring on surrounding lands, cognizant of potential impacts to those landscapes.
- The SNC purchases and/or creates incentives for the purchase, where practical, of resources for goods and services within the Sierra Nevada Region. The SNC diligently seeks opportunities to improve the economic well-being of communities in the Region.
- The SNC makes every effort to ensure that, over time, SNC funding and other efforts are spread equitably across Subregions and program areas, with adequate allowance for the variability of costs associated with individual Subregions and types of projects.

Working with Others

- The SNC emphasizes cooperation with local governments and other governmental, tribal, and non-governmental partners in providing information, technical assistance, and financial support to assist in meeting mutual goals.
- The SNC coordinates and collaborates with all partners to achieve research, project funding, and program goals.
- The SNC convenes and facilitates interested parties to seek solutions for difficult problems to achieve environmental, economic, and social benefits.
- The SNC respects the mission, responsibilities, and obligations of other agencies and organizations.

Programs, Strategies, and Actions

Overview and Context

As the SNC has implemented its programs and operations over the past ten years, it has gained significant knowledge and experience in identifying ways to make the greatest impact on the objectives set forth in its enabling legislation. For instance, it has become clear that the occurrence of an increasing number of uncharacteristically large, damaging fires presents the greatest threat to the Region’s environmental and economic well-being. In response, the SNC launched the Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative

(SNFCI) in 2011 to focus attention on the need to take action on this issue. The SNC also made forest health a focus in the final rounds of its Proposition 84 grant program.

Concurrently, the U.S. Forest Service, Region 5, (USFS) released its Leadership Intent for Ecological Restoration, identifying the need to significantly increase the pace and scale of ecological restoration on the lands it manages. The SNFCI and the Leadership Intent are largely complementary, and the SNC has worked closely with the USFS and a wide range of stakeholders in implementing these efforts.

Additionally, the SNC has participated in numerous local collaborative efforts aimed at addressing forest, watershed, and community health. A number of these efforts have resulted in increased investment and project implementation. In addition, the SNFCI Coordinating Council has identified key policy areas that need to be addressed at a Regional scale if the pace and scale of restoration is to be increased. Nonetheless, there has been little or no overall increase in the area being restored on U.S. Forest Service lands, while the amount being consumed by uncharacteristic wildfire continues to increase.

For example, the 2013 Rim Fire became the largest fire in the recorded history of the Sierra Nevada when it scorched more than 257,000 acres over the course of 69 days. It added a new term to the lexicon: “megafire.” Not only did it cover an area eight times the size of San Francisco, it burned at an extremely high intensity, leaving nearly 100,000 acres virtually without living vegetation. Worse yet, the Rim Fire heralded an era of increasing size and frequency of Sierra wildfires. The 2014 King Fire was smaller in acreage, but an even greater proportion of its area – nearly 50 percent – burned at high intensity.

In addition to these wildfires’ devastating effects on biological resources, experts have noted that recent Sierra wildfire trends may be detrimental to efforts being made throughout California to lessen the impacts of climate change. All of the public dollars spent on reducing greenhouse gas emissions in urban areas may be compromised if large portions of Sierra forests – the best buffer against climate change in California – are reduced to ash and smoke. These fires also produce massive amounts of pollutants that create significant health risks, particularly for people with existing respiratory issues.

Furthermore, high-intensity burn areas experience runoff and erosion rates five to ten times greater than low- or moderate-intensity burn areas. The sediment that is carried off burned hillsides not only degrades water quality and damages infrastructure, it fills reservoirs, reducing storage capacity. High-intensity fire destroys habitat for many species, including those listed under state and federal Endangered Species Acts, and adversely impacts local recreational opportunities, businesses, and communities.

In recognition of recent wildfire trends, in June 2014 the SNC Governing Board directed staff to increase efforts and provide bold leadership related to healthy forests and watersheds in the Sierra Nevada. Staff responded by developing the SNFCI Action Plan, which was approved by the Board in September 2014. Also in September 2014, the SNC released the [State of the Sierra Nevada Forests](#) report, which identifies the wide range of

forest and watershed benefits that are at risk, impediments to expanding forest restoration, potential solutions to these challenges, and a framework for addressing these issues.

At the same time, the SNC recognized that a holistic watershed restoration initiative was necessary to connect the wide range of agencies and interests that benefit from the Region. The SNC's work over the past decade positioned it as the appropriate entity to organize and coordinate such an effort. Given the SNC's close working relationship with the U.S. Forest Service, the primary land manager in the Region, it was determined that such an initiative should be led in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service.

In March 2015, the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) was launched as a state-federal partnership. A diverse group of agencies and stakeholders participated in the launch, recognizing the importance of the Region and the need for bold action. Recognizing the importance of this effort in meeting various state objectives, California Natural Resources Agency Secretary John Laird entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with U.S. Forest Service Regional Forester Randy Moore, pledging a cooperative relationship in implementing the WIP. The SNC is named as the lead state agency in this effort.

The Approach

This Plan focuses planning efforts over the next three-and-a-half years and sets priorities for the SNC within the context of its broad mission, statutorily established program areas, Board direction, and a recent reduction in base funding. The plan will be implemented in ongoing collaboration with multiple partners throughout the Region, and its strategies will be carried out through specific actions identified in annual updates. Each update will set forth a realistic set of actions for the SNC to accomplish in support of the priorities established through this planning process, in the context of available resources.

This Plan provides greater focus to certain of SNC's statutory program areas. This is a product of a number of factors, including organizational priorities and funding source limitations. The SNC will continue to support multi-benefit projects and activities, while remaining cognizant of programmatic and geographic distribution.

Programs

The SNC will focus on four programs during the life of this Plan, from January 2016 to June 2019. These programs:

- Are statutorily required and/or directed by the SNC Governing Board.
- Are associated with a workload that fits within current budgetary and staff resources.

Two of the programs are designated as primary and two as secondary, with organizational resources allocated accordingly. The primary programs that will be the focus of SNC efforts under this Plan are the Watershed Improvement Program and the Grant Program. The secondary programs are the Abandoned Mine Lands Program and the Regional Recreation and Tourism Program.

Development of this Plan is specifically intended to reflect the SNC's top priorities of the implementation of the WIP and the important role the Proposition 1 Grant Program will play in improving watershed health. The Plan further recognizes two other important areas of focus related to the WIP: Abandoned Mine Lands and Regional Recreation and Tourism. The SNC previously had a focus area of Agricultural and Range Lands, but anticipates that related issues will be addressed as part of the WIP.

The program strategies and the actions associated with implementing them are described below. Although the strategies will be in place from January 2016 to June 2019, the actions currently in this Plan are intended to be undertaken over the 18-month period from January 2016 to June 2017.

Watershed Improvement Program

Description

Healthy forests. Healthy waters. These are at the center of the Sierra Nevada [Watershed Improvement Program](#) (WIP), a coordinated, integrated, collaborative program that will catalyze improvements to the health of California's primary watershed through increased investment and policy changes.

The WIP builds upon broad consensus that more must be done to restore Sierra Nevada forests and watersheds. Science-based ecological restoration must dramatically increase in order to stem the tide of large, uncharacteristic wildfires and further ecosystem degradation. Reducing the risks of and from fire creates a resilient landscape where fire can play its natural role within ecological processes and where the quality and quantity of water available for all of California in the face of ongoing drought and climate change is safeguarded. A strategic, multi-purpose, multi-agency approach to forests and all watershed lands in the Region is needed.

Because of its singular focus on the entire Sierra Nevada Region, the SNC is well-positioned to co-lead this comprehensive effort with the U.S. Forest Service, in close partnership with additional federal, state, and local agencies, tribes, and other diverse stakeholders (collectively referred to as WIP partners).

In addition to the overall coordination of the WIP, WIP activities are organized into four focus areas, which include Policy, Restoration Needs Identification and Implementation, Funding, and Communications. The overall success of the WIP is dependent upon the successful integration and execution of these individual focus areas.

Policy

Work within this area focuses on identifying and addressing state, federal, and local policy opportunities to increase the pace and scale of restoration, and improving the socio-economic well-being of Sierra communities, as well as identifying and addressing impediments to achieving these objectives.

Restoration Needs Identification and Implementation

Work within this area focuses on identifying and quantifying the level and cost of

restoration activity needed to restore Sierra Nevada watersheds to a state of proper function and resilience, providing the impetus for more restoration through the implementation of those activities on the ground.

Funding

Work within this area focuses on increasing and tracking state, federal, and local governmental and non-governmental investment in restoration activities, as well as securing investment from those who benefit from the Region, such as the urban, business, and agricultural communities that receive water from the Region.

Communication

Work within this area focuses on developing and utilizing a variety of communications tools and materials that support key WIP messages, and implementing outreach and communications strategies that engage key audiences, in order to support the goals of the WIP.

Statutory Goals Addressed

Primary

- Protect, conserve, and restore the Region's physical, cultural, archaeological, historical, and living resources.
- Reduce the risk of natural disasters, such as wildfires.
- Protect and improve water and air quality.
- Assist the Regional economy through the operation of the SNC's program.
- Aid in the preservation of working landscapes.

Secondary

- Provide increased opportunities for tourism and recreation.
- Enhance public use and enjoyment of lands owned by the public.

Strategies and Actions

Coordination

Strategy

- Coordinate broad and diverse partnerships to harness the power of collaboration among the WIP partners.

Actions - January 2016 through June 2017

- Convene a WIP Steering Committee as needed and appropriate to guide progress of the WIP on an ongoing basis.
- Develop and utilize a communications network for regular engagement with WIP partners.
- Maximize efficiency of project planning and implementation through coordinated National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance processes.
- Continue to work through the Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI) Regional Council to address its five focus areas for overcoming obstacles

to increasing the pace and scale of restoration:

- Steep ground technology
- Increasing the use of fire as a restoration tool
- Support of wood-processing infrastructure
- Promoting landscape-level treatments
- Promoting local economies through local contracting tools.

Policy Strategies

- Identify and pursue legislative, policy, and state and federal planning and funding opportunities to benefit the WIP and the Region.
- Develop and maintain relationships with legislators, key decision-makers, state agencies, local governments, and partners to garner support for sound, science-based policy decisions that benefit California, the WIP, and the Region.
- Inform and engage partners and key decision-makers to ensure that the WIP and the Region are included in policy and investment decisions at the state and federal levels on issues including, but not limited to:
 - Air quality, greenhouse gas emissions reductions, and carbon sequestration and storage
 - Forest restoration and management
 - Water quality and supply reliability
 - Habitat and biodiversity
 - Ranching and agricultural lands
- Include the WIP as a strategic component in the development and implementation of state administrative and planning processes, and in guidance documents that inform, generate, and affect policy, such as the California Water Action Plan.
- Utilize the results of WIP watershed-level assessments to identify and pursue policy and funding opportunities that address local needs and issues.
- Work with the WIP Steering Committee to identify, and where necessary assist, in conducting scientific research to inform activities under the WIP and to affect policy and funding decisions at the state and federal levels.

Actions - January 2016 through June 2017

- Explore, track, and promote policy-related funding mechanisms that benefit the WIP and the Region, including securing funding in future Sierra-relevant bonds and the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund.
- Identify and recruit SNC legislative liaisons to represent the WIP and the Region in important policy decisions, and facilitate, organize, and participate in meetings with local, state, and federal agencies, legislators, and other key decision-makers to garner support and emphasize the WIP's role in protecting and enhancing the Region and the state.
- Track and engage in state guidance document creation and update processes, work with partners to provide Regionally relevant feedback, and ensure that the WIP is included in applicable plans and high-profile case studies such as the Strategic

Growth Council Integrated Regional Conservation and Development Program.

- As needed and appropriate, consider the development of an interagency, scientific advisory team to track and review new research, identify important findings, synthesize key insights, answer questions, and complete analyses to inform policy and funding decisions.
- Track, review, and utilize watershed-level assessment results to identify policy and funding needs and opportunities, and to meet federal [Resilient Lands and Waters Designation](#) reporting requirements. Work with the WIP Steering Committee and partners to determine which opportunities to pursue and how to engage.

Restoration Needs Identification and Implementation

Strategies

- Working closely with WIP partners, develop and implement the WIP Regional Strategy in order to engage a wide range of stakeholders and provide a basis for more localized efforts. The Regional Strategy will include key information, trends, plans, and data for major categories influencing watershed health, as well as the process and timeline for implementation of the WIP.
- Finalize watershed-level assessments and utilize the findings to implement on-the-ground projects to restore affected watersheds to a state of resilience.
- Work with WIP partners to establish additional wood and biomass processing infrastructure that can utilize the woody material removed from forests as part of restoration efforts.

Actions - January 2016 through June 2017

- In order to facilitate watershed resilience, work with WIP partners to assess estimated restoration needs and costs of watershed-specific projects, and where possible, match specific projects to planning and implementation funding.
- Work with federal land management agencies, beginning with the U.S. Forest Service, to conduct restoration needs assessments across their ownership.
- In conjunction with other key WIP partners, assess and verify Sierra watershed-level, baseline data collected by the SNC and Sierra Coordinated Resources Management Council Joint Powers Authority (SCRMC JPA) staff for non-federally-managed lands.
- Identify metrics to successfully track implementation of the WIP.
- Work with partners to develop an online presence for the WIP that makes it the hub of a network connecting partners to data, funding, projects, and each other in order to better make the case for restoration in the Sierra Nevada, and focus and leverage resources to restore watershed health.
- Promote the need for establishment of wood and biomass processing infrastructure, and support related efforts.

Funding

Strategies

- Expand and secure funding from new sources, including private investment, to support the SNC and the programs of the WIP.

- Provide technical assistance to increase capacity of partners to apply for and administer grant funds.
- Coordinate with other agencies and private investors to strategically fund projects under the WIP.
- Work with other agencies on grant guidelines to ensure Regional resource needs and issues are addressed.
- Increase efficiency of funding programs by addressing prerequisites or other barriers to accessing grants.
- Provide user-friendly information about grant opportunities to WIP partners.
- Track funding coming to the Region by type of funder, type of project funded, and amount leveraged or matched.

Actions - January 2016 through June 2017

- Inform and encourage public and private funders, including ecosystem beneficiaries, to invest in the WIP as the appropriate mechanism for addressing Regional issues.
- Identify and implement projects suitable for multi-agency funding under the auspices of the WIP.
- Coordinate on a statewide and agency basis to maximize funding opportunities for Regional partners.
- Develop grant research memos, newsletters, social media announcements, web site content, grant calendars, and other documents to inform partners about funding opportunities.
- Provide funding strategy consultations and grant writing workshops to partner agencies and organizations as resources allow, and maintain a project tracking tool that specifically captures information to allow funders to search for projects by interests, funding needs, environmental planning status, and other criteria.
- Maintain an investment tracker identifying funding awarded to projects within the SNC Region, and analyze relative funding awarded to the Region by project type and category, as compared to the remainder of the state.

Communication

Strategies

- Develop messaging and materials that:
 - Increase awareness among policy-makers and the public about the important role the Region plays in California's overall economic, social, and environmental health and well-being.
 - Convey the risks the Region is currently facing, and explain the consequences of not restoring the Region's forests and watersheds to a state of resilience.
 - Support the needs identified by the funding, policy, and implementation goals of the WIP.
- Utilize the most effective tools to deliver messages, including both traditional and new media, to engage target audiences.

- Engage key partners and establish a communications network that can maximize the communication efforts of the WIP through coordinated outreach.
- Utilize current events as opportunities to increase awareness among policy-makers about the benefits provided by healthy Sierra forests and watersheds, and the actions needed to improve, maintain, and enhance those benefits.
- Increase participation in events, such as field tours and conferences, which support the overall goals of the WIP and engage new members of target audiences.

Actions - January 2016 through June 2017

- Reach out to traditional media (such as newspaper, television, and radio) and new media (such as blogs and social media) to pitch stories and interviews that help communicate the goals and need for the WIP.
- Develop social media campaigns and content using new media tools to communicate WIP goals visually, including products such as iMovie, AdobeVoice presentations, ArcGIS Online story maps, infographics, and others.
- Produce fact sheets, reports, talking points, web content, and other products that support the communication needs of the WIP, including an annual report highlighting the progress of the WIP.
- Convene an annual Sierra Nevada WIP check-in event to provide updates on WIP progress for partners, legislators, and key decision-makers.
- Work with existing and new partners and networks to amplify WIP messaging by sharing products created for the WIP, collaborating on social media campaigns, or pitching story ideas to media outlets.
- Monitor current news and share relevant items with policy-makers, legislators, and partners to help demonstrate the need for the WIP. Information will be shared via social media, email, the Sierra Wildfire Wire blog, and by WIP team leads in face-to-face meetings.
- Identify opportunities for SNC staff and WIP partners to speak at or sponsor events and conferences that can introduce the WIP to new audiences, and work with WIP partners and interested organizations to host tours, briefings, and informational events that communicate the need for the WIP and highlight efforts to date.
- Identify opportunities to respond to misinformation or add WIP messaging information to reports, news articles, or positions.

Grant Program

Description

Through funding from Proposition 84 and Proposition 1, the SNC works directly with nonprofit, tribal, and governmental partners in the Region to grant funding for multi-benefit projects to further the SNC mission.

Proposition 84 Wrap-Up

The SNC's Proposition 84 Grant Program has been one of the primary tools used by the SNC to support the work of its partners across the Region. Since its first year of grantmaking in 2007, the SNC has authorized more than 300 individual grants totaling

more than \$51 million. The SNC is wrapping up the Proposition 84 Grant Program and anticipates awarding the remaining funds in Fiscal Year 2015-16.

Proposition 1 Implementation

California voters recently passed Proposition 1, The Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Bond Act of 2014. Proposition 1 authorized the state to issue bonds for multi-benefit water quality, water supply, and watershed protection and restoration projects for the watersheds of the state, and the SNC was allocated \$25 million for this purpose. The SNC will deliver the first \$10 million consistent with objectives of the WIP over Fiscal Years 2015-16 and 2016-17, with a focus on forest health projects that result in multiple watershed benefits.

Statutory Goals Addressed

Primary

- Protect, conserve, and restore the Region's physical, cultural, archaeological, historical, and living resources.
- Protect and improve water and air quality.
- Assist the Regional economy through the operation of the SNC's program.
- Reduce the risk of natural disasters, such as wildfire.

Secondary

- Provide increased opportunities for recreation and tourism.
- Enhance public use and enjoyment of lands owned by the public.
- Aid in the preservation of working landscapes.

Strategies and Actions

Proposition 84 Wrap-Up

Strategies

- Successfully conclude the Proposition 84 program, including funding Rim Fire restoration projects, closing out remaining projects and implementing a long-term monitoring program.
- Assess the overall effectiveness of the Proposition 84 Grant Program by quantifying impacts on the SNC Region.

Actions - January 2016 through June 2017

- Identify and award remaining funding for Rim Fire restoration projects.
- Work with grantees to close out remaining Proposition 84 projects.
- Implement a grant project monitoring program to ensure long-term benefits of bond-funded grants are being realized.
- Produce a performance measures summary and map for all Proposition 84 grants.

Proposition 1 Implementation

Strategies

- Support the WIP and state plans such as the California Water Action Plan by funding the following types of projects consistent with guidance in Proposition 1:
 - Fuel treatment projects that reduce wildfire risks, protect watersheds tributary to water storage facilities, and promote watershed health
 - Projects that protect and restore rural and urban watershed health in order to improve watershed storage capacity, forest health, safety of life and property, and greenhouse gas reductions
 - Watershed adaptation projects, in order to reduce the impacts of climate change on California's communities and ecosystems
- Maximize the impact of SNC Proposition 1 funding by coordinating with other Proposition 1 funding agencies and leveraging other sources of funds in order to implement multi-benefit, landscape-scale projects.
- Implement grant process improvements based on experience and as identified by the California Department of Finance during its regular agency audit.

Actions - January 2016 through June 2017

- Work with applicants to develop high quality, multi-benefit projects, utilizing technical experts and an application evaluation process to ensure that the highest-benefit projects are recommended for grants.
- Participate in a working group of Proposition 1 funding agencies to leverage other funding for high-benefit projects.
- Identify and actively solicit other funding to augment Proposition 1 funding, increasing the overall benefit of projects.
- Provide staff and grantee training to improve processes and procedures as determined through experience and audits.
- Develop and implement a grant project monitoring program to ensure long-term benefits of bond-funded grants are being realized.

Abandoned Mine Lands

Description

The Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) program area concerns legacy impacts from abandoned mines within the Region. AML features continue to contribute heavy sediment loads and toxins such as mercury to Sierra Nevada waterways, threatening fish, water quality, and the capacity of local water supplies and downstream storage facilities. In addition, sediment and toxins originating from AML features within the Region continue to spread with the flow of water into the Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta and the San Francisco Bay.

SNC activities in this program area will support efforts to reduce the amount of sediments and toxins entering and moving through the Region's waterways, thereby reducing impacts to local and downstream fish populations, people, water supplies,

and storage facilities. Strategies undertaken within this program area to remediate AML legacy impacts support the goals of the WIP through restoration and protection of soils, waterways, meadows, and habitat within the Region, benefiting overall forest health.

Statutory Goals Addressed

Primary

- Protect, conserve, and restore the Region's physical, cultural, archaeological, historical, and living resources.
- Protect and improve water and air quality.
- Enhance public use and enjoyment of lands owned by the public.

Secondary

- Provide increased opportunities for tourism and recreation.
- Assist the Regional economy through the operation of the SNC's program.

Strategies and Actions

Strategies

- Facilitate protection of the Region's resources by assisting in the development of a California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) policy reducing liability and monetary risks associated with acquisition of land impacted by AML.
- Contribute to the efforts of the California Abandoned Mine Land Agency Group, The Sierra Fund, the Delta Tributaries Mercury Council, and other partners to educate policy-makers and identify and pursue AML remediation work.
- Explore funding opportunities, and provide information and assistance regarding these opportunities to entities seeking to implement AML cleanup projects.

Actions - January 2016 through June 2017

- Participate on the advisory team created by the CNRA to establish an agency-wide due diligence policy.
- Continue to participate and provide input in partner efforts and activities focused on legacy AML issues.
- Identify opportunities and resources, including event sponsorships and relevant science, to support partners' efforts to educate decision-makers and others about legacy mining impacts.
- Continue to monitor current and past SNC grant project outcomes and developments in order to furnish policy-makers and partners with valuable information to use in the pursuit of AML remediation.
- Stay apprised of potential project funding needs through participation in AML-focused agency and other partners' organized efforts, and assist in identifying and compiling funding resources for specific projects.

Regional Recreation and Tourism

Description

The tourism industry is one of the top two economic sectors for the majority of the Sierra Nevada's 22 counties. Outdoor recreation is a key driver of visitation, and contributes to the overall quality of life for residents of the Region. SNC's Regional Recreation and Tourism Program will focus on positioning the Region as a top tourism destination by helping to develop sustainable outdoor recreation activities and authentic visitor experiences. This program will develop tools to help visitors and residents alike enjoy and protect the Region's natural and cultural resources while growing the economic vitality of the Region.

Statutory Goals Addressed

Primary

- Provide increased opportunities for tourism and recreation.
- Protect, conserve, and restore the Region's physical, cultural, archaeological, historical, and living resources.
- Aid in the preservation of working landscapes.
- Assist the Regional economy through the operation of the SNC's program.
- Enhance public use and enjoyment of lands owned by the public.

Secondary

- Reduce the risk of natural disasters, such as wildfires.
- Protect and improve water and air quality.

Strategies and Actions

Strategies

- Forge strategic partnerships among Regional recreation interest groups and communities to identify opportunities for the development and implementation of sustainable recreation infrastructure and experiences such as trails, facilities, and enhanced interpretive and educational projects.
- Where feasible, support collaborative processes that develop sustainable recreation strategies in order to meet the recreation demands in the Region.
- In compliance with the existing Memorandum of Understanding, continue support for the Sierra Nevada Geotourism Project to help promote the Region's cultural and heritage resources.
- Build local and Regional capacity through researching and identifying increased funding opportunities to support sustainable recreation and tourism development throughout the Sierra Nevada.
- Support ongoing training, education, and promotion efforts to develop additional agritourism producers in the Region.

Actions - January 2016 through June 2017

- Compile a list of relevant funding resources for sustainable recreation and tourism

development projects, and work with partners to identify and select projects to connect with potential implementation funding sources.

- Continue to participate in key stakeholder discussions, strategy sessions, and activities in the Region in order to identify opportunities to integrate sustainable recreation efforts into the WIP.
- Work with the National Forest Foundation to develop further its sustainable recreation initiative through collaboration with key stakeholders in the Region.
- Identify best practice models for sustainable recreation development and stewardship projects to share throughout the Region.
- Work with Visit California and other agencies and organizations in support of further developing rural tourism, sustainable recreation programs, and marketing opportunities throughout the Region.
- Collaborate with the UC Davis Small Farm Center and other sources to develop training sessions with potential agritourism and geotourism producers in the Region as a follow-up to the 2015 Agritourism Summit.

Related Program Activities and Rapid-Response Projects

In the course of implementing the four programs described above, SNC staff will carry out activities in the following areas. In addition, staff may sometimes implement actions in these areas that are considered important for SNC effectiveness, but that are not covered within the four program areas:

- Science and Research
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
- Tribal Relations
- Funding Development

Furthermore, the SNC periodically undertakes quick-turnaround projects in response to opportunities to further its mission. Examples of these might be compiling research, or developing story maps or fact sheets that are especially timely. Due to the nature of these opportunities, the SNC has termed them rapid-response projects and anticipates doing more of them as the need arises. Any such projects would be consistent with adopted programs and strategies, and would likely involve work in the areas of science, GIS, tribal relations, or funding development.

Other Activities

Under the previous Strategic Plan, the SNC initiated a number of activities that are still underway. Work will continue on these activities under this Strategic Plan as well, and limited resources are allocated to carry out these functions:

- Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative Coordinating Council
- Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council
- Great Sierra River Cleanup

The SNC is also involved in a few new activities that it anticipates allocating minor resources to:

- Sierra Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Partnership – Sierra Business Council
- Resilient Lands and Waters: California Headwaters Program
- National Disaster Resilience Competition

Long-Term Effectiveness of the SNC

The SNC plans to continue the following activities related to enhancing its long-term effectiveness:

- Actively pursue new and enhanced funding streams in support of the SNC, including existing and potential opportunities.
- Work with better-funded state agencies to bring a higher proportion of State funding to support projects in the Sierra.
- Investigate potential fee-for-service opportunities with other organizations, or other potential new sources of income.
- Improve the SNC's visibility and publicize its work with decision-makers and the public to improve knowledge of its program successes and mission.
- Execute agency operations related to policy, education, and communications; legislative activity; and administrative projects

Unforeseen Circumstances

The SNC will continue to consider new developments and changing circumstances. If necessary, staff will draft changes to this Plan, and bring them to the Governing Board for consideration.

Agenda Item XII

2016-19 Strategic Action Plan

Presented by:
Angela Avery

Input Received on Draft SAP

- SNC Governing Board
- Public comment letters
 - Alpine County Board of Supervisors
 - Alpine Fire Safe Council
 - El Dorado County Board of Supervisors

Overarching Changes

- SNC Governing Board and public comments addressed
- Strategies updated
- Draft actions for January 2016 – June 2017 added

Actions

- Developed for each of the four programs
- Can realistically be accomplished in 18 months

Resources

Program	Estimated Staff Commitment January 2016 - June 2019	Estimated External Resources Fiscal Year 2015-16
Watershed Improvement Program Support	50%	\$ 75,000
Grants	40%	\$167,500
CEQA Consulting		\$131,000*
Technical Evaluator		\$ 10,000
EasyGrants Annual Contract		\$ 26,500
Abandoned Mine Lands	5%	\$ 0
Recreation and Tourism	5%	\$ 15,000**

**contract paid in full in FY 2015-16 actually covers work through FY 2016-17*

***pending identification of additional funding from partners*

Next Steps

- Implement approved SAP in January 2016
- Report progress on 2014-15 Action Plan in March 2016
- Develop next set of actions early in 2017

Questions and Comments

Background

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is required by statute, Public Resource Code Section 33350, to “make an annual report to the Legislature and to the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency regarding expenditures, land management costs, and administrative costs.”

In the early years of the SNC, the Annual Report was produced as an expanded education and outreach tool. In more recent years, due to budget and operational constraints, the Annual Report has been scaled down in scope while still satisfying statutory requirements and providing an overview of key activities.

Current Status

Staff is in the process of producing another in-house Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2014-15. The report, which will be approximately four pages in length and designed primarily for electronic distribution, will fulfill statutory requirements while highlighting the SNC’s commitment and benefit to the Region and its communities.

Proposed Outline:

A combined word from Chair & Executive Officer

Report Topics:

- The Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP)
- The State of the Sierra Nevada Forests Report
- Great Sierra River Cleanup 2015

King Fire

- Description of the fall 2014 legislative tour

Fiscal/Grants

- Budget and Fiscal information
- Grant Program information

Next Steps

Staff will draft the Annual Report as described above and will complete design, layout, and illustrations in-house. Graphics may include budget charts or graphs, a small number of photos and quotes from partners, stakeholders, and/or Boardmembers. With Board concurrence, staff will prepare the Annual Report and distribute it appropriately. Staff will complete distribution of the report by December 31, 2015.

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Board approve the proposed approach for completing the 2014-15 Annual Report and direct staff to develop and distribute the report.

Background

California voters passed Proposition 1, The Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Bond Act of 2014, on November 4, 2014. Proposition 1 added Section 79731 to the California Water Code, authorizing the state to issue bonds, and the legislature to appropriate the proceeds, for multi-benefit water quality, water supply, and watershed protection and restoration projects for the watersheds of the state. The bond measure included an allocation of \$25 million for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC).

The 2015-16 state budget included an appropriation of \$10 million, which is intended to be awarded over two fiscal years. At the June 2015 Board meeting, the Board approved the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Proposition 1 Fiscal Year (FY) 2015-16/16-17 Grant Guidelines, incorporating Acquisition Alternative #1 and all other Board recommendations. The SNC released a request for proposals on July 1, 2015, with the first application deadline of the FY 2015-16/16-17 Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program on September 1, 2015. The SNC continues to consult with other Proposition 1 funding agencies to maximize the investment of bond funds in the Region.

Current Status

By the September 1, 2015, deadline, the SNC received 20 applications from 15 organizations requesting a total of \$5,516,649.87. The applications received included 13 Category 1 (site improvement) projects and seven Category 2 (planning) projects. Prior to evaluation, one application was deemed ineligible and one application was withdrawn by the applicant.

Of the remaining 18 applications, 14 have been evaluated and scored by staff and outside experts. Five applications, representing \$853,190.00, scored above the 85-point threshold and are being recommended for funding at this meeting. Four Category 1 applications are still undergoing environmental review, scoring, and site visits for possible recommendation at the March 2016 Board meeting.

Applicants who scored below the 85-point threshold were notified of their application's deficiencies and offered the opportunity to consult with SNC staff. Many of them may re-apply in future rounds after revising proposed projects to better meet Proposition 1 and SNC requirements. Please see [Table 1](#) for details on all applications.

Next Steps

Staff is recommending Board approval of these five projects totaling \$853,190.00. Project specific information including project descriptions, maps, and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documentation is linked below for each project.

- [Project #828](#), Hirschman's Pond Forest Health Project, with Notice of Exemption from CEQA. Forest thinning and invasive species removal project on 85 acres of land owned and managed by the City of Nevada City for public use. This implementation grant follows a Category II planning grant funded by the SNC. Category I Site Improvement Project - \$156,069.00

- [Project #832](#), Diamond Mountain Watershed Restoration Project (USFS), with Notice of Exemption from CEQA. Work to complete CEQA and NEPA necessary to support the US Forest Service portion of watershed restoration and hazardous fuel treatments on up to 8,194 acres on the Lassen National Forest in the Diamond Mountain area.
Category II Planning Project - \$75,000.00
- [Project #835](#), Magalia Forest Health Management Project, with Notice of Exemption from CEQA. Work to complete CEQA for forest and watershed health, and wildfire safety projects on 800 acres near the town of Magalia in Butte County.
Category II Planning Project - \$75,000.00
- [Project #843](#), Oak Creek Watershed Restoration Project, with Notice of Exemption from CEQA. Work to complete CEQA and NEPA for post-fire restoration work on up to 800 acres on the Inyo National Forest in Inyo County.
Category II Planning Project - \$47,121.00
- [Project #845](#), Big Tree Creek Watershed Forest Restoration, with Notice of Exemption from CEQA. Reduction of fuel loads on 235 acres of forest at Calaveras Big Trees State Park in Calaveras County.
Category I Site Improvement Project - \$500,000.00

Attachments

[Table 1](#), Maps, Project Descriptions and CEQA Documentation

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Board (a) authorize the Executive Officer to file Notices of Exemption for the Hirschman's Pond Forest Health Project (SNC 828), the Diamond Mountain Watershed Restoration Project (SNC 832), the Magalia Forest Health Management Project (SNC 835), the Oak Creek Watershed Restoration Project (SNC 843), and the Big Tree Creek Watershed Forest Restoration (SNC 845); and (b) authorize a grant award to each of the above listed projects for the amounts recommended by staff, and further authorize staff to enter into the necessary agreements for the recommended projects.

Agenda Item XIV

Table 1

Table 1
Projects Submitted on September 1, 2015

Score	SNC ID#	Organization	Project Title	Amount Requested	County	Subregion
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Clicking the SNC ID# hyperlinks will open the submitted application in a pdf document.

Eligible and Complete Applications Scoring Over 85 Points:

95.25	835	Butte County Fire Safe Council	Magalia Forest Health Management Project	\$75,000.00	Butte	North Central
91.00	843	Trout Unlimited	Oak Creek Watershed Restoration Project	\$47,121.00	Inyo	East
91.00	828	Sierra Streams Institute	Hirschman's Pond Forest Health Project	\$156,069.00	Nevada	Central
88.75	832	Lassen County Fire Safe Council	Diamond Mountain Watershed Restoration Project (USFS)	\$75,000.00	Lassen	North
86.50	845	California Department of Parks and Recreation	Big Tree Creek Watershed Forest Restoration	\$500,000.00	Calaveras	South Central

Total: \$853,190.00

Eligible and Complete Applications Still Undergoing Review for Possible March Recommendation:

TBD	846	Butte County Fire Safe Council	Little Butte Creek Forest Health Project (Phase II)	\$379,693.00	Butte	North Central
TBD	841	American River Conservancy	American River Headwaters Improvement Project	\$500,000.00	Placer	Central
TBD	837	Plumas County Fire Safe Council	Wolf and Grizzly Creek Municipal Watershed Protection	\$500,000.00	Plumas	North Central
TBD	829	Alpine County	Markleeville Fuels Reduction Project	\$230,115.00	Alpine	East

Total: \$1,609,808.00

Table 1
Projects Submitted on September 1, 2015

Score	SNC ID#	Organization	Project Title	Amount Requested	County	Subregion
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Eligible and Complete Applications Scoring Below 85 Points:

79.75	844	Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions (CHIPS)	Mokelumne Community Forest/BLM Lands	\$45,650.00	Calaveras	South Central
79.25	849	California Conservation Corps	Rim Fire - Reed Creek Aspen Restoration Project	\$494,900.00	Tuolumne	South Central
77.75	848	Sierra Streams Institute	Sugar Loaf Mountain Fuel Reduction Project	\$154,521.00	Nevada	Central
77.50	834	Terra Fuego Resource Foundation	Butte Forest Thin - Doe Ridge Mills Watershed Project	\$491,561.00	Butte	North Central
76.00	831	Lassen County Fire Safe Council	Diamond Mountain Watershed Restoration Project	\$500,000.00	Lassen	North
73.25	838	Fall River Resource Conservation District	Burney Gardens Aspen and Meadow Restoration	\$500,000.00	Shasta	North
71.75	839	Fall River Resource Conservation District	Burney Bioenergy Project Development	\$75,000.00	Shasta	North
71.00	833	Pit Resource Conservation District	Lookout/Upper Pit River Watershed Restoration Project	\$500,000.00	Modoc	North
58.00	847	Terra Fuego Resource Foundation	The Butte Forest Thin - Doe Ridge Mills Watershed Project	\$74,250.00	Butte	North Central

Total: \$2,835,882.00

Applications Deemed to be Ineligible:

N/A	850	Natural Heritage Institute	Yellow Starthistle Control Demonstration Project	\$75,000.00	N/A	N/A
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Total: \$75,000.00

Applications Rescinded:

N/A	840	Northstar Fire Department	2016 Northstar Fire Department Forest Enhancement Project	\$142,769.87	Placer	Central
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Total: \$142,769.87

Total: \$5,516,649.87

Agenda Item XIV

Project Map



832, Diamond Mountain Watershed Restoration Project (USFS)
Lassen County, Honey-Eagle Lakes Watershed

835, Magalia Forest Health Management Project
Butte County, Butte Creek Watershed

828, Hirschman's Pond Forest Health Project
Nevada County, Upper Yuba Watershed

845, Big Tree Creek Watershed Forest Restoration
Calaveras County, Upper Calaveras California Watershed

843, Oak Creek Watershed Restoration Project
Inyo County, Owens Lake Watershed



Map data from Esri, DeLorme, GeoEye, (Geo), USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community
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Agenda Item XIV

2015-16 Proposition 1 Grant Awards

Presented by:

**Mt. Whitney Area Manager,
Randi Jorgensen**

and

**Mt. Lassen Area Manager,
Andy Fristensky**

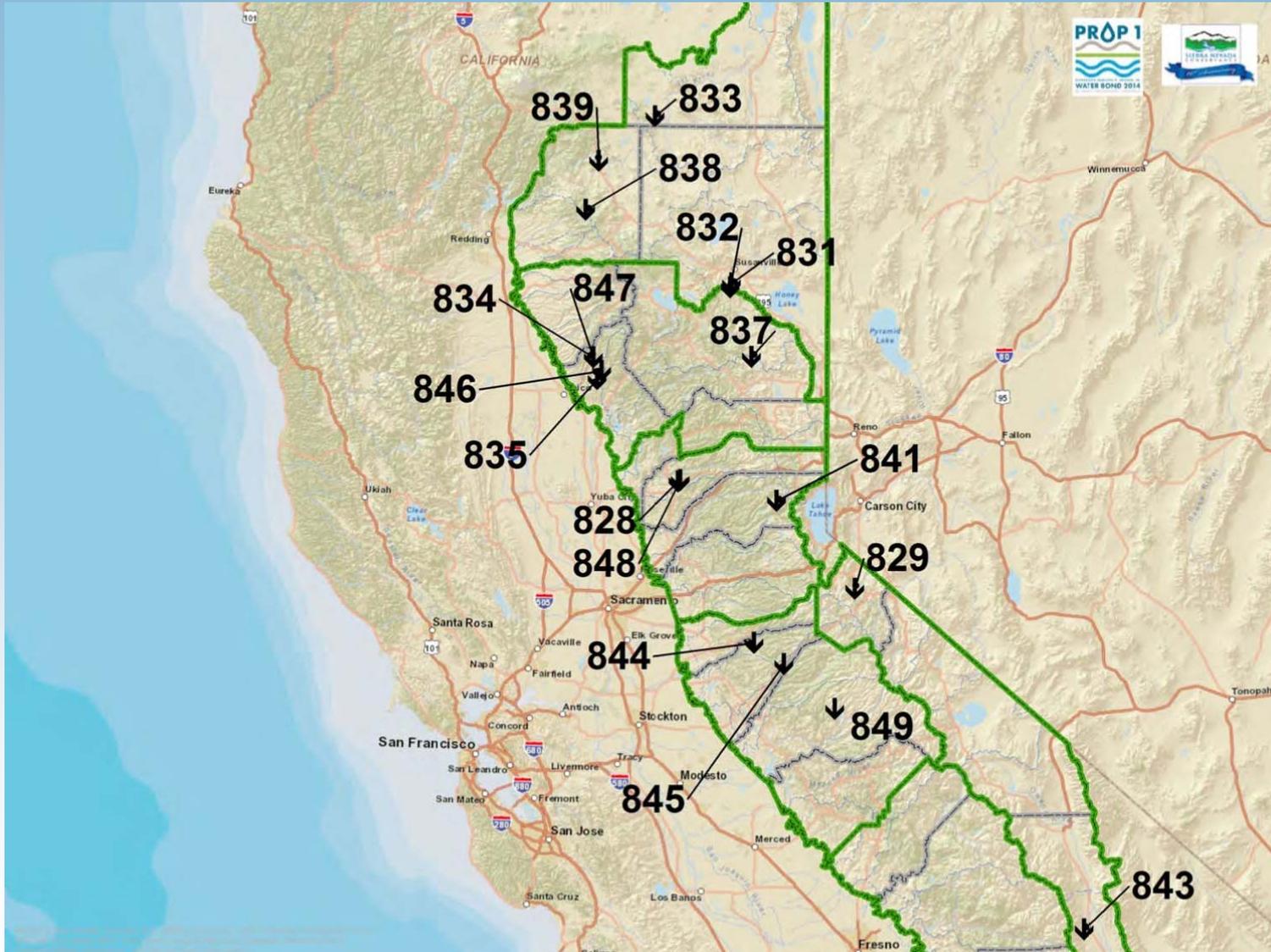
Background

- June 2015 – SNC Board approved the Proposition 1 Watershed Improvement Program Grant Guidelines.
- July 1, 2015 – The SNC requested grant proposals.
- September 1, 2015 – first application deadline.
- Staff will be making recommendations on first round applications at this meeting and in March 2016.
- Next Application Due Date: March 1, 2016

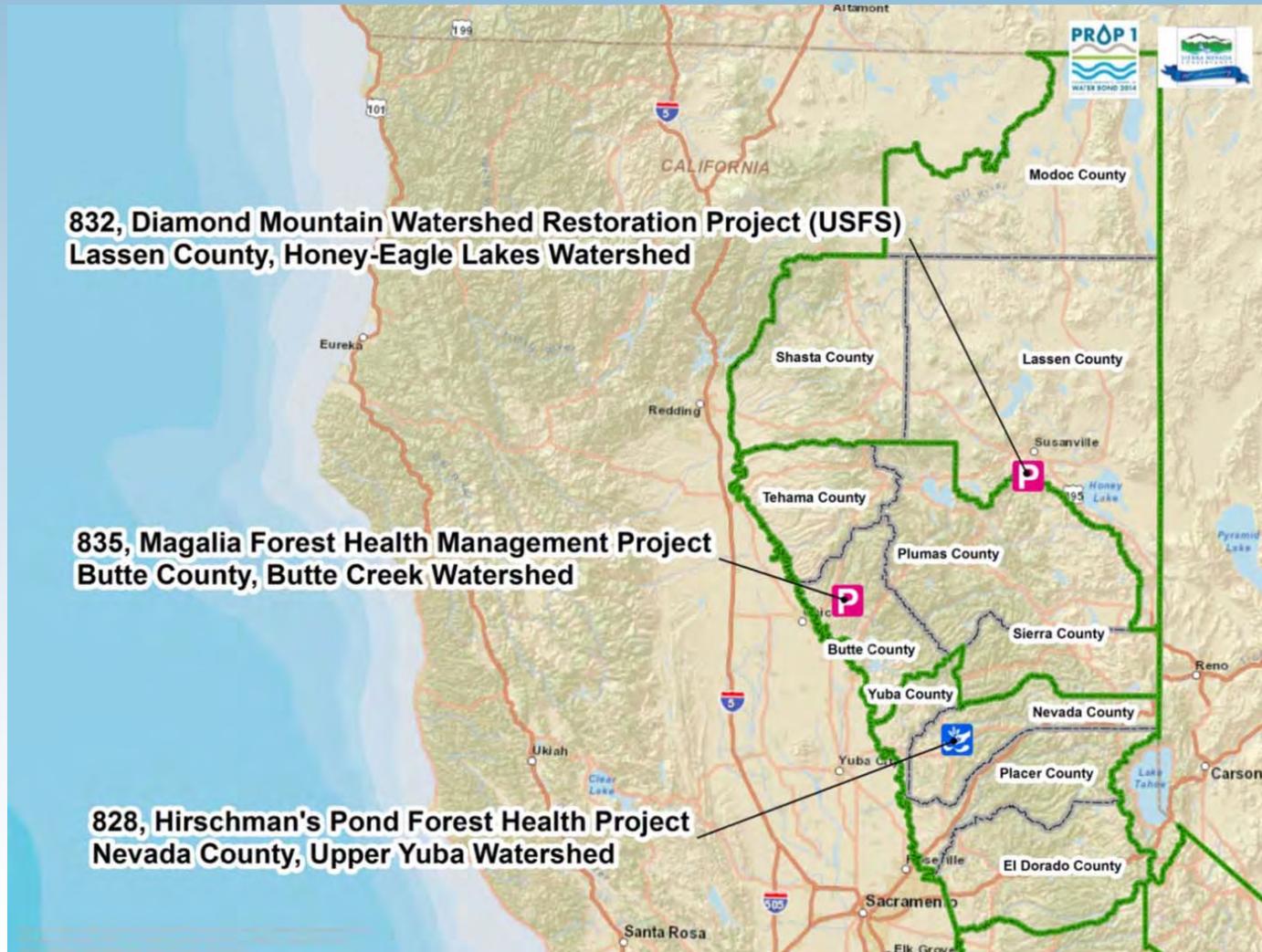
Applications Received

- SNC received 20 applications from 15 organizations totaling \$5,516,649.87.
- 13 Category 1 projects and 7 Category 2 projects.
- One project was ineligible, and one application was withdrawn.
- 5 projects being recommended at this meeting.
- 4 projects still undergoing review for possible March recommendation.

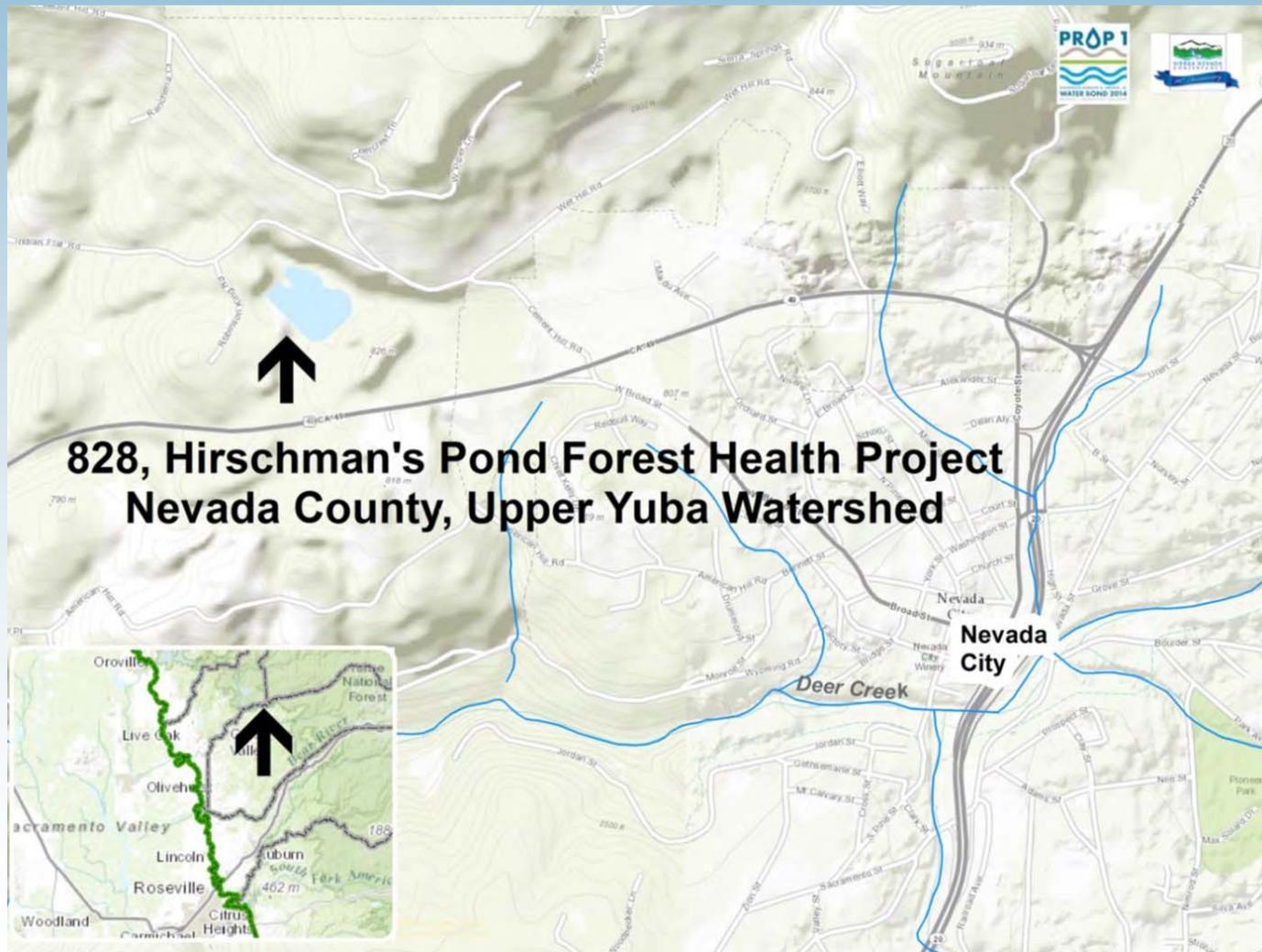
Applications Evaluated



Mt. Lassen Projects



Hirschman's Pond Forest Health Project



Hirschman's Pond Forest Health Project

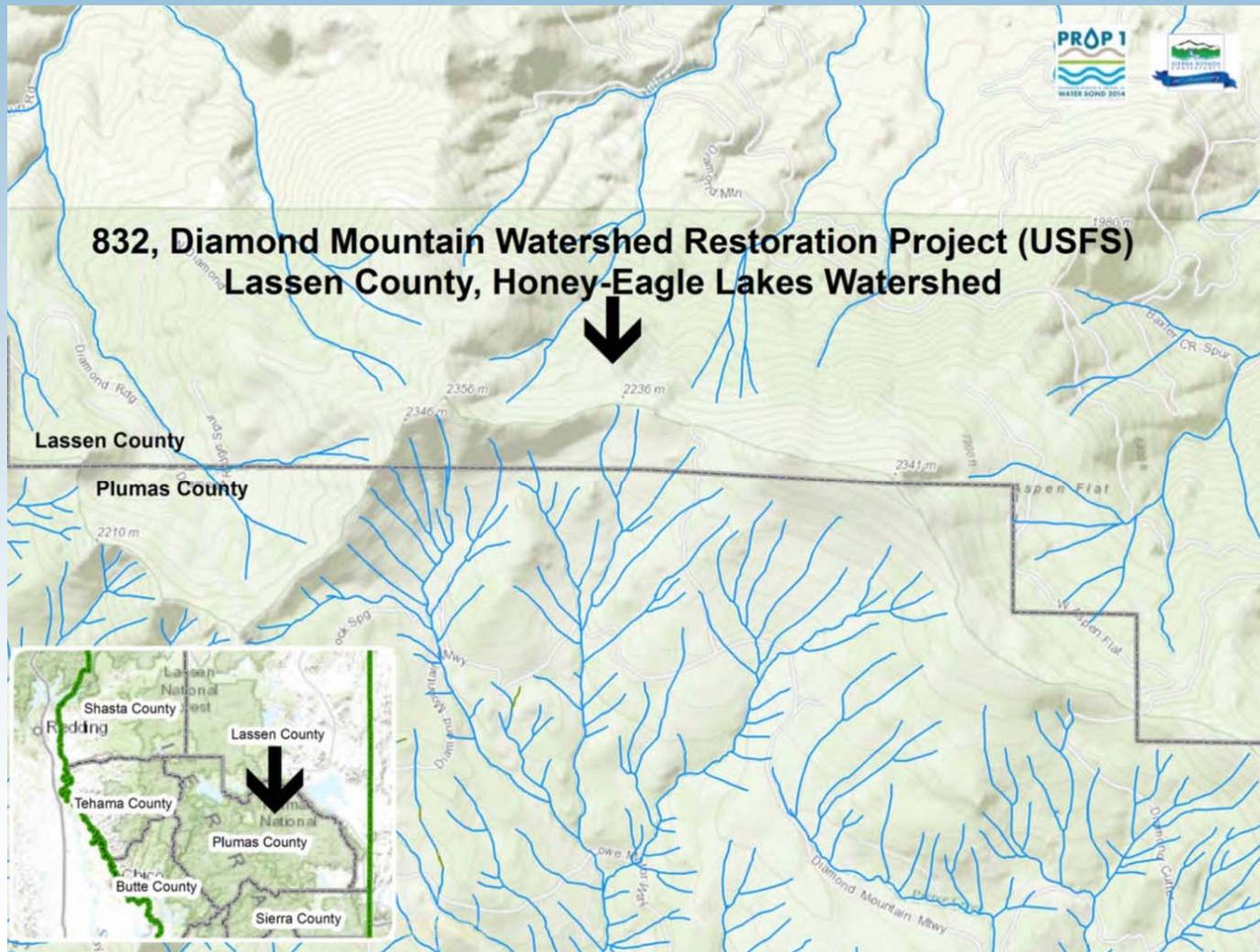


Condition of Woods Ravine, a tributary to Deer Creek that is located within the project boundary.



Representative conditions throughout the Hirschman's Pond Project site. Note the public trail in the foreground.

Diamond Mountain Watershed Restoration



Diamond Mountain Watershed Restoration

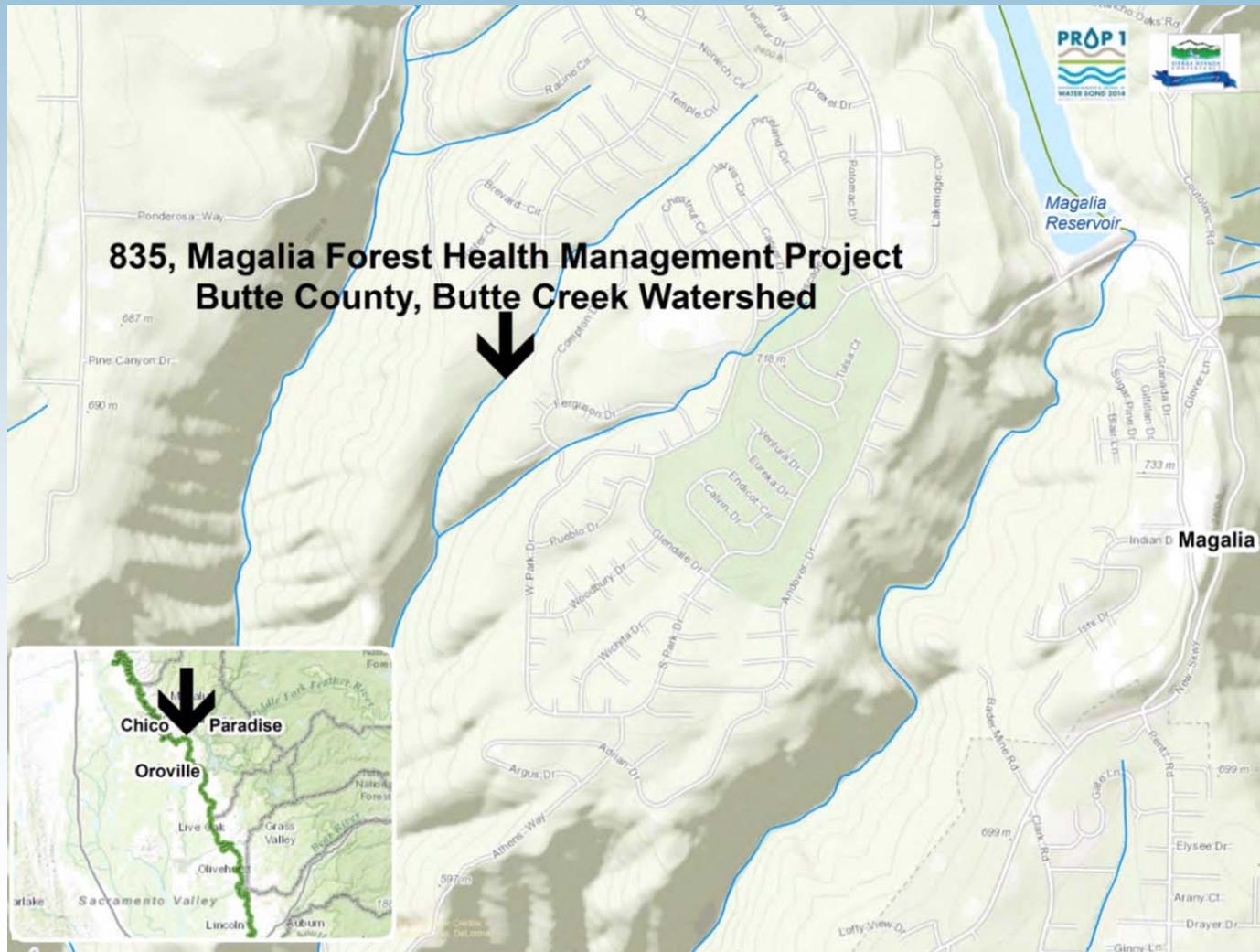


Representative conditions throughout the project area.



Overview of Diamond Mountain topography and conditions.

Magalia Forest Health Management Project



Magalia Forest Health Management Project



Little Butte Creek Riparian Area showing overstocked conditions.



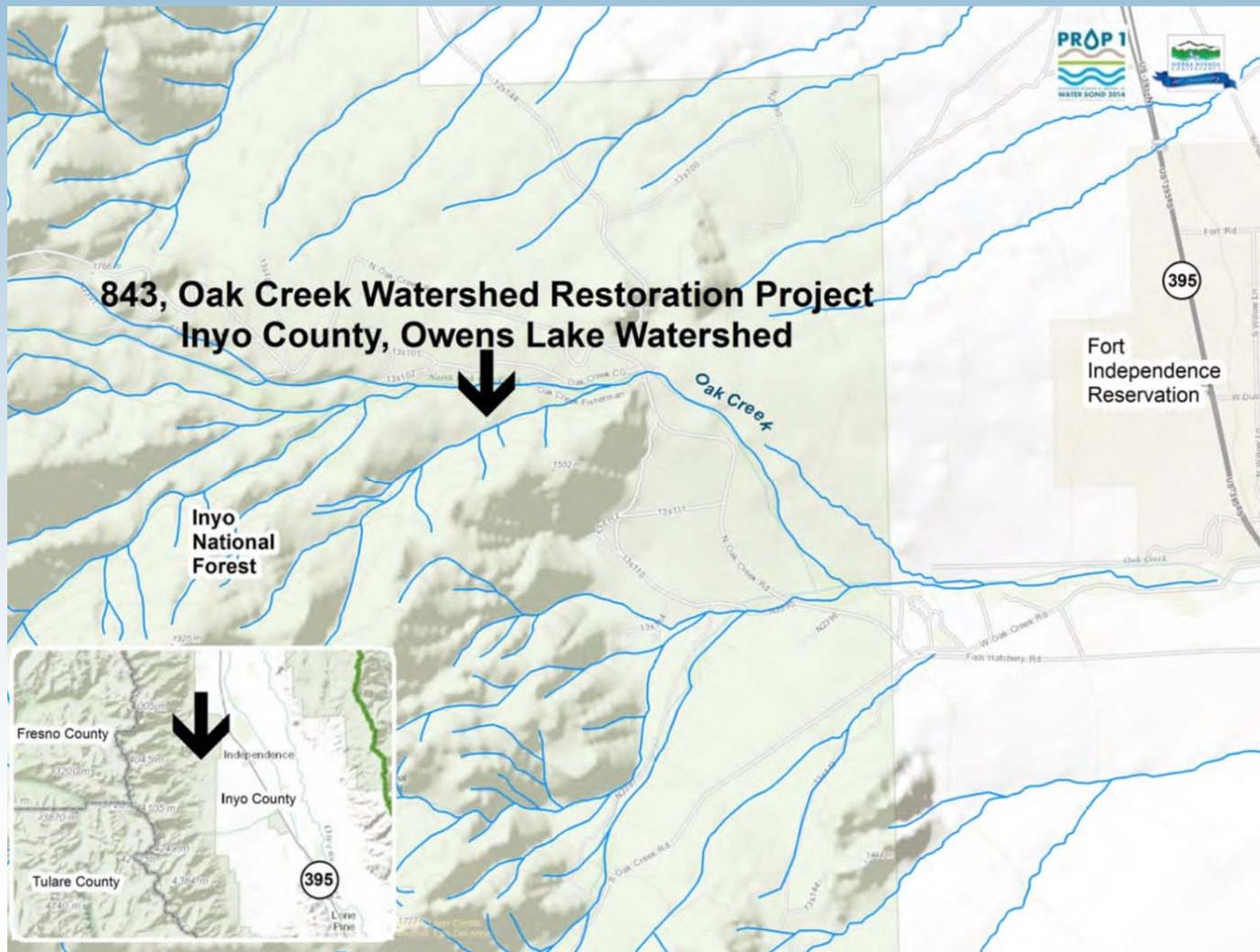
Representative overstocked forest conditions throughout the project area.

Questions?

Mt. Whitney Projects



Oak Creek Watershed Restoration Project

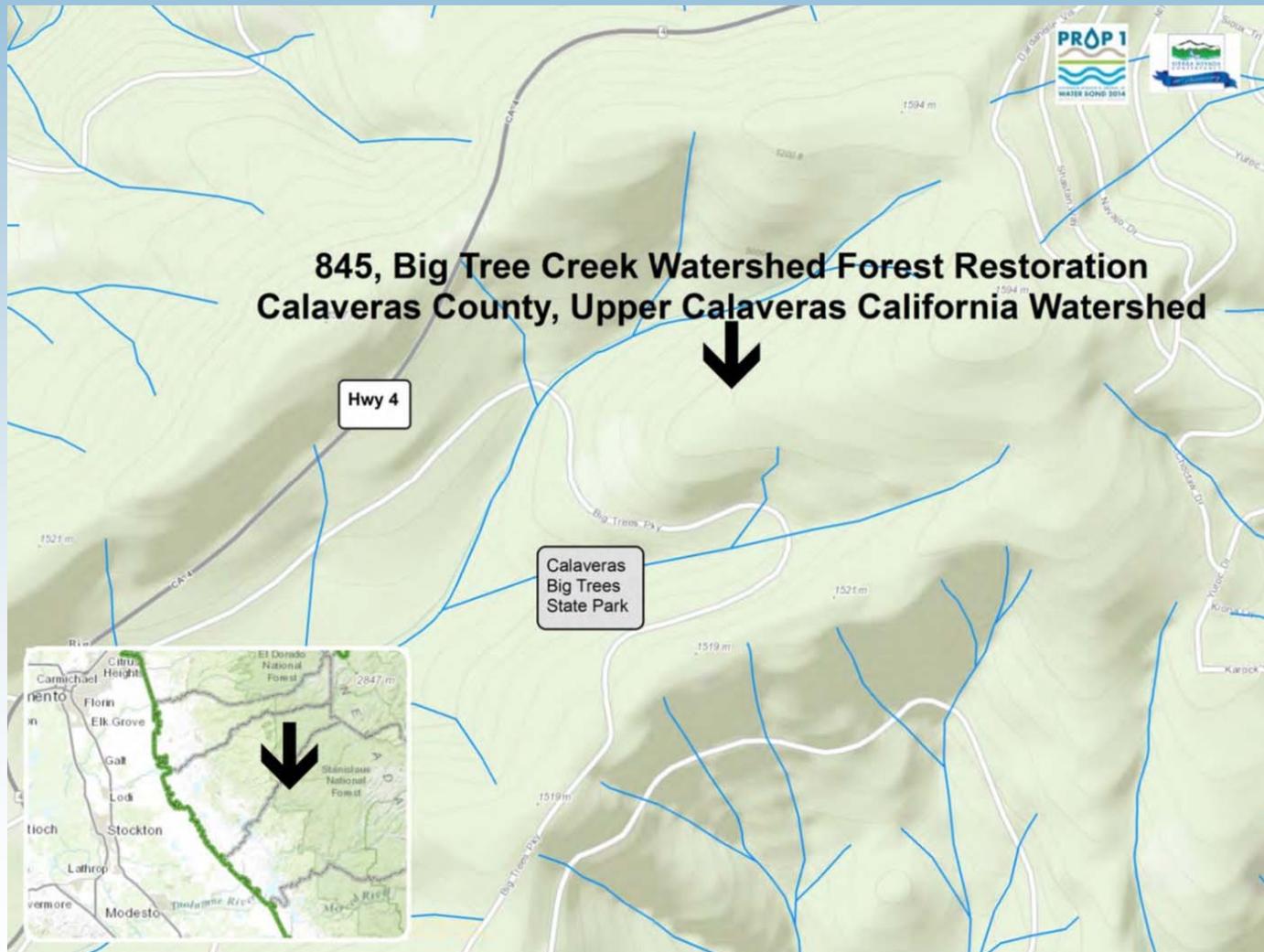


Oak Creek Watershed Restoration Project



North Fork of Oak Creek after the fire and immediately following the mudflow (July, 2008).

Big Tree Creek Watershed Forest Restoration



Big Tree Creek Watershed Forest Restoration



Previously treated area
above meadow and
adjacent to project site.



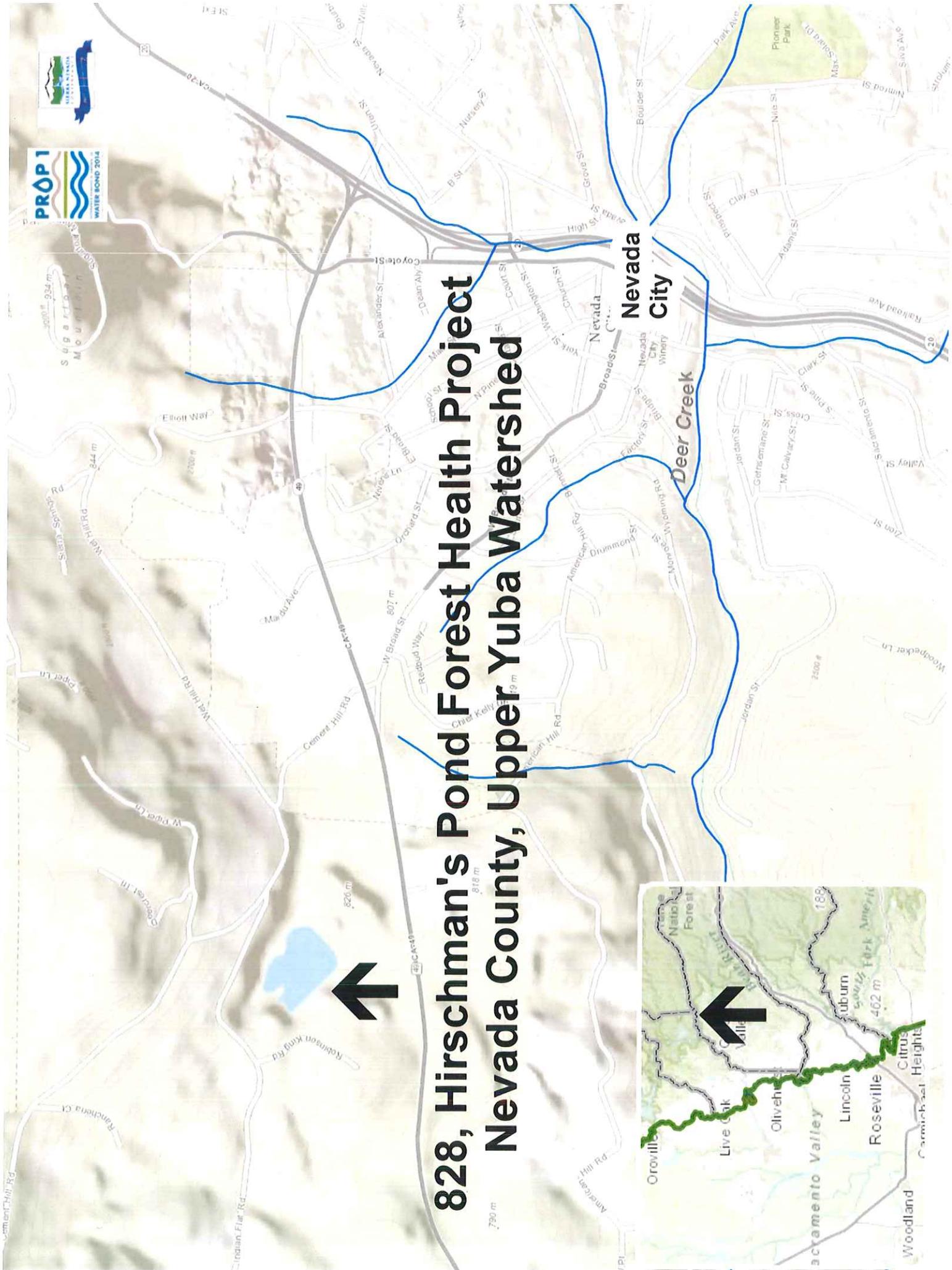
Representative overstocked forest conditions throughout
the project area.

Questions?

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Board (a) authorize the Executive Officer to file Notices of Exemption for the Hirschman's Pond Forest Health Project (SNC 828), the Diamond Mountain Watershed Restoration Project (SNC 832), the Magalia Forest Health Management Project (SNC 835), the Oak Creek Watershed Restoration Project (SNC 843), and the Big Tree Creek Watershed Forest Restoration (SNC 845); and (b) authorize a grant award to each of the above listed projects for the amounts recommended by staff, and further authorize staff to enter into the necessary agreements for the recommended projects.

828, Hirschman's Pond Forest Health Project Nevada County, Upper Yuba Watershed



**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY**

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program
Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1)**

Applicant: Sierra Streams Institute

Project Title: Hirschman's Pond Forest Health Project

Subregion: Central

County: Nevada

SNC Funding: \$156,069.00

Total Project Cost: \$217,936.00

Application Number: 828

Final Score: 91

PROJECT SCOPE

The Hirschman's Pond project is a partnership between Sierra Streams Institute and the City of Nevada City. This implementation grant follows a planning grant funded by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. The project site area is 85.34 acres of heavily overgrown mixed-conifer forested landscape. Project work consists of hand-thinning of woody debris, ladder fuels, and small diameter trees on 63.5 acres, and includes chipping of woody debris with disbursement on the site, and 21 acres will be treated for extensive invasive species, including 15 acres of Scotch Broom. Exposed areas will be replanted with native vegetation to improve habitat, and reduce risk of fire. The project includes biological and water monitoring during and after the treatment work.

The project site is in very close proximity to downtown Nevada City, so a wildfire initiated or burning through this property poses an immediate threat to a large number of homes and businesses. The project site includes a 2.4 mile trail that receives heavy recreational use. The heavily overgrown aspect of the forest, combined with large amounts of fire susceptible invasive weeds, as well as high vulnerability of ignition from recreational usage and its position along Highway 49, presents a high fire hazard to Nevada City.

The project area includes Woods Ravine, a tributary to Deer Creek. Potential post-wildfire erosion on the property and adjacent lands would compromise water quality in Woods Ravine, Deer Creek, and the Yuba River.

This project will utilize a large volunteer effort in the removal of the invasive weeds.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
Finalize subcontracts/agreements	June 15, 2016
Forest thinning and chipping	July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2018
Invasive plants removal	July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2018
Revegetation	July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2018
Progress Reports	Nov. 30, 2016, May 31, 2017, Nov. 30, 2017, May 31, 2018
Monitoring Report	July 31, 2018
Final Report	August 31, 2018
FINAL PAYMENT/FINAL PAYMENT REQUEST	Sept. 30, 2018

PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
Direct*	\$108,812.00
Indirect**	\$26,900.00
Administrative***	\$20,357.00
GRAND TOTAL	\$156,069.00

- * Direct: Direct costs are expenses necessary to acquire, construct, or to adapt property to a new or different use, or to improve property including land, buildings, and equipment. The property/expense must have a useful life longer than one year.
- ** Indirect: Expenses involve ongoing operations, repair, or maintenance costs, regardless of whether the repair or maintenance may last more than one year.
- *** Administrative: Expenses associated with the administration of a project and may not exceed 15 percent of the total SNC grant request for direct and indirect costs.

PROJECT LETTERS SUPPORT/OPPOSITION

- Support
 - Bear Yuba Land Trust
 - City of Nevada City
- Oppose
 - None

PROJECT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

There are four Performance Measures common to all grants. In addition, grantees are required to include between one and three project-specific measures. Performance Measures listed here represent those proposed by applicants and may be modified through further discussion with SNC staff.

- Acres of land improved or restored

Notice of Exemption

Form D

To: Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, Room 212
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: (Public Agency) Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205
Auburn, CA 95603

County Clerk
County of Nevada
950 Maidu Avenue, Suite 210,
Nevada City, CA 95959

(Address)

Project Title: Hirschman's Pond Forest Health Project (SNC 828)

Project Location - Specific:

The project is located approximately one mile east of downtown Nevada City, on State Route 49, in Nevada County, California.

Project Location - City: Near Nevada City Project Location - County: Nevada

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

This is a forest restoration project involving minor alterations to land and vegetation. Sierra Streams Institute is requesting \$156,069 in funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program for site improvement/restoration activities on approximately 85 acres. Implementation of the Hirschman's Pond Land Management Plan will reduce fuel loads through the removal of highly flammable woody understory and invasive species, such as Scotch broom, and through thinning and relocation of high concentrations of woody debris and ladder fuel species. (continued)

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Sierra Streams Institute

Exempt Status: (check one)

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
[X] Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Section 15304, "Minor Alterations to Land"
Statutory Exemptions. State code number:

Reasons why project is exempt:

This is a forest improvement project involving minor alterations to land and vegetation. The proposed Hirschman's Pond Forest Health project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15304, which consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of the land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry or agricultural purposes. (continued)

Lead Agency Contact Person: Patrick Eidman Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (530) 823-4689

If filed by applicant:

- 1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? Yes No

Signature: Date: Title:

- Signed by Lead Agency Date received for filing at OPR:
Signed by Applicant

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project (continued):

Reasons why project is exempt: (continued):

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION
CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Section 15304

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Proposition 1 Grant Application Number 828
Hirschman's Pond Forest Health Project

Description of Activities

The Sierra Streams Institute is requesting \$156,069 in funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program for site improvement/restoration activities on approximately 85 acres of forestland. Hirschman's Pond Forest Health project includes mixed conifer/oak woodland centered on a pond that is a relic of hydraulic mining operations. The project area includes Woods Ravine, a tributary to Deer Creek. Restoring health to the forested areas of Hirschman's Pond is essential for maintaining the integrity of the wildlife habitat that this open space area provides. This project will reduce forest fuel loads through removal of highly flammable woody understory and invasive species, such as Scotch broom, and through thinning and relocation of high concentrations of woody debris and ladder fuel species. The project will implement fuels reduction work in 63.5 acres and remove invasive vegetation from 21 acres, including 15 acres of Scotch broom. The overall goal of the project is to restore health to the forested areas of Hirschman's Pond and maintain it in perpetuity, preventing catastrophic wildfires and improving recreational opportunities. These goals will be met by focusing on non-native vegetation management and hand thinning of dense forest stands.

Specific site improvement/restoration work will include:

- 1) *Fuels Management*: Guided by the Hirschman's Pond Land Management Plan, the project team will select and flag trees and ladder fuels for removal within the 63.5 acres of the project site identified as being in need of fuels reduction work, as delineated in the Site Plan. The prescription for hazardous fuels management includes selective thinning of dense and diseased trees under 6" diameter at breast height (DBH) using hand tools (e.g., saws and small chainsaws). The project will also remove downed woody debris from areas without resident rodent populations to minimize ladder fuels. Woody debris will be mulched and dispersed throughout the project area. Fuels management guidelines are further specified in the *Long-term Land Management Plan for Hirschman's Pond, Nevada City, CA*.
- 2) *Invasive Species Removal*: Sierra Streams Institute will remove invasive non-native vegetation, particularly Scotch broom and Himalayan blackberry, from the project site, using hand tools, and working with CCC and AmeriCorps members and community volunteers. The workplan will target 21 acres that are infested with invasive vegetation, including 15 acres of Scotch broom. Biomass will be removed prior to development of seeds, hand-mulched to facilitate decomposition, and dispersed throughout the removal area.
- 3) *Revegetation*: Sierra Streams Institute will work with community volunteers to replant non-native vegetation removal areas, using native plant species known for their ability to establish quickly and outcompete Scotch broom, and for their fire-safe qualities. Guided by the Land Management Plan, plant species chosen from the project plant palette to restore a naturally diverse community of native plants.

Reasons Why the Project is Exempt

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), a categorical exemption provides for an exemption from CEQA environmental documentation requirements for a class of projects determined not to have a significant effect on the environment. Categorical Exemptions are addressed in Article 19 of the CEQA Guidelines, where a list of 32 classes of projects has been identified. Projects falling within one of these classes of projects are generally exempt from the provisions of CEQA.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15304: Minor Alterations to Land

The Hirschman's Pond Forest Health project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15304, Class 4, which consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of mature, scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes.

The Hirschman's Pond Forest Health project consists of minor land alterations involving the thinning and removal of surface vegetation for forestry purposes (improved forest health and fire risk reduction) and revegetation using native species on approximately 85 acres; there are no hazardous materials on or around the project site; and the site improvement/restoration work will not result in significant adverse impacts.

No Exceptions to a Categorical Exemption

Categorical exemptions represent activities that generally do not result in significant environmental impacts. However, there are six exceptions to categorical exemptions, defined in the CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2. Generally, a categorical exemption does not apply if a project would occur in certain specified sensitive environments, would affect scenic resources within an official state scenic highway, or would be located on a designated hazardous waste site. In addition, a categorical exemption would not apply if the project causes substantial adverse changes in the significance of a historical resource or would be considered significant within the cumulative context. Table 1 identifies the exceptions from CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 and includes a brief discussion of why each exception does not apply to the Hirschman's Pond Forest Health project.

Exception	Applicability
(a) Location. Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located – a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply in all instances, except where the project may impact an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.	<p>The goals of this approximately 85- acre site improvement/restoration project are to restore health to the forested areas of Hirschman's Pond and maintain it in perpetuity, preventing catastrophic wildfires and improving recreational opportunities. These goals will be met by focusing on non-native vegetation management and hand thinning of dense forest stands. Maintaining a fire-safe forest in the Hirschman's Pond area will also prevent potential water quality impacts to Woods Ravine by preventing erosion that ensues after catastrophic fires, and ensuring that resulting sedimentation and nutrient addition to Woods Ravine are avoided. The fire safety improvements will help support resident populations of Western pond turtles, Pacific chorus frogs, and many migrating and resident waterfowl species, Further habitat and forest health improvements will be achieved by replanting non-native vegetation removal areas, using native plant species.</p> <p>This project work consists of minor land alterations involving the removal of surface vegetation. The project work does not involve</p>

	<p>activities in or adjacent to streams or waterbodies, nor will project work occur on areas know to contain hazardous substances. The project activities will not occur in locations that contain known significant cultural or biological resources</p> <p>The anticipated timeline for the project is from May 2016 through July 2018. Site improvement/restoration work will include: fuels management, invasive species removal, and revegetation.</p>
<p>(b) Cumulative Impact. All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.</p>	<p>The site improvement/restoration activities will not adversely affect environmental resources, and will therefore not contribute to any cumulative environmental impact in relation to other restoration projects in the region. The site improvement/restoration will result in beneficial effects to the region's forests, creeks, watersheds, associated lands, and adjacent neighborhoods by providing wildfire risk reduction, and natural resource management and protection.</p>
<p>(c) Significant Effect. A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.</p>	<p>The site improvement/restoration project will not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. Specific environmental topics are addressed below:</p> <p>Aesthetics. The site improvement/restoration will result in a minor change in the appearance of the Hirschman's Pond Park due to the removal of surface vegetation and replanting with native plants. The goals of this approximately 85-acre site improvement/restoration project is to restore health to the forested areas of Hirschman's Pond and maintain it in perpetuity, preventing catastrophic wildfires and improving recreational opportunities. All intended management practices such as site preparation, thinning, and burning can be conducted with limited visibility or detection from surrounding properties.</p> <p>Agriculture/ Forestry. The project site does not contain any grazing or agricultural resources; consequently, the project will have no impact on agricultural resources. The project will reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire on</p>

approximately 85 acres by thinning dense stands and removal of invasive plant species.

Air Quality/GHGs. The project activities will result in nominal fugitive dust and mobile source emissions. Mobile source emissions will be limited to those associated with vehicle trips to/from the site improvement/restoration areas, and mechanized equipment. Mechanized equipment will be used for restoration activities (i.e., small chainsaws and chipper). Nearby sensitive receptors will not be exposed to substantial pollutant concentrations. The restoration will not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the region's applicable air quality plan and will not violate any air quality standard or contribute to an existing or projected air quality violation.

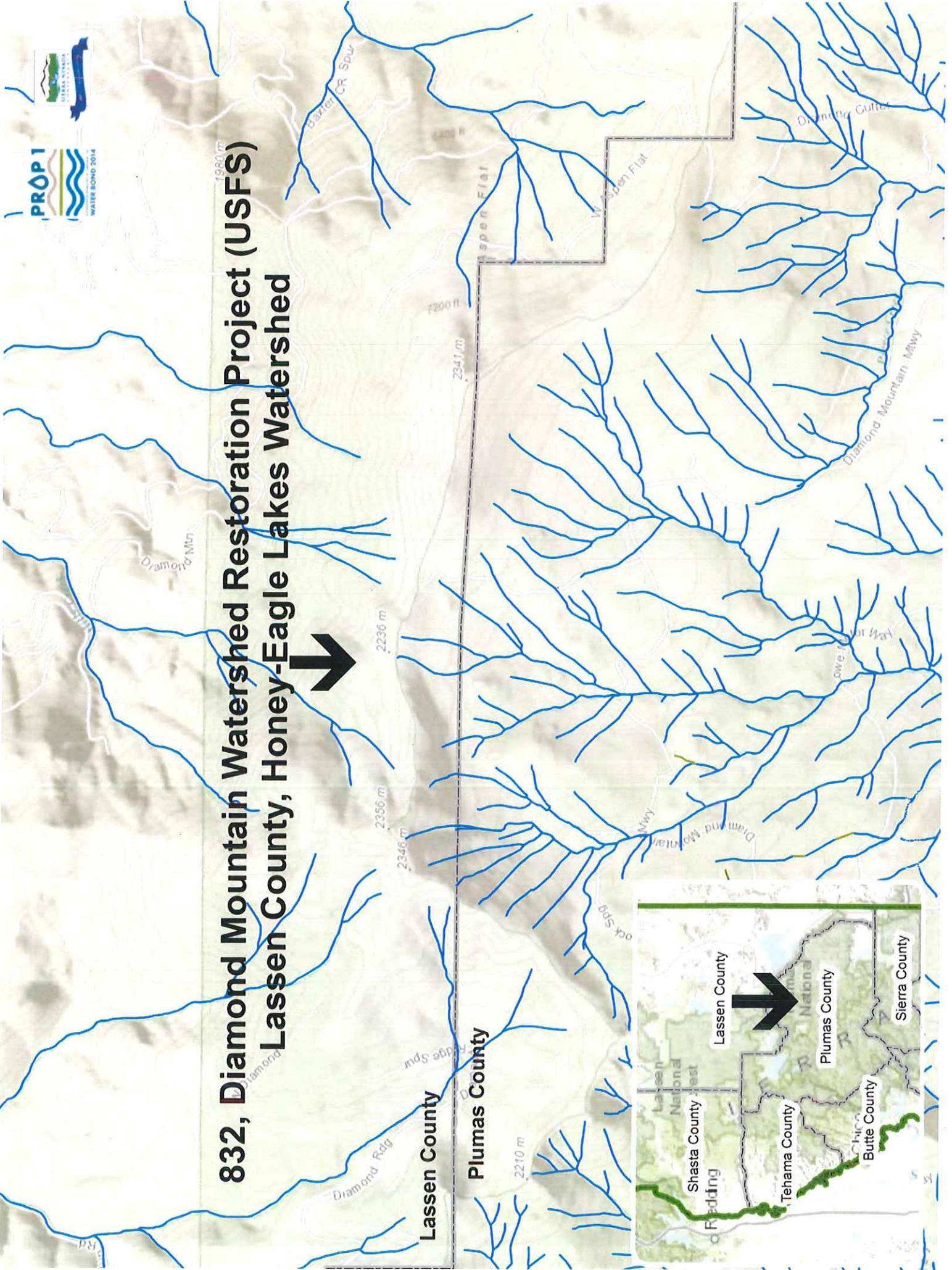
Biological Resources. No work will occur in the vicinity of sensitive resources. Biological surveys were performed on the project area in 2013, 2014, and 2015. A search of the California Natural Diversity Database was completed in 2014, which found no sensitive or listed plant species present or dependent upon the project area. The western pond turtle, a state Species of Special Concern, is present in Hirschman's Pond, where no vegetation removal will occur. The pond – especially the north side of the pond, which has no trail access – is home to a great variety of wildlife, both migratory and resident. This area will serve as a "wildlife sanctuary" where animals and their habitat can remain undisturbed from human activity and any potentially disruptive management activities. All work will maintain a variable-width buffer, dependent on location and work type, around the pond area itself.

Two avian Species of Special Concern were identified during bird surveys: the yellow warbler and the yellow-breasted chat. The yellow warbler is a second priority species, while the yellow-breasted chat is a third priority species. Both species nest primarily in riparian vegetation and brush and not in coniferous areas, and are only a special priority during breeding season. All work will be conducted in non-breeding season and avoid riparian habitat areas that include preferred vegetation species such as willow (*Salix* sp.). Therefore, the project will have no impact on these species.

	<p>The integrity of native plant communities will be enhanced with removal of invasive vegetation from 21 acres of the site and replanting with native plant species known for their ability to establish quickly and outcompete Scotch broom, and for their fire resistant qualities. In addition, wildlife habitat will be improved by removing overstocked stands while also maintaining quality downed snags for wildlife habitat purposes.</p> <p>Cultural Resources. See (f).</p> <p>Geology/Soils. Site improvement/restoration activities will not expose people or structures to loss, injury, or death due to seismic activity or unstable soils. The work planned as part of the Hirschman's Pond Forest Health project would include removal of non-native vegetation near Hirschman's Pond, but would be limited to removal using hand tools and would not result in adverse effects on the pond. Valuable soils will be retained onsite to grow trees and support wildlife.</p> <p>Hazards/Hazardous Materials. See (e).</p> <p>Hydrology/Water Quality. See (a) and Geology/Soils.</p> <p>Noise. Site improvement/restoration activities will generate temporary noise. However, given that restoration activities will be limited to daytime business hours (the least sensitive hours of the day), and the limited extent to which these activities could expose sensitive receptors to increased noise levels, the project will not cause significant noise effects.</p> <p>Transportation. There will be limited additional trips on local roadways during project implementation. No vehicular transportation over sensitive habitat will occur. The vehicles will not block traffic and no traffic delays will occur due to restoration activities.</p> <p>Other CEQA Issues. The project will have no effect on land use, mineral resources, population and housing, public services, recreation, or utilities and service systems.</p>
(d) Scenic Highways. A categorical exemption	State Route (SR) 49 to the south of the project

<p>shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.</p>	<p>site is eligible for designation as a scenic highway. The project involves selective reduction in tree density through careful thinning and removal of trees under 6" DBH and invasive plant species. In the vicinity of the project, views to the east along SR 49 are of forested areas. Travelers on SR 49 may have intermittent, temporary views of project activities. The proposed project will not result in the removal of, or damage to, any trees, rock outcroppings, historic buildings or other resources within the viewshed of a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway.</p>
<p>(e) Hazardous Waste Sites. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.</p>	<p>The site is not located on toxic sites listed pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code. The <i>Preliminary Abandoned Mine Land Characterization for Hirschman's Pond</i> prepared by Holdrege and Kull identified elevated levels of arsenic and lead in the waste rock pile on the southern end of the pond. The project will not include any work in this area and therefore will not risk exposure to hazardous materials.</p>
<p>(f) Historical Resources. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.</p>	<p>An Archaeological Inventory Survey was performed by Jensen and Associates and was submitted with the Indian Trails Subdivision map, which covers the open space parcels dedicated to the City of Nevada City which are a part of the Hirschman's Pond Trail project. Within the area covered by the survey, evidence of two prehistoric sites and 15 historic sites were identified. The survey concluded none of the sites have been qualified as significant per CEQA and no mitigation for project related disturbance was recommended.</p> <p>However, due to the historic occupation of the region there is the remote possibility of encountering subsurface cultural resources during invasive species removal activities. If such resources are encountered or suspected, work shall be halted immediately and shall not resume until the area is cleared by qualified individuals. No work will occur in the vicinity of sensitive resources. The project will not result in an adverse change in the significance of any archaeological or historical resource and will not disturb or destroy any human remains or paleontological resources.</p>

832, Diamond Mountain Watershed Restoration Project (USFS) Lassen County, Honey-Eagle Lakes Watershed



**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY**

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program
Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1)**

Applicant: Lassen County Fire Safe Council

Project Title: Diamond Mountain Watershed Restoration (USFS)-Planning

Subregion: North

County: Lassen

SNC Funding: \$75,000.00

Total Project Cost: \$125,000.00

Application Number: 832

Final Score: 88.75

PROJECT SCOPE

The project site, located seven miles south of Susanville in northeastern California's Lassen County, is situated in the Susan River Watershed. The Lassen County Fire Safe Council, working with the Lassen National Forest, will complete surveys, project design, and assessments in order to support a decision by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service for future fuel treatments on the Forest Service portion of the project site. Targeting approximately 3,000 acres of public land, the planning project will be completed by July 1, 2017. The actual treatment area for this portion of the project will be determined after field surveys have been completed as a result of this project.

The project is part of a larger project area called the Diamond Mountain Project that encompasses a mix of public and private lands. Forested areas within the Diamond Mountain Project are in an overstocked condition resulting in heavy fuel loading and a corresponding increase in fire hazard. The goals of the overall project include: 1) reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire and the associated adverse effects on air and water quality, 2) reducing the probability of excessive greenhouse gas emissions associated with catastrophic wildfire, 3) improving public health and safety, and 4) protecting the working forest landscape from loss to wildfire.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
Complete Surveys	September 30, 2016
Climate Change and Economic Analysis	November 30, 2016
Six-Month Progress Reports Due	August 1, 2016, February 1, 2017
Draft Environmental Document	June 15, 2017
Final Report Due	July 1, 2017
FINAL PAYMENT/FINAL PAYMENT REQUEST	July 15, 2017

PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
Direct*	\$58,217.00
Indirect**	\$7,000.00
Administrative***	\$9,783.00
GRAND TOTAL	\$75,000.00

* Direct: Direct costs are expenses necessary to acquire, construct, or to adapt property to a new or different use, or to improve property including land, buildings, and equipment. The property/expense must have a useful life longer than one year.

** Indirect: Expenses involve ongoing operations, repair, or maintenance costs, regardless of whether the repair or maintenance may last more than one year.

*** Administrative: Expenses associated with the administration of a project and may not exceed 15 percent of the total SNC grant request for direct and indirect costs.

PROJECT LETTERS SUPPORT/OPPOSITION

- Support
 - Lassen County Board of Supervisors
 - Brian Dahle, Assembly Member 1st District
 - Lassen National Forest, Eagle Lake District Ranger
 - BLM, Eagle Lake Field Station, Fire Prevention/Mitigation Specialist
 - CAL FIRE Lassen-Modoc-Plumas Unit, Acting Unit Chief
 - Honey Lake Power Company

PROJECT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

There are four Performance Measures common to all grants. In addition, grantees are required to include between one and three project-specific measures. Performance Measures listed here represent those proposed by applicants and may be modified through further discussion with Sierra Nevada Conservancy staff.

- Percent of Pre-project and Planning Efforts Resulting in Project Implementation
- Number of Collaboratively Developed Plans and Assessments

Notice of Exemption

Form D

To: Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, Room 212
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: (Public Agency) Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205
Auburn, CA 95603

County Clerk
County of Lassen
220 S Lassen St., Suite 5
Susanville, CA 96130

(Address)

Project Title: Diamond Mountain Watershed Restoration Project Environmental Studies (832)

Project Location - Specific:

Lassen National Forest, Lassen County, California 7 miles south of Susanville. Latitude/Longitude: 40.316401N, 120.681461W

Project Location - City: near Susanville Project Location - County: Lassen

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The Lassen County Fire Safe Council is requesting \$75,000 in funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy grant program to perform environmental studies to support the Diamond Mountain Watershed Restoration Project. (continued)

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Lassen County Fire Safe Council, Inc.

Exempt Status: (check one)

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Sec 15306, Information Collection
Statutory Exemptions. State code number: Sec. 15262, Feasibility and Planning Studies

Reasons why project is exempt:

The project involves planning and feasibility studies, and information collection that does not involve ground disturbance or impacts to environmental resources. Specific actions include working collaboratively with the LNF to complete resource surveys, prepare specialist reports, and prepare NEPA and CEQA documentation. The resource evaluations will inform future possible actions, which have not been approved, and the completion of these resource evaluations will not have legally binding effect on future activities.

Lead Agency
Contact Person: Patrick Eidman, Grant Program Coordinator Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (530) 823-4689

If filed by applicant:

- 1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? Yes No

Signature: Date: Title:

- Signed by Lead Agency Date received for filing at OPR:
Signed by Applicant

Revised 2005

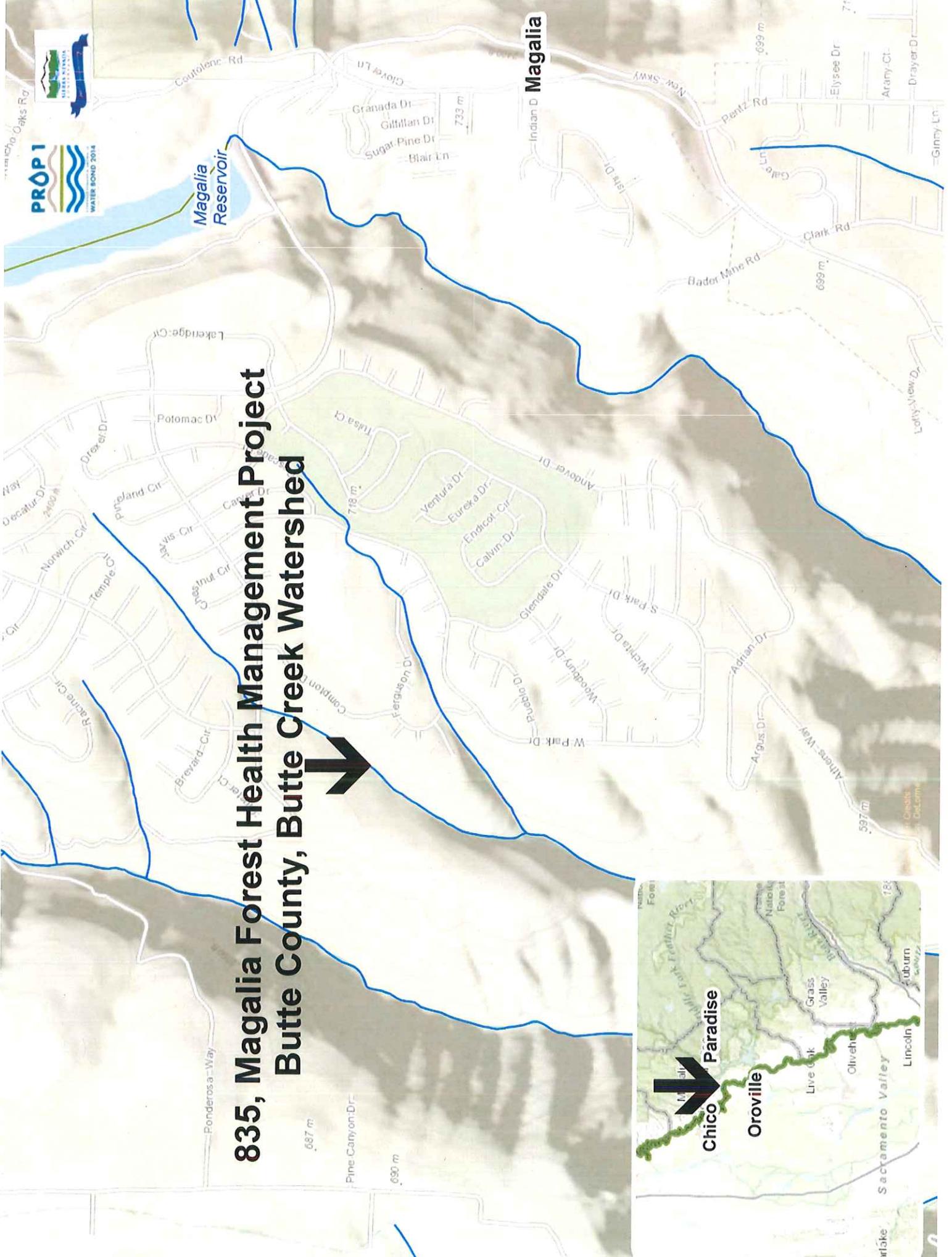
Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project (continued):



Magalia Reservoir

Magalia

835, Magalia Forest Health Management Project Butte County, Butte Creek Watershed



**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY**

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program
Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1)**

Applicant: Butte County Fire Safe Council

Project Title: Magalia Forest Health Management Project

Subregion: North Central

County: Butte

SNC Funding: \$75,000.00

Total Project Cost: \$75,000.00

Application Number: 835

Final Score: 95.25

PROJECT SCOPE

The project area is located in the community of Magalia in Butte County, home to approximately 11,000 residents. The community is situated within a mixed conifer forest between the Little Butte and Butte Creek watersheds, which are significant tributaries to the Feather River watershed. The project is located within a collection area of drinking water supply for the Town of Paradise, and is within a CAL FIRE designated "Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone."

This project will produce the following deliverables: Completion of a Forest Management Plan, a collaborative landscape level inventory and assessment on the health of 800 forested acres. The property to be the focus of this effort consists of parcels owned by Paradise Irrigation District, Paradise Pines Property Owners Association, and Paradise Unified School District. The Plan will identify, map, and describe forest health treatment methodologies for each identified project area. This documentation will support a decision towards completion and filing of a California Environmental Quality Act determination document by Butte County or Butte County Resource Conservation District.

Treatments as a result of the plan developed under this grant will increase forest diversity and resiliency to better adapt to the stresses of climate change, safeguard a significant reservoir that supplies drinking water to nearby communities, and contribute to the reduction of catastrophic wildfire threat to the residents who live within the watershed.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
Contracting complete	March 30, 2016
Archaeological Surveys and Native American Notification complete	May 30, 2016
Draft environmental document delivered to Butte County or Butte County Resource Conservation District for purpose of filing CEQA documentation	July 30, 2016
Forest Management Plan complete/approved by partner landowners and Butte County Fire Safe Council	August 31, 2016
Six Month Progress Reports (1)	August 1, 2016
FINAL REPORT/FINAL PAYMENT REQUEST	January 1, 2017

PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
Direct*	\$71,000.00
Indirect**	\$1,000.00
Administrative***	\$3,000.00
GRAND TOTAL	\$75,000.00

- * Direct: Direct costs are expenses necessary to acquire, construct, or to adapt property to a new or different use, or to improve property including land, buildings, and equipment. The property/expense must have a useful life longer than one year.
- ** Indirect: Expenses involve ongoing operations, repair, or maintenance costs, regardless of whether the repair or maintenance may last more than one year.
- *** Administrative: Expenses associated with the administration of a project and may not exceed 15 percent of the total SNC grant request for direct and indirect costs.

PROJECT LETTERS SUPPORT/OPPOSITION

- Support
 - Butte County Air Quality Management District
 - FSC- Bare on the Ridge
 - FSC- Paradise
 - BLM- Redding Field Office
 - CCC- Chico Satellite office
 - Butte County Emergency Services
 - Paradise Irrigation District
 - Paradise Pines Property Association

- Oppose
 - N/A

PROJECT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

There are four Performance Measures common to all grants. In addition, grantees are required to include between one and three project-specific measures. Performance Measures listed here represent those proposed by applicants and may be modified through further discussion with SNC staff.

- Number of Collaboratively Developed Plans and Assessments

Notice of Exemption

Form D

To: Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, Room 212
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: (Public Agency) Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205
Auburn, CA 95603

(Address)

County Clerk
County of Butte
25 County Center Drive
Oroville, CA 95965

Project Title: Magalia Forest Health Management Plan (835)

Project Location - Specific:

The project area is located in the community of Magalia in Butte County. The project will take place on 800 acres of forest lands owned by Paradise Pines Property Owners Association (540 acres), Paradise Irrigation District (180 acres), and Paradise Unified School District (80 acres)

Project Location - City: Magalia Project Location - County: Butte

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The Butte County Fire Safe Council is requesting \$75,000 from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy grant program to prepare the Magalia Forest Health Management Plan. The work is a planning project. A Registered Professional Forester (RPF) will develop a landscape-level Forest Management Plan (FMP) covering approximately 800 acres of conifer forest lands. (continued)

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Butte County Fire Safe Council

Exempt Status: (check one)

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
- Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
- Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
- Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Sec 15306, Information Collection
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: Sec. 15262, Feasibility and Planning Studies

Reasons why project is exempt:

The project will involve information collection and planning studies, which do not involve ground disturbance or impacts to environmental resources. These efforts will inform the development of a plan that will direct possible future forest health management actions. These potential future actions have not yet been approved, and the completion of these planning studies will not have a legally binding effect on future activities.

Lead Agency
Contact Person: Patrick Eidman, Grant Program Coordinator Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (530) 823-4689

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? Yes No

Signature: _____ Date: _____ Title: _____

- Signed by Lead Agency
 - Signed by Applicant
- Date received for filing at OPR: _____

Revised 2005

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project (continued):



843, Oak Creek Watershed Restoration Project Inyo County, Owens Lake Watershed

Fort Independence Reservation

Inyo National Forest

Oak Creek

395



**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY**

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program
Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1)**

Applicant: Trout Unlimited

Project Title: Oak Creek Watershed Restoration Project

Subregion: East

County: Inyo County

SNC Funding: \$47,121

Total Project Cost: \$47,771

Application Number: 843

Final Score: 91

PROJECT SCOPE

The Oak Creek Watershed Restoration Project will fulfill step three of a four-step process that began in 2011 with the development of the Oak Creek Watershed Restoration Action Plan (WRAP) as a response to impacts to the watershed due to a high intensity fire in 2007 and a summer 2008 rain event that moved 1.5 million cubic yards of debris through the system, affecting more than 800 acres in the watershed. Step Three will complete the funding and environmental compliance necessary to begin Step Four which is implementation of the restoration plan and adaptive management of the site.

This project is located on the Inyo National Forest, above the community of Independence and the Fort Independence Native American Reservation, on the eastside of the Sierra Nevada range. Significant pre-planning completed with funding from the Inyo-Mono Integrated Regional Water Management Program and the Lahontan Water Quality Control Board, along with volunteers from local NGOs, has led to the project being ready for environmental review and permitting.

Specific tasks to be delivered with this project include the completion of the CEQA/NEPA analysis necessary to support a NEPA record of decision document, an adopted CEQA review document, and the application and acquisition of the necessary permits for in-channel work as authorized by the Army Corps of Engineers and the Lahontan Water Quality Control Board.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
Develop draft restoration proposal – begin field work and data collection to establish design criteria	May 1, 2016
Finalize proposed action and design criteria	June 30, 2016
Initiate public scoping and tribal consultation	September 1 – October 1, 2016
Complete 6-month status report	November 1, 2016
Finalize specialist reports	November 1, 2016
Respond to comments	November 15, 2016
Finalize NEPA/CEQA decision	January 15, 2017
Water quality/stream work permits submitted to agencies	March 1, 2017
Complete 6-month status report	May 1, 2017
Water quality/stream work permits acquired	June 1, 2017
FINAL PAYMENT/FINAL PAYMENT REQUEST	July 30, 2017

PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
Direct*	
Project manager and stream work permits	\$11,823.06
NEPA/CEQA analysis/documentation	\$15,500.00
TU field work/supplies	\$1,000.00
Inyo NF staff field work/data collection	\$10,500.00
Outreach print materials and media costs	\$500.00
Indirect**	
Project reporting/invoicing	\$1,651.86
Administrative***	
Administrative expenses	\$6,146.24
GRAND TOTAL	\$47,121.16

- * Direct: Direct costs are expenses necessary to acquire, construct, or to adapt property to a new or different use, or to improve property including land, buildings, and equipment. The property/expense must have a useful life longer than one year.
- ** Indirect: Expenses involve ongoing operations, repair, or maintenance costs, regardless of whether the repair or maintenance may last more than one year.
- *** Administrative: Expenses associated with the administration of a project and may not exceed 15 percent of the total SNC grant request for direct and indirect costs.

PROJECT LETTERS SUPPORT/OPPOSITION

- Support
 - Ed Armenta, Forest Supervisor, Inyo National Forest

PROJECT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

There are four Performance Measures common to all grants. In addition, grantees are required to include between one and three project-specific measures. Performance Measures listed here represent those proposed by applicants and may be modified through further discussion with SNC staff.

- Percent of Pre-project and Planning Efforts Resulting in Project Implementation
- Number of Collaboratively Developed Plans and Assessments
- Number of People Reached

Notice of Exemption

Form D

To: Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, Room 212
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: (Public Agency) Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205
Auburn, CA 95603

County Clerk
County of Inyo
P.O. Drawer F
Independence, CA 93526

(Address)

Project Title: Oak Creek Watershed Restoration Project (843)

Project Location - Specific:

Oak Creek Watershed in the Inyo National Forest near Independence. Lat/Long: 36 50' 30.25" N 118 16' 07.67" W

Project Location - City: Independence Project Location - County: Inyo

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The project would include completion of the CEQA/NEPA analysis and application and acquisition of the necessary permits for in-channel work from the Army Corps of Engineers and Lahontan Water Quality Control Board. (continued)

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Trout Unlimited

Exempt Status: (check one)

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
- Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
- Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
- Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Sec 15306, Information Collection
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: Sec. 15262, Feasibility and Planning Studies

Reasons why project is exempt:

The project involves information collection and planning studies, which do not involve ground disturbance or impacts to environmental resources. The planning studies will inform future possible actions, which have not been approved, and the completion of these planning studies will not have legally binding effect on future activities.

Lead Agency
Contact Person: Patrick Eidman, Grant Program Coordinator Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (530) 823-4689

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? Yes No

Signature: _____ Date: _____ Title: _____

- Signed by Lead Agency Date received for filing at OPR: _____
- Signed by Applicant

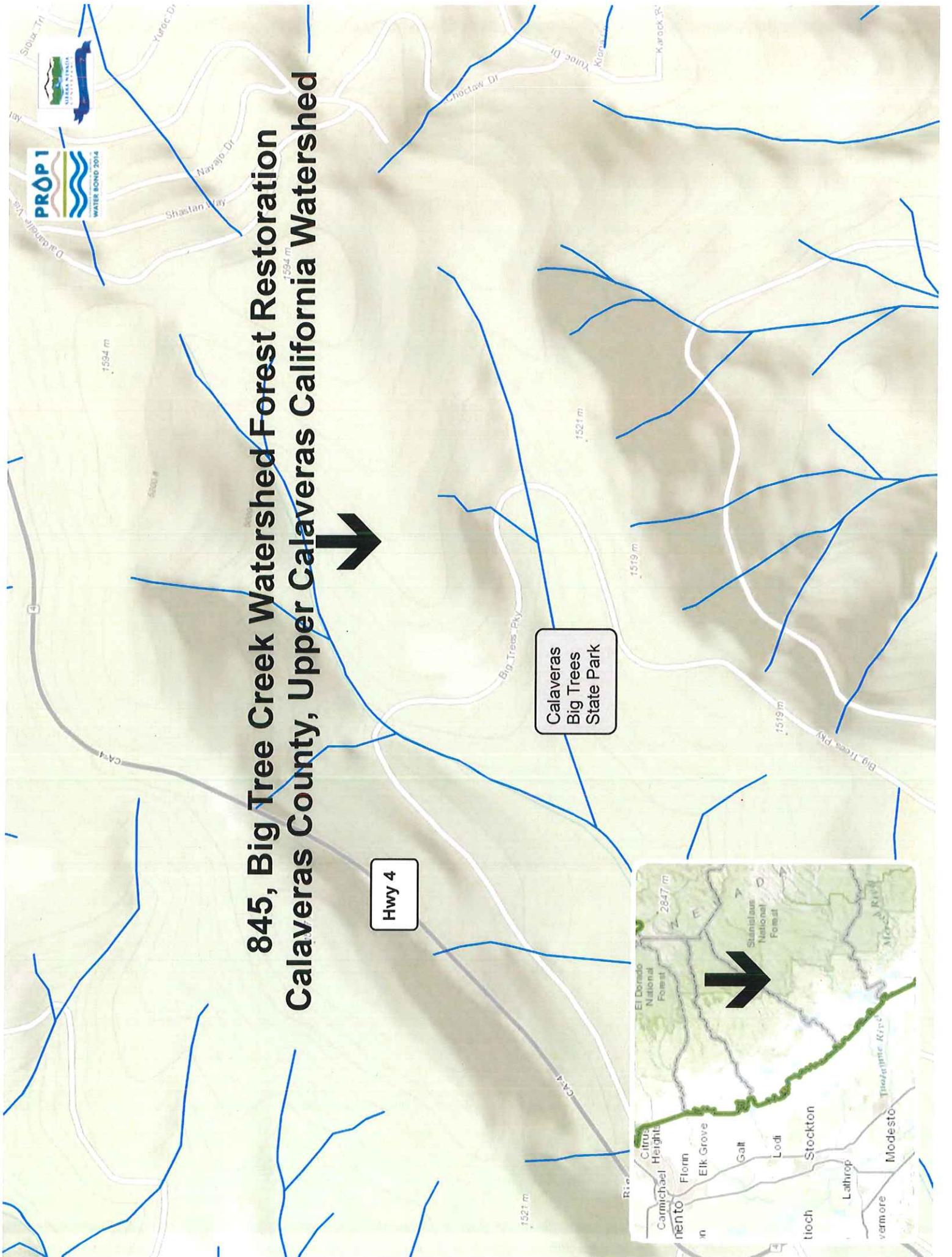
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Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project (continued):

845, Big Tree Creek Watershed Forest Restoration Calaveras County, Upper Calaveras California Watershed

Hwy 4

Calaveras
Big Trees
State Park



**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY**

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program
Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1)**

Applicant: CA Department of Parks and Recreation

Project Title: Big Tree Creek Watershed Forest Restoration Project

Subregion: South Central

County: Calaveras

SNC Funding: \$500,000

Total Project Cost: \$550,560

Application Number: 845

Final Score: 86.5

PROJECT SCOPE

The Big Tree Creek Watershed Forest Restoration Project is found within the Calaveras Big Trees State Park (CBT), located midway up the western slope of the central Sierra Nevada range. The CBT is located between the town of Arnold and the community of Big Trees Village.

The primary purpose of the project is to restore the targeted 235 acre site to a heterogeneous stand structure and to enhance the watershed through the removal of overstocked understory and shade-tolerant trees. Secondary benefits include a healthier creek system that supplies drinking water to the CBT and downstream users and a reduction of over-accumulated biomass intended to minimize impacts of wildland fires. Overall, this project aligns with Proposition 1 and Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) objectives by creating an ecologically healthy forest resilient to wildland fire, enhancing a watershed that supports the forest community, and establishing a soil structure that is capable of filtering nutrients for a cleaner, high-quality water system.

Specific project work includes thinning to reduce ladder and canopy fuels, reduction of 400 stems per acre to 100-200 stems per acre, and reduction of surface woody debris from 35-80 tons per acre to less than 10-25 tons per acre. Biomass removed will be: 1) piled for future burning, 2) sent to a biomass energy facility, 3) chipped and material stored in the park's maintenance yard for erosion control purposes or stored for the park's wood program.

In addition to the SNC funding being requested, CA State Parks is providing \$50,560 of in-kind funding to provide environmental scientists for the oversight and management of this project.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
Conduct raptor surveys	July 1, 2016
Community outreach, education and training	July 1, 2016
Flag project boundaries and sensitive resource areas; select photo point locations	July 15 - August 15, 2016
Training of labor crews	July 15 – August 15, 2016
Mark trees for removal and begin fuels treatment work	August 1 – November 15, 2016
Burn piles (as conditions deemed appropriate)	December 1, 2016 – March 1, 2017
Submit 6-month report	January 15, 2017
Conduct raptor surveys	April 1 – July 15, 2017
Resume fuels treatment work	April 1 – November 15, 2017
Submit 6-month report	July 15, 2017
Take photo point pictures (same time period as previous year)	July 15 – August 15, 2017
Burn piles (as conditions deemed appropriate)	December 1, 2017 – March 1, 2018
Submit 6-month report	January 15, 2018
Conduct raptor surveys	April 1 – July 15, 2018
Resume fuels treatment work	April 1 – November 15, 2018
Submit 6-month report	July 15, 2018
Take photo point pictures (same time period as previous years)	July 15 – August 15, 2018
Burn piles (as conditions deemed appropriate)	December 1, 2018 – March 1, 2019
Submit 6-month report	January 15, 2019
Resume fuels treatment work, conduct quality control measures to complete project, take stand measurements, take photo point pictures for final report.	March 1, 2019 – June 30, 2019
Complete final report	June 30, 2019
FINAL PAYMENT/FINAL PAYMENT REQUEST	July 30, 2019

PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
Direct*	
CCC Contract	\$187,499.97
State Park Laborer Crew	\$196,736.50
Environmental Scientist	\$25,950.00
Project Materials and Equipment	\$19,666.98
Chemical Toilets	\$3,840.00
Indirect**	
Environmental Scientist (monitoring, reporting, performance measures)	\$7,350.00
Office Technician	\$13,002.00
Interpretative Signage and Materials	\$500.00
Administrative***	
Operating Costs	\$45,454.55
GRAND TOTAL	\$500,000.00

Direct: Direct costs are expenses necessary to acquire, construct, or to adapt property to a new or different use, or to improve property including land, buildings, and equipment. The property/expense must have a useful life longer than one year.

** Indirect: Expenses involve ongoing operations, repair, or maintenance costs, regardless of whether the repair or maintenance may last more than one year.

*** Administrative: Expenses associated with the administration of a project and may not exceed 15 percent of the total SNC grant request for direct and indirect costs.

PROJECT LETTERS SUPPORT/OPPOSITION

None received.

PROJECT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

There are four Performance Measures common to all grants. In addition, grantees are required to include between one and three project-specific measures. Performance Measures listed here represent those proposed by applicants and may be modified through further discussion with SNC staff.

- Acres of Land Improved or Restored
- Number and Type of Jobs Created
- Number of People Reached

Notice of Exemption

Form D

To: Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, Room 212
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: (Public Agency) Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205
Auburn, CA 95603

County Clerk
County of Calaveras
891 Mountain Ranch Road
San Andreas, CA 95249

(Address)

Project Title: Big Tree Creek Watershed Forest Restoration Project (SNC 845)

Project Location - Specific:

The project is located in the Big Tree Creek Watershed (BTCW) within Calaveras Big Trees State Park (CBT). CBT is located between the unincorporated town of Arnold and the community of Big Trees Village. Latitude/Longitude 38.285645/-120.293892

Project Location - City: Near Arnold Project Location - County: Calaveras

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

This is a forest restoration project involving minor alterations to land and vegetation. California State Parks is requesting \$500,000 in funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program for site improvement/restoration activities on approximately 230 acres. (continued)

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: California Conservation Corps and California State Parks

Exempt Status: (check one)

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
[X] Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Section 15304, "Minor Alterations to Land"
Statutory Exemptions. State code number:

Reasons why project is exempt:

The Big Tree Creek Watershed Forest Restoration Project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15304, which consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of the land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry or agricultural purposes. (continued)

Lead Agency Contact Person: Patrick Eidman Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (530) 823-4689

If filed by applicant:

- 1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? Yes No

Signature: Date: Title:

- Signed by Lead Agency Date received for filing at OPR:
Signed by Applicant

Revised 2005

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project (continued):

Reasons why project is exempt: (continued):

**NOTICE OF EXEMPTION
CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Section 15304**

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Proposition 1 Grant Application Number 845
Big Tree Creek Watershed Forest Restoration Project**

The purpose of this multi-benefit project is to restore 230 acres, dominated by ponderosa pine, to a heterogeneous stand structure and to enhance the BTCW through removal of overstocked understory and shade-tolerant trees, such as white fir. Reducing fuel loads throughout the BTCW and creating forest heterogeneity will result in habitat conditions that are conducive and suitable for wildlife, as well as create a healthy forest resistant to pests and disease. Furthermore, this project will reduce the vulnerability of the forest to catastrophic wildland fire that would greatly impact CBT and the BTCW by way of increased water temperatures, soil scorch leading to erosion, followed by sediment and nutrient buildup in the water system.

Project work will reduce understory fuels creating a healthy, fire-resilient forest that will benefit the watershed and reduce the risk fire damage to the redwood water tank that supplies clean, healthy drinking water to CBT and the neighboring community. Other project benefits include creation of a healthier creek system by removal of high fuel loads that could burn at high temperatures leading to the development of a hydrophobic crust that repels and flushes water away instead of allowing the soil to absorb water as part of the filtration process; reduction of over-accumulated biomass will reduce chances of wildland fire that create conditions leading to erosion issues (i.e., excess nutrients and sediments to watersheds after rain events); removal of an overabundant understory of shade tolerant trees will make more water available to this creek system and provide more water to the giant sequoias. The water supplied by Big Tree Creek is essential for the giant sequoias, general forest health, and the State's water supply in the face of climate change (i.e., hotter winters, less snowpack). The end result would be an ecologically healthy forest resilient to wildland fire, a watershed that will support the forest community, and a soil structure that is capable of filtering nutrients for a clean water system.

The project has been designed to avoid locations that contain active nests for raptors or migratory birds. Raptor and migratory bird surveys have already been conducted and, unless operations begin outside of the critical period for nesting raptors, the scope of work includes conducting additional pre-project surveys for California spotted owls and northern goshawks. Surveys will be conducted two weeks prior to start of work. If nesting migratory birds or raptors are located in the project area then a buffer area of 250 feet will be installed around raptor nest trees and 100 feet around migratory bird nests in trees and shrubs. No work will occur in the buffer areas until the nest is vacated and the juveniles have fledged (as determined by a DPR-approved biologist).

The District Archaeologist and Project Manager will field check identified archaeological sites recorded within and in the vicinity of the project site together when conditions permit and flag their boundaries if necessary prior to forest treatments to implement the stipulations of the 9/17/12 PRC 5024 review for the North Grove Forest Restoration project. To protect these resources, trees will be felled away from sites, burn piles will be placed outside of site boundaries, and fire lines will also be dug outside of site boundaries. The project will not result in an adverse change in the significance of any archaeological or historical resource and will not disturb or destroy any human remains or paleontological resources.

Forest restoration work will be completed by hand crews provided by the California Conservation Corps (CCC) and California State Park (CSP) who will use chainsaws, loppers, and other hand tools as required. Work includes:

- Thin from below to reduce ladder and canopy fuels, and to reduce overall stand density.

- Reduce the stems per acre from up to 400 per acre to 100-200 stems per acre, dependent on slope, aspect, and soil. All trees will be marked by a CSP Environmental Scientist (ES) or designee.
- Reduce surface woody debris from 35-80 tons/acre to less than 10-25 tons/acre.
- Wildlife corridors will be managed by leaving shrubs for cover and forage purposes determined by CSP-ES.
- Retain quality downed logs and snags for wildlife habitat.
- Remove or pile to burn, 60%-90% of total surface fuel load.
- Woody debris that is removed will be: 1) piled in 5' X 5' piles for future burning; 2) removed and sent to a biomass power plant; 3) chipped and material stored in the park's maintenance yard for future erosion control purposes; and/or 4) removed and stored in the park's maintenance yard for the park's wood program.
- Burn piles in the appropriate season and weather conditions with burn permits and smoke management permit from Cal Fire and Calaveras Air Pollution Control District.

Overall this project will restore this Sierra forest and watershed to a healthier state; improve the quantity and quality of water; improve habitat for wildlife, fish, and plant species; reduce the risk of a large damaging wildfire; and improve conditions for public safety.

Workplan and Schedule

Project implementation will occur in July 2016 through June 2019 and will include outreach to staff, volunteers, local community and public through flyers, press releases, and signage. Photo point locations will be selected and photos taken from each point. Fixed area plots (0.1 acre circular plots) will be randomly selected, marked and data recorded at each plot on fuel loads and vegetation. The 2016 understory treatment will begin after the above tasks are accomplished and will continue until late November 2016. Work will then focus on burning piles each December through April with fuels treatment resuming each May-November until the final field season ends in June 2019.

Detailed Project Deliverables	Timeline
Conduct raptor surveys	July 2016
Make staff, volunteer, community and media contacts and inform public about the project. Post signs and print handouts for community boards. Select photo point locations and take photos. Train staff and volunteers on public interpretation of project and how to tally numbers of public contacts.	July 2016
Flag project boundaries, flag all sensitive resource areas including snags, logs, and shrubs that will not be removed. Set up fixed area plots and take stand measurements.	July – August 2016
Train laborer crews on work specifications.	July – August 2016
Mark trees for removal and start fuels treatment work	August – November 2016
Burn piles when conditions are appropriate	December 2016 – March 2017
Complete 1 st six-month report	January 2017
Conduct raptor surveys. Resume fuels treatment work.	April – November 2017
Complete 2 nd six-month report	July 2017
Take photo point pictures during same period as prior year.	July – August 2017

Detailed Project Deliverables	Timeline
Burn piles when conditions are appropriate	December 2017 – March 2018
Complete 3 rd six-month report	January 2018
Conduct raptor surveys. Resume fuels treatment work.	April – November 2018
Complete 4 th six-month report	July 2018
Take photo point pictures during same period as prior year.	July – August 2018
Burn piles when conditions are appropriate	December 2018 – March 2019
Complete 5 th six-month report	January 2019
Resume fuels treatment work and conduct any quality control measures needed to complete project. Take stand measurements. Take photo point pictures for final report.	March 2019 – June 2019
Complete final report including data related to the project performance measures	June 2019

Reasons Why the Project is Exempt

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), a categorical exemption provides for an exemption from CEQA environmental documentation requirements for a class of projects determined not to have a significant effect on the environment. Categorical Exemptions are addressed in Article 19 of the CEQA Guidelines, where a list of 32 classes of projects has been identified. Projects falling within one of these classes of projects are generally exempt from the provisions of CEQA.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15304: Minor Alterations to Land

The Big Tree Creek Watershed Forest Restoration project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15304, Class 4, which consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of mature, scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes.

The Big Tree Creek Watershed Forest Restoration project consists of minor land alterations involving the thinning and removal of surface vegetation for forestry purposes (improved forest health and fire risk reduction) on approximately 230 acres; there are no hazardous materials on or around the project site; and the site improvement/restoration work will not result in significant adverse impacts. This project is similar in nature to the examples listed in Guidelines Section 15304.

No Exceptions to a Categorical Exemption

Categorical exemptions represent activities that generally do not result in significant environmental impacts. However, there are six exceptions to categorical exemptions, defined in the CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2. Generally, a categorical exemption does not apply if a project would occur in certain specified sensitive environments, would affect scenic resources within an official state scenic highway, or would be located on a designated hazardous waste site. In addition, a categorical exemption would not apply if the project causes substantial adverse changes in the significance of a historical resource or would be considered significant within the cumulative context. Table 1 identifies the exceptions from CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 and includes a brief discussion of why each exception does not apply to the Big Tree Creek Watershed Forest Restoration project.

Table 1
Categorical Exemption Exceptions (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2)

Exception	Applicability
<p>(a) Location. Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located – a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply in all instances, except where the project may impact an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.</p>	<p>The main goal of this approximately 230-acre site improvement/restoration project within CBT is to restore the forest landscape to a healthy, more resilient condition where natural processes can occur. The project will directly benefit the land by thinning an overstocked understory and creating forest heterogeneity will result in habitat conditions that are conducive and suitable for wildlife, as well as create a healthy forest resistant to pests and disease. The reduction of understory fuels will benefit the watershed and reduce the risk fire damage to the redwood water tank that supplies drinking water to CBT and the neighboring community.</p> <p>This project work consists of minor land alterations involving the removal of surface vegetation. The project work does not involve activities in or adjacent to streams or waterbodies, nor will project work occur on areas known to contain hazardous substances. The project activities will not occur in locations that contain known significant cultural or biological resources, such as within 250 feet of an active raptor nest.</p> <p>The project would include the following site improvement/restoration activities: use of chainsaws, loppers, and other hand tools as required to thin from below to reduce ladder and canopy fuels, reduce woody debris, leave shrubs for cover and forage purposes in wildlife corridors, retain quality downed logs and snags for wildlife habitat, piling and burning of 60 to 90 percent of total surface fuel load, some woody debris will be removed and sent to a biomass plant, and some woody debris will be chipped and stored in the park for future erosion control purposes, and some woody debris will be used for the park's wood program.</p>
<p>(b) Cumulative Impact. All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.</p>	<p>The site improvement/restoration activities will not adversely affect environmental resources, and will therefore not contribute to any cumulative environmental impact in relation to other restoration projects in the region. The site improvement/restoration will result in beneficial effects to the region's forests, creeks, watersheds, and associated lands by providing wildfire risk reduction, and natural resource</p>

	management and protection.
<p>(c) Significant Effect. A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.</p>	<p>The site improvement/restoration project will not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. Specific environmental topics are addressed below:</p> <p>Aesthetics. The site project will result in a minor change in the appearance of the CBT forest due to the removal of surface vegetation. After completion, the project site will still contain forested land with a very similar visual characteristics as the existing forest. The main goal of this approximately 230-acre site improvement/restoration project within CBT is to restore the forest landscape to a healthy condition where natural processes can occur. All intended management practices such as site preparation, thinning, and burning can be conducted with limited visibility or detection from surrounding properties. The project will directly benefit the land by thinning overstocked stands and reduce the potential for aesthetic impacts from a wildfire. Quality downed logs and snags will be retained for wildlife habitat and shrubs in wildlife corridors will be managed for cover and forage purposes.</p> <p>Agriculture/ Forestry. The project site does not contain any grazing or agricultural resources; consequently, the project will have no impact on agricultural resources. The project will reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire on approximately 230 acres by thinning dense stands dominated by ponderosa pine in the CBT forest.</p> <p>Air Quality/GHGs. The project activities will result in nominal fugitive dust and mobile source emissions. Mobile source emissions will be limited to those associated with vehicle trips to/from the site improvement/restoration areas, and mechanized equipment used for restoration activities (i.e. chainsaws and chippers). Nearby sensitive receptors will not be exposed to substantial pollutant concentrations. The restoration will not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the region's applicable air quality plan and will not violate any air quality standard or contribute to an existing or projected air quality violation. Burning of excess fuels will only be performed on approved air quality burn days in the appropriate season and weather</p>

conditions with burn permits and smoke management permit from CAL FIRE and Calaveras Air Pollution Control District.

Biological Resources. No work will occur in the vicinity of sensitive resources. Biological surveys for California spotted owl and the northern goshawk were performed on the project area in 2013 and 2014. One possible spotted owl detection was recorded. The majority of project activities will occur during the non-breeding season. If initiation of project activities are necessary during the breeding season of March 1 to August 31, then surveys by a DPR-approved biologist will be required to confirm project activities will not occur in the vicinity of active nests. As described under "Description of Activities," surveys will be conducted two weeks prior to start of work. If nesting migratory birds or raptors are located in the project area then a buffer area of 250 feet will be installed around raptor nest trees and 100 feet around migratory bird nests in trees and shrubs. No work will occur in the buffer areas until the nest is vacated and the juveniles have fledged (as determined by a DPR-approved biologist). The project manager will contact the district's Environmental Scientist one month prior to start of work to schedule surveys.

The integrity of native plant communities will be protected from exotic plants through the CBT Vegetation Management Plan, which includes hand pulling or grubbing with hand tools. During the preparation of the CBT Vegetation Management Plan, a records search for special status plants was conducted, and no special status plant species were identified as occurring or likely to occur within the project site.

In addition, wildlife habitat will be improved by removing overstocked stands while also maintaining quality downed snags and shrubs for cover and foraging. Wildlife habitat is also protected by removal of exotic weed species.

Cultural Resources. See (f).

Geology/Soils. Site improvement/restoration activities will not expose people or structures to loss, injury, or death due to seismic activity or unstable soils. The work planned as part of the Big Tree Creek Watershed Forest Restoration

	<p>project does not propose project activities near Big Tree Creek. Valuable soils will be retained on-site to grow trees and support wildlife.</p> <p>Hazards/Hazardous Materials. See (e).</p> <p>Hydrology/Water Quality. See (a) and Geology/Soils.</p> <p>Noise. Site improvement/restoration activities will generate temporary noise. However, given that restoration activities will be limited to daytime business hours (the least sensitive hours of the day), and their distance from sensitive receptors, the project will not cause significant noise effects.</p> <p>Transportation. There will be limited additional trips on local roadways during project implementation. No vehicular transportation over sensitive habitat will occur. The vehicles will not block traffic and no traffic delays will occur due to restoration activities.</p> <p>Other CEQA Issues. The project will have no effect on land use, mineral resources, population and housing, public services, recreation, or utilities and service systems.</p>
<p>(d) Scenic Highways. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.</p>	<p>State Route (SR) 4 to the west of the project site is an officially designated scenic highway. In the vicinity of the project, views to the east along SR 4 are of mixed conifer forest. Views of project activities would be screened from view of travelers on SR 4. The proposed project will not result in the removal of, or damage to, any trees, rock outcroppings, historic buildings or other resources within the viewshed of a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway.</p>
<p>(e) Hazardous Waste Sites. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.</p>	<p>The site is not located on toxic sites listed pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.</p>
<p>(f) Historical Resources. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.</p>	<p>A State Certified Archaeological Surveyor has surveyed the project area for cultural resources. Archaeological sites have been recorded within and in the vicinity of the project site, and the project activities have been designed to avoid all impacts to these sites.</p> <p>As part of the project (see "Description of Activities" above), the District Archaeologist and</p>

	<p>Project Manager will field check the sites together and flag their boundaries if necessary prior to forest treatments to ensure no project activities occur on the sites. To protect these resources, trees will be felled away from sites, burn piles will be placed outside of site boundaries, and fire lines will be dug outside of site boundaries. The project will not result in an adverse change in the significance of any archaeological or historical resource and will not disturb or destroy any human remains or paleontological resources.</p>
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Background

For more than six years, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) has been actively involved in issues relating to forest and community health. The Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI) was adopted by the Board in 2011 and was endorsed by all 22 Sierra counties, as well as numerous other groups and organizations. It called for parties to work together in a collaborative manner with the objectives of restoring forests to ecological health and improving local communities' social and economic well-being.

The SNFCI Regional Coordinating Council (Coordinating Council) continues to represent a wide range of diverse perspectives unified by the common goals of increasing the pace and scale of restoration of the Sierra Nevada's forests and building healthier ecosystems, economies, and communities in the Sierra Nevada. The various forest collaboratives are also continuing their work to carry out this same mission on the ground in specific watersheds and communities.

At the June 2014 Board meeting, the Board directed SNC staff to develop a plan that ensures the issues being addressed under SNFCI were the organization's top priority. In response to this direction, the [State of Sierra Nevada's Forests Report](#), which represents the current understanding of forest conditions and potential consequences, was developed by staff and approved by the Board at the September 2014 Board meeting.

Recognizing that a more holistic approach to watershed health in the Sierra was needed, SNC staff worked closely with U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Region 5 in the development of the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP). The WIP is a coordinated, integrated, collaborative program to restore the health of California's primary watershed through increased investment and needed policy changes. The WIP was officially launched in March of this year, with the Board approving a [Plan](#) to guide development of the WIP. The USFS has indicated that all of the National Forests in the Sierra Nevada will be active participants in the WIP, and also co-hosted the March 4 WIP Summit with the SNC, which was a critical first step in continuing work to engage key partners in the WIP.

In late June 2015, staff worked with the USFS and California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) to have a portion of the Sierra Nevada Region included in [the designation of the California Headwaters as a Resilient Lands and Waters Region](#). President Obama's Priority Agenda for Enhancing the Climate Resilience of America's Natural Resources called for the identification of place-based, landscape-scale resilience strategies. While this designation didn't result in new funding for the Region, it did shine a light on the importance of the Sierra to California, and supported the work SNC and its partners are striving to accomplish through the WIP.

In July 2015, SNC staff and representatives from USFS Region 5 met with Secretary John Laird and CNRA staff, resulting in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that commits the CNRA and USFS Region 5 to a cooperative state/federal collaboration to

support the WIP. The SNC is designated as the lead state agency for coordination and implementation of the WIP.

Boardmembers Bob Kirkwood and Pam Giacomini continue to serve as the Board committee providing oversight and guidance for the WIP effort.

Current Status

The SNC staff has continued to meet with partners to identify opportunities to leverage efforts to further the shared objectives under the WIP. On October 8, 2015, SNC and USFS hosted a special webinar to update existing and potential partners on the current status of the WIP. This webinar included an overview of the WIP, a high-level review of the WIP Regional Strategy (Strategy), and opportunities through which interested parties can endorse and engage with the WIP ([Attachment A](#)). A total of 132 individuals participated in this webinar. These participants were from a diverse range of interests and geographic locations, both inside and outside of the Sierra Nevada Region.

A key next step in moving the WIP forward is the development of a Regional Strategy to further define the steps, process, and outcomes of implementation (a draft Regional Strategy is included in [Attachment B](#) of this agenda item). This draft reflects primarily the work of SNC staff, and will be used to solicit input and engagement from existing and new partners, following review and approval of the USFS Region 5. As such, it will likely be modified prior to becoming final and will be updated as needed to reflect necessary course changes.

The WIP Regional Strategy describes in detail the process and timeline for the assessment of restoration needs that is currently underway. The watershed assessments will include information developed by the USFS and other federal agencies on lands they manage, as well as information gathered by the Sierra Coordinated Resources Management Council (SCRMC), including other lands and broader watershed information. It also describes Regional efforts related to increased investment, addressing key policy issues, and development of additional restoration related infrastructure. Finally, the Strategy describes the process of project identification and implementation, the ultimate key objective of the WIP.

Here are some of the other key activities under the WIP over the last three months:

Integrated Regional Conservation and Development Program (IRCAD)

The SNC and USFS staff have engaged in initial discussions with the CA Strategic Growth Council (SGC) regarding the potential of the WIP serving as a pilot project for this program. The IRCAD was launched in October 2014 to “coordinate state agencies for the development and implementation of an Integrated Regional Planning approach to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of regional development and natural resource conservation in California.” The SGC and CA Biodiversity Council have entered to an agreement in support of the IRCAD. (The Biodiversity Council is comprised of agency leaders of state and federal agencies, and local government.) While it is somewhat

unclear as to all of the implications of becoming a pilot, it would significantly heighten the recognition of the WIP with state and federal agencies, and could result in additional support for the effort. Staff will continue to explore the opportunity, in consultation with Boardmembers Kirkwood and Giacomini.

Funding

The SNC Funding Team has undertaken a number of activities in support of WIP objectives, including the following:

- Published 11 Grant Research Memos and updates identifying available funds for a broad range of WIP related activities.
- Provided 43 funding development consultations to partners seeking advice about funding opportunities.
- Conducted one grant-writing workshop for 13 participants representing ten organizations.
- Developed a fund-tracking tool to monitor investments in the SNC Region from all sectors.
- Coordinated with other Proposition 1 funding agencies to increase exposure of WIP-related project opportunities.
- Coordinated with USFS Region 5 on developing strategies to identify potential federal funds and programs that support the WIP.

Restoration Assessments

The SNC staff has continued to work with public and private land managers to develop the templates for approaching implementation of the WIP restoration needs assessments at the watershed level in lands across a variety of ownership. This includes close coordination with USFS and Sierra Coordinated Resources Management Council (SCRMC) partners through regularly scheduled inter-agency WIP Team meetings.

The SNC continues to coordinate with USFS Region 5 and the Tahoe National Forest, who are making final refinements to the watershed assessment approach at the forest level. The template should be completed by the end of this calendar year, and is designed to answer the question, "What restoration projects need to be implemented in the next 10 years to return the watersheds of this forest to a state of ecological resilience?" The assessments will identify the work that is needed and could be done with additional resources/funding, as well as identify other key constraints affecting needed restoration efforts. As a part of this process, the Forests will also have a list of current planned forest restoration activities, which will include NEPA/CEQA-ready projects. This will help build an understanding what is currently planned, so a comparison can be made of the current pace of restoration versus what is actually needed or feasible.

Once finalized, the template will be rolled out on the USFS lands throughout the Region, with the end goal for completion of assessments on all National Forests in the Sierra Nevada by June 2016. The Stanislaus National Forest is currently on board as the next

forest to complete the assessment process. SNC staff and USFS Region 5 are also committed to work with the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest to ensure they are included in the various aspects of the WIP.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Mother Lode Field Office was in the process of developing a pilot assessment on their lands, to complement the assessment on the Tahoe National Forest. Unfortunately, the Butte Fire derailed this effort, though it will be resumed in the near future. A template will be developed based on this pilot that will then be adopted by the other BLM field offices throughout the Sierra Nevada Region as part of the WIP. SNC is also in conversation with National Park Service leadership in order to determine the best ways to engage them in the WIP as well.

The Placer Resource Conservation District, through the SCRMC Joint Powers Authority, is conducting pilot data collection process at the watershed level in the area overlapping the Tahoe National Forest and BLM Mother Lode Field Office assessment areas. This pilot assessment is expected to be completed by the end of 2015. Once this approach has been confirmed, SCRMC will conduct similar assessments in the other Sierra Nevada watersheds. Completion of these assessments is anticipated in the first half of 2016.

Next Steps

Staff will take the Board-approved draft of the WIP Regional Strategy and continue to work with the USFS and other partners to finalize the document.

Staff will continue discussions with the Strategic Growth Council to determine its viability as a pilot project of the Strategic Growth Council Integrated Regional Conservation and Development Program (IRCAD).

The assessment phase of the WIP will identify general information and needs for each Sierra watershed and provide a better understanding of more overarching regional needs, opportunities, and challenges. With a solid knowledge base established and the help of diverse partners, assessments will be utilized to identify critical areas in need of immediate action. The WIP provides the opportunity to consider new models for delivering restoration activities, likely with one or more pilot areas considered for exploration of such models.

Staff and partners will continue to cement existing and cultivate new WIP partnerships by growing the list of WIP supporters and gathering information regarding their specific geographic and issue areas of most interest. Staff will also continue to further its work in the four key areas of Policy, Funding, Communications, and Restoration Implementation. Staff will provide regular updates to the Board as to progress in the development and implementation of the WIP.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board approve the draft Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Plan Regional Strategy and direct staff to finalize it following review and input from the USFS and other partners.

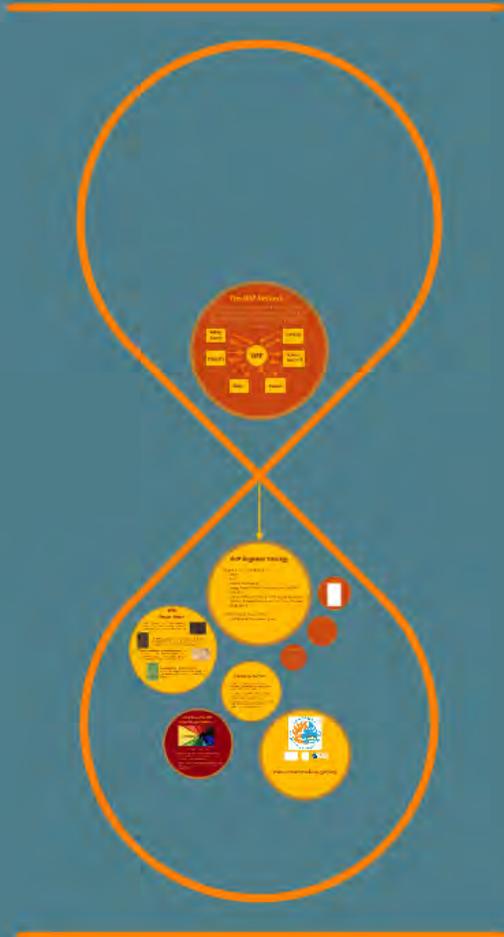
Agenda Item XV
Attachment A

Time for Change:

Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program

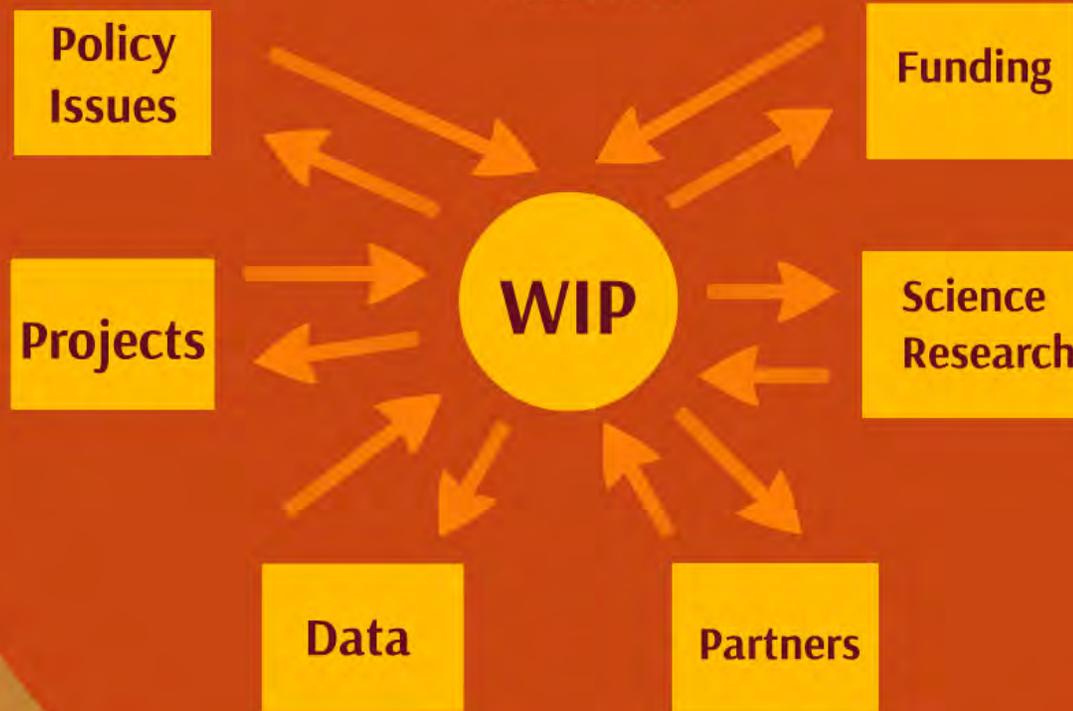


Pacific Southwest
Region



The WIP Network

Our goal is to eventually make the WIP the hub of a network connecting partners to data, funding, projects and each other in order to better make the case for restoration in the Sierra Nevada, and focus and leverage our resources to restore the health of our watersheds.



WIP Regional Strategy

Regional Level Issue Portfolios

- Water
- Fire
- Habitat/Biodiversity
- Longer-Term, Stable Carbon Sequestration/GHG Emissions
- Common Threads: Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Climate Change Resilience, Infrastructure, Economy, Public Health

Watershed Level Assessments

- 16 Watershed Assessment Areas



Photo Credit: Luxomedia

investment, focusing
on new funding
for Watersheds

16 Watershed Assessments



Watershed Level Assessments

Watershed Level Assessments (WLA) are conducted by the Watershed Assessment Council (WAC) to provide information for each of the 16 watershed assessment areas.

Watershed Level Assessments are conducted by the Watershed Assessment Council (WAC) to provide information for each of the 16 watershed assessment areas.

- Development Information
- Land Use/Planning/Infrastructure
- Municipalities - water utility
- Population
- Watershed Groups
- Watershed
- Land Use/Planning/Infrastructure
- Fire Threat
- Wetlands
- Recreation and Open Space (ROOS)
- Fish and Wildlife Habitat
- Connectivity
- Riparian/Streamside/Channel/Bedrock Knowledge (RSCBCK)
- Cultural Resources
- Key Watersheds
- Watershed Land Use/Planning/Infrastructure
- Watershed

16 Watershed Assessment Areas



Watershed Level Assessments

Sierra Coordinated Resources Management Council (SCRMC) is gathering the following information for each of our 16 watershed assessment areas:

- Restoration plans, assessments, and initiatives
- Critical contacts for groups working in those watershed assessment areas
- Demographic information
- Wood processing/biomass infrastructure
- Infrastructure – water, utility, transportation
- Data layers/maps
- Waterways
- Land Ownership
- Land Use
- Fire Threat
- Fire History
- Fire Return Interval and Departure (FRID)
- Fish and Wildlife Habitat
- Crop reports
- Reports, Studies, and Plans
- Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)
- Collaborative Groups
- Key Stakeholders
- In-watershed and downstream beneficiaries
- Model Projects

Public Lands Assessments

- Identification of watershed restoration needs and estimated costs by National Forests
 - Meadow Restoration
 - Road Sediment Reduction Treatments
 - Aquatic Organism Passage
 - Invasive Species Removal
 - Hydraulic Mining Restoration
 - Forest Health/Fuels Reduction Treatments
 - Others may be added or subtracted depending on conditions on a particular forest
- Pilot assessment underway on Bureau of Land Management lands
- Working with other public land managers such as National Park Service on assessments

WIP Focus Areas

Policy: If impeding policy challenges are not addressed, we cannot make progress towards healthy and resilient Sierra Nevada Watersheds.



Photo Credit: Luxomedia



Photo credit: gettyimages.com

Funding: Includes tracking existing investment, focusing existing funding sources and identifying new funding sources for investment in Sierra Nevada Watersheds

Project Identification and Implementation: Use watershed assessments to identify watershed restoration needs/costs to increase the pace and scale of restoration across the Sierra Nevada.



Photo credit: Kelly Sikkema



Photo credit: Jeff Kubina

Communication: The success of WIP Communication goals rely upon the support and participation of our partners to help amplify its message.

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- Spr

Timeline for the WIP

- Fall 2015-Spring 2016: complete watershed assessments; track present investments and focus existing funding in Sierra Nevada watersheds
- Spring 2016 - Spring 2017 and beyond: Refine watershed assessments and focus new funding sources in Sierra Nevada Watersheds
- Present-Ongoing: Address policy issues and continue to increase investment in order to ensure implementation of restoration projects.

conditions on a

- Pilot assessment of Management lands
- Working with other National Park Serv

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What Does the WIP Mean for our Partners?



Photo by Denise Chan

The WIP is designed to:

- **Harmonize, Leverage, Connect** and **Amplify** our partners and their efforts, to ensure more effective initiatives, programs and projects.
- **Provide a basis for exploring new models** for getting needed restoration work done more effectively at the watershed level.



Pacific Southwest
Region



www.sierranevada.ca.gov/wip

Agenda Item XV
Attachment B



DRAFT

Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program Regional Strategy



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Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program Regional Strategy

“Only an environmental restoration program of unprecedented scale can alter the direction of current trends.”

U.S. Forest Service Region 5 Ecological Restoration Leadership Intent

Executive Summary

The Sierra Nevada Region (Region) is critically important to the environmental and economic well-being of California. It is the source of origin for more than 60 percent of the state’s developed water supply, headwaters of the State Water Project and federal Central Valley Project, and primary source of fresh water for the Delta. The Region’s forested watersheds store massive amounts of carbon, provide crucial habitat to hundreds of species, provide world-class recreational opportunities enjoyed by millions, and are major producers of wood products and hydro-electric power.

Several high-profile statewide plans and programs identify the importance of the Sierra to the state’s well-being and recognize the critical state of its forests, including the CA Water Action Plan and the AB 32 Scoping Plan (see appendix A). Recently Governor Brown issued a Proclamation of Emergency addressing the substantial tree mortality occurring in California. The Governor identified a number of actions state government will be undertaking to address this issue, all consistent with the objectives of the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP).

Why is the WIP necessary?

Today, all is not well in this critical region of California. Many Sierra Nevada watersheds are unhealthy with overgrown forests, suffering uncharacteristically large and intense fires and dramatic amounts of tree mortality. Degraded streams and meadows exist throughout the Region, some a result of decades old practices such as the legendary gold mining. And many Sierra communities face extreme adverse economic conditions. Clearly the severe drought conditions we face have made the situation worse and the projections of a changing climate portend more trouble ahead.

The occurrence of uncharacteristically large, intense wildfire presents the most significant threat to the Region. In fact, the number of acres burned on the western slope of the Sierra has increased steadily, and with a normal fire season in 2016, we will establish the new record for acres burned in a decade – with three years to go in the decade. In addition, the historic average of nearly 20 percent of acres burned succumbing to high-intensity fire has steadily increase to nearly 30 percent. The 2013 Rim Fire had nearly 40 percent area burn at high intensity, while the 2014 King Fire reached almost 50 percent. Additional information detailing the conditions of Sierra



forests can be found in the [State of Sierra Nevada's Forests](#) report, published by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) in 2014.

To be clear, not all fire is bad; in fact it has always been an essential part of the Sierra Nevada ecosystem. A key component of the WIP will be to significantly increase the use of fire as an ecological restoration tool under appropriate conditions.

What is the WIP?

The Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) is a coordinated, integrated, collaborative program to restore the health of California's primary watershed through increased investment, needed policy changes, and increased infrastructure. This comprehensive effort is being organized and coordinated by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) and US Forest Service (USFS) in close partnership with other federal, state and local agencies, and diverse stakeholders, and aims to increase the pace and scale of restoration in the Sierra Nevada Region.

The WIP is a large-scale restoration program designed to address ecosystem health in the Sierra Nevada in a holistic manner and encompass concerns beyond wildfire and water, including habitat, infrastructure, recreation, socio-economic and public safety issues. By restoring and protecting the health of Sierra forests, streams, meadows, and soils we can achieve the following objectives:

- Reduce the risk and consequences of large, damaging wildfires
- Reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and stabilize carbon storage
- Improve and protect air quality
- Improve and protect the quantity and quality of water available throughout the year
- Improve and protect habitat for wildlife, fish, and plant species
- Improve local socio-economic conditions and public safety

This Regional Strategy identifies the processes, steps, and activities needed to achieve these objectives. The foundation of the WIP will include watershed-by-watershed needs assessments that identify a wide range of restoration needs including forest, stream and meadow restoration, invasive species removal, sediment reduction treatments, and abandoned mine lands restoration. The full range of activities will be identified during the assessment phase, as local conditions will vary from watershed to watershed. The WIP will build upon existing efforts, while providing a basis for exploring new models for getting restoration work done more effectively at the watershed level.

The key focus areas of the WIP are:

Increased Investment in Restoration

Significant financial investments are needed now to increase the pace and scale of watershed restoration in the entire Sierra Nevada Region. The WIP will serve as a tool to attract and focus investments in watershed restoration from a broad array of stakeholders, including federal, state and local governments, special



districts, private and corporate interests, non-profit organizations and foundations, and out-of-region beneficiaries.

Addressing Key Policy Issues Affecting Restoration

A number of policy-related issues need to be addressed in order to restore Sierra forests and watersheds to a healthier state. Even if funding is increased to support more restoration activities, if impeding policy challenges are not addressed it will be virtually impossible to make significant progress towards establishing resilient Sierra forests that provide for the health and well-being of all California.

Increased Infrastructure Needed for Restoration

The lack of wood and biomass-processing infrastructure remains a significant impediment to forest restoration efforts – the Sierra’s forest management infrastructure must be enhanced if it is to handle the pace and scale of needed restoration. In doing so, it will be imperative that policies and procedures are aligned to appropriately provide for maximization of local contracting opportunities in forest restoration activities.

The WIP is designed to increase coordination and interaction at the regional and watershed levels. It is not intended to create a singular set of restoration priorities, but rather to assist in harmonizing the multiple organizational restoration activities and objectives that already exist in the Region. It also provides an opportunity to explore new models and approaches in achieving large landscape restoration. In order to gauge success of the WIP, performance measurement metrics will be developed and regularly reported on as part of WIP communications efforts.

Overview

In March 2015, the USFS and the SNC co-hosted a summit to launch the WIP, with participation from a number of state, federal and local agencies, and key stakeholders. In September, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Natural Resources Secretary John Laird and the Regional Forester for USFS Region 5, Randy Moore, committed ongoing support to the effort and helped to guide this program. The MOU identified the SNC as the lead state agency in the WIP.

This Regional Strategy identifies key information, trends, plans, efforts, and data for major categories influencing watershed health, as well as the process and timeline through which the WIP will be implemented. The key activities are assessing watershed restoration needs across the Sierra, increasing investment in the Region, and addressing policy issues to ensure the implementation of needed restoration projects and the infrastructure needed to support such efforts. The Regional Strategy identifies opportunities to leverage collective resources to affect significant on-the-ground progress towards watershed resilience, and specific metrics will be developed to measure the program’s success.



The SNC and the USFS Region 5 will act as the primary coordinators of the WIP and partner activity. Given the scope and scale of this program, however, the active engagement and participation of governmental and non-governmental partners will be critical. The creation of steering and/or advisory groups will occur as needed to move the program forward. This may occur at both the regional and watershed level.

The WIP process consists of two primary activities: assessing the level and cost of watershed restoration needs in the Region, watershed by watershed; and implementation, which includes project identification and completion, increased investment, and addressing key policy issues.

WIP supported activities will build upon and enhance existing collaborative efforts addressing watershed restoration. The WIP process also provides an opportunity to explore new models for delivering restoration activities.

Assessing Restoration Needs

In addition to addressing key issues at a Sierra Nevada Regional level, the WIP also will identify critical issues and restoration opportunities at the watershed level. Initially, information will be gathered in sixteen identified watersheds (see Map, appendix B) and will include assessments of restoration needs on public lands, as well as available information on needs, plans, reports, and existing efforts within each watershed. These dynamic assessments will allow information to be added over time, and some watersheds may require unique categories or situations to be addressed.

Watershed Level Assessments will provide baseline knowledge, and present information to help steer interested partners to specific watersheds, issues, or types of restoration. The assessments will paint a picture of on-the-ground conditions and restoration needs across the Sierra Nevada, help identify areas best suited for deploying a more detailed assessment process, and provide a basis for exploring new models for accomplishing restoration work more effectively at the watershed level.

Public Lands Assessments

Given the USFS's role as the program's primary federal partner, the WIP effort is beginning with the USFS assessing the holistic restoration needs of the lands they manage in the Region. The National Forest Assessments will consider a wide range of watershed restoration issues, including forest health and fuel reduction projects, meadow and stream restoration, habitat restoration and enhancement projects, invasive species removal, sediment reduction activities, aquatic organism passage issues, and abandoned mine lands remediation. Other restoration issues may be added on a forest-by-forest basis, based on local conditions. The assessments will quantify restoration needs and costs for the next decade, as well as identify key constraints that affect restoration efforts. It is anticipated these assessments will be completed by mid-2016.



The Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service are also expected to engage in a similar exercise, although details of those assessments have not been worked out.

Watershed Restoration Needs Assessments

The condition and needs of each watershed will vary, and multiple partners will be relied upon to gather relevant data and to help develop localized strategies for moving assessments forward in the sixteen watersheds. This effort has been initiated by the Sierra Coordinated Resources Management Council (SCRMC), a Joint Powers Authority comprised of several Sierra Nevada Resource Conservation Districts, through an interagency agreement funded by the SNC and USFS Region 5. This arrangement relies on the RCD's local relationships and on-the-ground knowledge of these watersheds to gather, verify, and summarize available information regarding restoration needs, plans, reports, and efforts. The watershed assessments are expected to be completed by early 2016.

The main focus for the SCRMC staff will be gathering the following data (if other relevant categories are identified, they will be added):

- Reports, studies, plans
- Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)
- Collaborative groups and efforts
- Key stakeholders
- In-watershed and downstream beneficiaries
- Model projects

Together, the public lands and broader watershed assessments will be used as a foundation for identifying and increasing the pace and scale of restoration activities in the Sierra Nevada. The WIP will bring agencies, stakeholders and valuable information together, and be the hub of a network connecting partners to data, funding, projects and each other in order to more efficiently restore Sierra watersheds. The assessments are expected to inform and support decisions on increased investment and key policies. It will likewise help connect funders and decision makers to specific projects, issues, and partners in areas of interest to implement needed restoration.

WIP Implementation

Increased Investment

Significant financial investments are needed now to increase the pace and scale of forest and watershed restoration in the entire Sierra Nevada Region. The WIP will serve as a tool to attract and focus investments in watershed restoration from a broad array of stakeholders, and help ensure investments yield a positive return.



Successful implementation of the WIP will require commitments to invest from all stakeholders, including federal, state and local governments, special districts, private and corporate interests, non-profit organizations and foundations, and out-of-region beneficiaries. Failure to invest at the needed levels will result in the assured deterioration of the Region's natural, social, and economic capital to the detriment of all.

Federal Government

The largest landholder in the Sierra Nevada Region is the USFS, and significant acreage is under the responsibility of the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation, Department of Defense, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The public at-large places many demands on these federal lands and derives multiple benefits from resources found on these lands. Sustainable management of these public resources requires investments to secure long-term delivery of clean water, clean air, forest products, fish and wildlife resources, tourism attractions, and healthy communities. In addition, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides significant support for private landowners in the Region and the USDA Rural Development has been an active partners on restoration related activities in the Region.

There are a number of existing federal programs and funding streams that align with WIP objectives, and efforts will be undertaken to increase the Sierra Nevada's share of these opportunities.

One key issue that is currently garnering considerable attention is federal legislation intended to correct "wildfire borrowing" by putting wildfire disasters on par with natural disasters such as floods, tornadoes, and hurricanes for response funding. The current system forces the USFS to pay for fire suppression costs above the appropriated amount out of other budget categories, including restoration. For the fiscal year that ended fall 2015, the USFS redirected \$700 million from important programs including recreation, research, watershed protection, rangeland management, and forest restoration to cover fire suppression costs. The State and Private Forestry program, the leading federal effort to provide technical and financial assistance to protect communities from wildfire, lost \$37 million that instead went to cover fire suppression costs.

State Government

California is a major stakeholder and landowner in the Region and its citizens are the primary beneficiaries of resources originating in the Region. Increased levels of investment are needed from state sources to restore and maintain lands which provide environmental and economic benefits for all of California. There are a number of state funding sources that could be accessed and/or enhanced to contribute to the WIP, including, but not limited to:

- Proposition 1 (and other Bonds) Grant Funds
- Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund
- CA Electric Program Investment Charge
- State Responsibility Area Funds



Local Government

Counties, cities, special districts, and other local governments operating in the Region continually invest in their respective jurisdictions at levels they can afford. Investments made at this level contribute to the benefits received by all beneficiaries, in and out of the Region, and must be accurately tracked. The WIP will provide opportunities for these local governments to receive credit or recognition for their stewardship and investment in the Region, and provide a platform to leverage additional investments in their respective watersheds.

Private Stakeholders

The economic survival of many private businesses is directly attributable to the continued health of Sierra Nevada watersheds. Since much of the responsibility for managing and maintaining the resources used by the private sector falls to public agencies, a strong partnership will be required to leverage additional investment from the private sector. Clear and compelling examples of the need for additional private investment must be developed and demonstrated.

Nonprofit Organizations

Hundreds of nonprofit organizations are operating within the jurisdiction of the Sierra Nevada. These organizations range in size and capacity and will play a critical role in implementing projects and securing funds to support the WIP. They also must be collaboratively engaged and involved in representing the public in political processes. The collective influence of this sector will be extremely important and effective if messaging is unified.

Out-of-Region Beneficiaries

Water agencies, municipalities, utilities, agricultural interests, irrigation districts, and others beyond the Sierra Nevada Region derive benefits from ecosystem services that originate in the Sierra Nevada. Engaging partners and beneficiaries beyond the Sierra Nevada Region in investing to protect and enhance those benefits is essential.

Addressing Key Policy Issues

There is growing understanding that a number of key policy issues at the federal and state level affect the pace and scale of forest restoration in the Sierra Nevada. These include policies established by public land management agencies, as well as by statute and regulation. The WIP provides a forum for identifying, reviewing, and discussing ecological needs and potential necessary and appropriate policy changes.

Clearly, opportunities to establish more reliable, policy-based funding sources for restoration in the Sierra exist, but coordination among federal, state and local agencies, and private partners is necessary.

A number of policy areas exist that affect restoration efforts and provide examples of issues to be addressed as a part of the WIP:



Air Quality and Prescribed Fire

Using fire, under appropriate conditions, is an important restoration tool that improves forest resiliency and reduces the risk of large, high-intensity fires. However, a number of factors including air quality regulations, staffing, funding, and liability issues can restrict the use of prescribed and managed fire.

Existing policies may have the unintended consequence of enabling larger, more damaging fires to occur and result in far more emissions than would have been released by prescribed fire. Working with the US EPA, Cal EPA, California Air Resources Board (CARB), and local air districts to determine strategies to achieve air quality objectives while allowing for an increased use of fire will be an important focus of WIP. WIP partners will also work with local communities, health care professionals, and recreation/tourism to educate parties of the value of prescribed fire.

GHG Emissions Reduction and Carbon Storage

Since 2000, the climate and fire behavior patterns in California have differed significantly from the previous century. Sierra Nevada forests are huge carbon reservoirs, but high-intensity wildfires are turning storage pools into emissions sources. For example, the Rim Fire of 2013 produced GHG emissions equivalent to the emissions of 2.3 million vehicles in one year, counting only the fraction of total emissions that occurred during the fire. Additionally, more and more conversion of forests to shrub and/or grassland has been documented, dramatically reducing the capacity for storing carbon.

Identifying immediate and long-term mechanisms to increase investment in the Sierra Nevada through the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund will be critical as California works to meet greenhouse gas emission reduction goals. As state officials adopt and implement policies guiding the use of these funds, it is important to understand the opportunities that exist to provide for stable long-term carbon storage while reducing GHG emissions from uncharacteristic high-severity fire. Additional investment in meadow restoration also offers a positive opportunity for stable storage of carbon. Using science to determine how best to restore forests and meadows is crucial and urgent.

Water Quality and Quantity

If California is to restore its primary watershed and increase reliability of the water needs of a growing population, protecting and improving water quality is critical. For example, the impacts on surface water from abandoned mines present unique challenges in many Sierra watersheds. Mercury, sediment, and other substances from abandoned mines in the Sierra travel downstream, impairing California's reservoirs and accumulating in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and the San Francisco Bay. Adopting policies and providing investment that remediate these substances is an important component to a holistic approach to water quality.

Healthy watersheds likewise contribute to stable water yield and reduced sedimentation. Sedimentation rates from high-intensity burn areas are at least five to



ten times greater than experienced in low- or moderate-intensity burn areas. Post-fire sedimentation not only degrades water quality and damages infrastructure, but also fills reservoirs and reduces storage capacity.

Wood and Biomass Utilization

The lack of wood and biomass processing infrastructure in the Sierra Nevada is a significant impediment to forest restoration efforts. While recent state policy efforts such as the Bioenergy Action Plan, SB 1122 (2012), and Governor Jerry Brown's Proclamation of Emergency addressing tree mortality (2015) provide direction on increasing the use of forest biomass for energy production, a number of challenges remain. Utilizing biomass removed as part of restoration efforts can improve community safety, offset forest restoration costs, and reduce GHG emissions. Biomass power generation is heavily constrained by the cost of transporting the feedstock material (wood chips) from the field to the plant – transportation costs often exceed the value of the fuel.

The USDA Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP), which subsidizes transportation costs using Farm Bill funding, has been a critical resource for biomass energy facility operators and provides greater potential for the future. Additionally, the USDA Forest Service Woody Biomass Utilization Grant program provides another source of funding to promote and support the utilization of woody biomass, products, and residues from forest restoration. Matching funds from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund could help alleviate some transportation costs and would be highly beneficial to forested landscapes, the economy, and California's renewable energy goals.

Milling capacity, in particular for smaller diameter trees, is also very limited in the Sierra Nevada. In the most recent years, a significant portion of mill capacity was met with logs burned as a part of wildfire, reducing opportunities for managing "green forests." Considering new business models that can utilize materials removed as a part of forest restoration activities is essential.

Landscape-scale Restoration

The variety of policies, regulations, issues, responsible agencies, and range of stakeholders make landscape level restoration complicated and challenging. Identifying opportunities to improve the efficiency of planning processes and enhancing the coordination and integration of various processes will result in increased ecologically sound restoration activities in the Sierra Nevada. Identifying specific opportunities to demonstrate more efficient approaches to landscape restoration planning as it relates to National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Endangered Species Act (ESA) processes is critical to increasing the pace and scale of ecological restoration.

Federal Lands Management Opportunities

Because the federal government is the largest land manager in the Sierra Nevada, its land management practices have significant impacts on the benefits Californians



receive from the Region. Therefore, it is critical to identify and evaluate policies that affect the pace and scale of restoration. Also, utilizing authority granted under the most recent Farm Bill, including the expansion of Sierra Nevada areas designated as “insect and disease threat areas” and the Good Neighbor Authority, provide opportunities to achieve significant restoration efforts.

Project Identification and Implementation

By better identifying the true restoration needs and costs, increasing restoration investment, and addressing key policy issues, the WIP will result in an increase in the pace and scale of on-the-ground restoration activities.

The WIP serves as a hub connecting partners to data, funding, projects, and each other in order to more efficiently and effectively implement the restoration projects needed to restore the health of Sierra watersheds. As the WIP is fully implemented, specific restoration projects will be identified and will be considered in the context of the watershed. The WIP will provide the following:

- Data regarding the need for restoration, including restoration projects that have been identified
- Information about issues critical to watershed health, and strategies for addressing them
- Information on potential funding sources for various project types
- Facts regarding partners and project plans at the Regional and watershed levels
- Information about successful collaborations and funding invested in the Sierra Nevada

The WIP also creates the opportunity to explore new models for delivering restoration activities to Sierra watersheds. Given the mix of land owners/managers, various regulatory regimes, and competing priorities, determining a more efficient and effective way to achieve the work needed may be an outcome of the WIP.

Socio-economic Implications

The Sierra Nevada would greatly benefit from a robust, skilled workforce to conduct proposed restoration work. Groups such as the Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions (CHIPS) are examples of restoration-focused collaboratives with workforce development as a key component. These workgroups emphasize diversity in the workforce and keep work local to provide maximum benefit to the communities where the work originates. Workforce development opportunities like the CHIPS program should be considered for replication throughout the Sierra Nevada.

Another key component of improving the social well-being of Sierra Nevada communities is the utilization of contracting options that maximize local benefit. Significant work on this issue has been done by the USFS, SNC, and partners to clarify options that exist at the project level and provides an opportunity for further progress.



Communications and Outreach

The Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program is complex, with many moving pieces and partners. It cannot succeed without consistent messaging delivered to prioritized audiences through effective channels. The goals of the WIP include increasing investment to restore watershed health in the Sierra Nevada, addressing policy barriers limiting the pace and scale of restoration, and increasing the infrastructure necessary to increase the pace and scale of ecological restoration. Those who have the ability to direct funding and alter policy within the Sierra Nevada Region are the primary audiences. With the support of our partners, we will work to develop and utilize key messages, produce communications tools and materials that support those messages, and implement outreach and communications strategies that engage our key audiences.

A successful communications strategy for the WIP will:

- Establish the Sierra Nevada Region as a critical component of California's water and climate future.
- Encourage partners, and policy and decision makers to view the WIP as California's solution to addressing declining forest and watershed health in the Sierra.
- Establish the WIP as the program for distributing state forest and watershed health-related funding in the Sierra.
- Encourage policy and decision makers to implement new policies and/or recommend legislation that helps improve forest and watershed health in the Sierra Nevada, and begin addressing past policies and legislation that hinders ecological restoration in the Region.
- Provide partners across the Region with the messages and tools they need to communicate the value of the WIP to primary audiences.
- Enable all partners to speak clearly and coherently about the WIP, and incorporate these messages into their regional work activities.

Timeframe

The WIP is a long-term, ongoing effort that evolves and serves as a hub for the restoration of Sierra Nevada watersheds. The critical first phase includes engaging appropriate partners to continue to refine the WIP strategy and identify details required to ensure implementation success.

The assessment phase described above is expected to be substantially completed by mid-2016. Project implementation will occur on an ongoing basis, with the assessments and efforts to increase investment and address policy issues serving to increase the pace and scale of activities.



Metrics

Metrics will be identified and utilized to measure progress of on-the-ground restoration activities. Identifying meaningful performance metrics will be critical to WIP implementation success, and the process of establishing restoration metrics will rely heavily on partner expertise and engagement. Where possible, appropriate metrics already established by WIP partners will be utilized. Active partner engagement will refine the development of appropriate performance metrics, which may include:

- Amount of increased funding invested in the Sierra Nevada Region
- Reduction of fire threat within the WUI
- Percentage of fire acres burning at high, medium, and low severity
- Tons of carbon sequestered and GHG emissions avoided
- Number of acres of forests and meadows improved or restored
- Number of acres of habitat improved or restored
- Number of sites of abandoned mine lands restored
- Acreage treated through prescribed/managed fire
- Development of new infrastructure for forest products (hard infrastructure)
- Number of new jobs created and/or preserved
- Amount of funding spent in fire suppression and restoration
- Kilowatts of renewable energy production capacity maintained or created

Conclusion

Sierra Nevada watersheds are in need of increased restoration efforts, without which there will be significant adverse impact to the many benefits they provide to all of California. Wildfires are getting bigger and more intense, a changing climate with record-low snowpack are compromising the Region's ability to filter and store water, and greenhouse gases are being released at a higher rate than previously expected due to drought, insect-related tree mortality, and high-intensity fire events. There is a growing understanding that many Sierra Nevada forests are not healthy and that overgrown forests are susceptible to disease and intense wildfire. There is likewise broad consensus that science-based ecological restoration of Sierra Nevada forests must be dramatically increased in order to stem the tide of large, uncharacteristic wildfires.

The WIP is an unprecedented large-scale restoration program designed to address a variety of ecosystem health issues in the Sierra Nevada in a holistic manner. The WIP will be the hub of a network connecting partners to data, funding, projects, and each other in order to more efficiently and effectively implement the projects needed to restore the health of Sierra watersheds. It likewise will provide the opportunity to explore and implement new models for delivering restoration at a landscape scale.

The Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program is the solution to addressing declining forest and watershed health in the Sierra Nevada.



APPENDIX A. State Plans and State Guidance Document Updates

Because the Sierra Nevada provides environmental services that benefit the entire state of California, the issues identified in the WIP process are/should be included in the development and implementation of state and federal planning processes including, but not limited to:

- **California Water Action Plan and its Implementation Plan**
Any comprehensive plan to conserve water resources and improve water quality must acknowledge the impact the health and functionality of Sierra watersheds have on downstream ecosystems and water users. Sierra watersheds and meadows are specifically identified in the California Water Action Plan as needing restoration; including the WIP in ongoing plan developments can help make sure that need is reflected in the Implementation Plan and facilitate watershed and meadow restoration.
- **Safeguarding California Climate Adaptation Plan and AB 32 Scoping Plan Updates**
Since Sierra watersheds have the potential to be carbon sinks or emission sources, quantifying the GHG benefits of restoration and connecting watershed health to AB 32 directives would help the state achieve its emission-reduction goals. The WIP will collect and analyze significant data regarding restoration and preparing the Sierra's forested watersheds for a warmer climate, and can provide important information to help shape planning and scoping activities.
- **Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund Investment Plan Updates and Guidelines Development**
Restoring stressed watersheds will provide myriad benefits, including reducing the threat of severe wildfires that release huge quantities of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. Connecting WIP partners developing plans that will provide an emission-reduction benefit with funding sources designated for emission reduction could streamline processes and increase the pace of on-the-ground restoration efforts.
- **California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Wildlife Action Plan**
Watershed-level restoration directed through the WIP will yield dividends including improved water quality, aquatic species habitat conservation, and enhanced biodiversity. Dialog between WIP partners and regulators must be encouraged to ensure consistency and compatibility with state agency efforts.
- **California Department of Water Resources' Water Plan**
Watershed restoration efforts will aim to improve California's water quality and quantity. WIP partners should be encouraged to work with regulators to find more efficient ways to effect landscape-level restoration, conserve water resources at the watershed and Regional levels, and help DWR achieve its goals while leveraging available funds.

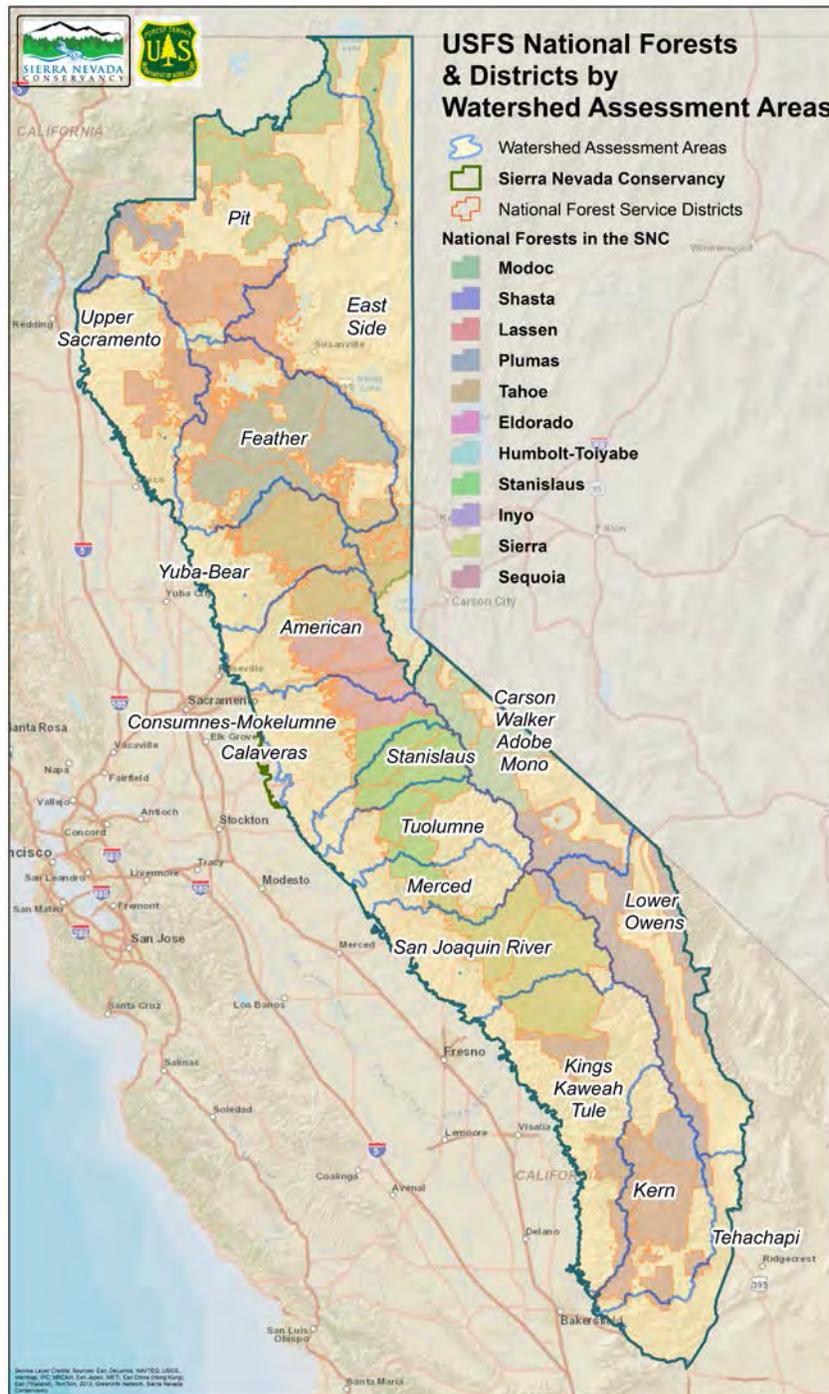


- California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's Fire Plan
Watershed restoration in the Sierra must address the uncharacteristic fuel loads that have been driving an increase in severe wildfire in the Region. WIP collaboration during statewide planning efforts can help ensure consistent approaches to restoration treatments, identify opportunities to increase regulatory efficiency, and help achieve fuel-reduction goals.
- Forest and Rangelands Assessment
The WIP will amass significant volumes of data regarding the condition of Sierra forests and rangelands and the effectiveness of various restoration treatments. Upfront planning and strategic coordination between WIP partners and CAL FIRE staff could avoid duplication of efforts and result in more efficient information collection and analysis.
- Forest Carbon Plan (under development)
The WIP will encourage investment in watershed restoration treatments that reduce accumulated fuel loads, increase biomass utilization, and improve terrestrial carbon sequestration capacity while establishing resilient forests on the landscape. WIP activities could well inform efforts to develop the state's forest carbon plan.

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APPENDIX B. Watershed Assessment Areas Map



Note: This delineation of watersheds has been developed to assist in organizing and tracking WIP activities. It is understood that restoration efforts will likely occur in a more localized fashion, based on local conditions, relationships, and existing efforts.



Background

On August 17, 2013, the Rim Fire began burning in the steep, rugged canyons of the Stanislaus National Forest, headed for Yosemite National Park. As devastating as the event was to the local landscape and communities, the impacts of the Rim Fire were widespread.

The Rim Fire doubled in size during the early stages. In less than three weeks it grew to be the largest wildfire in the Sierra Nevada and the third largest in California history. The Rim Fire burned 257,314 acres, about 402 square miles, or an area equal to eight times the size of San Francisco. Suppression costs exceeded \$127 million, and the cost of emergency road, trail, and watershed stabilization efforts exceeds \$8.5 million. Habitat for many species, including listed or proposed for listing species such as the California spotted owl, great gray owl, and Pacific fisher, was drastically altered. Losses to the ranching community, such as destroyed grazing land, killed livestock, and damaged infrastructure, are estimated to be in the millions.

On August 23, Governor Brown declared a state of emergency for the City of San Francisco due to the threat that the fire posed to water and power resources at Hetch Hetchy - the reservoir that serves 2.6 million people in the Bay Area. A state of emergency was also declared by the Governor for Tuolumne County and President Obama made a Major Disaster Declaration on December 13, 2013.

Current Status

Based on these emergency declarations, the area is eligible for the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's National Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC). The NDRC is a \$1 billion program being administered by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The NDRC is designed to provide grants to communities to rebuild in a more resilient way following major disaster. States that had a presidential disaster declaration in 2011, 2012, or 2013 are eligible to apply.

The Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR), together with a variety of state and local partners including the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), CAL FIRE, CalEPA, the United States Forest Service, and Tuolumne County, developed a Phase 1 NDRC application based on the Rim Fire disaster declaration. The Phase I application was submitted in March 2015 and approved in August 2015 (application materials are available on the [NDRC – California website](#)). Upon approval, the partners quickly began developing the details of a Phase II application, which was submitted on October 27.

Three components have been included in the Phase II application:

1. Two community resilience centers (CRCs) in Tuolumne County which will serve as evacuation centers during emergencies and will provide year-round services such as a food bank, education and training facilities, commercial kitchen, and childcare. (\$55M)

2. A biomass facility and wood products campus to provide clean power, heating and cooling to both CRCs and residents of Tuolumne County and include operations of a sustainable wood products business generating products such as fence posts, pellets and lumber. This will be a two-phase project, with the first including site selection, preparation, engineering & design, environmental review, and the second phase including build-out and implementation. (\$22M)
3. Forest and watershed health projects including biomass removal, reforestation, and restoration, and the creation of a network of strategic fuel breaks. (\$40M)

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) has been involved in this effort over the past few months and was recently asked to enter into a partnership agreement with the HCD to administer and oversee the planning and implementation of a biomass facility and wood products campus, as well as oversee and manage the forest and watershed health projects identified in the Phase II application. This arrangement is contingent upon the award of funds from HUD (decision expected in January 2016). If the grant is approved and details of the partnership agreement worked out, HCD will be the fiscal agent of the grant and SNC would administer the funding associated with the biomass and forest components of the award.

Should SNC take on these responsibilities, funding will be made available to cover all costs associated with our duties. It is anticipated that two additional staff members would be hired to administer the program, with additional funding to cover management and administrative responsibilities.

Next Steps

HUD is expected to announce NDRC grant awards in January 2016. Should California's application be awarded, SNC, upon Board authorization, will work with HCD to finalize a partnership agreement, hire the additional staffing needed to meet the requirements of the HUD NDRC funding, and begin implementing the programs.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board authorize the Executive Officer, contingent upon the award of funds from the National Disaster Resilience Competition, to enter necessary and appropriate agreements to administer the Forest and Watershed Health and Biomass and Wood Products Facility activities identified in the application, provided that adequate funding will be provided to the Conservancy.