



March 2 – 3, 2016 Board Meeting

California Department of Food &
Agriculture Building
Auditorium
1220 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Board Meeting AGENDA

March 2 – 3, 2016
Sacramento, CA



MARCH 2, 2016

Board Meeting

*California Department of Food &
Agriculture Building Auditorium
1220 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814*

1:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
(End time is approximate)

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Oath of Office for New Boardmembers**
- III. Roll Call**
- IV. Approval of December 10, 2015, Meeting Minutes (ACTION)**
- V. Public Comments**
Provide an opportunity for the public to comment on non-agenda items.
- VI. Board Chair's Report**
- VII. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)**
 - a. Administrative Update
 - b. Status of Proposed Water Bond/Park Bond/GGRF Funding
 - c. Forest Climate Action Plan
 - d. Rim Fire Grant Notification
 - e. Overview of March 3 Summit
 - f. Miscellaneous Updates
- VIII. Deputy Attorney General's Report (INFORMATIONAL)**
- IX. 2015-16 Proposition 1 Grant Awards (ACTION)**

The Board may take action to adopt CEQA findings and award grants under the 2015-16 Proposition 1 Grant Program for the following projects:

 - Project #829, Markleevillage Fuels Reduction Project, with Notice of Determination
 - Project #846, Little Butte Creek Forest Health Project (Phase II), with Notice of Exemption from CEQA.
- X. Proposition 1 Apportionment for Tree Mortality (ACTION)**

The Board may take action to approve apportioning \$1 million of SNC's Proposition 1 Allocation to support Governor Brown's Emergency Proclamation on Tree Mortality.

- XI. Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) Update (INFORMATIONAL)**
Staff will provide the Board with an update on the WIP.
- XII. Update on National Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC) Grant (INFORMATIONAL)**
Staff will provide the Board with an update on the status of the NDRC application.
- XIII. 2014-15 Action Plan Accomplishments (INFORMATIONAL)**
Staff will report to the Board on progress and accomplishments relative to the 2014-15 Action Plan.
- XIV. Conservation Easements Discussion (INFORMATIONAL)**
A panel presentation and discussion with regional partners about Conservation Easements and the role SNC may play in administering future bond funds.
- XV. Boardmembers' Comments**
Provide an opportunity for members of the Board to make comments on items not on the agenda.
- XVI. Public Comments**
Provide an opportunity for the public to comment on non-agenda items.
- XVII. 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

December 9 - 10, 2015
Best Western Plus Sonora Oaks
Hotel & Conference Center
19551 Hess Avenue
Sonora, CA 95370



I. Call to Order

Board Chair BJ Kirwan called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m.

II. Oath of Office for New Boardmembers

Deputy Attorney General Christine Sproul administered the Oath of Office to Supervisor Randy Fletcher serving as alternate for the Central Subregion, Supervisor Doug Teeter serving as alternate for the North Central Subregion, and Governor Brown's appointee, Terrence O'Brien.

III. Roll Call

Present: BJ Kirwan, Todd Ferrara, John Brissenden, Pam Giacomini, Randy Fletcher, Louis Boitano, Allen Ishida, Bob Johnston, Terrence O'Brien, Ron Hames, Doug Teeter, Este Stifel, and Woody Smeck

Absent: Barnie Gyant

IV. Closed Session (This portion of the meeting is not open to the public.)

The Board met in closed session to evaluate the performance of the Executive Officer.

V. Approval of September 3, 2015, Meeting Minutes (ACTION)

ACTION: Boardmember Louis Boitano moved, and Boardmember Ron Hames seconded, a motion to approve the September 3, 2015, meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Public Comments

No public comment at this time.

VII. Board Chair's Report

Board Chair BJ Kirwan announced that language has been filed with state officials with the intent of qualifying the "Water Supply Reliability and Drought Protection Act of 2016" for next November's ballot. A copy of the initiative is included in Agenda Item VIIIb and she noted that the Sierra Nevada Conservancy is identified for a \$150 million allotment.

VIII. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

Executive Officer Jim Branham announced the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) was awarded the United States Forest Service Region 5 Regional

Foresters Honor Award of 2015 Partnership of the Year Award accepted by Assistant Executive Officer, Bob Kingman.

a. Administrative Update

Administrative Services Chief, Amy Lussier, reported that in the Fiscal Year 16-17 budget, it is expected that SNC's budget should return to normal as it is not expected that there will be an Environmental License Plate Fund (ELPF) reduction. She also indicated the SNC is expected to receive funds to offset the increase costs of Contracted Fiscal Services (CFS), which provides accounting services to the SNC.

The new state FI\$Cal system is now in wave 2 of implementation and SNC started using it as of August 12, 2015. Unfortunately, the transition has resulted in delays in bill payment, which is out of the control of the SNC. This has resulted in SNC internet services being shut off twice and our CAL-Cards currently being shut off. Administrative staff have been working with vendors and grantees to explain the situation. Lussier and Branham will be coordinating with the nine other Resource agencies who also use CFS services, to find a resolution to this issue.

b. Policy and Outreach Update

Policy and Outreach Division Chief, Angela Avery, introduced Elizabeth Betancourt, who recently joined the SNC as a Policy Analyst.

Avery updated the Board on where SNC is in terms of in-Region partnerships and engagements. Avery stated that SNC continues to focus on the Sierra Climate and Adaptation Mitigation Program (CAMP) which has just reached its one year mark. The Sierra CAMP program has developed a Climate Adaptation Plan which will include the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP). The SNC is reaching out to key Regional partners to participate in a mini summit in January.

Avery added that, at the state level, the SNC continues to be involved in many activities with a focus on forest health. The California Air Resources Board (ARB) is currently in the process of updating the AB 32 scoping plan document and the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund Investment Plan. The SNC is actively participating in these activities through the Forest Climate Action Team (FCAT) and will provide input through the FCAT's creation of a Forest Carbon Action Plan. SNC is also actively involved in the Natural and Working Lands Working group, which has been organized by the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) to gather input for the scoping plan update. Climate adaptation will be considered in this plan.

She also updated the Board on SNC involvement with the Federal Resilient Lands and Water /California Headwaters Designation, a science synthesis

report on the effects of forest management in reducing GGH emissions, and the Governor's Tree Mortality Task Force (TMTF).

The SNC continues to be a leader, particularly in the social media realm. Avery provided kudos to Brittany Covich and Belinda Gutierrez of SNC staff for all of the work they have done in this area. She noted that the SNC is testing a new social media program during this Board meeting to provide video stream via Twitter.

Avery concluded her report by showing a video produced about the SNC's Great Sierra River Cleanup event.

c. Report on the Butte Fire

Branham, provided background for the Butte Fire presentation, pointing out printed information that was provided showing the fire area compared to what was modeled in the Mokelumne Avoided Cost Analysis. Branham also pointed out that SNC has been involved in a tremendous amount of activity over the past eight years in the Mokelumne River watershed where the Butte Fire occurred. Branham introduced Steve Wilensky, a former SNC Boardmember and Calaveras County Board Supervisor. Wilensky is the current president of the Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions (CHIPS) and started the program by presenting a thank you video to Boardmembers and staff for SNC support over the years. Wilensky presented a second video demonstrating some of the damage resulting from the Butte Fire. Wilensky described the extreme fire behavior, the loss of structures and social impacts associated with the fire.

Wilensky discussed policy issues that have been learned from this fire and stated, "When we work in the forest, it works." Wilensky further stated that multiple towns were saved because of the work that had been done previously, allowing firefighters to get access to these threatened areas. Wilensky stated that the investment in forest system infrastructure is something we should all devote some significant time to and he feels that we need policy shifts in the state of California, "before we are all lost."

Boardmembers Louis Boitano, Allen Ishida, Ron Hames, Bob Johnston, and John Brissenden thanked Wilensky for the presentation and expressed their sympathy and support for continued efforts to accomplish the work and policy changes suggested in the presentation.

Branham followed up indicating there is an urgent need to speak up about these issues. Branham stated that we need to have the same urgency to find the resources to prevent large damaging fires rather than finding the resources to deal with the fires when they occur, which is a major focus of the WIP.

- d. Miscellaneous Updates
No Miscellaneous Updates provided.

IX. Deputy Attorney General's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

Christine Sproul announced the Governor's Office of Planning and Research and the California Natural Resources Agency have begun the process to amend the CEQA guidelines. Sproul stated that it will probably take more than a year to complete the amendment process. The SNC has been watching these issues to assist in making our bond funds more productive.

Sproul also stated that she will provide a reminder of proper and improper activities during the development and pursuit of Water Bond proposal development.

X. Election of Chair and Vice Chair (ACTION)

Boardmember John Brissenden nominated BJ Kirwan as Board Chair, and Pam Giacomini as Board Vice-Chair for the 2016 calendar year. There were no other nominations.

ACTION: Boardmember John Brissenden moved, and Boardmember Ron Hames seconded, a motion to elect BJ Kirwan as the 2016 Sierra Nevada Conservancy Board Chair. The motion passed unanimously.

ACTION: Boardmember John Brissenden moved, and Boardmember Louis Boitano seconded, a motion to elect Boardmember Pam Giacomini as the 2016 Sierra Nevada Conservancy Board Vice Chair. The motion passed unanimously.

XI. 2016 Board Meeting Schedule (ACTION)

Executive Officer Jim Branham presented the Board meeting schedule, noting that staff was recommending reversing the order of the two-day March Meeting and start the Board meeting on Wednesday, March 2, 2016, at 1:00 p.m. The WIP Summit would follow on Thursday morning.

ACTION: Boardmember Pam Giacomini moved, and Boardmember Ron Hames seconded, a motion to approve the proposed Board meeting schedule for 2016. The motion passed unanimously.

XII. SNC Strategic Action Plan (ACTION)

Policy and Outreach Division Chief, Angela Avery, summarized the actions taken with the draft strategic action plan since last submitted for the Board's review. Avery stated that three letters with comments were submitted and are in the Board package for their review. Avery informed the Board that Boardmember Bob Kirkwood provided his comments in advance of this meeting.

Boardmember Pam Giacomini stated it is a very well done document and thanked Boardmember John Brissenden and Boardmember Jennifer Montgomery for their hard work on this.

ACTION: Boardmember Doug Teeter moved, and Boardmember Randy Fletcher seconded, a motion to approve the Sierra Nevada Conservancy 2016-19 Strategic Action Plan, including the January 2016-June 2017 actions. The motion passed unanimously.

XIII. 2014-15 Annual Report (ACTION)

Policy and Outreach Division Chief, Angela Avery, presented the proposed outline and format for the 2014-2015 Annual Report stating that the Watershed Improvement Program would be the primary focus of the report. Avery informed the Board that this report will also contain all information required by the statutes.

ACTION: Boardmember Bob Johnston moved, and Boardmember John Brissenden seconded, a motion to approve the proposed approach for completing the 2014-15 Annual Report. The motion passed unanimously.

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

Assistant Executive Officer Bob Kingman, introduced Mt Lassen Area Manager, Andy Fristensky, and Mt. Whitney Area Manager, Randi Jorgenson.

Fristensky informed the Board that the SNC received twenty applications on September 1, 2016, and that of those, thirteen were Category 1 projects, and seven were Category 2 projects. He further shared that the applications came from fifteen individual organizations from a wide geographical range, and that five of the twenty were being recommended for approval.

Fristensky presented an overview of the three Mt. Lassen Area projects proposed for approval (Project #828, Project #832, and Project #835). Kingman added that the three projects Fristensky reviewed had CEQA exemptions.

Jorgensen, presented an overview of the two Mt. Whitney Area projects proposed for approval (Project #843, and Project #845).

The Board engaged in a discussion about the need for additional project information including requesting project acreage in a summary table. They also requested more detailed maps and landscape context in staff reports, and asked how proposed project costs are evaluated and determined to be reasonable.

Kingman assured the Board that staff would evaluate what additional detail could reasonably be added to staff reports and reminded the Board that SNC policy

requires a site visit for each Category 1 project prior to recommendations. He also noted that the SNC relies heavily on input from professional external evaluators including foresters when making project recommendations.

Additional discussion was had regarding SNC plans for project applications received but not included in current recommendations, as well as the ways SNC and grantees will communicate and promote the impacts and results of awarded projects. Kingman confirmed that staff will continue to work with applicants to revise and resubmit applications and that project leads and the SNC communications team will work with grantees to promote the successes of these grants upon completion.

Boardmember Doug Teeter noted he would recuse himself from the vote on Project #835 because he sits on the applicant's Board of Directors.

ACTION: Boardmember Louis Boitano moved, and Boardmember Bob Johnston seconded, a motion to (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. Boardmember Doug Teeter recused himself from the approval on Project 835. The motion passed unanimously.

- XV. Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program Regional Strategy (ACTION)**
Executive Officer Jim Branham pointed out to the Board that the Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) is providing many different positive benefits to the SNC by way of public and private engagement.

Watershed Improvement Program Coordinator, Mandy Vance, directed Boardmembers to the full length draft WIP Regional Strategy provided in Board materials noting that the version was developed without heavy input from the Forest Service. Vance also noted that the Forest Service was in the process of review and that their suggestions would be integrated into the final document. Vance also reported that SNC would post the final draft for partner review with the goal of finalizing by the March Board meeting.

An overview of the WIP Partner Webinar that the SNC co-hosted with the Forest Service in early October, which reached more than 130 participants, was provided and critical areas of the WIP strategy including Regional Level Issues,

information that is currently under development, *and* Watershed Level Assessments on both public and private lands were highlighted.

Special thanks were given to United States Forest Service Staff, Jerry Bird, Genny Wilson, Boardmember Barnie Gyant, and Randy Moore, as well as Tom Quinn and his staff at the Tahoe National Forest, for their work in advancing the forest level assessments. Additional thanks and recognition were given to Boardmember Este Stifel and Bill Haigh from the Bureau of Land Management for their support and preliminary work; and Boardmember Woody Smeck, Don Neubacher, Ray Murray, and Linda Mazzu for initial WIP engagement with the National Park Service.

Boardmembers were encouraged to review the WIP website which provides a link to the WIP endorsement as well as marketing and informational tools for use when discussing the WIP with potential partners.

Branham reported that the SNC is considering a potential partnership with the Strategic Growth Council (SGC) who is working with the California Biodiversity Council and looking at the possibility of including the WIP as a demonstration project of its Integrated Regional Conservation and Development Program.

Branham reported that prior to this meeting, the Board WIP Committee of Bob Kirkwood and Pam Giacomini identified the need to identify pilots where new models to deliver restoration work at an increased pace and scale could be explored. That concept will be included in the revised Regional Strategy. He also acknowledged that Boardmember Bob Johnston provided prior comments about the WIP Regional Strategy, which suggested inclusion of a call for standardization of data systems used in the Region and strengthening the analytical content of the document.

Boardmember Doug Teeter suggested revisions to the Regional Strategy in two areas:

1. Attachment B, page 6: Add a sentence regarding possible income from the work being done.
2. Appendix A, Attachment B page 16: Add federal plans that will be published to the list.

ACTION: Boardmember John Brissenden moved, and Boardmember Pam Giacomini seconded, a motion to approve the draft Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Plan Regional Strategy and direct staff to finalize it following review and input from the United States Forest Service and other partners. The motion passed unanimously.

XVI. Natural Disaster Resiliency Competition Grant (ACTION)

Dr. Louise Bedsworth, Deputy Director, Governor's Office of Planning and Research, joined SNC to provide an overview of the Natural Disaster Resiliency Competition (NDRC) Grant. Dr. Bedsworth reported this grant is through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), specifically through the Community Development Block Grant Program. This is the first time that these funds have been taken and awarded competitively following a state disaster.

HUD aggregated \$1 billion in funds for this grant competition. Bedsworth stated there were 67 qualifying jurisdictions, California had a total of three federally declared qualifying disasters, and the attention was focused on the Rim Fire disaster based on scale and the tie to our water supply.

Bedsworth said the total grant application dollar amount requested was \$117 million to support an integrated program on community and watershed resilience. Investments would go into three broad areas.

Bedsworth advised the Board of the timelines, a decision is expected by early January 2016. The funds do need to be spent within a two to five year time period.

Brissenden asked about funds available for fire preventative actions would be a part of the grant. Bedsworth indicated that this particular funding can only be used in the Rim Fire footprint, so generally preventative actions would not be undertaken.

Public Comment: Ron Ringen, a Tuolumne County resident, requested the SNC consult with Supervisor Brennan and Supervisor Hanvelt in moving forward with using this grant as an "example" for future projects and grant applications, given concerns the County had with the process.

ACTION: Boardmember Pam Giacomini moved, and Boardmember Allen Ishida seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer, contingent upon the award of funds from the Natural 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 is provided to the Conservancy. The motion passed unanimously

XVII. Boardmembers' Comments

Board Chair BJ Kirwan announced that Boardmember Louis Boitano will be leaving the Board again and presented Boitano with an SNC backpack for his service. Boitano thanked fellow Boardmembers and SNC staff for the great work that has been done during his two tenures on the Board.

XVIII. Public Comments

No public comment at this time.

XIX. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:42 p.m.

Next meeting in Sacramento, March 2 and 3, 2016.

Current Status – Budget

The Governor's proposed 2016-17 budget was released January 7, 2016. The Sierra Nevada Conservancy's (SNC) base funding that comes from the Environmental License Plate Fund (ELPF) and pays for staff, programs, and operations was allocated as expected. There was an increase of \$98,000 that included \$10,000 for annual state administrative fees and \$88,000 for salary and benefit adjustments. Based on the Governor's proposed budget, we do not anticipate there will be a cost savings drill associated with ELPF for 2016-17 (as there has been at the roughly \$300,000 level the past two years). The Governor proposes to address the ELPF budget issues through a variety of actions. We will closely monitor these proposed actions as the budget works its way through the legislature.

The SNC did not request an appropriation from Proposition 1, as the current year's \$10 million funding will be allocated over two fiscal years.

As for the current year, we are on target to achieve our \$310,000 cost savings in the ELPF fund and utilize our remaining budget. The current status of SNC's 2015-16 budget can be viewed on page two of this report.

Current Status – Accounting

We are continuing the transition to the State of California's new accounting system, Fi\$Cal. Unfortunately, the payments for many of our invoices from vendors and grantees are still two to three months behind. As mentioned at the last Board meeting, this is out of the control of the SNC. However, we are not the only department experiencing these issues. To ensure a smoother transition for other Natural Resource departments, and to help departments currently using the FI\$Cal system, the California Natural Resource Agency has a hired contractor that will be a resource available to us soon.

Current Status – Human Resources

During the month of January, the State Personnel Board performed a Compliance Review of SNC's human resource practices. The review happens every three years and is necessary to maintain our human resource delegations. We anticipate we will receive a final report of the review in March and it will be posted on the State Personnel Board's website.

All of our vacancies have been filled and the new staff is settling in. The current SNC organizational chart can be viewed on page three of this report.

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 December 2016**

Environmental License Plate Fund (ELPF) Support Budget			
	<i>Budget</i>	<i>Expended thru December</i>	<i>%</i>
ELPF Appropriation	\$ 4,476,000		
ELPF Cost Savings Drill	\$ (310,000)		
Total ELPF Support Budget	\$ 4,166,000		
SALARIES & STAFF BENEFITS	\$ 2,830,743	\$ 1,240,941	44%
Operating Expenses & Equipment			
GENERAL EXPENSE (includes printing, communications & postage)	\$ 117,401	\$ 41,904	36%
TRAVEL	\$ 79,000	\$ 13,083	17%
TRAINING	\$ 20,000	\$ 1,497	7%
FACILITIES	\$ 280,069	\$ 112,418	40%
UTILITIES	\$ 19,600	\$ 6,397	33%
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)	\$ 405,029	\$ 190,600	47%
CONTRACTS - EXTERNAL (includes Altum \$26,448)	\$ 65,448	\$ 26,448	40%
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	\$ 57,200	\$ 13,477	24%
PRO RATA (control agency costs)	\$ 260,955	\$ -	0%
VEHICLE OPERATIONS (includes vehicle insurance)	\$ 30,555	\$ 10,492	34%
Total Operating Expenses & Equipment	\$ 1,335,257	\$ 416,316	31%
Total Personal Services & OE&E Expenditures	\$ 4,166,000	\$ 1,657,257	40%

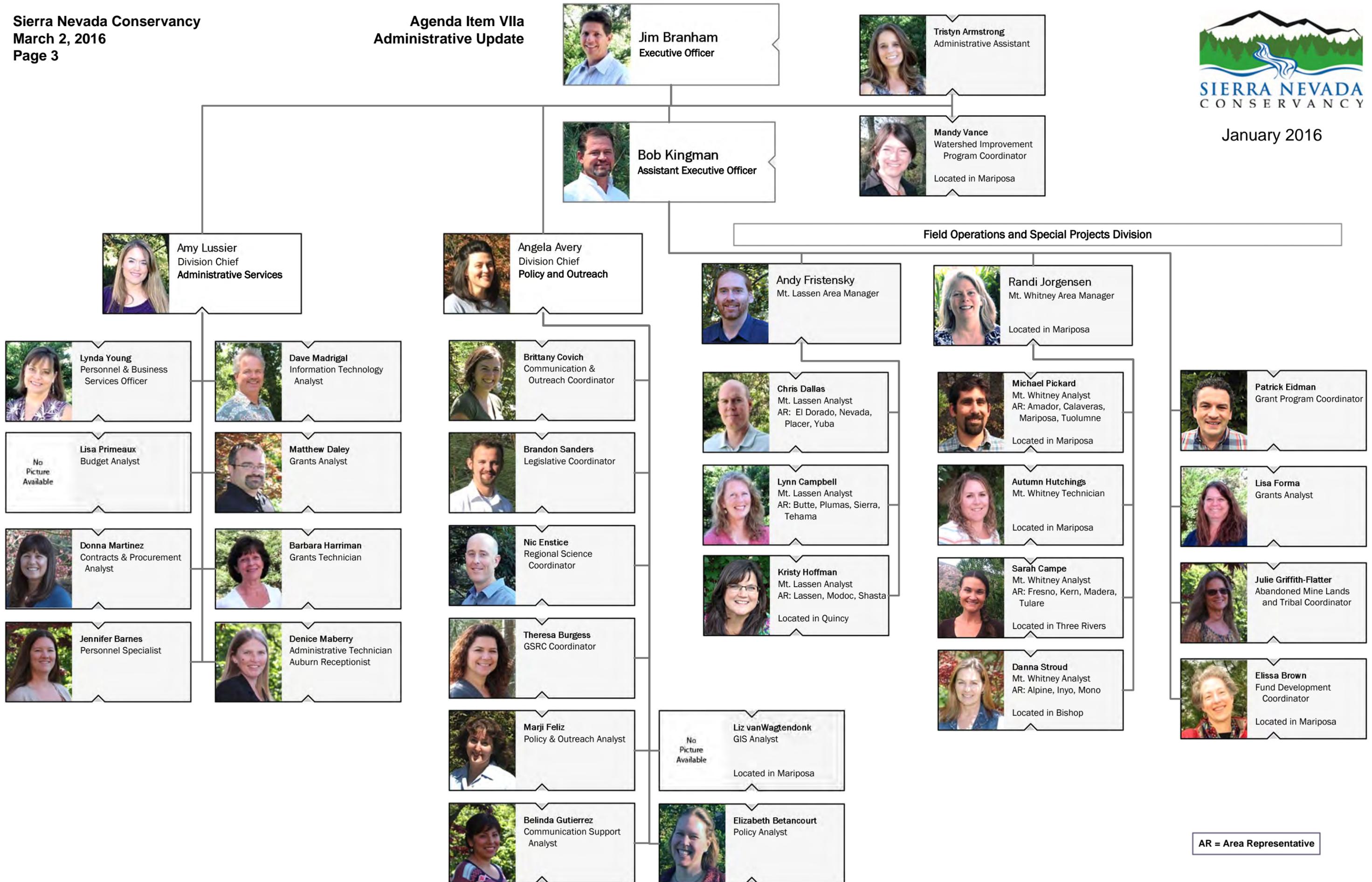
Prop 1 Support Budget			
	<i>Budget</i>	<i>Expended thru December</i>	<i>%</i>
Prop 1 Appropriation	\$ 207,000		
SALARIES & STAFF BENEFITS	\$ 200,000	\$ 93,677	47%
Operating Expenses & Equipment			
GENERAL EXPENSE			0%
TRAVEL	\$ 7,000		0%
Total Operating Expenses & Equipment	\$ 7,000	\$ -	0%
Total Personal Services & OE&E Expenditures	\$ 207,000	\$ 93,677	45%
Prop 1 Local Assistance			
	<i>Budget</i>	<i>Expended thru December</i>	<i>%</i>
Prop 1 Appropriation	\$ 10,000,000	\$ -	0%

Prop 84 Support Budget			
	<i>Budget</i>	<i>Expended thru December</i>	<i>%</i>
Prop 84 Appropriation	\$ 150,000		
SALARIES & STAFF BENEFITS	\$ 150,000	\$ 70,258	47%
Operating Expenses & Equipment			
GENERAL EXPENSE			0%
TRAVEL		1,068	0%
Total Operating Expenses & Equipment	\$ -	\$ 1,068	0%
Total Personal Services & OE&E Expenditures	\$ 150,000	\$ 71,326	48%

Agenda Item VIII
 Administrative Update



January 2016



AR = Area Representative

Background

Following Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Governing Board guidance, and in an attempt to identify and obtain additional funding for the SNC and our Region, staff continues to identify and monitor legislative opportunities for funding in support of the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) and the variety of activities that promote watershed health and protect the benefits that flow from the Region for the good of all of California.

Current Status

Water Bond

As reported at the last SNC Governing Board meeting, \$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).

There were eight slightly different versions reviewed by the Attorney General. The total amount of the bond will either be \$4.92 billion or \$6.02 billion depending on which of the eight measures NHI decides to advance. Funding for SNC is identified in the Watershed improvement for Water Supply and Water Quality enhancement chapter. SNC is currently in all versions for \$150 million, and there is specific language relative to fuel reduction projects and expenditure of funds on federal lands, consistent with SNC's ongoing efforts under WIP.

However, despite being eligible for the 2016 general election ballot, contingent on gathering the required number of signatures, NHI has notified the SNC they will no longer be pursuing this measure in the current year. NHI is now planning to commence signature gathering in 2017. Also, it is not entirely clear at this point which of the eight possible measures will be advanced, if any.

Park Bond

At the onset of the current legislative session in early 2015, Senate President pro Tempore Kevin de León introduced SB 317. The measure proposed a park bond to fund a broad range of park and open space investments, as well as conservation and environmental enhancements throughout the State.

Senate Bill 317 is now effectively dead in the Senate, as it was not passed from its house of origin pursuant to a key deadline. While there is always the potential for rule waivers to revive the measure, there is no clear indication as to a timeframe for passage if at all. Unlike his earlier park bond measure, SB 1086 from the previous session, SB 317 did not explicitly include the Sierra Nevada Conservancy for direct funding, though it did propose funding for the Tahoe Conservancy and other conservancies. There is the possibility of a new bill being introduced to serve as a new park bond vehicle, but as of this writing nothing had been introduced to that effect.

It is unclear at this time whether the Governor would support such legislation, as he has made very clear over time his aversion to further bonded indebtedness. We are actively engaged with key partners to track the process and are optimistic the SNC will be included for funding allocation should that measure proceed to passage.

Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund

Throughout 2015, the California Air Resources Board has been developing its second Cap and Trade Investment Plan, which will define allocations of cap and trade revenues for the ensuing three years. Public comment was solicited for the broad spectrum of stakeholders, and multiple commenters from within and outside of the Region expressed support for investments which would benefit the Sierra Nevada.

The second investment plan for the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) has been released and is reflected in the Governor's budget. Of particular relevance to our work and Region is the inclusion of \$150 million for CAL FIRE to conduct forest health projects, and \$60 million to the Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) for meadow and wetlands restoration. We are actively engaged with CAL FIRE and CDFW to support and encourage funding of projects consistent with the WIP.

Also of note is the formation of the Governor's Tree Mortality Task Force, of which SNC is an active member on six of eight working groups that range in focus from Forest Health and Resilience to Mapping and Monitoring to Public Outreach and Prescribed Fire. Through the task force, there is the potential for CAL FIRE GGRF funds to be largely focused on the removal of dead trees, particularly in the wildland urban interface and in proximity to key electrical and water delivery infrastructure.

Next Steps

SNC staff will continue to monitor and engage where meaningful and appropriate on all of these issues, and will keep Boardmembers apprised of any notable actions or changes. If Boardmembers are interested in learning more about any of these matters and/or wish to be involved in ongoing deliberations, please feel free to communicate with SNC staff.

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 VIIb

Status Update on Proposed Water Bond, Park Bond, and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund

Presented by:

Brandon Sanders, Legislative Affairs Coordinator
Sierra Nevada Conservancy

A 2018 Water Bond?

The Natural Heritage Institute (NHI) had recently received a circulating title and summary for a prospective water bond.

Their plan now is to refile the measure in 2017 to qualify their water bond for the 2018 General Election.

The proposal would provide a direct allocation to the SNC of \$150 million.

Key Aspects

Aside from the prospect of a direct allocation of \$150M to the SNC, there are other favorable components:

- Ability to direct-fund projects in addition to grants
- Ability to provide funding to federal agencies
- Favorable language relative to focal points of WIP

Staff will continue to monitor this through the coming years and will provide periodic updates to the Board.

A 2016 Park Bond?

Most Recent Vehicle: SB 317 (De León)

Included funding for a wide variety of activities and areas, including Lake Tahoe, LA River, and Salton Sea for the “protection/restoration of rivers, lakes, and streams.”

The most recent version of the measure did not include specific funding for the Sierra Nevada or SNC.

So What Now?

SB 317 failed a key deadline and is effectively dead, but we must be mindful of:

- The possibility of rule waivers to revive the measure
- The potential for a new bill to be introduced

In anticipation of further work on this issue, we must:

- Build support among the Sierra delegation
- Generate enthusiasm among the environmental community both within and outside the Region
- Expand support-base to urban interests who “get it”

Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund

The GGRF is the single largest opportunity for increased investment in the Sierra over time; however, a number of key issues remain.

- Need for a CARB-approved methodology for quantifying the GHG benefits of forest/fuels management
- Development of biomass energy and other utilization infrastructure
- Use of Enviroscreen 2.0 to define disadvantaged communities largely omits the Sierra

Good News on GGRF

Governor's proposed budget recognizes the need to invest in watershed health through GGRF:

- \$150M to CAL FIRE for Healthy Forests
 - Supports the work of the Tree Mortality Task Force
- \$60M to CDFW for Wetlands and Meadow Restoration
 - Potential for substantial portion to be spent in Sierra
- \$100M to CalRecycle for Waste Diversion
 - Some portion could relate to future actions on tree mortality

Watershed Improvement Program

The WIP articulates the need for increased investment as well as the consequences of not doing so.

- Watershed health will continue to deteriorate, affecting water quality, yield, and reliability
- Tree mortality will increase and amplify fire risk
- Loss of stored carbon and increase in GHG emissions through intense wildfire will continue

The presence of the WIP provides the opportunity for a strategic, holistic approach.

Background

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) continues to play an active role working with the United States Forest Service (USFS), the Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions (YSS) collaborative, and other partners in ongoing efforts to restore portions of the Stanislaus National Forest that were burned in the 2013 Rim Fire. At the December 2013 SNC Board meeting, the Board authorized up to \$1 million of remaining Proposition 84 funds to be directed to this restoration effort.

Utilizing Executive Officer authority as previously approved by the Board, the SNC has awarded two planning grants for a total of \$150,498 to Tuolumne River Preservation Trust (TRT), acting as the fiscal agent for YSS, and coordinating with the Stanislaus National Forest. The grants funded assessment of 80 springs in the Rim Fire Burn area and consequently the design and permitting for the restoration of four meadows, ten springs, and preliminary design for the replacement of two culverts. All of the planned restoration activities are within the Lower Cherry Creek watershed and formed the basis for a final implementation grant application.

In February 2016, the Executive Officer awarded a grant (SNC #856), to the Tuolumne River Preservation Trust in the amount of \$842,473.46 to implement restoration activities planned with previous grant funds. Consistent with delegated authority, the SNC consulted with the SNC Board Chair and Vice Chair (designated subcommittee), Tribal representatives, local water districts and public agencies prior to authorizing the grant. The project and grant is CEQA exempt per Executive Order B-23-13 and authority delegated to the Secretary for Natural Resources.

Current Status

Project description and location maps are attached to this staff report ([Attachment A](#)) and available for review on SNC website. The Tuolumne River Preservation Trust and project partners are preparing to implement restoration activities as soon as ground conditions are suitable and contracts are in place.

Next Steps

SNC staff will continue to monitor progress of the restoration efforts and work with grantee to coordinate reporting and administrative requirements of the grant.

Recommendation

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

Agenda Item VIId
Attachment A

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY**

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program Safe Drinking Water,
Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River
and Coastal Protection Act of 2006 (Proposition 84)**

Applicant: Tuolumne River Preservation Trust

Project Title: Rim Fire Restoration

Subregion: South Central

County: Tuolumne

SNC Funding: \$842,474

Total Project Cost: \$1,318,229

Application Number: 856

PROJECT SCOPE

This project implements a collaborative effort between the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC), USDA Forest Service, and Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions to initiate Rim Fire restoration work on the ground, funded by a commitment of \$1 million in SNC Prop 84 bond money. This grant follows on two previous SNC grants for this purpose: a Rim Fire Springs Assessment (SNC grant #813) and a Rim Fire Restoration Planning grant (#816). The project concept was developed through extensive discussions with the Stanislaus National Forest and other potential funding partners.

This project provides a coherent strategy to focus a portion of needed restoration work within the Lower Cherry Creek watershed, a critical area in the heart of the Rim Fire burn area. Ninety one percent (91%) of the entire Lower Cherry Creek watershed burned in the Rim Fire. The project will provide biomass thinning of about 200 acres of high-severity burned forest, restore four (4) meadows, rehabilitate seven (7) of the ten (10) identified springs in the watershed (and monitor the other three), and replace or improve two at-risk roadway culverts.

The project includes 204 acres that have been identified for strategic felling and piling of burnt material utilizing a combination of mechanical equipment and hand crews. The trees identified for removal would be designated by species and diameter to create a mosaic pattern with multiple age classes. While the forest thinning area is covered under the Rim Fire Recovery Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), the identified acreage for this grant is unmerchantable for commercial salvage and biomass removal.

Four meadows (Wilson Meadow, Upper Cherry Creek Tributary Meadow, Middle Cherry Creek Tributary Meadow, and Lower Cherry Creek Tributary Meadow) in the Lower Cherry Creek watershed will be restored by stabilizing headcuts and reintroducing large woody debris that was lost to fire in order to repair and prevent continuing erosion, and remove encroaching conifers.

Spring restoration will reduce the potential for post fire flooding and debris flows that may enter into the springs and lead to incised channeling. Actions taken to protect and improve the springs include removal of invasive species and encroaching conifers, directionally felling dead trees around the springs, and planting native spring vegetation.

Two culverts along Forest System Road 1N96 in the Lower Cherry Creek watershed were identified for significant risk of being overwhelmed by increased post-fire flows. A large 10 foot diameter culvert at Granite Creek on 1N96 will be improved by placing a 4-5 foot squash culvert, offset and elevated from the existing culvert, to act as a 'relief valve,' in addition to armoring of recent scouring around the existing culvert and minor improvements to the road bed at the crossing. A 24 inch culvert at an unnamed tributary to Granite Creek along 1N96 will be replaced with larger 4-5 foot squash culvert.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
Forest thinning	Aug. 2016 – Dec. 2016
Prescribed pile burning	April 2017 – Dec. 2017
Meadow restoration	April 2016 – Oct. 2017 *
Springs restoration	April 2016 – Dec. 2016
Culvert replacement / improvement	April 2016 – Oct. 2017 *
Six-month Progress Reports	Oct. 2016, April 2017, Oct. 2017 (if needed)
Final Report	February 1, 2018
FINAL PAYMENT/FINAL PAYMENT REQUEST	March 1, 2018

* Meadow restoration and culvert replacement/improvement might be completed in 2016 if weather permits.

PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
Direct*	\$839,294
Administrative**	3,180
GRAND TOTAL	\$842,474

*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.

**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

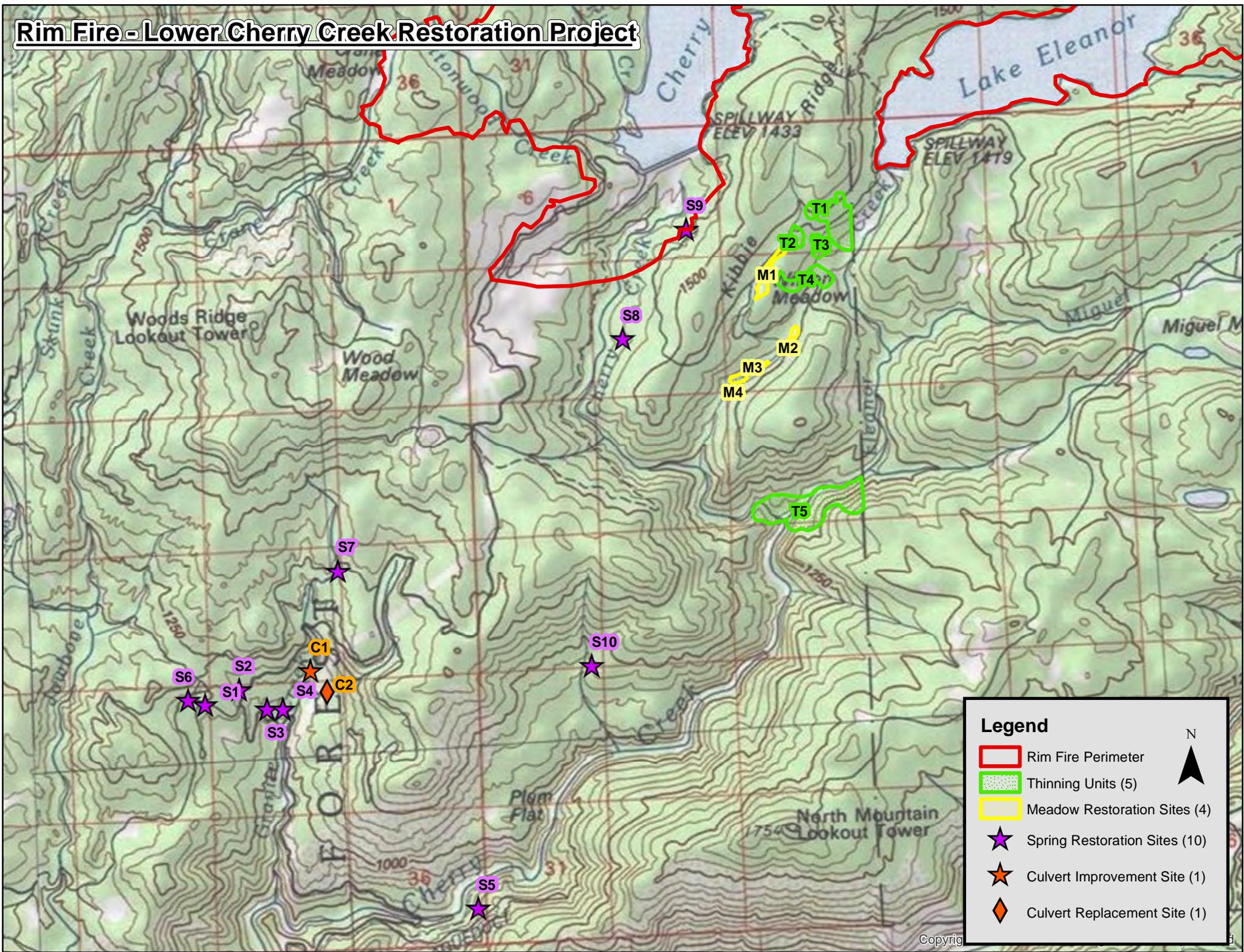
This project is supported by a broad coalition of stakeholders through their participation in the Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions collaborative group.

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
- Linear feet of streambank improved or restored
- Number of culverts improved or replaced

Rim Fire - Lower Cherry Creek Restoration Project



Legend

- Rim Fire Perimeter
- Thinning Units (5)
- Meadow Restoration Sites (4)
- Spring Restoration Sites (10)
- Culvert Improvement Site (1)
- Culvert Replacement Site (1)

N

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. 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 18 grants evaluated, nine scored below the 85-point threshold, two remain in pending status awaiting completion of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documentation, and five grants totaling \$853,190 were authorized by the Board at the December 10, 2015, meeting. Two additional Category 1 applications representing \$609,808.00 scored above the 85-point threshold and are being recommended for funding.

Please see [Table 1](#) for details on all applications, including links to the complete application packages.

The second application deadline is March 1, 2016. Applications submitted by this deadline will be processed by SNC staff and reviewed by the evaluation team. Those applications meeting the scoring threshold will be presented to the SNC Board for consideration at future Board meetings.

Next Steps

Staff is recommending Board approval of two projects, totaling \$609,808. Project information including descriptions, maps, and CEQA documentation is linked below for each project.

- [Project #829](#) proposed by Alpine County - Markleevillage Fuels Reduction Project, with Notice of Determination as a Responsible Agency. The project involves removal

of heavy brush, small trees, and other understory fuels on 234 acres in the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. The project area is located 1.5 miles from the town of Markleeville in Alpine County and is immediately southeast of Grover Hot Springs State Park. The treatment areas are within the Wildland Urban Interface and leverage earlier work conducted by Alpine County, Grover Hot Springs State Park, and private property owners, and will focus on multiple watershed benefits including increased forest vigor, improved water filtration ability, and augmenting carbon storage capacity. Waterways in proximity to the project areas include Musser and Jarvis Creek, Spratt Creek, Millberry Creek, Hot Springs Creek, Pleasant Valley Creek, and Indian Creek. To access the complete application package, [click here](#)
Category I Site Improvement Project - \$230,115.00

- [Project #846](#) proposed by the Butte County Fire Safe Council - Little Butte Creek Forest Health Project (Phase II), with Notice of Exemption. The project involves thinning, pile burning, chipping, masticating, and pruning on three parcels (USFS, BLM, Paradise Irrigation District) totaling 176 acres of forested lands in the community of Magalia in Butte County. Project areas are located in a CAL FIRE-designated "Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone" and within the collection area for the drinking water supply of Paradise. The proposed work seeks to improve watershed health and reduce the adverse impacts of wildfire to Magalia Reservoir, Paradise Lake, Butte Creek, and the Feather River.
To access the complete application package, [click here](#)
Category 1 Site Improvement Project - \$379,693.00

Attachments

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

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Board (a) authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Little Butte Creek Forest Health Project – Phase II (SNC 846); (b) make findings that there is no substantial evidence that the Markleevillage Fuels Reduction Project (SNC 829), with mitigation measures, may have a significant effect on the environment and adopt the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration and the related Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program; and (c) 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.

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 Above 85 Points:

89.50	846	Butte County Fire Safe Council	Little Butte Creek Forest Health Project (Phase II)	\$379,693.00	Butte	North Central
86.25	829	Alpine County	Markleevillage Fuels Reduction Project	\$230,115.00	Alpine	East

Subtotal: \$609,808.00

Eligible and Complete Applications Still Pending CEQA for Possible June Recommendation:

88.50	837	Plumas County Fire Safe Council	Wolf and Grizzly Creek Municipal Watershed Protection	\$500,000.00	Plumas	North Central
94.00	841	American River Conservancy	American River Headwaters Improvement Project	\$500,000.00	Placer	Central

Subtotal: \$1,000,000.00

Grants Authorized at the December 2015 Board Meeting:

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

Subtotal: \$853,190.00

Table 1
Projects Submitted on September 1, 2015

Score	SNC ID#	Organization	Project Title	Amount Requested	County	Subregion
-------	---------	--------------	---------------	------------------	--------	-----------

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

Subtotal: \$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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Subtotal: \$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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Subtotal: \$142,769.87

Total: \$5,516,649.87



Agenda Item IX

2015-16 Proposition 1 Grant Awards

Presented by:

Randi Jorgensen
Mt. Whitney Area Manager
and
Andy Fristensky
Mt. Lassen Area Manager

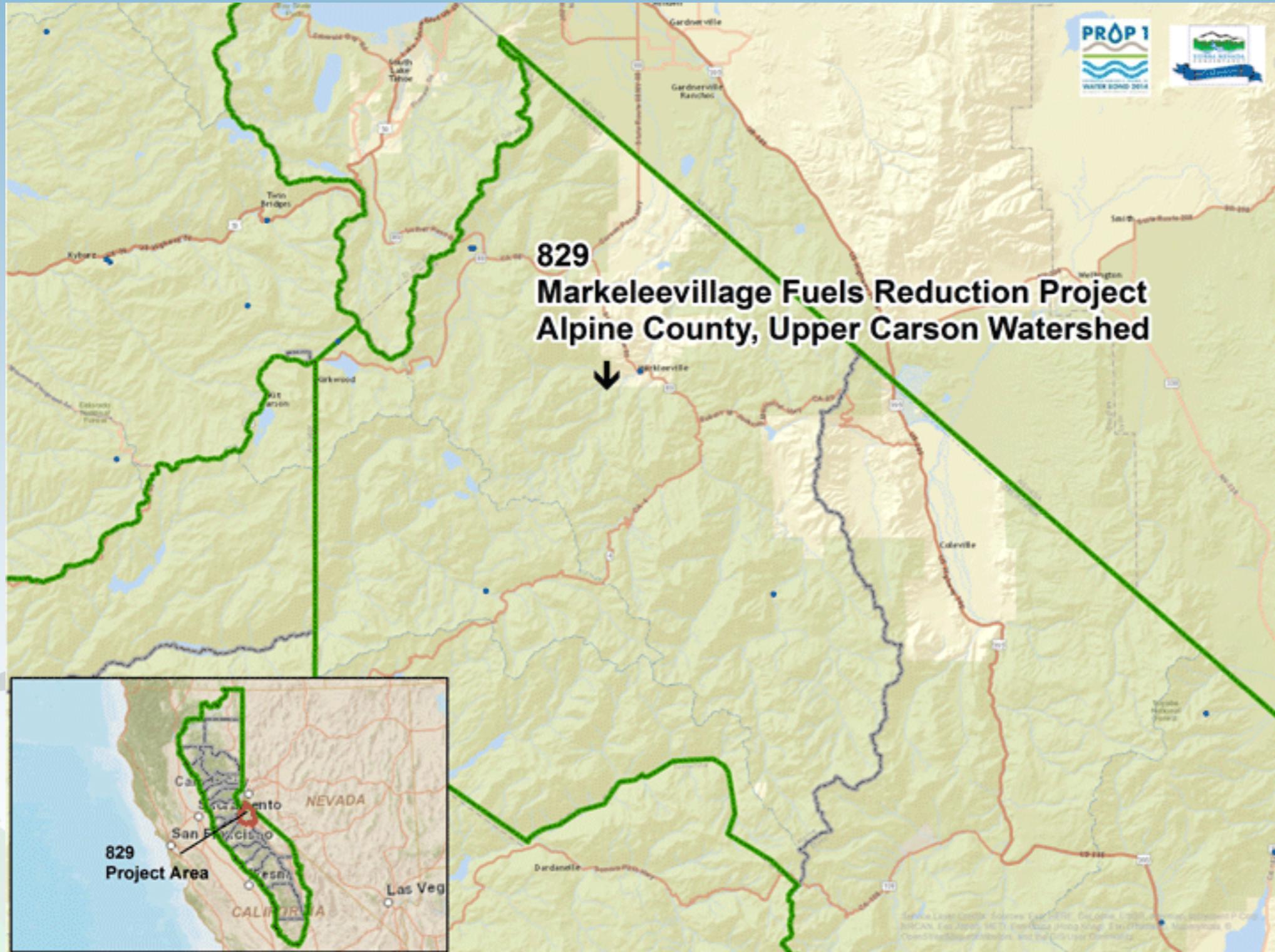
Background

- July 1, 2015 – The SNC requested grant proposals.
- September 1, 2015 – first application deadline.
- SNC received 20 applications:
 - One project was ineligible
 - One application was withdrawn
 - Nine were evaluated and not recommended
- December 2015 – SNC Board authorized 5 projects (two Category 1 projects and three Category 2 projects) totaling \$853,190.

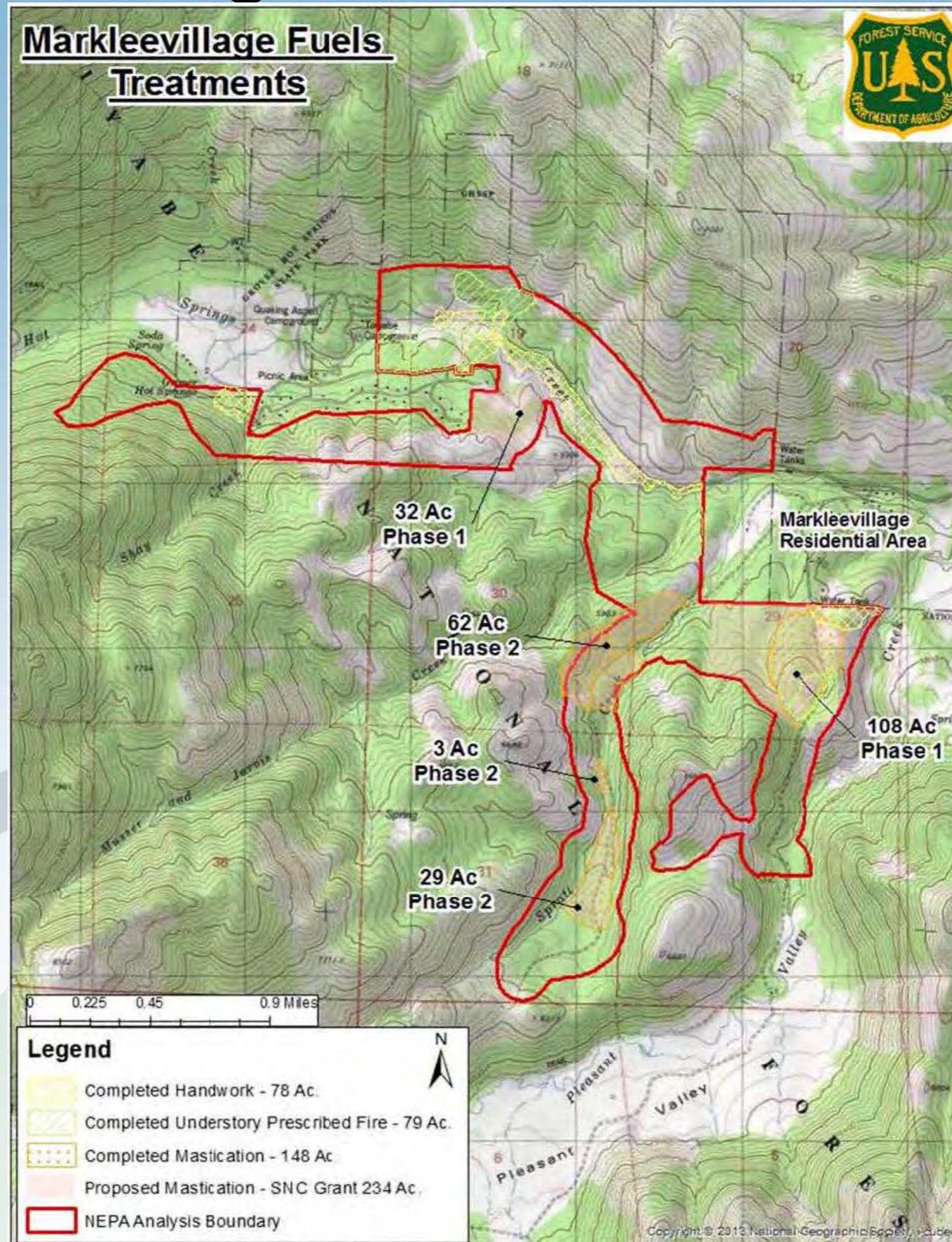
Current Status

- Two projects are recommended for approval at this meeting.
- Two projects still undergoing CEQA review for a possible June recommendation.

Mt. Whitney Area



Markleevillage Fuels Reduction Project



Markleevillage Fuels Reduction Project



Heavy undergrowth and brush accumulation

Markleevillage Fuels Reduction Project

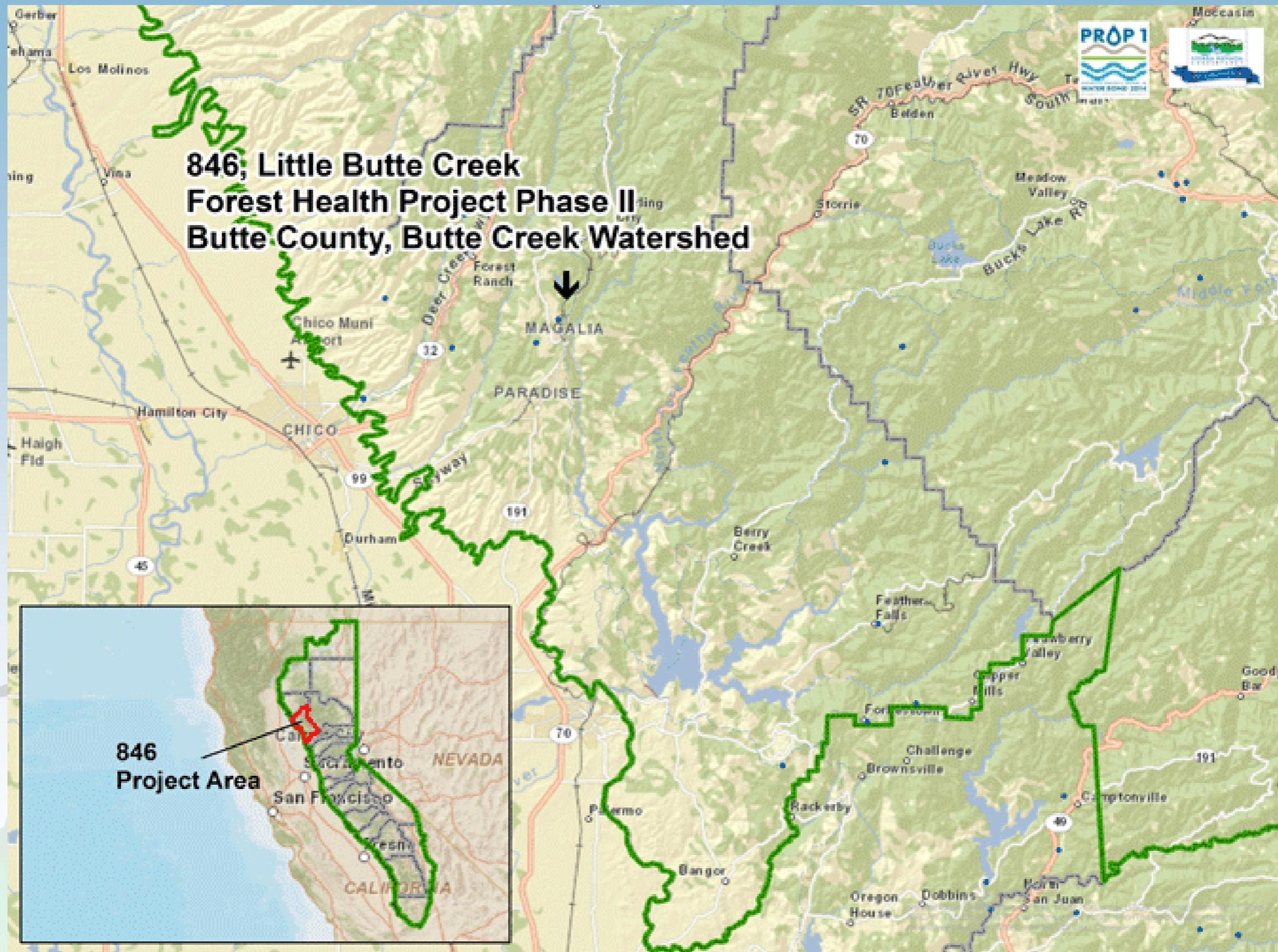


Project will increase snowpack that reaches forest floor

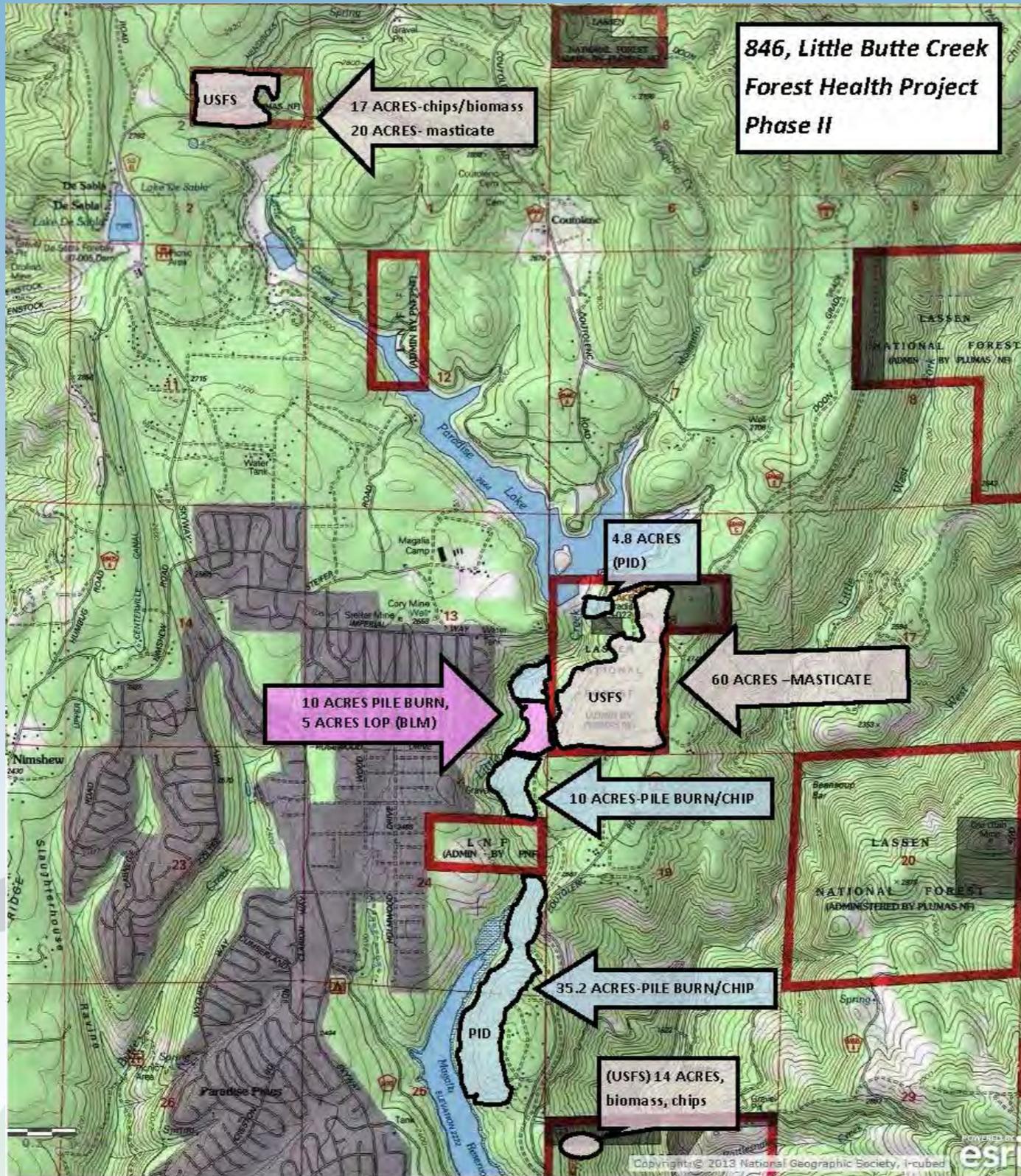
Questions?



Mt. Lassen Area



Little Butte Creek Forest Health Project Phase II



846, Little Butte Creek Forest Health Project Phase II

USFS
17 ACRES-chips/biomass
20 ACRES-masticate

12

USFS
4.8 ACRES (PID)

60 ACRES-MASTICATE

10 ACRES PILE BURN,
5 ACRES LOP (BLM)

10 ACRES-PILE BURN/CHIP

35.2 ACRES-PILE BURN/CHIP

(USFS) 14 ACRES,
biomass, chips

- Legend:
-  Paradise Irrigation District (PID)
 -  Lassen National Forest (USFS)
 -  Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

Little Butte Creek Forest Health Project Phase II



Overstocked forest located in Paradise Irrigation District land.

Little Butte Creek Forest Health Project Phase II



This project is within a collection area for the drinking water supply for the Town of Paradise.

Little Butte Creek Forest Health Project Phase II



A portion of the work will include pile burning.

Questions?



Recommendation

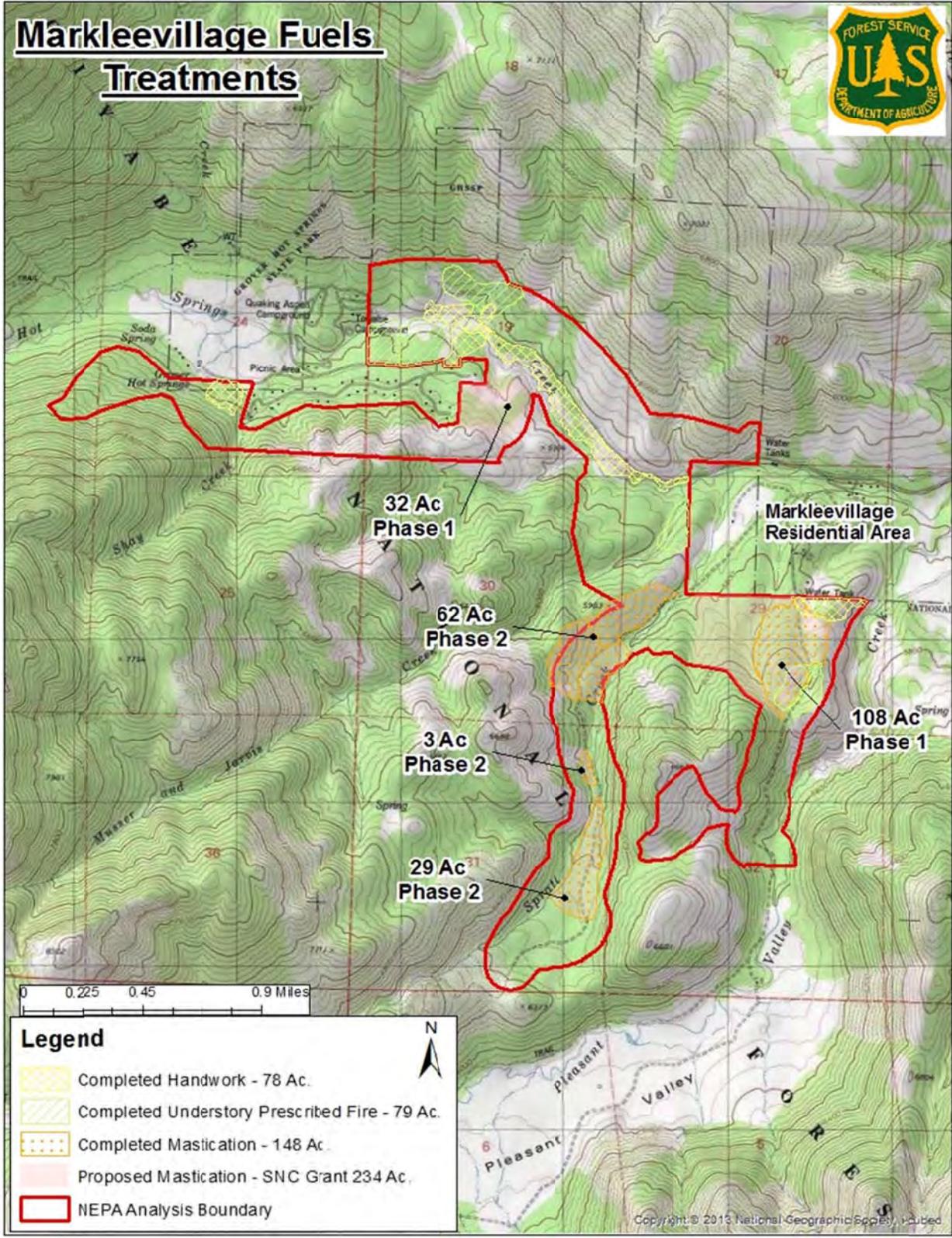
Staff recommends the Board (a) authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Little Butte Creek Forest Health Project – Phase II (SNC 846); (b) make findings that there is no substantial evidence that the Markleevillage Fuels Reduction Project (SNC 829), with mitigation measures, may have a significant effect on the environment and adopt the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration and the related Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program; and (c) 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.



829 Markelevillage Fuels Reduction Project Alpine County, Upper Carson Watershed



Markleevillage Fuels Treatments



Legend

- Completed Handwork - 78 Ac.
- Completed Understory Prescribed Fire - 79 Ac.
- Completed Mastication - 148 Ac.
- Proposed Mastication - SNC Grant 234 Ac.
- NEPA Analysis Boundary

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY**

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

Applicant: Alpine County

Project Title: Markleevillage Fuels Reduction Project

Subregion: East

County: Alpine

SNC Funding: \$230,115.00

Total Project Cost: \$249,115.00

Application Number: 829

Final Score: 86.25

PROJECT SCOPE

The Markleevillage Fuels Reduction project will treat 234 acres of land managed by the Carson Ranger District of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest near the community of Markleeville and will be implemented through a working partnership between Alpine County, the U.S. Forest Service Carson Ranger District, the Alpine Watershed Group, and the Alpine Fire Safe Council.

The project is broken into two treatment areas: Treatment Area #1 will be 140 acres in the Pleasant Valley area and Treatment Area #2 will be 94 acres in the Thornburg Canyon area. Both treatment areas will use standard mechanical treatments including removing heavy brush, small diameter trees (up to 12”) and other under story fuels by mechanized mastication. Due to lack of alternative biomass utilization infrastructure, material will be scattered or burned.

This project leverages previously SNC-funded creek restoration and water quality projects by treating areas that are in close proximity to those projects and are contiguous with previous treatments conducted by the Humboldt-Toiyabe NF. In order to ensure treatment continuity and maintain efficacy, the project will complete additional work in some areas that have recently been treated. By reducing hazardous wildfire fuels, this project provides multiple benefits to the area’s watershed conditions by increasing forest vigor, improving water filtration ability, augmenting carbon storage capacity, and enhancing wildlife habitat.

This project also includes a community outreach and education element intended to help residents connect fuels reduction projects with improved watershed conditions.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
Partner Meeting and Agreement between USFS and County	May 15, 2016
RFP Development	June 1, 2016 – July 15, 2016
Release RFP, review bids, select contractor	July 15, 2016 – September 15, 2016
Community outreach and education	September 15, 2016 – May 1, 2017
Treatment Area #1 Implementation	October 1, 2016 – March 15, 2017
Partner Meeting	March 1, 2017
Treatment Area #2 Implementation	June 1, 2017 – March 1, 2018
6-Month Progress Reports	December 1, 2016 June 1, 2017 December 1, 2017 June 1, 2018
FINAL PAYMENT/FINAL PAYMENT REQUEST	June 15, 2018

PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
Direct*	\$200,100.00
Administrative**	\$30,015.00
GRAND TOTAL	\$230,115.00

* 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. Direct expenses should also include costs directly attributable to the project such as performance measure reporting, project management, billing, signs, etc.

** Administrative: Shared expenses associated with the administration of a project and may not exceed 15 percent of the total SNC grant request for direct costs. Examples of administrative costs include the costs of operating/maintaining facilities, general expenses, general administration, etc.

PROJECT LETTERS SUPPORT/OPPOSITION

- Support
 - Carson Ranger District, Humboldt Toiyabe National Forest
 - Alpine Watershed Group
 - Alpine Fire Safe Council
 - American Rivers
 - Carson Water Subconservancy District
 - Eastern Alpine County Volunteer Fire Department
 - Markleeville Water Company
 - Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California – Tribal Council
 - Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California – Community Council

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
- Number of People Reached
- Resources Leveraged for the Sierra Nevada

Notice of Determination**Appendix D****To:**

Office of Planning and Research
 U.S. Mail: _____ Street Address: _____
 P.O. Box 3044 1400 Tenth St., Rm 113
 Sacramento, CA 95812-3044 Sacramento, CA 95814

County Clerk

County of: _____
 Address: _____

From:

Public Agency: Sierra Nevada Conservancy
 Address: 11521 Blocker Dr #205
Auburn, CA 95603
 Contact: Patrick Eidman
 Phone: 530-823-4689

Lead Agency (if different from above):

Alpine County Community Development
 Address: 50 Diamond Valley Road
Markleeville, CA 96120
 Contact: Brian Peters
 Phone: 530-694-1361

SUBJECT: Filing of Notice of Determination in compliance with Section 21108 or 21152 of the Public Resources Code.

State Clearinghouse Number (if submitted to State Clearinghouse): 2015092057

Project Title: 2016 - 2018 Markleevillage Fuels Reduction Project

Project Applicant: Alpine County

Project Location (include county): Markleeville, Alpine County, CA; approx. 1.5 mile west of Markleeville, CA

Project Description:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) would provide \$230,115 in funding to Alpine County to implement the 2016-2018 Markleevillage Fuels Reduction Project (Project). The Project would treat a total of 234 acres to reduce wildfire risk. A total of 140 acres would be treated between Nov. 2016 and Mar. 2017, and a second 94 acre treatment area would be treated between Nov. 2017 and March 2018. The project would involve the removal of brush, small trees and under story fuels by mechanical mastication. SNC has reviewed the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration prepared by Alpine County (SCH # 2015092057), and concurs with the analysis in that document.

This is to advise that the Sierra Nevada Conservancy has approved the above
 Lead Agency or Responsible Agency)

described project on _____ and has made the following determinations regarding the above
 (date)
 described project.

1. The project [will will not] have a significant effect on the environment.
2. An Environmental Impact Report was prepared for this project pursuant to the provisions of CEQA.
 A Negative Declaration was prepared for this project pursuant to the provisions of CEQA.
3. Mitigation measures [were were not] made a condition of the approval of the project.
4. A mitigation reporting or monitoring plan [was was not] adopted for this project.
5. A statement of Overriding Considerations [was was not] adopted for this project.
6. Findings [were were not] made pursuant to the provisions of CEQA.

This is to certify that the final EIR with comments and responses and record of project approval, or the negative Declaration, is available to the General Public at:

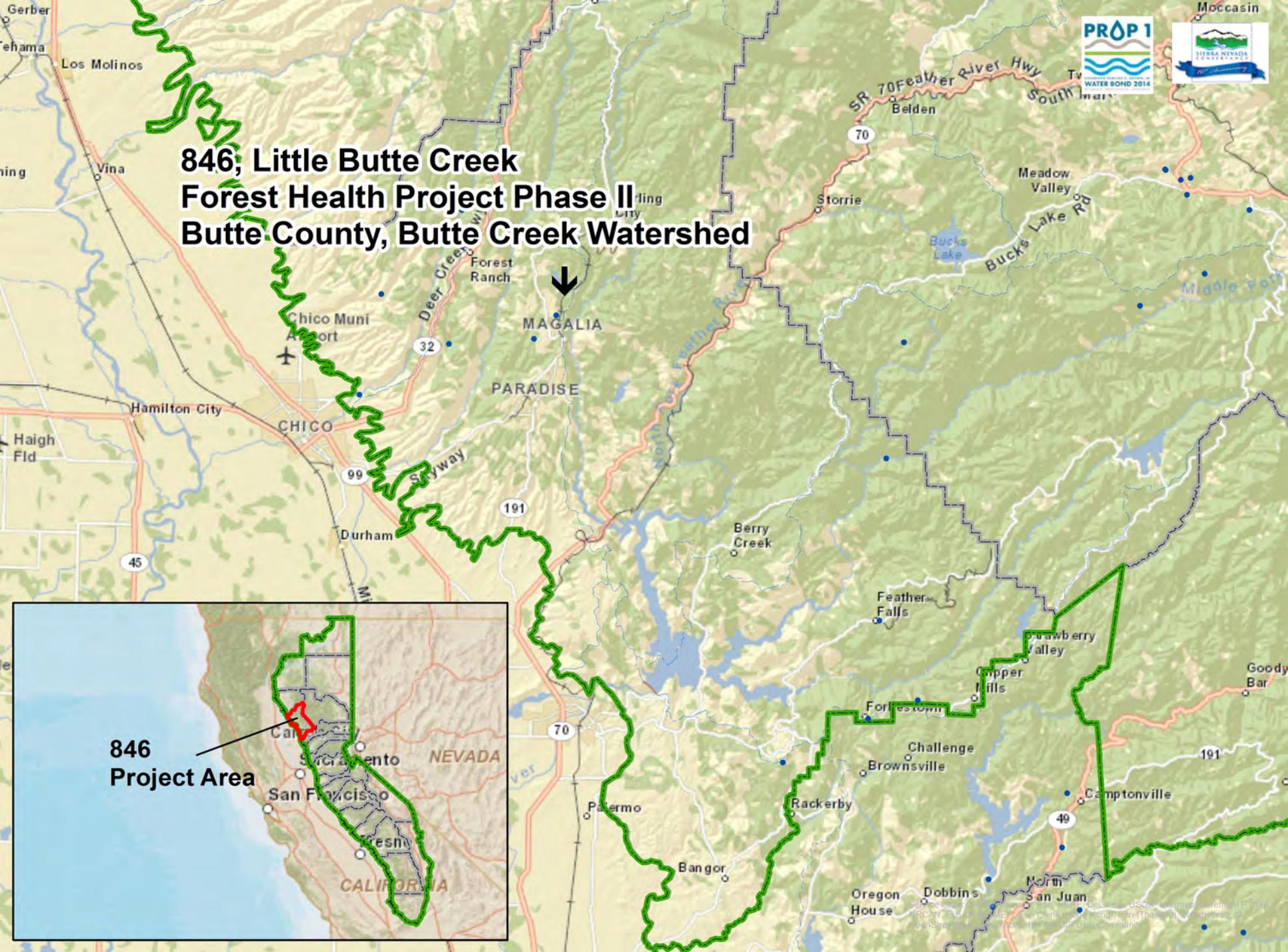
Sierra Nevada Conservancy, 11521 Blocker Dr #205, Auburn, CA 95603

Signature (Public Agency): _____ Title: _____

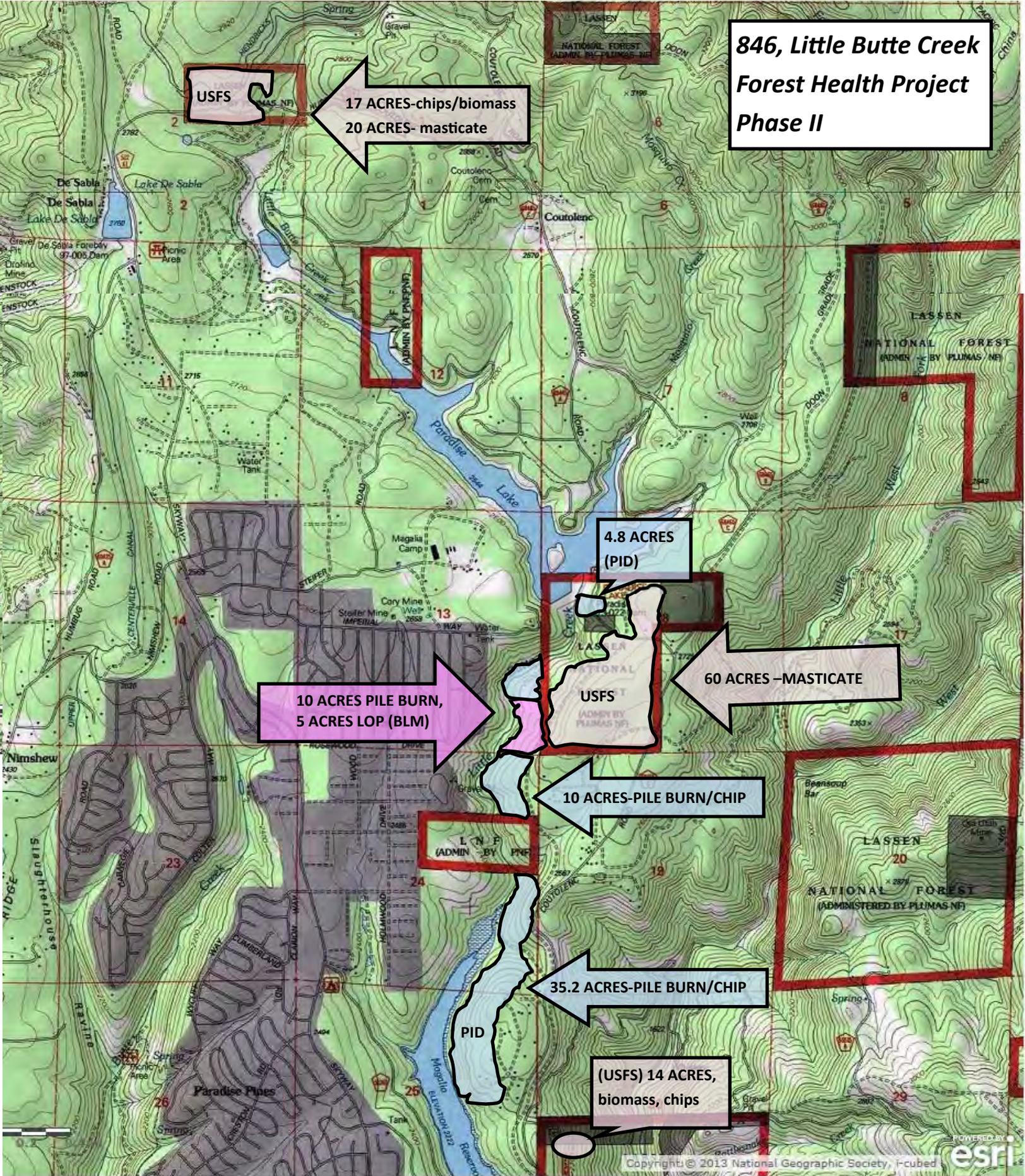
Date: _____ Date Received for filing at OPR: _____



846; Little Butte Creek Forest Health Project Phase II Butte County, Butte Creek Watershed



846, Little Butte Creek Forest Health Project Phase II



- Legend:**
- Paradise Irrigation District (PID)
 - Lassen National Forest (USFS)
 - Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

**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: Little Butte Creek Forest Health Project Phase II

Subregion: North Central

County: Butte

SNC Funding: \$379,693.00

Total Project Cost: \$443,293.00

Application Number: 846

Final Score: 89.5

PROJECT SCOPE

The project is located in the community of Magalia in Butte County, home to approximately 11,000 residents. The community is situated in a mixed conifer forest between the Little Butte and Butte Creek watersheds and the west branch of the Feather River. The project is located within a collection area of drinking water supply for the Town of Paradise. The treatment areas are part of larger planning and completed fuels projects in the community by US Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and Butte County Fire Safe Council (e.g., SNC Grant 474 - Little Butte Creek Forest Health Project Phase 1).

The project will complete fuel treatments on 176 acres of overgrown forest lands owned by the Paradise Irrigation District, USFS, and BLM to reduce wildfire risk, protect watershed tributaries to water storage facilities, and promote watershed health.

Treatment methodologies will include thinning, pile burning, chipping, masticating, and pruning of overstocked conifer forest. Due to lack of alternative biomass utilization infrastructure, material will be scattered or burned. Improved forest conditions resulting from the project will benefit the quality of ground and surface water by reducing the chance of intense wildfires and subsequent soil erosion, opening the forest for better water absorption, and encouraging native species and more diverse wildlife habitats.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
Contracts completed with CCC and private contractors	April 30, 2016
Implementation: forest health thinning work (photo points)	May 1, 2016 – June 30, 2018
Firewise Education (newsletter, tour and web postings)	May 1, 2016 – June 30, 2018.
Monitoring (GPS mapping, pre and post photo documentation)	May 1, 2016 – June 30, 2018.
Six Month Progress Reports (4)	October 1, 2016 April 1, 2017 October 1, 2017 April 1, 2018
Final Report and Deliverables Due	August 1, 2018
FINAL PAYMENT/FINAL PAYMENT REQUEST	August 1, 2018

PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
Direct*	\$345,175.00
Administrative**	\$34,518.00
GRAND TOTAL	\$379,693.00

* 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. Direct expenses should also include costs directly attributable to the project such as performance measure reporting, project management, billing, signs, etc.

** Administrative: Shared expenses associated with the administration of a project and may not exceed 15 percent of the total SNC grant request for direct costs. Examples of administrative costs include the costs of operating/maintaining facilities, general expenses, general administration, etc.

PROJECT LETTERS SUPPORT/OPPOSITION

- Support
 - CAL FIRE/Butte County Fire Department
 - Bare on the Ridge
 - Butte County Office of Emergency Management
 - Paradise Fire Safe Council
 - California Conservation Corps
 - Butte County Air Quality Management District
 - Paradise Pines Property Owners Association

- Paradise Irrigation District
- The Bureau of Land Management
- US Forest Service

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) _____

County Clerk
County of _____

(Address)

Project Title: _____

Project Location - Specific: _____

Project Location – City: _____ Project Location – County: _____

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project: _____

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: _____

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: _____

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: _____

Statutory Exemptions. State code number: _____

Reasons why project is exempt: _____

Lead Agency
Contact Person: _____ Area Code/Telephone/Extension: _____

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):

Paradise Irrigation District (PID) lands, 111 acres of National Forest (NF) lands, and 15 acres managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land management. (BLM) The project involves thinning of brush, ladder fuels, and overstocked conifer forests. Specific treatments include hand thinning, and pile burning or chipping on 60 acres of PID and BLM lands; hand thinning, and lop and scatter of materials on 5 acres of BLM land; hand thinning and chipping of 31 acres of NF lands; and mastication of 80 acres of NF lands.

Reasons why project is exempt: (continued):

Trees will be removed and thinned to improve forest health and reduce fire risk using methods that will protect water quality and improve habitat values. The project consists of minor land alterations involving the removal of surface vegetation and ladder fuels. The USFS and BLM conducted an environmental analysis pursuant to NEPA for the federal lands within the project, and the PID reviewed the project activities on PID lands and found the project was exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15304. SNC independently reviewed the USFS and BLM NEPA documents and the PID Notice of Exemption and concurred with their findings. Database searches were conducted to identify known biological and archaeological resources in the project vicinity, and the project has been designed in a manner that would not affect identified sensitive resources. The project will implement Standard Operating Procedures, Best Management Practices, and avoidance measures to avoid adverse environmental impacts.

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION
CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Section 15304

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Proposition 84 Grant Application Number 846
Little Butte Creek Forest Health Project Phase II

Description of Activities

The Butte County Fire Safe Council, a non-profit 501c(3) organization, is requesting \$379,693 in funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program for site improvement/restoration activities on approximately 176 acres. Implementation of the Little Butte Creek Forest Health Project Phase II will reduce fuel loads on 176 acres of forested lands, which includes 50 acres of Paradise Irrigation District (PID) lands, 111 acres of National Forest (NF) lands, and 15 acres managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. (BLM). The project involves thinning of brush, ladder fuels, and overstocked conifer forests. Specific treatments include hand thinning, and pile burning or chipping on 60 acres of PID and BLM lands; hand thinning, and lop and scatter of materials on 5 acres of BLM land; hand thinning and chipping of 31 acres of NF lands; and mastication on 80 acres of NF lands. Forest management activities will utilize hand crews, chippers, and masticators.

The project includes elements that will avoid detrimental environmental impacts including the following:

1. Snags that provide wildlife habitat will be retained.
2. Areas of wetlands or riparian areas will be avoided.
3. Elderberry plants and rare or endangered species will be avoided.
4. Trees greater than 8 inches in diameter at breast height will be retained.
5. Shrub or small tree vegetation may be retained if it does not occur adjacent to trees and do not meet the definition of a ladder fuel.

In addition, the project incorporates the measures identified in the NF and BLM joint EIS for the Concow Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project, which are incorporated as into the design of the proposed project. The EIS, including a listing of mitigation measures that have now been incorporated as part of the proposed project, are available at the link below:

http://www.fs.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsinternet!/ut/p/c5/04_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8xBz9CP0os3gDfxMDT8MwRydLA1cj72BTUwMTAwgAykeaxRtBeY4WBv4eHmFYT4GMHkidBvgAl6EdleDXIvfdrAJuM3388jPTdUvyA2NMMgyUQQAYrgQmg!!/dl3/d3/L2dJQSEvUUt3QS9ZQnZ3LzZfS000MjZOMDcxT1RVODBJN0o2MTJQRDMwODQ!/?project=10083

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 Little Butte Creek Forest Health Project, Phase II 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 minor land alterations proposed by the project involve the hand thinning and removal of brush and trees less than 8 inches dbh for forestry purposes, resulting in improved forest health and reduced fire risk, on approximately 176 acres; and the site forestry 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 rationale as to why each exception does not apply to the Little Butte Creek Forest Health Project, Phase II.

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 goals of this approximately 176- acre forestry project are to restore health to the forested areas near the community of Magalia, preventing catastrophic wildfires and protecting drinking water supplies for the town of Paradise.</p> <p>The project work consists of minor land alterations involving the removal of brush and small trees by hand crews, chippers, and masticators. The project work does not involve 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>(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 forest management 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 project 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. In addition, the project area was evaluated as part of the Concow Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project EIS, which evaluated a larger management program that would treat 1,510 acres in nearby areas, and by the PID pursuant to CEQA. These analyses found that the project, in combination with other nearby forest management treatments would not result in significant cumulative impacts.</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</p>	<p>The site improvement/restoration project will not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.</p>

<p>significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.</p>	<p>Specific environmental topics are addressed below:</p> <p>Aesthetics. The site forest management treatments will result in a minor change in the appearance of the forested areas near the community of Magalia due to the removal of brush and small diameter trees. However, the project will maintain the project area as a conifer forest, and will have minimal long-term effects on the project area’s visual character. All proposed management practices such as site preparation, thinning, and burning can be conducted with limited visibility or detection from surrounding properties. In addition, the project is intended to prevent catastrophic wildfire, which could otherwise occur and result in aesthetic impacts.</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 176 acres by thinning dense conifer stands, thereby helping to protect these forest resources from catastrophic wildfire.</p> <p>Air Quality/GHGs. The project activities will result in nominal fugitive dust, particulate, and mobile source emissions. Mobile source emissions will be limited to those associated with vehicle trips to/from the project sites, and use of mechanized equipment. Mechanized equipment will be used for forest management activities (i.e., chainsaws, chipper, and masticator). Activities that emit fugitive dust and particulate (i.e., smoke) will be conducted in compliance with a permit from the Butte County Air Quality Management District, which includes measures to minimize emissions. Nearby sensitive receptors will not be exposed to substantial pollutant concentrations. The project 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.</p> <p>Biological Resources. No sensitive biological resources will be affected by the project. Biological surveys were conducted on the US Forest Service and BLM lands as part of the Concow Hazardous Fuels EIS, and standard</p>
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operating practices and mitigations were incorporated into the project to avoid impacts on biological resources. The EIS found that the project as it is currently designed would have no significant effects on biological resources.

A search of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) was also completed in December 2015. The CNDDDB found no occurrences of special status wildlife species within the project area. The CNDDDB search identified a Bald Eagle (a CDFW fully-protected species) nest site in the vicinity of the project area on private land north of Magalia Reservoir. Bald Eagle activity at the nest site has not been observed since 1999, and it is unknown if the nest is still active. The nest site is approximately 0.35 miles from the project site, which is greater than the 0.25-mile distance within which project noise could affect the species, per US Fish and Wildlife Service guidance. In addition, the project consists of thinning small diameter trees and brush, which would not affect habitat components used by the species for roosting or foraging (i.e., mature trees, open water).

The CNDDDB search identified a recorded occurrence from 1984 of Mildred's clarkia, a California rank 1B.3 plant in the project vicinity. The 1984 observation included a vague handwritten map, and it is not known whether the occurrence was located within the project area. Botanical surveys conducted by the US Forest Service to support the Concow Hazardous Fuels EIS and surveys by CalFire in support of adjacent forestry projects did not identify Mildred's clarkia in the project vicinity. The project activities include hand thinning of small diameter trees and mastication of brush within dense stands of brush. Mildred's clarkia is not known to grow in dense patches of brush, and it is not expected to occur in areas targeted for mastication. Hand thinning and chipping/burning of small diameter trees would not result in substantial ground disturbance that would affect Mildred's clarkia. Because the species is not known to occur within the project area, and project activities are not likely to affect the species if it was present on site, the project would not result in a significant effect on the species.

Cultural Resources. See (f).

	<p>Geology/Soils. The forestry activities would not expose people or structures to loss, injury, or death due to seismic activity or unstable soils. The work planned as part of the project would not occur in wetlands or riparian areas. Treatment activities would incorporate temporary erosion control measures to minimize the potential for soil loss.</p> <p>Hazards/Hazardous Materials. See (e).</p> <p>Hydrology/Water Quality. See (a) and Geology/Soils.</p> <p>Noise. Forestry activities will generate temporary noise. However, given that project 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>
<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) 70, approximately 6.5 miles to the southeast of the project area is eligible for designation as a scenic highway. The project area is not visible from SR 70 and the proposed project would 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 project is not located on a site which is included on a hazardous waste site contained on a list compiled 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</p>	<p>No prehistoric or historic resources will be affected by the project. An archaeological survey was conducted for the US Forest Service and</p>

of a historical resource.

BLM lands within the project area as part of the Concow Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project EIS. All cultural resources on federal land will be flagged by a US. Forest Service archeologist and avoided during project implementation.

An archeological records search was conducted in January 2016 for the 50 acres of PID lands included in the project area. This search found no prehistoric or historic resources within the project area. The records search identified one prehistoric and six historic resources within 1/8th mile of the project site. None of the resources within 1/8th mile would be affected by project implementation. One nearby historic resource, a historic railroad grade, serves as a forest access road, which may be used to access the project area. The project includes no grading or access improvements that would affect the integrity of the historic railroad grade.

The SNC used information from the Native American Heritage Commission, and a map of ancestral tribal territories that was prepared for the CA Water Plan to identify tribal groups that may have information on cultural resources within the project area. The SNC contacted the KonKow Valley Band of Maidu and the Estom Yumeka Maidu Tribe of Enterprise Rancheria in October 2015 to solicit information on tribal resources potentially affected by the project. Those tribal groups did not identify tribal resources within the project area. In addition, the Butte County Fire Safe Council has coordinated with the Mechoopda Indian Tribe of Chico Rancheria during the development of the project. Thus tribal group did not identify tribal resources that would be affected by the project, and they will be harvesting forest vegetation for traditional uses prior to implementation of the project.

If previously undiscovered resources are encountered or suspected during project implementation, work would be halted immediately and would not resume until the area is cleared by qualified individuals. No work would occur in the vicinity of sensitive cultural resources. The project would 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.

Background

On October 29, 2015 Governor Brown issued an Emergency Proclamation ([Attachment A](#)) in response to the dramatic and extensive die-off of trees in the state. The proclamation references 22 million dead trees and forecasts tens of millions more to die, and identifies a broad range of actions to help mitigate the immediate threats to public health and safety, and the environment (current estimates are that as many as 58 million trees may be dead or dying statewide). The Governor established the Tree Mortality Task Force (TMTF) to:

- Identify existing efforts to mitigate tree mortality in high hazard zones
- Identify an organizational structure and plan of action
- Establish working groups, as appropriate, to address various aspects identified in the Governor's State of Emergency proclamation
- Facilitate information flow between state, federal, tribal, and local governments, utilities, and other non-governmental organizations
- Ensure project activities and resources are coordinated
- Identify potential funding sources
- Coordinate with other state-level initiatives, such as the Forest Climate Action Team and California Biomass Working Group.
- Identify and evaluate the availability of wood products markets, and determine whether expanded wood products markets can be developed.
- Develop and maintain a website for the dissemination of information.
<http://www.fire.ca.gov/treetaskforce/>

Current Status

The Governor's Office is emphasizing the immediate need to take actions and has directed numerous activities by various state agencies to address the problem. The initial focus of the TMTF is the six counties that make up the southern Sierra Nevada (Tuolumne, Mariposa, Madera, Fresno, Tulare, and Kern). The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) participates in each of eight working groups organized to develop specific actions referenced in the list above, and also has the opportunity and ability to respond rapidly to the call-to-action. Most of the activities or solutions being discussed in working groups are directly related to the ongoing work of the SNC and the Watershed Improvement Program (WIP).

The SNC Proposition 1 Grant Program is focused on supporting projects in the region specifically aligned with many of the activities being discussed in working groups. The SNC has authorized \$853,190 from its initial \$10 million allocation. An additional \$1.1 million is being recommended at this meeting and staff is actively reviewing applications representing an additional \$5-6 million dollars' worth of projects.

Given the severity of the problem, particularly in the southern Sierra, staff is recommending that the Board apportion \$1 million of the funds remaining from the \$10 million appropriation for grant awards to support efforts identified by TMTF working

groups and are also aligned with the existing SNC Grant Guidelines. This will allow the SNC to actively participate in the on-the-ground work that will be occurring in coming months to protect the public, communities, infrastructure, and the natural landscape.

Next Steps

If the staff recommendation is approved by the Board, Area staff will work directly with potential applicants to identify projects and ensure TMTF issues are addressed in project design and applications. All future grant recommendations that contribute to the TMTF will be brought to the Board for consideration consistent with existing guidelines and schedules, but will highlight this aspect.

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Board apportion up to \$1 million of the existing \$10 million available in the Proposition 1 Watershed Improvement Program to support projects that align with all existing requirements of the adopted Grant Guidelines and also achieve objectives of Governor Brown's Emergency Proclamation on Tree Mortality.

Agenda Item X

Attachment A

Executive Department
State of California

PROCLAMATION OF A STATE OF EMERGENCY

WHEREAS the State of California is experiencing record drought conditions, which have persisted for the last four years; and

WHEREAS on January 17, 2014, I proclaimed a State of Emergency to exist throughout the State of California due to severe drought conditions; and

WHEREAS a lack of precipitation over the last four years has made trees in many regions of California susceptible to epidemic infestations of native bark beetles, which are constrained under normal circumstances by the defense mechanisms of healthy trees; and

WHEREAS these drought conditions and resulting bark beetle infestations across broad areas have caused vast tree mortality in several regions of the state, with the United States Forest Service estimating that over 22 million trees are dead and that tens of millions more are likely to die by the end of this year; and

WHEREAS recent scientific measurements suggest that the scale of this tree die-off is unprecedented in modern history; and

WHEREAS this die-off is of such scale that it worsens wildfire risk across large regions of the State, presents life safety risks from falling trees to Californians living in impacted rural, forested communities, and worsens the threat of erosion across watersheds; and

WHEREAS such wildfires will release thousands of tons of greenhouse gas emissions and other harmful air pollutants; and

WHEREAS the circumstances of the tree die-off, by reason of its magnitude, is or is likely to be beyond the control of the services, personnel, equipment and facilities of any single county, city and county, or city and require the combined forces of a mutual aid region or regions to combat; and

WHEREAS under the provisions of section 8558(b) of the California Government Code, I find that conditions of extreme peril to the safety of persons and property exist within the State of California due to these events; and

WHEREAS under the provisions of section 8571 of the California Government Code, I find that strict compliance with various statutes and regulations specified in this order would prevent, hinder, or delay the mitigation of the effects of the drought.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, EDMUND G. BROWN JR., Governor of the State of California, in accordance with the authority vested in me by the State Constitution and statutes, including the California Emergency Services Act, and in particular, section 8625 of the California Government Code, **HEREBY PROCLAIM A STATE OF EMERGENCY** to exist within the State of California.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT:

1. The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, the California Natural Resources Agency, the California Department of Transportation, and the California Energy Commission shall immediately identify areas of the State that represent high hazard zones for wildfire and falling trees using best available science and geospatial data.
2. State agencies, utilities, and local governments to the extent required by their existing responsibilities to protect the public health and safety, shall undertake efforts to remove dead or dying trees in these high hazard zones that threaten power lines, roads and other evacuation corridors, critical community infrastructure, and other existing structures. Incidental vegetation such as shrubs that restrict access for safe and efficient removal of the dead and dying trees also may be removed. The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection shall issue emergency guidelines setting forth the relevant criteria, and the California Conservation Corps shall assist government entities in implementing this directive to the extent feasible.
3. The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection shall identify potential storage locations for removed trees across impacted areas in partnership with federal agencies and local jurisdictions.
4. The California Department of Transportation shall formally request immediate assistance through the Federal Highway Administration's Emergency Relief Program, Title 23, United States Code section 125, in order to obtain federal assistance for removal of dead and dying trees that are adjacent to highways.
5. The Department of General Services will identify state facilities, and the California Department of Transportation shall identify highway and road corridors, where woodchips produced from dead trees can be used as mulch.
6. The Governor's Office of Emergency Services and the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection shall work with impacted counties to distribute portable equipment across high hazard zones so that isolated communities can remove and process wood waste locally where appropriate.
7. The California Air Resources Board and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection shall work together and with federal land managers and the United States Environmental Protection Agency to expand the practice of prescribed burns, which reduce fire risk and avoid significant pollution from major wildfires, and increase the number of allowable days on a temporary basis to burn tree waste that has been removed in high hazard areas.

8. The California Public Utilities Commission shall utilize its authority to extend contracts on existing forest bioenergy facilities receiving feedstock from high hazard zones.
9. The California Public Utilities Commission shall take expedited action to ensure that contracts for new forest bioenergy facilities that receive feedstock from high hazard zones can be executed within six months, including initiation of a targeted renewable auction mechanism and consideration of adjustments to the BioMat Program defined pursuant to Public Utilities Code section 399.20. No later than six months after the BioMat program begins, the California Public Utilities Commission shall evaluate the need for revisions to the program to facilitate contracts for forest bioenergy facilities.
10. The California Public Utilities Commission shall prioritize facilitation of interconnection agreements for forest bioenergy facilities in high hazard zones, and shall order the use of expedited mediation or other alternative dispute resolution processes when conflicts delay development of projects.
11. The California Energy Commission shall prioritize grant funding from the Electric Program Investment Charge for woody biomass-to-energy technology development and deployment, consistent with direction from the California Public Utilities Commission.
12. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, the California Energy Commission, and other appropriate agencies shall work with land managers to estimate biomass feedstock availability, storage locations, and volumes that may be available for use as bioenergy feedstock at existing and new facilities.
13. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and the California Energy Commission shall work with bioenergy facilities that accept forest biomass from high hazards zones to identify potential funds to help offset higher feedstock costs.
14. The California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection will work with affected counties and existing wood product markets to determine the feasibility for expanded wood product markets in California.
15. For purposes of carrying out directives 1, 2, and 5 through 8, Division 13 (commencing with section 21000) of the Public Resources Code and regulations adopted pursuant to that Division are hereby suspended. This suspension applies to any actions taken by state agencies, and for actions taken by local agencies where the state agency with primary responsibility for implementing the directive concurs that local action is required, as well as for any necessary permits or approvals required to complete these actions.

16. In order to ensure that equipment and services necessary for emergency response can be procured quickly, the provisions of the Government Code and the Public Contract Code applicable to state contracts, including, but not limited to, advertising and competitive bidding requirements, are hereby suspended as necessary to carry out this Proclamation. Approval by the Department of Finance is required prior to the execution of any contract entered into pursuant to these directives.
17. For purposes of this Proclamation, Chapter 3.5 (commencing with section 11340) of Part 1 of Division 3 of the Government Code is suspended for the development and adoption of regulations or guidelines needed to carry out the provisions in this Order. Any entity issuing regulations or guidelines pursuant to this directive shall conduct a public meeting on the regulations and guidelines prior to adopting them.
18. The Office of Emergency Services shall provide local government assistance as appropriate under the authority of the California Disaster Assistance Act, California Government Code section 8680 et seq. and California Code of Regulations, title 19, section 2900 et seq.
19. State agencies shall actively monitor tree removal efforts directed by this Proclamation to assess their effectiveness in protecting forest health and strengthening forest resilience.

This Proclamation is not intended to, and does not, create any rights or benefits, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity, against the State of California, its agencies, departments, entities, officers, employees, or any other person.

I FURTHER DIRECT that as soon as hereafter possible, this proclamation be filed in the Office of the Secretary of State and that widespread publicity and notice be given of this proclamation.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of California to be affixed this 30th day of October 2015.


EDMUND G. BROWN JR.
Governor of California

ATTEST:

ALEX PADILLA
Secretary of State

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. As a part of SNFCI's ongoing work, 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. Various forest collaboratives also continue their work to carry out this same mission on the ground in specific watersheds and communities.

In June 2014, the Board directed SNC staff to develop a plan that ensures the issues being addressed under SNFCI were the organization's top priority, which resulted in the [State of Sierra Nevada's Forests Report](#), which represents the current understanding of forest conditions and potential consequences. 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 and subsequent launch of the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) on March 4, 2015. 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 USFS is actively engaged in all aspects of the WIP, including general coordination, communications, funding development, policy, and project identification and implementation. In July 2015, SNC staff and representatives from USFS Region 5 met with Secretary John Laird and California Natural Resources Agency (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.

In late June 2015, staff worked with the USFS and 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 \(CA Headwaters\)](#). While this designation doesn't result in new funding for the Region, it does shine a light on the importance of the Sierra to California, and supports the work SNC and its partners are striving to accomplish through the WIP. SNC is currently in close collaboration with USFS in the development of communications materials and establishment of a working group in support of the CA Headwaters initiative.

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

Current Status

An initial draft of the WIP Regional Strategy was developed by SNC staff, and presented to the Board in December 2015. This 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, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and National Park Service (NPS) for 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.

The initial draft has been revised based on feedback from the Board and USFS Region 5, and the final draft was circulated to existing and new partners for feedback, as well as posted for public comment in early February. One key addition to the draft reviewed by the Board is a specific reference to the establishment of at least two pilot watersheds where new approaches to deliver conservation activities can be explored. This will include the issues of governance, funding, and project implementation. In addition, the critical role that wood/biomass infrastructure plays in restoration has been highlighted in efforts to address the tree mortality epidemic, and this issue will likely become even a greater focus under WIP. The public comment period will close March 18, 2016, though the WIP Regional Strategy will be updated as needed to reflect necessary course changes on an ongoing basis.

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

Integrated Regional Conservation and Development Program (IRCAD)

On January 20, Executive Officer Jim Branham and Regional Forester Randy Moore presented the WIP and the CA Headwaters Partnership to the CA Biodiversity Council (the Biodiversity Council is comprised of agency leaders of state and federal agencies, and local government). The Council has entered into an agreement with the state's Strategic Growth Council in support of an effort 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." Discussions continue as to the potential of the WIP being selected as a pilot project for this effort. Further details as to the purpose and function of the pilot are still being discussed, but this designation could 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 continue consultation with Boardmembers Kirkwood and Giacomini about this effort moving forward.

National Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC)

The SNC staff worked with key partners to secure a \$70 million proposal for the Rim Fire area through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's NDRC (see [Agenda Item XII](#) for additional detail). The SNC is working through the contracting process that will allow us to administer and oversee the planning and implementation of a biomass facility and wood products campus, as well as the forest and watershed health projects identified in the application.

Tree Mortality Task Force

SNC staff are taking an active role in the Tree Mortality Task Force established by Governor Brown in October 2015 to implement the policies and projects set forth in his Tree Mortality Emergency Declaration. SNC participation includes development of more favorable policies for forest bioenergy and the establishment of log deck sites to store hazard trees for future use in biomass processing.

Forest Climate Action Team (FCAT)

The SNC staff continue to participate in the FCAT in a number of different workgroups. FCAT was formed under the direction and leadership of Governor Jerry Brown in August 2014, and is comprised of Executive level members from many of the state's natural resources agencies, state and federal forest land managers, and other key partners directly or indirectly involved in California forestry. The FCAT's primary purpose is developing a Forest Carbon Plan by the end of 2016.

Good Neighbor Authority

The U.S. Forest Service and CNRA signed a Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) master agreement, which will allow state entities within the CNRA to complement the work being done by USFS staff on California's national forests over the next 10 years. Supplemental agreements between national forests and CA agencies will specifically identify the work the state can perform on national forest system lands. The 2014 Farm Bill authorized GNA for the USFS and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. The GNA allows the USFS to enter into agreements or contracts with states to perform forest, rangeland, and watershed restoration services on national forest system lands. It can leverage state resources to increase capacity to accomplish work on national forest system lands, and also enhances cooperative efforts and federal and state partnerships for landscape scale restoration and improvements. The agreement could help facilitate an increased ability to address California's tree mortality issue, pro-actively treat forests to help avoid large damaging wildfires, protect and restore California's watersheds, and increase ability to implement projects that reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and secure long-term carbon storage.

Science Synthesis

A science synthesis on the relationship between forest management and greenhouse gas emissions has been completed as a partnership between SNC, CAL FIRE, the USFS and other agencies has been shared with a variety of partner agencies and

stakeholders working on incorporating the forest sector into long-term GHG emissions reduction plans.

Prescribed Fire Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

An MOU was developed and signed by state and federal land managers, non-governmental organizations, and prescribed fire councils which captures a commitment to increase the use of fire for ecological and other benefits, and provides guidance developed by federal, state, local, and other stakeholders to address fire management across jurisdictions. The SNC is a signatory to the MOU ([Attachment A](#)) and is actively participating in its implementation.

Co-branded WIP website

The WIP Communications Team has been working on a co-branded, stand-alone web site for the WIP. The development of this site will allow us to highlight the WIP as a partnership between SNC and the USFS, and will allow the WIP to be seen as a large restoration program with clear goals and solid support from stakeholders. The launch of this new site is scheduled for late February/early March 2016 in conjunction with the WIP Summit on March 3.

Outreach Materials Development

The Communications Team developed new fact sheets and outreach materials that connect the WIP to the CA Headwaters Partnership, and outline successes to date. These materials were designed to show the progress that the WIP has made and highlight the value of the Program to the Region and the state. (Release date for these coincide with the March Summit.)

Funding

The SNC Funding Team has undertaken a number of activities in support of WIP objectives. Staff assisted the Yosemite-Sequoia RC&D in their successful application for approximately \$100,000 in CAL FIRE State Responsibility Area (SRA) Fire Prevention Funds for implementation of a log deck to take hazard trees at the North Fork mill site. This is a demonstration project which can be duplicated in other communities in response to the Tree Mortality disaster. Staff has also participated in the Tree Mortality Task Force to share information about bioenergy, fuel reduction funding resources, and policy issues. Staff also provided community capacity building, specifically through a grant writing workshop given for Plumas and Sierra Counties.

Sierra LiDAR Cooperative Discussion Group

SNC initiated support for a Sierra LiDAR cooperative discussion group to allow agencies and organizations to better coordinate data needs, resources, and funding opportunities. LiDAR is a remote sensing tool that can provide researchers with invaluable information regarding forest health, water supply, topographic information, and infrastructure location, all of which directly support WIP efforts.

Restoration Assessments

The SNC staff has continued to work to develop assessments for determining WIP restoration needs at the watershed level in lands across a variety of ownership. This includes close coordination with USFS, Sierra Coordinated Resources Management Council (SCRMC), National Park Service, and Bureau of Land Management staff throughout the Region.

USFS Region 5 has rolled out the WIP watershed assessment approach at the forest level, to answer the question of “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 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. The end goal is to complete assessments on all National Forests in the Sierra Nevada by June 2016. The SNC staff and USFS Region 5 are also working with the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest to ensure they are included in the various aspects of the WIP.

The BLM and NPS have initiated watershed assessments on their lands, which when combined with the USFS forest assessments, will complete the picture of restoration needs on public lands in the Sierra Nevada, including but not limited to, meadow restoration, road sediment reduction treatments, aquatic organism passage, invasive species removal, hydraulic mining restoration, and forest health/fuels reduction treatments. The Placer Resource Conservation District, through the SCRMC Joint Powers Authority, has initiated watershed assessments for the private lands in [the 16 Watershed Assessment Areas under the WIP](#). The vast majority of these public and private lands assessments should be completed by early summer 2016.

Next Steps

Staff will work with the USFS and other partners to implement the Board-approved WIP Regional Strategy, updating as needed to reflect necessary course changes.

Once the assessment phase of the WIP is complete, we will have identified general information and needs for each Sierra watershed, as well as a better understanding of more overarching regional needs, opportunities, and challenges. With the help of diverse partners, assessments will be utilized to identify opportunities for project funding and critical policy areas in need of immediate action. This will include identification and consideration of successful models for delivering restoration activities, including the selection of at least two pilot watersheds for implementing these new restoration models on the ground.

The WIP has always recognized that the lack of wood- and biomass-processing infrastructure remains a significant impediment to forest restoration efforts. However, the rapidly escalating issue of tree mortality in the Sierra Nevada has thrown a spotlight on the need to enhance forest-related infrastructure so it can handle the pace and scale of needed restoration. [Governor Brown's Emergency Proclamation](#) on this issue clearly identified this need and provided direction to appropriate agencies to address it.

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 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

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

Agenda Item XI

Attachment A

FS Agreement No. 16-MU-11052012-148
Cooperator Agreement No. _____

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
FOR THE PURPOSE OF INCREASING THE USE OF FIRE TO MEET
ECOLOGICAL AND OTHER MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES
Between the
USDA, FOREST SERVICE
PACIFIC SOUTHWEST REGION
AND
SIERRA FOREST LEGACY,
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION,
STATE OF CALIFORNIA SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY,
THE NATURE CONSERVANCY,
USDI, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PACIFIC REGION,
THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY,
THE SIERRA CLUB,
CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY,
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA PRESCRIBED FIRE COUNCIL,
SOUTHERN SIERRA PRESCRIBED FIRE COUNCIL**

This MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) is hereby made and entered into by and between Sierra Forest Legacy, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, State of California Sierra Nevada Conservancy, The Wilderness Society, The Nature Conservancy, The Sierra Club, Center for Biological Diversity, USDI National Park Service-Pacific Region, Northern California Prescribed Fire Council, Southern Sierra Prescribed Fire Council, hereinafter referred to as “MOU Partners,” and the USDA, Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region, hereinafter referred to as the “U.S. Forest Service.”

Background: California’s wildlands are dominated by ecosystems that evolved with fire that shaped these landscapes and provided resilience and renewal. Recognition by scientists and land managers of the ecological benefits of fire has led to the development of policies and guidance to support the expanded use of fire to improve ecological conditions and more effectively undertake fire management across the landscape.

Managed Fire within the scope and context of this MOU refers to the use of natural or human-caused ignitions within burn prescription for the purposes including public safety and ecosystem benefits, where allowed under the policies of agencies with primary jurisdiction.

Federal, State and local land management agencies and private landowners are governed by regulations and policies that provide direction on how fire may be applied and managed to achieve ecological benefits. Landowner goals and objectives and public health and safety also influence any decision to apply fire as a restoration tool.



This MOU acknowledges the unique direction applicable to each MOU partner. The MOU draws on the guidance below developed by federal, state, local, and other stakeholders to address fire management across jurisdictions to support the use of fire for ecological and other benefits:

A. Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (2009)

“The role of wildland fire as an essential ecological process and natural change agent will be incorporated into the planning process. Federal agency land and resource management plans set the objectives for the use and desired future condition of the various public lands.” (Guiding Principles, p.8)

“A wildland fire may be concurrently managed for one or more objectives and objectives can change as the fire spreads across the landscape. Objectives are affected by changes in fuels, weather, topography; varying social understanding and tolerance; and involvement of other governmental jurisdictions having different missions and objectives.” (p. 7, 19)

“Agencies will exploit the full range of fire management options to sustain healthy ecosystems within acceptable risk levels as identified in the Land Resource Management Plan (LRMP).” (p. 10)

B. The National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy National Action Plan (2014)

Management options include:

“**Prescribed fire** – One of the more effective and cost-efficient means of managing vegetation for multiple purposes, including hazard reduction, ecosystem restoration or maintenance, silviculture and others.

Managing wildfire for resource objectives - This option refers to a specific choice to use unplanned ignitions to achieve resource management objectives.” (National Action Plan, p.5)

C. Strategic Fire Plan for California (2010)

Vision - A natural environment that is more resilient and man-made assets which are more resistant to the occurrence and effects of wildland fire through local, state, federal and private partnerships.

Policies Supporting the Objectives - The central policies that are critical to reducing and preventing the impacts of fire revolve around both suppression efforts and fire prevention efforts. Major policy components are:



- Land use planning that ensures increased fire safety for new development
- Creation of defensible space for survivability of established homes and neighborhoods
- Improving fire resistance of homes and other constructed assets
- Fuel hazard reduction that creates resilient landscapes and protects the wildland and natural resource values
- Adequate and appropriate levels of wildland fire suppression and related services
- Commitment by individuals and communities to wildfire prevention and protection through local fire planning.(Strategic Plan, p.2)

Specific goals and objectives related to prescribe fire are:

Goal 5: Develop a method to integrate fire and fuels management practices with landowner priorities and multiple jurisdictional efforts within local, state and federal responsibility areas. (p.11, 18)

Objective:

- f) Increase public education and awareness in support of ecologically sensitive and economically efficient vegetation management activities, including prescribed fire, forest thinning and other fuels treatment projects. (p.18)

CAL FIRE implements Goal 5 in part through the Vegetation Management Program, a cost-sharing program that focuses on the use of prescribed fire, and mechanical means, for addressing wildland fire fuel hazards and other resource management issues on State Responsibility Area (SRA) lands. The use of prescribed fire mimics natural processes, restores fire to its historic role in wildland ecosystems, and provides significant fire hazard reduction benefits that enhance public and firefighter safety.

Title: Cooperating for the purpose of increasing the use of fire to meet ecological and other management objectives

- I. PURPOSE:** The purpose of this MOU is to document the cooperation between the parties to increase the use of fire to meet ecological and other management objectives in accordance with the following provisions.

II. STATEMENT OF MUTUAL BENEFIT AND INTERESTS:

The mission of the **U.S. Forest Service** is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. This mission includes addressing all aspects of wildland fire management



and working through State Foresters to accomplish this mission on State and private lands.

The mission of **Sierra Forest Legacy** is to engage citizens, communities, and coalition members in the healthy management of Sierra Nevada forest ecosystems to protect and restore the region's unparalleled beauty and natural values. We apply the best practices of science, advocacy and grassroots organizing to safeguard forest lands throughout the Sierra Nevada. Sierra Forest Legacy is a coalition of over 80 conservation organizations dedicated to science-based ecological restoration and the use of fire as a primary process for building lasting forest resilience.

The mission of the **California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection** (“CAL FIRE”) is to serve and safeguard the people and protect the property and resources of California. CAL FIRE manages several programs aimed to enhance forest resources and recognizes prescribed fire as a useful tool in enhancing ecosystem processes.

The **Sierra Nevada Conservancy** initiates, encourages, and supports efforts that improve the environmental, economic and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region, its communities and the citizens of California. The SNC strongly supports the increased use of prescribed and managed fire, under appropriate conditions, as critical tools in restoring the ecological health of our forests and watersheds. The use of fire as a restoration tool will greatly assist in protecting water supplies and quality, preserving important habitat and providing for stable long-term storage of carbon.

The **National Park Service** preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

The Wilderness Society's mission is to protect wilderness and inspire Americans to care for our wild places. We contribute to better protection, stewardship and restoration of our public lands, preserving our rich natural legacy for current and future generations.

The mission of **The Nature Conservancy** is to conserve the lands and waters upon which all life depends. We envision a world where the diversity of life thrives, and people act to conserve nature for its own sake and its ability to fulfill our needs and enrich our lives.

The **Sierra Club's** mission is to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the Earth, to practice and promote responsible uses of the Earth's ecosystems and resources, to educate and enlist humanity in the protection and restoration of the quality of the natural and human environment, and to use all lawful means to carry out those objectives.

The **Center for Biological Diversity** is a national, nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places. We do so though



science, law and creative media, with a focus on protecting the lands, waters and climate that species need to survive.

The mission of the **Northern California Prescribed Fire Council** is to serve as a venue for practitioners, state and federal agencies, academic institutions, tribes, coalitions and interested individuals to work collaboratively to promote, protect, and expand the responsible use of prescribed fire in Northern California's fire adapted landscapes.

The **Southern Sierra Nevada Prescribed Fire Council** mission is to serve as a venue for practitioners, state and federal agencies, academic institutions, tribes, non-governmental organizations, coalitions, and interested individuals to work collaboratively to promote, protect, conserve, and expand the responsible use of prescribed fire and cultural fire in the southern Sierra Nevada's fire-adapted landscapes and fire-dependent landscapes, and to promote public understanding and acceptance on the ecological and cultural importance of burning.

The MOU Partners join in their shared knowledge, experience, networks and vision for ecological resilience and sustainable, diverse forests in California, recognizing the ecological role of fire in these ecosystems in relation to each of the MOU partner's missions.

Furthermore, the MOU Partners acknowledge that expanding collaboration associated with the expressed purpose of this MOU to include other organizations and groups is in the interest of all of the partners.

In consideration of the above premises, the parties agree as follows:

III. IT IS MUTUALLY UNDERSTOOD AND AGREED BY AND BETWEEN THE PARTIES THAT:

- A. Engage with of a variety of stakeholders, including, but not limited to, federal, state and local government agencies, and non-governmental organizations;
- B. Encourage minimizing barriers to implementing fire use by improving smoke management coordination and engaging in public education and outreach. (This is especially important when trying to encourage the choice by decision makers to manage wildfire for resource objectives); and
- C. Work to help increase capacity to use wildland fire through expanded training opportunities and resource sharing.
- D. The MOU is a broad, relatively general agreement that seeks to include as many parties as possible who are interested in increasing the use of wildland fire to meet ecological objectives. Signatories can be government or non-government organizations or individuals, generally the designated leader of each organization.



Participation in the MOU is voluntary, and non-binding. Agreements by any of the parties to the MOU are non-binding on any other parties, nor are they legally actionable.

Leadership and governance will be managed by a voluntary steering committee composed of MOU Partners who are able to commit the time or resources to facilitate the completion of the agreed upon activities. The voluntary steering committee will meet periodically to identify approaches or activities that all parties, some parties, or individual parties are undertaking to further the purpose of the MOU.

The steering committee will establish meeting schedules once the MOU implementation is underway.

It is expected that the MOU Partners membership will expand over time and not remain static.

The steering committee is responsible for the creation of an action plan to identify the activities the MOU Partners agree to support. It is understood that MOU Partners will have varying interests and opportunities to advance the application of increased managed fire through the stated objectives above.

The action plan biennially will be reviewed and updated by the steering committee and interested MOU Partners. The action plan update will be circulated to all MOU Partners for review, comment and possible endorsement, biennially.

Working groups will be established to implement the action plan. Working groups will devise a mechanism to keep the steering committee and MOU Partners informed of their progress implementing the action plan that is synchronized with the periodic meetings of the steering committee. It is understood that throughout the duration of this MOU Partnership, any activities that involve the exchange of funds or resources will be done utilizing a separate agreement type and authority.

E. PRINCIPAL CONTACTS. Individuals listed below are authorized to act in their respective areas for matters related to this agreement.

Principal MOU Partner Contacts:

MOU Partner Program Contact	MOU Partner Administrative Contact
Name: Craig Thomas, Conservation Director, Sierra Forest Legacy Address: P.O. Box 244 Garden Valley, CA 95633 Telephone: 916-708-9409 Email: craig@sierraforestlegacy.org	Name: Susan Britting, Executive Director, Sierra Forest Legacy Address: P.O. Box 244 Garden Valley, CA 95633 Telephone: 530-295-8210 Email: britting@earthlink.net



MOU Partner Program Contact	MOU Partner Administrative Contact
<p>Name: Edward Smith, Forest Ecologist, The Nature Conservancy Address: 555 Capitol Mall, Suite 1290, Sacramento, CA 95814 Telephone: 916-449-2854 Email: esmith@tnc.org</p>	<p>Name: David Edelson, Forest Conservation Director, The Nature Conservancy Address: 201 Mission Street, 4th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105 Telephone: 415-777-0487 Email: dedelson@tnc.org</p>
<p>Name: Jim Branham, Executive Officer Sierra Nevada Conservancy Address: 11521 Blocker Drive #205, Auburn, CA 95603 Telephone: 530-823-4667 Email: jbranham@sierranevada.ca.gov</p>	<p>Name: SAME Address: Telephone: Email:</p>
<p>Name: Stan Van Velsor, Senior Regional Conservation Representative The Wilderness Society Address: 250 Montgomery Street, Ste.210 San Francisco, CA 94104 Telephone: 415-398-1484 Email: stan_vanvelsor@tw.s.org</p>	<p>Name: Dan Smuts, Senior Regional Director, The Wilderness Society Address: 250 Montgomery Street, Ste. 210 San Francisco, CA 94104 Telephone: 415-398-1420 Email: dam_smuts@tw.s.org</p>
<p>Name: Justin Augustine, Center for Biological Diversity Address: 1212 Broadway St., Ste. 800 Telephone: 503-910-9214 Email: jaugustine@biologicaldiversity.org</p>	<p>Name: SAME Address: Telephone: Email:</p>
<p>Name: Ken Pimlott, Director CAL FIRE Address: P.O. Box 944246, Sacramento, CA 94244-2460 Telephone: 916-653-7772 Email:ken.pimlott@fire.ca.gov</p>	<p>Name: TBD Address: Telephone: Email:</p>
<p>Name: Robin Wills, Deputy Regional Fire Management Officer, USDI National Park Service-Pacific West Region Address: 333 Bush Street, San Francisco, CA 94104 Telephone: 415-203-7162 Email: robin_wills@nps.gov</p>	<p>TBD Martha Lee, Deputy Regional Director, National Park Service, Pacific West Region (Tentative) Address: Telephone: Email:</p>



MOU Partner Program Contact	MOU Partner Administrative Contact
Name: Terry Davis, Director, Mother Chapter-Sierra Club. Address: 909-12 th Street, Suite 202, Sacramento, CA 95814 Telephone: 916-557-1100 ext.108 Email: Terry.davis@sierraclub.org	Name: Dave Porter, Our Wild American Delivery Team Address: 4471 139th Ave SE Bellevue, WA 98006-2211 Telephone: 425-644-2572 Email: DNPorter@hotmail.com
Name: TBD Southern Sierra Prescribed Fire Council Address: Telephone E-mail	Name: TBD Address: Telephone: Email:
Name: Nick Goulette, Steering Cmte Chair, Northern CA Prescribed Fire Council Address: P.O. Box 356 Hayfork, CA 96041 Telephone: 530-628-4206 Email: nickg@hayfork.net	Name: Lenya Quinn-Davidson, Director, Northern CA Prescribed Fire Council Address: 5630 South Broadway Eureka, CA, CA 95503 Telephone: 707-445-7351 Email: lquinndavidson@ucanr.edu

Principal U.S. Forest Service Contacts:

U.S. Forest Service Program Manager Contact	U.S. Forest Service Administrative Contact
Name: Shawna Legarza Director Fire and Aviation Management USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region Address: 1323 Club Drive City, State, Zip: Vallejo, CA 94592 Telephone: 707 562-8925 FAX: 707 562-9048 Email: slegarza@fs.fed.us	Name: Monica Irvin Grant Management Specialist USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region Address: 1323 Club Drive City, State, Zip: Vallejo, CA 94592 Telephone: 707 562-8816 FAX: 707 562-9144 Email: meirvin@fs.fed.us

F. ASSURANCE REGARDING FELONY CONVICTION OR TAX DELINQUENT STATUS FOR CORPORATE ENTITIES. This agreement is subject to the provisions contained in the Department of Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2012, P.L. No. 112-74, Division E, Section 433 and 434 regarding corporate felony convictions and corporate federal tax delinquencies. Accordingly, by entering into this agreement MOU Partners acknowledges that it: 1) does not have a tax delinquency, meaning that it is not subject to any unpaid Federal tax liability that has been assessed, for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability, and (2) has not been convicted (or had



an officer or agent acting on its behalf convicted) of a felony criminal violation under any Federal law within 24 months preceding the agreement, unless a suspending and debarring official of the United States Department of Agriculture has considered suspension or debarment is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government. If MOU Partners fails to comply with these provisions, the U.S. Forest Service will annul this agreement and may recover any funds MOU Partners has expended in violation of sections 433 and 434.

- G. NOTICES. Any communications affecting the operations covered by this agreement given by the U.S. Forest Service or MOU Partner is sufficient only if in writing and delivered in person, mailed, or transmitted electronically by e-mail or fax, as follows:

To the U.S. Forest Service Program Manager, at the address specified in the MOU.

To MOU Partners, at MOU Partners' address shown in the MOU or such other address designated within the MOU.

Notices are effective when delivered in accordance with this provision, or on the effective date of the notice, whichever is later.

- H. PARTICIPATION IN SIMILAR ACTIVITIES. This MOU in no way restricts the U.S. Forest Service or MOU Partner from participating in similar activities with other public or private agencies, organizations, and individuals.
- I. ENDORSEMENT. Any of MOU Partner's contributions made under this MOU do not by direct reference or implication convey U.S. Forest Service endorsement of MOU Partner's products or activities.
- J. NONBINDING AGREEMENT. This MOU creates no right, benefit, or trust responsibility, substantive or procedural, enforceable by law or equity. The parties shall manage their respective resources and activities in a separate, coordinated and mutually beneficial manner to meet the purpose(s) of this MOU. Nothing in this MOU authorizes any of the parties to obligate or transfer anything of value.

Specific, prospective projects or activities that involve the transfer of funds, services, property, and/or anything of value to a party requires the execution of separate agreements and are contingent upon numerous factors, including, as applicable, but not limited to: agency availability of appropriated funds and other resources; cooperator availability of funds and other resources; agency and cooperator administrative and legal requirements (including agency authorization by statute); etc. This MOU neither provides, nor meets these criteria. If the parties elect to enter into an obligation agreement that involves the transfer of funds, services, property, and/or anything of value to a party, then the applicable



criteria must be met. Additionally, under a prospective agreement, each party operates under its own laws, regulations, and/or policies, and any Forest Service obligation is subject to the availability of appropriated funds and other resources. The negotiation, execution, and administration of these prospective agreements must comply with all applicable law

Nothing in this MOU is intended to alter, limit, or expand the agencies' statutory and regulatory authority.

- K. USE OF U.S. FOREST SERVICE and CAL FIRE INSIGNIA. In order for MOU Partners to use the U.S. Forest Service insignia on any published media, such as a Web page, printed publication, or audiovisual production, permission must be granted from the U.S. Forest Service's Office of Communications. A written request must be submitted and approval granted in writing by the Office of Communications (Washington Office) prior to use of the insignia.

In order for MOU Partners to use the CAL FIRE logo on any published media, such as a Web page, printed publication, or audiovisual production, permission must be granted from the CAL FIRE Communications Office. A written request must be submitted and approval granted in writing by the CAL FIRE Communications Office prior to use of the logo.

- L. MEMBERS OF U.S. CONGRESS. Pursuant to 41 U.S.C. 22, no U.S. member of, or U.S. delegate to, Congress shall be admitted to any share or part of this agreement, or benefits that may arise therefrom, either directly or indirectly.
- M. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA). Public access to MOU or agreement records must not be limited, except when such records must be kept confidential and would have been exempted from disclosure pursuant to Freedom of Information regulations (5 U.S.C. 552) or the California Public Records Act (California Government Code section 6250, et seq.).
- N. TEXT MESSAGING WHILE DRIVING. In accordance with Executive Order (EO) 13513, "Federal Leadership on Reducing Text Messaging While Driving," any and all text messaging by Federal employees is banned: a) while driving a Government owned vehicle (GOV) or driving a privately owned vehicle (POV) while on official Government business; or b) using any electronic equipment supplied by the Government when driving any vehicle at any time. All cooperators, their employees, volunteers, and contractors are encouraged to adopt and enforce policies that ban text messaging when driving company owned, leased or rented vehicles, POVs or GOVs when driving while on official Government business or when performing any work for or on behalf of the Government.
- O. PUBLIC NOTICES. It is the U.S. Forest Service's policy to inform the public as fully as possible of its programs and activities. MOU Partner is/are encouraged to



give public notice of the receipt of this agreement and, from time to time, to announce progress and accomplishments. Press releases or other public notices should include a statement substantially as follows:

"The Pacific Southwest Region of the Forest Service of the U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, works cooperatively to increase the use of fire to meet ecological and other management objectives."

MOU Partners may call on the U.S. Forest Service's Office of Communication for advice regarding public notices. MOU Partners is/are requested to provide copies of notices or announcements to the U.S. Forest Service Program Manager and to The U.S. Forest Service's Office of Communications as far in advance of release as possible.

- P. U.S. FOREST SERVICE ACKNOWLEDGED IN PUBLICATIONS, AUDIOVISUALS AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA. MOU Partners shall acknowledge U.S. Forest Service support in any publications, audiovisuals, and electronic media developed as a result of this MOU.
- Q. NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT – PRINTED, ELECTRONIC, OR AUDIOVISUAL MATERIAL. MOU Partners shall include the following statement, in full, in any printed, audiovisual material, or electronic media for public distribution developed or printed with any Federal funding.

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

If the material is too small to permit the full statement to be included, the material must, at minimum, include the following statement, in print size no smaller than the text:

"This institution is an equal opportunity provider."

- R. TERMINATION. Any of the parties, in writing, may terminate this MOU in whole, or in part, at any time before the date of expiration.
- S. DEBARMENT AND SUSPENSION. MOU Partners shall immediately inform the U.S. Forest Service if they or any of their principals are presently excluded,



debarred, or suspended from entering into covered transactions with the federal government according to the terms of 2 CFR Part 180. Additionally, should MOU Partners or any of their principals receive a transmittal letter or other official Federal notice of debarment or suspension, then they shall notify the U.S. Forest Service without undue delay. This applies whether the exclusion, debarment, or suspension is voluntary or involuntary.

- T. **MODIFICATIONS.** Modifications within the scope of this MOU must be made by mutual consent of the parties, by the issuance of a written modification signed and dated by all properly authorized, signatory officials, prior to any changes being performed. Requests for modification should be made, in writing, at least 30 days prior to implementation of the requested change.
- U. **COMMENCEMENT/EXPIRATION DATE.** This MOU is executed as of the date of the last signature and is effective for five years at which time it will expire, unless extended by an executed modification, signed and dated by all properly authorized, signatory officials.
- V. **AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVES.** By signature below, each party certifies that the individuals listed in this document as representatives of the individual parties are authorized to act in their respective areas for matters related to this MOU. In witness whereof, the parties hereto have executed this MOU as of the last date written below.

Susan Britting 9-28-15
 _____ Date
 SUSAN BRITTING, Executive Director
 Sierra Forest Legacy

Randy Moore 10-7-15
 _____ Date
 RANDY MOORE, Regional Forester
 U.S. Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region

Ken Pimlott 9/29/15
 _____ Date
 KEN PIMLOTT, Director
 California Department of Fire and Forestry Protection

Jim Branham 10/1/15
 _____ Date
 JIM BRANHAM, Executive Officer
 Sierra Nevada Conservancy



Martha J. Lee
Martha J. Lee, Acting Regional Director
USDI, National Park Service

11/10/15
Date

Dan Smuts
DAN SMUTS, Senior Regional Director
The Wilderness Society

10/11/15
Date

Amy Parke for David Edelson
DAVID EDELSON, Forest Conservation Director
The Nature Conservancy

10/28/15
Date

Terry Davis
TERRY DAVIS, Director Motherlode Chapter

10-6-15
Date

Justin Augustine
JUSTIN AUGUSTINE
Center for Biological Diversity

10-6-15
Date

Pamela Flick
PAMELA FLICK, STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBER
Southern Sierra Prescribed Fire Council

10/11/15
Date

Nick Goulette
NICK GOULETTE, Steering Committee Chair
Northern California Prescribed Fire Council

10/6/15
Date



The authority and format of this agreement have been reviewed and approved for signature.

9/24/2015

MONICA IRVIN

U. S. Forest Service Grants Management Specialist

Date

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Agenda Item XI

Watershed Improvement Program Communications and Research Updates

Presented by:
Mandy Vance

Watershed Improvement Program Coordinator
Sierra Nevada Conservancy

USFS/SNC Co-branded WIP Website

**We have developed a Website
in partnership with the USFS
to serve as the “go to” for all things WIP:**

www.RestoretheSierra.org

Prescribed Fire MOU

68°
Sign In | Subscribe
FULL MENU
NEWS SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT CLASSIFIEDS

THE SACRAMENTO BEE

CALIFORNIA FEBRUARY 2, 2016 1:08 AM

Partnership formed to increase controlled fires in Calif.

BY OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ
The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Environmental groups and federal and state agencies have formed a partnership to increase the use of prescribed fires to improve the health of California's forests and watersheds and minimize the effects of increasingly devastating wildfires.

The agreement signed by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, the U.S. Forest Service and other federal and state agencies and several environmental groups, including the Sierra Club and The Nature Conservancy, will enable the sharing of resources and expertise among the signatories, who will hold their first working meeting Tuesday.

"This allows us to bring key parties together and have a more organized approach to addressing some of the impediments that we face on using fire to restore our natural landscapes," said Jim Branham, Executive Officer for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, one of the state agencies that endorsed the memorandum of understanding.

CAL FIRE PIO Berlant
@CALFIRE_PIO

News Release: New Partnership Focused on Increasing the Use of #RxFire in California.
calfire.ca.gov/communications...



RETWEETS 23 LIKES 15

12:08 PM - 2 Feb 2016

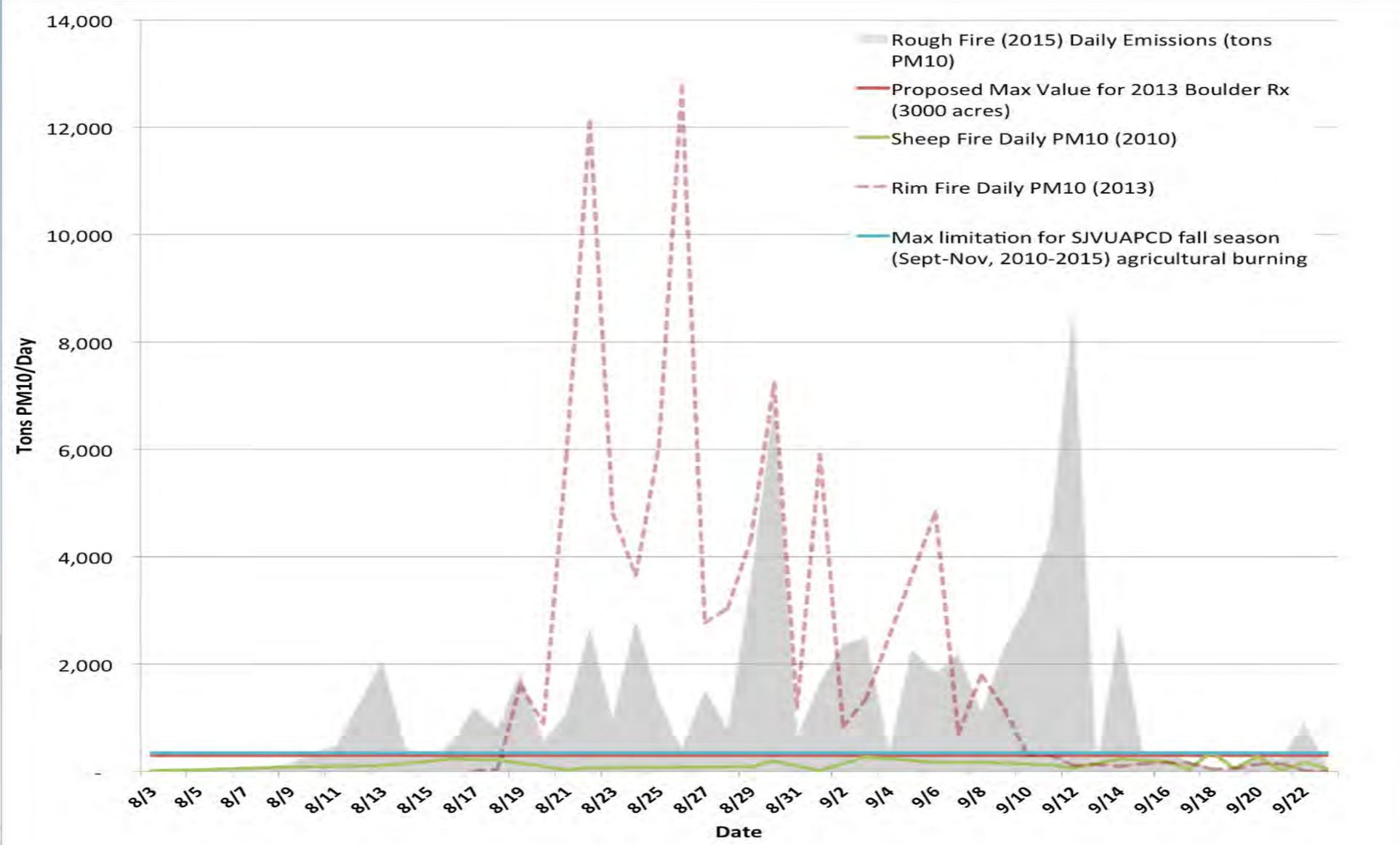
SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY CA SNC
@CAsWatershed

Announcing new partnership focused on use of fire for natural & public benefits #RxFire *PDF
sierraforestlegacy.org/Resources/Comm...



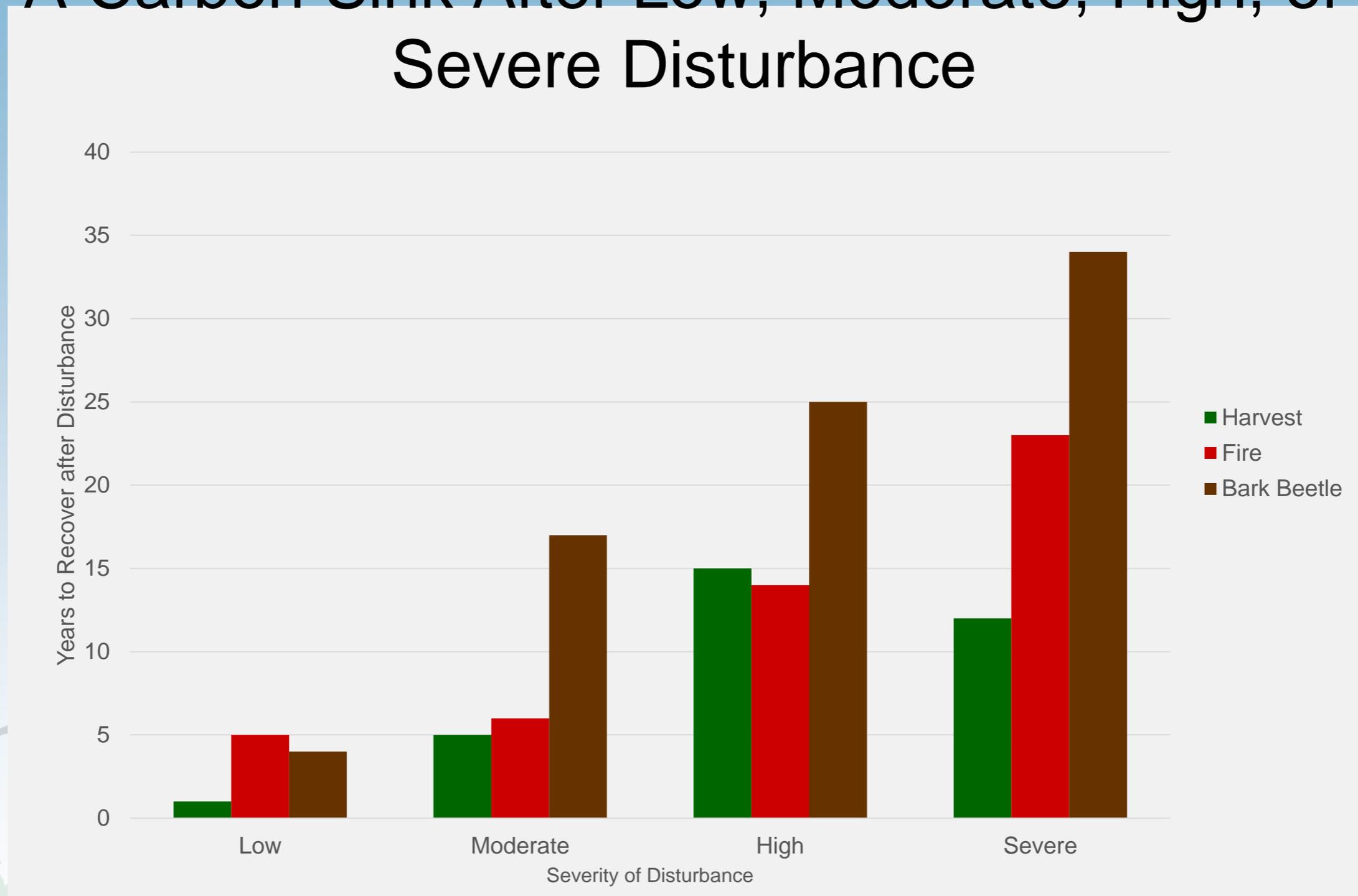
RETWEETS 9 LIKES 7

Figure 1. Relative magnitude of daily PM₁₀ emissions (tons/day) from recent fires affecting the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District airshed. Typical daily emissions from Agricultural allocations, Rx fire, and managed wildfire ignitions in this air district are 100 times lower than the daily emissions from the two megafires.



Source: Boulder Creek Rx Fire smoke management planning documents, Sheep, Rough, and Rim Fire progression data combined with tools built by California Air Resources Board to estimate emissions, San Joaquin Valley Unified APCD emissions allocation databases, and the 2015 staff report to the Board, found at: http://www.valleyair.org/Board_meetings/GB/agenda_minutes/Agenda/2015/November/final/09.pdf

Average Time It Takes a Stand to Become A Carbon Sink After Low, Moderate, High, or Severe Disturbance



Source: Crystal L. Raymond, Sean Healey, Alicia Peduzzi, Paul Patterson, **Representative regional models of post-disturbance forest carbon accumulation: Integrating inventory data and a growth and yield model**, Forest Ecology and Management, Volume 336, 15 January 2015, Pages 21-34.

Questions



Background

At the December 2015 meeting, Dr. Louise Bedsworth, Deputy Director of the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR), provided a detailed report on the \$117 million Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) National Disaster Resilience Grant application developed by a variety of agencies and stakeholders and submitted by the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD).

The Board authorized staff to enter agreements and hire the staff necessary to administer two of the three components of the grant application, should it be awarded: the Forest and Watershed Health (\$40 million) and Biomass and Wood Products Facility (\$22 million). The SNC's role in overseeing these two components is dependent on receiving adequate resources.

The third component of the application – development of two community resilience centers in Tuolumne County (\$55 million) – will be administered by Tuolumne County.

Current Status

In a press release dated January 21, 2016 the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development announced the winners of the \$1 billion National Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC). California was one of thirteen applicants who will receive funding under the NDRC program:

The State of California will receive \$70,359,459 in NDRC funding to pilot its Community and Watershed Resilience Program in Tuolumne County, which was severely affected by the 2013 wildfires. The Watershed Resilience Program will focus on supporting forest and watershed health, developing a bioenergy and wood products facility, and a community resilience center, which will create a long-term economically and environmentally sustainable program that can be replicated throughout the state.

At the time of this writing, further detail regarding the amount of funding allocated to each of the three individual components of the application was not available, though initial information received by California co-applicants is that each of the three components of the application would likely received some amount of funding.

Next Steps

As additional detail becomes available regarding the specific amounts allocated to each component of the grant application, staff will work with HCD to finalize the partnership agreement that will allow SNC to implement the Forest and Watershed Health and Biomass Wood Products Facility activities included in the application. Additionally, staff will take the steps necessary to hire the additional staff that will be required to administer and implement the program.

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.

Background

In September 2011, the Board adopted a Strategic Plan that established objectives for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) within five areas of focus and specified the strategies the SNC would employ in meeting those objectives. The areas of focus were:

- Healthy Forests
- Preservation of Ranches and Agricultural Lands
- Watershed Protection, Restoration, and Water Supply
- Promotion of Sustainable Tourism and Recreation
- Long-term Effectiveness of the SNC

Meeting Strategic Plan objectives requires the organization to undertake specific actions, which are set forth in an annual Action Plan. The Board has approved three Action Plans associated with this Strategic Plan: one for 2012-13, one for 2013-14, and one for 2014-15. The 2014-15 Action Plan initially covered the period from July 2014 – June 2015, but in June 2015, staff notified the Board of the intent to extend the Action Plan period through December 2015 since a new Strategic Action Plan was being developed and would not be complete prior to December 2015.

At the end of each Action Plan period, staff report to the Board on what has been accomplished relative to the Action Plan.

Current Status

The attached report details what the SNC has accomplished relative to the July 2014-December 2015 Action Plan (see [Attachment A](#)). Accomplishments are tied to the individual actions that the SNC had planned to undertake for each project or initiative.

The report reflects significant achievement on the part of the SNC on a number of efforts important to the Region. In a couple of instances, decisions by partners have made fulfillment of SNC's proposed actions infeasible or unnecessary. It is also important to note, that despite our best efforts, in some cases the actions taken have not resulted in the resulting benefits that were envisioned.

Next Steps

In addition to providing this report to the Board, staff will look for opportunities to highlight the important contributions we made to the Region in 2014-15 in all of our outreach efforts.

In December 2015, the Board approved the SNC's new Action Plan in conjunction with the 2016-19 Strategic Action Plan. The new Action Plan covers the period from January 2016 – June 2017, and staff will report on related accomplishments in September 2017, with interim updates as needed.

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 XIII

Attachment A

2014-15

Action Plan Accomplishments



SIERRA NEVADA
CONSERVANCY

March 2016

Table of Contents

Grant Program	4
Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI).....	5
Biomass Utilization.....	8
Abandoned Mine Lands	10
Regional Agriculture and Ranching	11
Regional Tourism and Recreation	12
Ecosystem Services.....	14
Education and Communications.....	16
Great Sierra River Cleanup	18
Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council	18
Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery	19
Internal Operations.....	20

The following represents the major initiatives and activities that were undertaken by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) between July 2014 and December 2015, consistent with the SNC's 2011-15 Strategic Plan (Plan). The 2014-15 Action Plan was originally approved by the SNC Governing Board in June 2014 and revisions to it were approved by the Board in December 2014. The actions listed here include the December 2014 revisions. For the most part, the SNC was able to undertake the actions and activities identified in the Action Plan, but in a couple of instances, decisions by partners rendered fulfillment of the SNC's proposed actions infeasible.

Grant Program

Action Planned: Award all of the funds available under the 2013-14 grant round, which was focused on healthy forest, biomass utilization, and abandoned mine land projects.

What was accomplished:

- Awarded nearly \$1.5 million to nine projects, representing all available funds, to local projects Region-wide. Of the nine, two were Category Two planning projects and the remaining seven were Category One implementation projects that focused on healthy forest, biomass utilization, and abandoned mine land projects.

Action Planned: Implement the Rim Fire restoration grant focus area, funding \$1 million of high quality projects in the affected Region.

What was accomplished:

- Collaborated with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and partners to develop a specific restoration strategy and timeline for available funding, and awarded two Category 2 assessment/planning grants of approximately \$150,000 to support the Rim Fire restoration effort. These grants provide needed pre-project due diligence for identified stream, meadow, and forest restoration projects. The process is on track to award the remainder of the \$1 million for project implementation in 2016.

Action Planned: Close out 34 current grant projects (allocating returned funds to the 2013-14 grant round), completing all required reporting, including SNC's Success Tracker and Performance Measures Database as well as state documentation.

What was accomplished:

- Due to the extended reporting timeframe and strong grantee performance, SNC closed 40 grant projects – six more than the 34 projected. SNC continues to utilize, refine, and upgrade internal reporting tools in order to track project and grant program metrics.

Action Planned: Provide timely and accurate response to any bond reporting and audit requests received. Update the Agency Bond Consolidated Reporting System web site and the California Strategic Growth Plan Bond Accountability web site as required in Executive Order S-02-07.

What was accomplished:

- The SNC grant program and administrative staff maintain a strong commitment to accurate and timely external reporting, including to the Agency Bond Consolidated Reporting System that now directly populates the California Strategic Growth Plan Accountability web site. Additionally, SNC and its grantees responded to more than 10 project audit requests from the Department of Finance (DOF) and held a DOF-sponsored training program for SNC staff.

Action Planned: Develop guidelines, including the holding of public workshops and submission to the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), for the 2015-16 Proposition 1 grant round.

What was accomplished:

- New grant guidelines for the SNC Proposition 1 grant program were developed by staff with input from the general public and grant program stakeholders. Public workshops were held on March 12, 18, and 19, in Redding, Auburn, and Visalia, respectively. The guidelines were formally adopted by the SNC Board at its June 2015 meeting, and staff released the Grant Application Packet to the public in July 2015, in advance of the first application deadline in September 2015.

Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI)

Specific actions to be accomplished under SNFCI were organized into three tiers in terms of priority levels, 1 indicating highest priority and 3 indicating lowest priority.

Action Planned: Develop a Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Action Plan to guide the SNC's efforts in addressing the dire state of many forests in the Sierra Nevada. The plan will include actions to address Regional issues and to facilitate collaborative processes for the identification of needs and priorities at the local level.

What was accomplished:

- In December 2014, the SNC Board approved the [SNFCI Action Plan](#). This plan was created in collaboration with the SNFCI Regional Coordinating Council (CC) and will serve as a roadmap for restoring forest health in the Sierra Nevada Region.

Action Planned: Launch an effort to develop a Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) in collaboration with other state, federal, and local government entities; nonprofit and community organizations; and tribes. The purpose of the plan will be to address key policy issues and coordinate investment in the Sierra Nevada to reduce risks to the benefits the Region provides.

What was accomplished:

- In March 2015, the SNC and the USFS co-hosted a summit to launch the Sierra Nevada WIP.
- In a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by CNRA Secretary John Laird and USFS Regional Forester Randy Moore in August 2015, the SNC was identified as the lead state agency responsible for organizing and implementing the WIP as well as the federal California Headwaters Partnership, which recognizes the Sierra-

Cascade Region as a flagship landscape under President Obama's Resilient Lands and Waters Initiative.

- In October 2015, SNC and USFS hosted a webinar to update existing and potential partners on the current status of the WIP, including an overview of the WIP, a high-level review of the WIP Regional Strategy, and opportunities through which interested parties can endorse and engage with the WIP. A total of 132 individuals, from a diverse range of interests and geographic locations inside and outside of the Sierra Nevada Region, participated in this webinar.
- The SNC and some of its partners commenced work to develop the WIP Regional Strategy. The strategy will include key information, trends, plans, and data for major categories influencing watershed health, as well as the process and timeline through which the WIP will be implemented.

Action Planned: Provide Proposition 84 grant funding for projects that meet SNC criteria for healthy forests funding under the 2013-14 grant round and Rim Fire restoration grant focus. (Tier 1)

What was accomplished:

- Five grants were awarded totaling approximately \$825,000 to support projects that reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire and improve forest health.
- Collaborated with the USFS and other partners to develop a specific restoration strategy and timeline for available funding, and awarded two Category 2 assessment/planning grants, as described in the Rim Fire restoration grant section above.

Action Planned: Continue to work with the SNFCI CC and the USFS in specific focus areas most likely to reduce barriers to increase pace and scale of ecological restoration in Sierra forests. (Tier 1)

What was accomplished:

- An MOU was developed and signed by state and federal land managers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and prescribed fire councils to capture a commitment to increase the use of fire for ecological and other benefits, and provide guidance developed by governmental and other stakeholders to address fire management across jurisdictions. The MOU will greatly increase collective ability to increase the use of prescribed fire on the landscape as a restoration tool.
- The USFS Region 5 has been working closely with the SNFCI CC to develop a toolbox to help National Forests and local collaborative groups to more effectively retain economic benefits from restoration work in local communities.
- The USFS Region 5 is working closely with the SNFCI CC to ensure that language is being included in forest plan revisions to enable better access and utilization of modern technology to increase access to steep slope areas for forest thinning, thereby decreasing the risk of uncharacteristically large wildfires and increasing the ability to use prescribed and managed fire as a restoration tool on the landscape.

Action Planned: Continue to develop and support projects consistent with SNFCI objectives, with clear deliverables and quantifiable measures for success and a positive influence on increasing pace and scale of restoration. (Tier 2)

What was accomplished:

- A number of projects funded by SNC's Proposition 84 grant program have been completed. Fuel reduction and restoration projects reduced the risk of large, catastrophic wildfires while promoting forest health, and meadow restoration projects improved plant and wildlife habitat. Local organizations and agencies benefitted from the work enabled by SNC grant funds, and Sierra watershed and forest health improved.
- Through fund identification and grant review, helped the Kern River Valley Heritage Foundation secure funding for site improvement and wetlands expansion for the Bob Powers Wetland Preserve near Lake Isabella.
- Provided staffing and funding support for the development of a Southern Sierra Fisher Conservation Strategy, with the goal of producing a final, geographically specific, "all lands" conservation strategy for the Pacific fisher. It is anticipated that the conservation strategy will be finalized in early 2016.

Action Planned: Support forest and biomass collaboration efforts seeking long-term sustainability by assisting them in the search for capacity-building funding through SNC partners and other opportunities. (Tier 2)

What was accomplished:

- Provided funding development assistance to collaborative efforts through funding consultations and grant research memos.
- Assisted the Sierra Institute in obtaining two Rural Community Development Grants to provide resources for capacity-building in communities that are developing collaborative biomass projects. The grants total more than \$400,000.
- Worked successfully with the forest health collaboratives and biomass working groups listed below to obtain over \$5 million in funding for building both internal capacity and project development capacity. Assistance from staff was provided by introducing relevant funding sources to individual groups, or through direct technical assistance with application or project development:
 - Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions
 - Alpine Biomass to Bioenergy Group
 - Mariposa Biomass Group
 - Groveland Biomass Group
 - Watershed Connections
 - North Fork Community Power
 - Camptonville Community Partnership
 - State Wood Energy Team
 - Northern Sierra Biomass Taskforce
 - Lost Sierra Community Collaborative

Action Planned: Participate in various efforts to promote research, policy changes, and investment in support of SNFCI objectives. (Tier 2)

What was accomplished:

- Began work with the USFS, CAL FIRE, and other partners on a science synthesis document that will aggregate the best available science on forest carbon, and will make policy and funding recommendations that are supported by the top Regional scientists in this field.
- Worked with Secretary Laird and CNRA staff to implement actions identified in Governor Brown's Rim Fire Emergency Proclamation and successfully confirmed California Environmental Quality Act exemptions for more than \$29 million of Rim Fire restoration projects.
- Initiated support for a Sierra Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) cooperative discussion group to allow agencies and organizations to better coordinate data needs, resources, and funding opportunities. LIDAR is a remote sensing tool that can provide researchers with invaluable information regarding forest health, water supply, topographic information, and infrastructure location, all of which directly support SNFCI efforts.

Action Planned: Monitor various in-progress projects and efforts that may intersect with SNFCI, either through policy changes that may impact the initiative, or emerging needs which might be strong candidates for SNC support or technical assistance, as resources allow. (Tier 3)

What was accomplished:

- Participated throughout the Region in a number of collaboratives working to improve forest and watershed health, including but not limited to:
 - Dinkey Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program
 - Sustainable Forests and Communities Collaborative
 - Watershed Connections Working Group
 - Southern Sierra Regional Water Management Group
 - Amador Calaveras Consensus Group
 - Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions
 - Eastern Sierra Recreation Collaborative
 - Alpine Biomass to Bioenergy Group
 - Mariposa Biomass Group
 - Burney/Hat Creek Community Forest and Watershed Group
 - Sierra Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Partnership
 - Mariposa County Tree Mortality Disaster Committee
 - Diamond Mountain Initiative Working Group

Biomass Utilization

Action Planned: Provide Proposition 84 grant funding for projects that meet SNC criteria for biomass utilization funding under the 2013-14 grant round.

What was accomplished:

- Awarded a grant for the implementation of the Mono County Thermal Biomass Project. This project will provide a model of using biomass boiler systems for heating public facilities.

- Also awarded an implementation grant for the Plumas County Energy Wood Processing Facility, which will convert forest biomass into conditioned wood chip fuel for boilers and enable the rapid development and implementation of a larger woody renewables boiler network.

Action Planned: Continue to strategically provide technical assistance and funding support, as well as identify additional funding sources, for projects in various stages of development within the Region. Under the Bioenergy Action Plan, the SNC will provide a limited level of assistance to projects outside the Region.

What was accomplished:

- Collaborative work by SNC staff and other agencies resulted in a \$4.9 million award for the implementation of a community-scale biomass project in North Fork, Madera County.
- Assisted in obtaining funding for four additional projects to complete feasibility studies for bioenergy facilities, and for three projects to complete System Impact Studies in preparation for utility interconnection.
- Assisted the Northern California Community Loan Fund with the development of a technical assistance program for financing biomass and bioenergy projects. The program will target those projects which will most significantly increase capacity for biomass utilization, thereby potentially increasing the pace and scale of forest restoration.
- Helped design and fund a capacity-building program to assist 10 communities working to develop bioenergy projects.

Action Planned: Continue to work with other agencies (such as the USFS, CAL FIRE, the California Public Utilities Commission, and the California Energy Commission) to help craft policies and programs to assist forest biomass infrastructure development and retention.

What was accomplished:

- Continued to work with other members of the Biomass Working Group to finalize the California Public Utilities Commission rule-making regarding the Senate Bill 1122 forest biomass auction process (now known as BioMat), ensuring adequate feed-in tariff pricing for community-scale forest bioenergy facilities. To date, no such facilities are operational.

Action Planned: Continue to provide outreach to help educate policy-makers and the public on the issues associated with woody biomass utilization, to help diverse interests resolve issues and concerns.

What was accomplished:

- The SNC staff made presentations at conferences, workshops, and during field tours to help diverse interests better understand the importance of local woody biomass utilization in helping to reduce open pile burning and the associated air pollution, as well as the local economic development opportunities of developing value-added biomass products and bioenergy.

Action Planned: Help to compile information and develop tools that assist in identifying the most appropriate locations for biomass utilization facilities.

What was accomplished:

- A geographic information systems (GIS) tool that identifies appropriate sites based on factors such as biomass availability, interconnection opportunities, etc., was finalized, and training was provided to SNC staff and other interested entities.

Abandoned Mine Lands

Action Planned: Continue to identify and develop abandoned mine lands (AML) project proposals eligible for funding in the 2013-14 grant round until the funding allocations are fully spent.

What was accomplished:

- Three grants totaling over \$326,000 were awarded to AML projects developed under the Proposition 84 2013-14 grant round. Two of the projects were for remediation planning efforts in Nevada and Plumas Counties. The third award was for a pilot project developed to combine the two areas of focus for the grant round: fuel reduction work and AML remediation. Biomass from a nearby thinning project will be used to amend soils at an AML site on public land in order to improve vegetative regrowth and reduce sedimentation in nearby waterbodies.

Action Planned: Continue to pursue the goal of a blanket due diligence process for properties that may be acquired using state funds.

What was accomplished:

- The CNRA approved the formation of a multi-department committee to develop a policy to provide guidance to all departments under the CNRA umbrella regarding AML-impacted land identification prior to purchasing or funding land acquisitions or conservation easements. The SNC is a member of the committee, and the policy is anticipated to be in place by June 2016.

Action Planned: Facilitate increased collaboration among state agencies participating in AML remediation in the Sierra and other parts of the state by providing support to the California Abandoned Mine Lands Agency Group (CAMLAG) and helping to identify and fill gaps in research, data, and knowledge that could be addressed in order to facilitate a more collaborative approach.

What was accomplished:

- Entered into a three-way contract with the Department of Conservation and University of California (UC) Davis to complete the first phase of a statewide AML prioritization tool, the California Abandoned Mine Land Prioritization Tool (CAMPT). The SNC provided \$30,000 toward the development of the tool and is providing staff time for completion of tasks identified in the work plan. The CAMPT will be a searchable database that may be used by state agencies to identify high-risk mine sites that need further assessment or remediation. Sites will be found through multiple filters such as location, type of contaminant, proximity to recreational

facilities, and proximity to water source, thereby providing the capability to address specific focus areas and needs.

- Continued to participate in CAMLAG meetings, contributing ideas and information on how to employ a more collaborative approach for funding and remediation work.

Action Planned: Continue to work with partners to educate decision-makers and others about legacy mining impacts, sponsoring or partnering in AML symposia and other events.

What was accomplished:

- Sponsored and participated in an event organized by The Sierra Fund, Reclaiming the Sierra 2015: The New Gold Rush. The event focused on the impacts of legacy mining in the Sierra Nevada, and attracted over 200 participants including policy-makers, local government officials, tribal members, state agency staff, and members of the public.

Action Planned: Continue to explore various funding opportunities for AML cleanup.

What was accomplished:

- Worked with CNRA and department partners to identify opportunities for AML projects in the various Proposition 1 grant programs. The opportunities identified through Proposition 1 as well as other state, federal, and philanthropic funding sources will be compiled into a comprehensive AML Funding Resource Opportunity document for open distribution and posting to the SNC web site in February 2016. The document will be updated approximately every six months.

Regional Agriculture and Ranching

Action Planned: Working closely with the Recreation and Tourism Initiative, support efforts to develop a Sierra Agritourism Network and increase the presence of agritourism on the Sierra Nevada Geotourism (SNGT) MapGuide, web site, and companion materials.

What was accomplished:

- Participated in a workshop with the Lost Sierra Tourism Collaborative (Sierra and Plumas Counties) in October 2014 and identified new agritourism products from that region to add to the SNGT web site.
- Sponsored, helped organize, and participated in the first California Agritourism Summit held in April 2015 in Woodland, CA. 100 participants from around the state attended – including more than 40 from the Sierra Nevada Region.
- Facilitated a discussion between Visit California and the UC Davis Small Farm Center that led to expansion of the agritourism section on the Visit California web site.
- Curated Sierra Nevada farmers market information from the UC Davis Small Farm Center for inclusion on the SNGT web site.

Action Planned: Continue to participate in discussions, workshops, and meetings to understand relevant issues, policies, and actions, and build relationships within the farming and ranching communities.

What was accomplished:

- Engaged and worked with local ranchers, land trusts, and other NGOs to identify eligible projects such as stream restoration, grazing management plans, and agricultural conservation easements that were submitted for SNC Proposition 84 funding. The SNC Board authorized funding for a number of these projects, which are now being implemented.

Action Planned: Support partner efforts to engage and reach out to policy-makers and legislators regarding the benefits of agriculture and ranching, and include these messages in SNC outreach and communication efforts as appropriate.

What was accomplished:

- Participated and helped support site tours of agriculture projects in the North and Central Subregions. The tours included local officials and policy-makers.
- Sponsored and attended the 2015 California Rangeland Conservation Coalition Summit, which was jointly held with the Society for Range Management National Conference in Sacramento. During the joint conferences, SNC staff met with local ranchers, NGO leaders, and elected officials to discuss ranching and agricultural issues in the Sierra Nevada.

Action Planned: Work with partners to support their efforts, including potentially funding and implementing workshops addressing specific needs; utilize grant writer to find funds to support these efforts.

What was accomplished:

- Assisted in drafting a U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service Conservation Innovation Grant application for biochar demonstration projects in Tehama and Placer Counties.

Action Planned: Support and participate in ongoing conversations regarding grazing on public lands.

What was accomplished:

- Sponsored and participated in the 2015 California Association of Resource Conservation Districts' annual conference.
- Provided oversight of the 2014 grazing assessment project completed for the USFS in the Kern Plateau in the Eastern Subregion. A decision was made by the USFS following the assessment not to pursue the matter further.

Regional Tourism and Recreation

Action Planned: Solicit and develop new content and destinations for display on the SNGT web site, with an emphasis on agritourism and under-represented regions.

What was accomplished:

- Nearly 170 new nominations were added to the SNGT web site, for a total of more than 1,900 nominations at the end of 2015.

- Conducted two SNGT nomination training sessions in the North Subregion, with over 90 participants attending.
- Participated in discussions with National Geographic web developers to provide significant input to the development of the 2.0 version of the geotourism web site platform that is now being implemented.
- Drafted and executed an agreement with Sierra Business Council that re-defined the responsibilities for management of the overall SNGT project, effective January 2016.

Action Planned: Implement the first of a two-year distribution plan for half of the 71,000 printed SNGT MapGuides (third printing).

What was accomplished:

- Executed a contract with Certified Folder for the distribution of 40,000 SNGT MapGuides in high-traffic outdoor retailer locations in Southern and Northern California in spring and summer of 2015, as well as in Certified Folder contracted locations throughout the Sierra Nevada Region.
- Distributed another 14,000 SNGT MapGuides to key distribution locations in the Sierra Nevada, including visitor centers and chamber of commerce offices.

Action Planned: Implement a marketing plan aimed at increasing downloads of mobile phone applications and the amount of web traffic visiting the SNGT site on a monthly basis.

What was accomplished:

- Paid print advertisements were inserted in the 2015 California Visitors Guide and Yosemite Journal, generating over 1,700 fulfillment requests for the SNGT MapGuide.
- The SNGT web site received more than 534,000 visits from July 2014 to December 2015, for an average of more than 44,000 visits per month during that period.
- Facebook reach increased to more than 1,900 followers and Twitter reach increased to more than 250 followers; these figures were up 11 percent and 13 percent, respectively.
- The metrics for the mobile application download indicated strong activity, with more than 500 downloads occurring in the fourth quarter of 2014.

Action Planned: Assist in the development of up to three water trail projects with local organizations, including seeking outside resources to support this effort.

What was accomplished:

- Provided funding and assistance for the development and design of the Lake Almanor Water Trail Map, a multi-partner effort.
- With the intent of identifying funding for the implementation of the Lower Owens River Recreation Use Plan, provided support to Inyo County for a California State Parks Recreation and Trails grant, and facilitated meetings with stakeholders for potential development of the Lower Owens River Management Alliance.

Action Planned: Continue working with state and local partners promoting existing agritourism opportunities, and support efforts to establish new agritourism opportunities by

organizing a series of agritourism training workshops in targeted areas and linking agritourism projects in the Region to create and market a Region-wide network of agritourism products and experiences.

What was accomplished:

- Collaborated with the UC Davis Small Farm Center and the UC Cooperative Extension in Quincy to develop and implement agritourism training curriculum covering three training sessions.

Action Planned: Engage with industry professionals and organizations to increase exposure of the Region and tourism issues in the Region.

What was accomplished:

- Represented the Region at meetings of the California Roundtable on Recreation, Parks, and Tourism.
- Sponsored and attended the 2015 California Trails and Greenways Conference, where SNGT MapGuides were distributed and discussions with key trail organization leaders occurred.
- Provided support for the formation of the Eastern Sierra Recreation Collaborative (ESRC), which convened stakeholders of the eastern Sierra gateway communities and interested parties in a collaborative effort to help inform the Forest Management Plan Revision (FMPR) efforts of the Inyo National Forest, using a “recreation lens” to develop an ESRC strategy and guiding principles. The ESRC initiative was also shared with the USFS Region 5 planning team and with USFS leadership in the Washington, D.C., office as a possible model for future collaborative efforts around FMPR.
- Facilitated discussions with a variety of regional organizations such as Shasta-Cascade Wonderland Association and Lost Sierra Tourism Collaborative to identify opportunities for enhancing tourism efforts in those respective areas.
- Initiated discussions with Visit California leadership that led to a commitment of financial support for a SNC research project focused on the impact of catastrophic fires on the Region’s tourism-based communities.

Ecosystem Services

Action Planned: Continue to communicate the key findings of the Mokelumne Watershed Avoided Cost Analysis (MACA), to make the case that new and additional investment in fuel treatments is a cost savings measure and needed for long-term forest health.

What was accomplished:

- The MACA report continues to generate interest and the results have been presented at several conferences and meetings. Additionally, the sediment modeling chapter in the MACA final report has been submitted and provisionally accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal, providing scientific merit to the process that was used.

Action Planned: Work with project partners to evaluate new opportunities to implement actions based on the outcomes of the MACA.

What was accomplished:

- The MACA group continues to communicate and work on projects where possible. The sediment modelers from the project worked with the Bureau of Land Management and CAL FIRE to project sedimentation from the Butte Fire under estimated El Niño conditions, helping those two agencies strategically target areas for stabilization ahead of the winter rains. Similarly, the fire modeling process developed for the MACA has been expanded to other watersheds in the Region; that work will be integrated into the WIP as well. To date, the MACA has not resulted in increased restoration activities in the watershed.

Action Planned: Coordinate with key partners, including USFS, The Nature Conservancy, and UC Merced, to identify and implement research and monitoring projects to better understand the relationship between forest management and water yield.

What was accomplished:

- The continuing drought emphasized the critical water supply contributions of the Region to the rest of the state, but the lack of water also hindered ongoing water research on connections between forest management and water yield. As reported at the September 2015 Board meeting, The Nature Conservancy released its report strongly suggesting that not only would water yield improve due to ecological forest treatments, but that in some cases the additional water would provide an economic benefit equal to or greater than the cost of the treatments.
- The SNC had previously provided funding for the UC-led Sierra Nevada Watershed Ecosystem Enhancement Project (SWEEP) which continues to move forward. Dr. Roger Bales at UC Merced has identified two watersheds, the Tuolumne and American Rivers, for additional SWEEP research, and SNC will continue to track his progress.

Action Planned: Evaluate the initial findings and potential of a previously funded project to quantify any potential water yield increase and change to the hydrograph that may result from meadow restoration activities. Work with U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and other partners to better understand the connection of forests, fires, and sediment to existing reservoirs within the state. Evaluate potential problem areas and begin to quantify the extent of the problem, if any.

What was accomplished:

- A project by the USGS collected new reservoir sedimentation data and created a new reservoir sedimentation model for the Sierra Nevada. The results of the model identified reservoirs most affected by fire, the initial results of which were presented at the 2015 Reclaiming the Sierra conference in Sacramento. The report and a proposal for the next stage of the study are presently in review at the USGS. The results of the initial study are expected to be useful for catalyzing public interest and science around reservoir sedimentation and its effects in the Sierra Nevada.

Education and Communications

Action Planned: Elevate the profile of the SNC as an accepted, trusted resource for information regarding the link between upper watersheds, forest health, climate change, clean water, clean air, and sustainable communities through increased involvement and communications on such issues.

What was accomplished:

- SNC staff was invited to participate in and are active members of a number of working groups that recognize the importance and value of the Region in the long-term health and well-being of California. These include:
 - The California Forest Climate Action Team, which was formed under the direction and leadership of Governor Brown in August 2014 to develop a Forest Carbon Plan by the end of 2016. The SNC staff are active members of the Policy and Co-benefits working groups that will determine how to best integrate the new science findings into state planning goals under Assembly Bill 32.
 - The California Forest and Watershed Association, whose members are working together to seek new ways to promote proactive, science-based, and ecologically sound forest management practices that will reduce the risk of destructive megafires by accelerating the pace and scale of forest restoration. The SNC is an ex officio/non-voting member of the alliance.
 - The Tree Mortality Task Force, which was organized in late 2015 after Governor Brown issued an emergency tree mortality declaration. The SNC staff are active members of six of the eight working groups of the task force.
- Also worked with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research and other partners to develop the second phase of a \$117 million proposal for the Rim Fire area through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's National Disaster Resilience Competition. The proposal, submitted to HUD in October 2015, called for SNC to administer and oversee the planning and implementation of a biomass facility and wood products campus, as well as the forest and watershed health projects identified in the application.
- Actively participated in the weekly CNRA Public Information Officer meetings.
- Signed on as a non-voting member of the Sierra Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Partnership, through which SNC has gained access to a large network of statewide policy-makers working toward a climate-adapted state in alignment with the Safeguarding California plan and other administration initiatives.

Action Planned: Continue relationship-building activities and conduct regular meetings with local, state, and federal agencies; legislators; and other decision-makers to ensure investment in the Region where more than 60 percent of the state's developed water supply originates.

What was accomplished:

- Conducted regular visits to the Capitol, which proved beneficial in developing new and fostering existing relationships with legislative staff and creating opportunities

to deliver presentations to committees, such as the Legislative Environmental Caucus, on topics of relevance to the SNC Region.

- Conducted more than 75 meetings with state legislators and legislative staff.
- Coordinated a screening of the Fire Next Time video at the State Capitol Theater, and secured sponsorship for the screening from Senator Tom Berryhill and Assembly Member Frank Bigelow. The screening, which coincided with Senator Berryhill's Wildfire Awareness Week Senate Concurrent Resolution, drew 25 viewers, including five Legislators and 10 staff.
- The SNC received unanimous support in both houses for its first two pieces of formally sponsored legislation, Assembly Bill 985 and Assembly Concurrent Resolution 22. The latter of the two received nearly 80 co-authors.
- The SNC was quite pleased to have several legislators and staff in attendance at its 10th anniversary celebration in March 2015. This fantastic event, hosted by long-time partner The Sierra Fund, was enhanced by the presence of policy-makers, and afforded both the SNC and its many partners a prime opportunity to discuss issues of importance to the Region.

Action Planned: Utilize events, newsletters, media stories, press releases, social media postings, the SNC Web site, interactive/story maps, and other related activities to communicate the value of the Sierra Nevada Region to the rest of the state.

What was accomplished:

- The State of the Sierra Nevada's Forests Report was produced and shared with statewide legislators, agency partners, media outlets, Regional partners, and the public. This report detailed the currently unhealthy conditions in Sierra forests, and identified a variety of challenges and opportunities related to restoring the Sierra to a more resilient state.
- Fact sheets were developed to provide targeted audiences with key, Sierra-focused information on the 2014 King Fire, as well as the newly launched Sierra Nevada WIP. These one- to two-page documents were shared with statewide legislators, agency partners, Regional partners, and the public during tours, tabling events, and face-to-face meetings.
- Placed an interpretive display in the governor's annex as part of the March 2015 Board meeting events. This display coincided with the WIP Summit and conveyed key messages relative to forest health, fire, and the need for increased action to address the two.
- Worked with the USFS to develop and roll out a WIP social media "You Choose" billboard campaign that highlighted the results of continued inaction in the upper watersheds.

Action Planned: Track and analyze current Sierra Nevada scientific research to inform the development of sound science-based policy that protects and restores the Sierra Nevada Region.

What was accomplished:

- Actively tracked and analyzed a variety of scientific research papers which have led to a better understanding of the complex systems in the Region and how

important those systems are in helping the state meet its goals. The value of this activity has been most evident in greenhouse gas reduction policies, where recent research has shown that megafires can emit in a few weeks as much carbon as California's major cities do in a single year.

Action Planned: Partner with allies to complete Regional tours that demonstrate the value of SNC initiatives and the importance of investment in watershed and forest health projects.

What was accomplished:

- Coordinated five tours with partners including the California Forestry Association, the Sierra Foothills Conservancy, CAL FIRE, Sierra Pacific Industries, El Dorado Resource Conservation District, and others. The tours have brought more than 30 state and federal legislators, legislative staff, and/or members of the media into the Region to see and understand firsthand the impacts of fires like the Rim, King, and Butte Fires, and to discuss the urgency of addressing current forest health conditions.

Action Planned: Create and distribute the Fiscal Year 2013-14 Annual Report.

What was accomplished:

- The 2013-14 and 2014-15 Annual Reports were developed and distributed to a range of legislative committees, in addition to being transmitted to a large cross-section of individual legislators from within the Sierra Nevada Region and many others with whom the SNC cultivates positive working relationships.

Great Sierra River Cleanup

Action Planned: Continue to work with existing river cleanups throughout the Sierra to unite and expand them.

What was accomplished:

- Coordinated the 6th and 7th annual Great Sierra River Cleanup.
- A record number of more than 5,600 volunteers participated in 2014.
- Nearly 109 tons of trash and recyclables, an all-time high, were removed from Sierra rivers in 2015.

Action Planned: Recruit organizations in areas with no river cleanup programs to host cleanups in their areas.

What was accomplished:

- In both years, staff was able to recruit coordinated efforts in new areas.

Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council

Action Planned: Execute agreements to serve as covenant holder on lands donated to the USFS (up to 10 properties).

What was accomplished:

- Based on approval by the Board, SNC entered into a Joint Powers Agreement with the California Coastal Commission authorizing the SNC to assume conservation covenant and monitoring responsibilities for a Stewardship Council property (Eel River). This is the only Stewardship Council property being transferred to the USFS that is also outside of SNC's legal jurisdiction.
- All transactions were completed for approximately 920 acres of land along Cole Creek, a tributary to the North Fork Mokelumne River in Amador County. The SNC now holds an in-perpetuity conservation covenant with the USFS, as well as responsibility for the long-term monitoring of the conditions of the covenant.

Action Planned: Finalize agreements for SNC to carry out certain duties upon the dissolution of the Stewardship Council.

What was accomplished:

- The SNC and Stewardship Council finalized an agreement providing that the SNC would have ongoing responsibility for monitoring lands transferred to the USFS for which SNC holds a conservation covenant.

Action Planned: Initiate the funding mechanism to compensate the SNC for all tasks performed.

What was accomplished:

- Agreement was reached with the Stewardship Council to reimburse the SNC for its activities related to the finalization of all land transactions and the ongoing monitoring of lands placed under conservation covenant between the SNC and USFS.

Action Planned: Build a web-based document library for Pacific Gas and Electric Company lands that have been donated and approved through the California Public Utilities Commission.

What was accomplished:

- Preliminary discussions were held with the Stewardship Council addressing the SNC's long-term role in housing information regarding lands donated through the Council. At this point, a determination has not been made as to whether the SNC will manage information only for the lands for which it holds a conservation covenant, or for other lands as well. Discussions will continue.

Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery

Most of the planned actions for this project were not completed due to the passing of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) lead for this project at the end of 2014. As a result of this loss, and budgetary constraints, CDFW moved this project to a lower priority within the department. In late 2014, CDFW legal counsel determined that it was not going to pursue a Phase 2 report.

At this time, there are no new plans to move this project forward. Inyo County and Friends of Mt. Whitney continue to discuss options, and the Friends group continues to operate the facility as a visitor/interpretive center under the lease with CDFW.

For reference, these were the planned actions:

Action Planned: Pursue a decision by the CDFW and Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) about completing a Phase 2 environmental site assessment report. The Phase 2 report would provide information on the environmental condition of the facility – results may have an impact on the completion of the transfer if significant environmental issues are identified.

Action Planned: Pursue a decision by CDFW and WCB about completing the future use document, which would limit the types of uses that could occur on the property if it were transferred to a third party.

Action Planned: A decision by SNC whether to proceed with a potential transfer based on 1) the results of a Phase 2 report, 2) a finalized future use document, and 3) a credible plan in place for completing a potential transfer that has been agreed to by participating parties.

Action Planned: Confirmation by Inyo County of a third party in place for a potential transfer and a plan completed for future use.

Internal Operations

Action Planned: Develop new processes and evaluation tools to ensure SNC's training program is preparing staff to implement the SNC mission.

What was accomplished:

- Released a Training Evaluation Survey that allows staff to provide feedback on each class and teacher. The information received is then reviewed to inform future training decisions.

Action Planned: Ensure continuity of essential functions and operations following a catastrophic event by implementing SNC's Business Continuity Plan. Provide training for management as well as perform tabletop exercises and drills to test SNC's technology recovery plan.

What was accomplished:

- Each manager received an updated employee directory and directions for implementation of the phone tree in the case of a catastrophic event.
- Updated the Technology Recovery Plan and performed tabletop exercises and drills specific to information technology (IT) needs.

Action Planned: Improve SNC network and IT tools and services, including continuous hardware assessment and modifications. Upgrade to SharePoint 2013, including development and implementation of a migration plan. Analyze telecommunication and video conferencing systems to enhance communication mechanisms, ensuring collaboration, efficiency, and productivity across the organization.

What was accomplished:

- Completed SharePoint upgrade and data migration. Provided all staff training and identified super users.
- Optimized virtual server configuration for enhanced performance and additional backup options.
- Migrated to State Consolidated Email Service to align with state requirements.
- Worked with Verizon to analyze a possible migration to Voice over Internet Protocol.

Action Planned: Develop project management tools to ensure that the SNC's processes, systems, and tools are efficient and effective. This includes training staff to use the tools developed internally, as well as training and support for SNC users of Microsoft Project.

What was accomplished:

- Transitioned project management templates to SharePoint 2013. Worked with staff to develop processes for use of project sites within SharePoint and trained impacted staff in Microsoft Project 2013 for use with SharePoint 2013.

Action Planned: Convert our current accounting and budget systems over to the statewide Financial Information System for California (FISCAL) system to maximize efficiency and effectively manage SNC resources.

What was accomplished:

- Administrative staff attended numerous trainings and converted all necessary data over to FISCAL.
- In August 2015, SNC transitioned to using the FISCAL system.

Action Planned: Improve SNC's GIS storage procedures, ensuring that critical data can be accessed and recovered from any location.

What was accomplished:

- Established a relationship with CNRA Data Center to address SNC's GIS needs.
- Implemented monthly check-in meetings with SNC GIS and IT staff to evaluate GIS needs and issues.

Agenda Item XIII

2014-15 Action Plan Accomplishments

Presented by:
Angela Avery

Background

- Initial time frame for this Action Plan was July 2014 – June 2015.
- In December 2014, Board revised to add the Watershed Improvement Program.
- In June 2015, staff notified Board of intent to extend Action Plan period through December 2015.
- This report covers actions from July 2014 – December 2015.

Successes

- SNFCI Action Plan approved
- WIP implemented
- All other actions in revised Action Plan implemented except for Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery actions (outside of SNC control)

Next Steps

- Staff will look for other opportunities to share information about these contributions to the Region.
- Implementing new Action Plan for January 2016 – June 2017
- Will report on related accomplishments in September 2017, with interim updates as needed

Questions or
comments?



Introduction

This discussion will provide the Board with a short history of the Conservancy's use of public bond funds to support acquisitions, specifically conservation easements. It is also intended to help educate and prepare Boardmembers for future decision making associated with conservation easements and concerns that have been raised in the past relative to their associated benefits, drawbacks, and evaluation criteria.

Background

The enabling legislation of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) includes provisions allowing for the granting of funds for acquisition of fee title to real property or partial-interests (easement or other marketable rights) (PRC 33343). Additional special provisions are required of nonprofit or tribal organizations receiving grants for purposes of acquiring interests in real property. The legislation also provides the SNC the ability to directly acquire less-than-fee interests in real property (PRC 33347), although the agency has never used this provision.

California bond acts passed during the last 16 years (Propositions 12, 13, 40, 50) have all identified acquisition of conservation easements from willing sellers as an accepted method for accomplishing conservation goals of the state. These measures have all been aligned with state plans related to water, wildlife, agriculture, recreation, and forests.

In 2006, California voters approved Proposition 84, the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act, which included \$54 million for the SNC. The bond language clearly anticipated that acquisition of property or easements would be used as a means to accomplish the goals of the bond and the agencies charged with administering bond funds. The SNC conducted extensive public workshops to identify conservation needs throughout the Region and developed its initial set of grants guidelines. The guidelines allowed eligible applicants to seek grants for fee title or easement acquisitions.

Between 2008 and 2011, the SNC Board authorized \$11.87 million in grants for 15 fee title property acquisitions which leveraged an additional \$38.3 million of outside funding and conserved 34,053 acres of land. In June 2011, while providing direction for development of guidelines to administer the last \$10 million of Prop 84, the SNC Board decided that investing in conservation easements was a preferred approach to achieve conservation goals rather than fee title acquisitions and directed staff to remove fee title acquisitions and pre-project work to support fee title acquisitions from the list of projects eligible for grant funds.

Between 2008 and 2013 the SNC Board authorized \$11.2 million in grants for 18 conservation easements which leveraged an additional \$11.6 million of outside funding and conserved 31,284 acres of land. In June 2013, with \$2.6 million remaining in the SNC Proposition 84 allocation, the SNC Board voted that none of the remaining Proposition 84 funds would be authorized for any conservation easements or pre-project work to facilitate conservation easements. This decision was reached after SNC

Boardmembers raised concerns about the “value” of funding conservation easements on land where perceived threat of development was not imminent, and a desire to focus remaining Prop 84 funds on the SNC’s Forest Health and Abandoned Mine Lands initiatives. The Board indicated that it needed to have a better understanding of conservation easements and that it would re-consider the decision if future funding became available.

In November 2014, California voters approved Proposition 1, which allocated \$25 million to the SNC. Bond language in Proposition 1 is similar to many previous bonds and specifically identifies acquisition of property and conservation easements as an accepted tool to accomplish the conservation goals of the bond. The language supports goals identified in the California Water Action Plan, California Wildlife Action Plan, California Forest Action Plan, and Safeguarding California Plan. SNC staff developed new grant guidelines with direction from the Board to continue limiting acquisition of conservation easements.

Current Status

In June 2014, the Board approved the Watershed Improvement Program Grant Guidelines to administer \$10 million of Proposition 1 funds for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 fiscal years. The program is focused on supporting projects to improve forest health. Currently, acquisition of conservation easements and related pre-project work are not eligible for funding. In an effort to help re-establish the wood processing infrastructure of the region, fee title acquisitions of land and related pre-project activities to facilitate development of wood processing or biomass utilization are eligible.

In the near future, staff will be tasked with developing grant guidelines to administer more Proposition 1 funds, and could be tasked with developing grant guidelines to administer granting funds from new bond measures or from other sources.

Staff has requested assistance from professionals on the topic of conservation easements to participate in a panel presentation and discussion with the Board at this meeting. Panel members have been asked to present a broad range of views on the topic to help inform the board about the pros and cons of conservation easements. Staff has compiled and attached a bibliography of publications that describe a broad range of issues related to conservation easements.

Next Steps

Staff is requesting Board participation in the panel conversation and welcomes comments or suggestions. Any specific recommendations to change existing policy related to this issue will be presented to the Board at a future meeting.

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.

Bibliography of Publications

Conservation Easement Basics

California Association of RCDs – Conservation Easement Guide

http://carcd.org/conservation_easements_guide0.aspx

California Department of Conservation – Conservation Easements

http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/cfcp/overview/Pages/ag_consrv_easements.aspx

Conservation Easements – The Primer (Briscoe Ivester & Bazel LLP)

<http://briscoelaw.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/ConservationEasements.pdf>

The Nature Conservancy – What are Conservation Easements?

<http://www.nature.org/about-us/private-lands-conservation/conservation-easements/what-are-conservation-easements.xml>

National Organizations

The National Conservation Easement Database

<http://www.conservationeasement.us/>

Find A Land Trust | Land Trust Alliance

<http://findalandtrust.org/states/california06>

Private Landowner Network

www.privatelandownernetwork.org

California Conservation Easement Information:

California Conservation Easements Registry

<https://easements.resources.ca.gov/>

California Council of Land Trusts

<http://www.calandtrusts.org/>

California Rangeland Trust

<http://www.rangelandtrust.org>

GreenInfo Network / CPAD / California Protected Areas Database

<http://www.greeninfo.org/work/project/cpad-the-california-protected-areas-database>

Books

Anella, Anthony, John B. Wright, and Edward Ranney. **Saving the Ranch: Conservation Easement Design in the American West**. Washington, DC: Island, 2004. Print.

Byers, Elizabeth, Karin Marchetti. Ponte, and Janet Diehl. **The Conservation Easement Handbook**. Washington, D.C.: Land Trust Alliance, 2005. Print.

Examples of Conservation Easement Projects in the Sierra Nevada

Campstool Ranch – Pacific Forest Trust

<https://www.pacificforest.org/2170-acre-jewel-in-californias-gold-rush-country-permanently-conserved/>

Cinnamon Ranch Conservation Easement – Eastern Sierra Land Trust

<http://www.eslt.org/Pages/projectCinnamon.html>

Goodwin Ranch – California Rangeland Trust

<http://www.rangelandtrust.org/~rangelan/conservation/conserved-ranches/21-conservation/conserved-ranches/132-goodwin-ranches.html>

Lemon Canyon Ranch & Calpine Meadow Ranch – Pacific Forest Trust

<https://www.pacificforest.org/public-private-partnership-conserves-sierra-valley-ranches/>

Loyalton Learning Landscape (Chadwick Ranch) – Feather River Land Trust

<http://www.frlt.org/conserves-land/success-stories/loyalton-learning-landscape>

Maddalena Ranch – Feather River Land Trust

<http://www.frlt.org/conserves-land/success-stories/maddalena-property-sierra-valley>

Pearce Family Ranch – Feather River Land Trust

<http://www.frlt.org/conserves-land/success-stories/pearce-family-ranch-indian-valley>

Rickert Brothers Ranch – Shasta Land Trust

<http://www.shastalandtrust.org/rickert-brothers-ranch/>

Rogers Key Brand Ranch – Feather River Land Trust

<http://www.frlt.org/conserves-land/success-stories/rogers-key-brand-ranch-indian-valley>

Side Hill Citrus – Placer County

<http://www.auburnjournal.com/article/1/16/15/ceremony-celebrates-mandarin-orchard-preservation>

Sinnamon Meadows – Eastern Sierra Land Trust

<https://easternsierralandlines.wordpress.com/2014/09/10/sinnamon-meadows/>

Recent Press Referencing Conservation Easements

A Displaced California Tribe Reclaims Sacred Land

<http://www.hcn.org/issues/47.16/a-displaced-california-tribe-reclaims-sacred-land>

Conserving Farms is Good Investment

<http://www.sacbee.com/opinion/op-ed/soapbox/article38965995.html>

Phyllis Faber: Bold Ideas, Enduring Legacy

<https://baynature.org/articles/phyllis-faber-bold-ideas-enduring-legacy/>

Suburban Sprawl Continues Creep Across Desert

<http://obrag.org/?p=102735>

Conservation Easement Criticisms

Conservation Easements: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly (2008)

<http://www.nationalcenter.org/NPA569.html>

Summary: Some land trusts are becoming “agents of government aiding in public land acquisitions.” Additionally, perpetual easements are locking up land forever and as conservation needs change or priorities shift, land under perpetual conservation easement cannot be adapted to meet those changing needs. The following example is provided: “Gains in scientific knowledge can change our definition of what is ecologically beneficial. For example, we know from scientific advances in forest management that thinning techniques are essential to protecting healthy forests and their habitat and preventing forest fires. Yet conservation easement requirements with the specific purpose of perpetually protecting habitat in a forest may not allow for necessary logging and thinning projects.”

The Problems with Conservation Easements (2008)

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2008/05/08/the-problems-with-conservation-easements/>

Lack of transparency in the process makes it difficult to determine the quality of the land being conserved and some land trusts and public agencies are more concerned with total acreage more than strategic value. Additionally, some easements have funding for the initial acquisition, but lack a long term plan and/or funding.

Skeptics Perspective on Voluntary Conservation Easements

<http://www.vlrc.org/articles/176.html>

Conservation easements are not, as is commonly believed, free market solutions since much of the funding is in the form of “direct public outlays, tax expenditures for donations of interests in land, or favorable tax treatment...” Additionally, the problem with voluntary easements is their very nature, “those willing to make voluntary contributions to the achievement of conservation goals are likely to be those who think they will be burdened the least...” There is too little “public debate” because the only parties to the conservation decision are “the landowner donor and the charitable

organization that will hold the easement.” Further, “social, economic, and even ecological conditions and priorities will change over time, meaning that some of today’s conservation decisions will appear misguided in the future.”

In Land Conservation, “Forever” May Not Last (2008)

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=88038482>

NPR story on a ranch in Wyoming that was placed under conservation easement. New owners argued that energy companies accessing their mineral rights made the land worthless for farming. The easement was rescinded and the new owners subdivided part of the ranch for a new home site.

The Problem with Easements (2000)

http://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/topic/excellence_in_philanthropy/the_problem_with_easements

“Another way to make the same point is that acres protected by ownership are clearly assets, while those protected by easements come with liabilities attached—in the form of the aforementioned legal challenges.”

Conservation Easements: A Critical Commentary (2000)

http://www.citizenreviewonline.org/feb_2002/conservation_easements_a_critical_commentary.htm

Lengthy, critical assessment of conservation easements from a private property rights perspective, including, “...long-term future impacts on forestry are negative and may foreclose future forestry.”

Landowners, while pleased with agricultural easements, suggest improvements (2002)

<http://californiaagriculture.ucanr.org/landingpage.cfm?article=ca.v056n01p21&fulltext=yes>

When asked about the effectiveness and impact of the program's public goals such as slowing urbanization and preserving farmland, the great majority (83%) of landowners stated that the programs were successful. However, they expressed some common reservations and concerns about the easement programs.

Williamson Act Basics

California Department of Conservation – The Land Conservation Act

<http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/lca>

Williamson Act Additional Reading

Analysis Reveals Potential Rangeland Impacts if Williamson Act Eliminated (2012)

<http://californiaagriculture.ucanr.org/landingpage.cfm?article=ca.v066n04p131&fulltext=yes>

Bill on Williamson Act Signed Into Law (2015)

<http://www.krctrv.com/north-coast-news/news/bill-on-williamson-act-signed-into-law/35764642>

California Land Conservation Act Still Keeps Millions of Acres in Agricultural Use (2015)

<http://www.conservation.ca.gov/index/news/Documents/2015-12%20Williamson%20Act%20status%20report.pdf>

The Land – Unprotected? Williamson Act has been Defunded (2014)

http://www.appeal-democrat.com/news/the-land-unprotected-williamson-act-has-been-defunded/article_ff5751f8-80e4-11e3-b1c4-0019bb30f31a.html

The Williamson Act: Past, Present, Future? A Legislative Oversight Hearing (2010)

http://www.calafco.org/docs/Williamson_Act-Past_Present_Future.pdf