

Bear Yuba Land Trust awarded funds for forest health plan in Yuba River watershed

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Bear Yuba Land Trust will receive \$74,550 in grant funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Governing Board to complete a timber management plan on approximately 2,000 acres of mixed conifer forest in the North and Middle Yuba River watersheds.

The grant-funded Non-Industrial Timber Management Plan will guide BYLT's future management actions within forests of Rice's Crossing Preserve, a 2,706 acre property owned by BYLT located along a six-mile span of the river corridor.

For years, Sierra Nevada Conservancy has served as a primary contributor to research and land management planning projects on BYLT Preserves.

"BYLT is very excited to work with SNC on another project. Having the opportunity to study wildlife, plants and ecosystem functions on the lands we conserve is essential to upholding our goals of protecting critical wildlife habitats and restoring ecosystems to the best of our ability based on scientific data we collect," said Director of Land Stewardship Erin Tarr.

In 1989, the state legislature created a new option in the Forest Practices Act for "non-industrial" landowners – private landowners and organizations without a wood processing facility known as the Non-Industrial Timber Management Plan. It is designed to promote long-term management and planning on forest ownerships of 2,500 acres or less.

BYLT's plan for Rice's Crossing will guide a wide variety of forest management methods including: areas that would benefit from understory prescribed fire, critical wildlife habitat corridors that should remain untouched and areas that could benefit from sustainable harvesting. All funds BYLT receives from timber harvests will be applied back to Rice's Crossing Preserve for stewardship of the land.

SNC approved a total of \$3.1 million in grants for ten projects throughout California that will: decrease wildfire risk, lessen tree mortality and restore forest and watershed health in the Sierra Nevada region. Funding for these projects comes from Proposition 1, The Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014. This is the fifth set of awards made under SNC's Proposition 1 grant program.

"Sierra forests are the source of more than sixty percent of California's developed water supply, but these forests have experienced rapid and significant change. The grants that were awarded by our board are great examples of the kind of work we need to be encouraging across the entire Sierra to protect the source of California's water," said Jim Branham, executive officer for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy.

The NTMP will allow BYLT to manage their land in a way that ensures ecosystems continue to add value to the wildlife habitat being preserved in the region. Protecting the Yuba River from increased sedimentation resulting from severe wildfires is an underlying objective of improving forest health.

Rice's Crossing Preserve spans the east and west sides of the North and Middle Yuba River below Bullard's Bar Dam. The steepness of the river canyon in this region allows limited public access and provides a vast area of wilderness that acts as a refuge for wildlife. However, the steep terrain also impedes future fire suppression efforts and increases the chance of a rapidly expanding fire that could negatively impact the river's riparian areas, a situation that creates a critical need for a management plan.

Community support for the project comes from: Yuba County Water Agency, CalFire, Bureau of Land Management, Army Corps of Engineers, South Yuba River Citizens League and Sierra Streams Institute.

In August, BYLT received \$312,000 in grant funding to develop multi-use, public recreation amenities for Rice's Crossing Preserve, work that is set to commence in 2017.

BYLT promotes land conservation in the watersheds of the Bear and Yuba Rivers, from the western crest of the Sierra Nevada range to lower elevation oak woodlands. Since 1991, more than 11,000 acres in the region have been protected from development and will be stewarded by BYLT in perpetuity.