

STATE OF CALIFORNIA SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Watershed Improvement Grant Program

SNC ID Number: 1069

Applicant: The Nature Conservancy

Project Title: Independence Lake Forest Health & Resiliency

Project Category: Two

SNC Subregion: North Central

County(ies): Sierra, Nevada

Funding Amount Requested: \$99,688

Funding Amount Recommended: \$99,688

Total Project Cost: \$99,688

Final Score: 86.25

PROJECT SCOPE / DESCRIPTION

Independence Lake Forest Health & Resiliency is a Category 2 project on 1,656 acres of The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) 2,300-acre Independence Lake Preserve in Sierra and Nevada counties. The Preserve is surrounded by the Tahoe National Forest and is within the Little Truckee River watershed, approximately 17 miles north of Truckee and approximately 12 miles south of Sierraville. Downstream beneficiaries include Pyramid Lake fisheries and water users in Reno and Sparks, Nevada.

Planning for treatments on 600 acres in the Independence Preserve has already resulted in fuel reduction and prescribed fire on the landscape. This project is the next step which includes development of a Timber Harvest Plan, using the GTR-220 forest prescription methodology, and a Prescribed Fire Burn Plan on the remaining 1,656 acres. Future implementation activities will result in an improved forest structure so that when wildfires do occur, flame lengths are more likely to remain close to the ground and thus mimic the historic fire regime in the Sierra Nevada.

SNC has contributed funding to complete the acquisition of the Independence Lake Preserve. In subsequent years the TNC has implemented thinning/fuel reduction and prescribed burning on 600 acres of the Preserve. The lake is part of a system of headwater lakes and meadows that contribute to the Truckee and Little Truckee river system. Neighboring landowners include other preserves: several of which are SNC funded acquisitions and conservation easements. These properties are all undergoing active forest and water quality and quantity management treatments. Tahoe National

Forest, another neighbor, has been a collaborative partner throughout most of the healthy forest partnership endeavors that are occurring in the Tahoe Central Sierra Initiative (TCSI) area.

The Nature Conservancy is a non-profit organization with a mission of protecting and enhancing landscapes for habitat and people, with a long history of forest, watershed, and habitat management projects throughout the Sierra Nevada. TNC has been a valuable partner for the SNC, both as a forest and watershed steward in upper Sierra watersheds and as a partner in the SNC’s WIP and TCSI programs.

This project is part of a broader effort to enhance fire resiliency and restoration of headwater forests in the Truckee River watershed which is designated as a Treasured Landscape in the Sierra Nevada. TNC is working with many stakeholders in the watershed to advance forest restoration that benefits downstream water users and CA recreationists. Partners in this broader effort have funded up to \$1 million in projects on the Preserve. Contributors include the U.S. Forest Service (Tahoe National Forest and Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest), California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Truckee Meadows Water Authority, Wildlife Conservation Board, The National Forest Foundation, Truckee River Watershed Council, and many others.

Independence Lake supports one of only two remaining lake populations of endemic Lahontan cutthroat trout and is one of the few lakes in the Sierra Nevada to retain all native fish species. The forest lands surrounding the lake are rich in aspen stands, riparian habitat, wet meadows, and mixed conifer stands. The Preserve is a valued recreation destination for the public. This project will further landscape level fuel treatments within the watershed, will reduce wildfire risk throughout crowded forests surrounding the lake, and will reduce chances of subsequent post-fire erosion to this important water supply for downstream users.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

PROJECT TASKS / DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
Development of the Timber Harvest Plan (THP) and Prescribed Fire Burn Plan	April – November 2019
Tahoe National Forest review of Burn Plan & approval by TNC’s Director of Fire Management	January 2020
CAL FIRE review of THP	March 2020
Completed Timber Harvest Plan and Prescribed Burn Plan	June 2020
SNC Progress Reports	Every 6 months
SNC Final Report	July 2020
Estimated Project Completion Date	July 2020

PROJECT COSTS

BUDGET CATEGORIES	SNC FUNDING
Project Costs:	
Project Management	\$13,685
Timber Harvest Plan contract	\$55,000
Prescribed Fire Burn Plan	\$15,000
GIS Support	\$3,000
Administrative:	
Administrative Costs	\$13,002
TOTAL:	\$99,688

PROJECT LETTERS OF SUPPORT / OPPOSITION

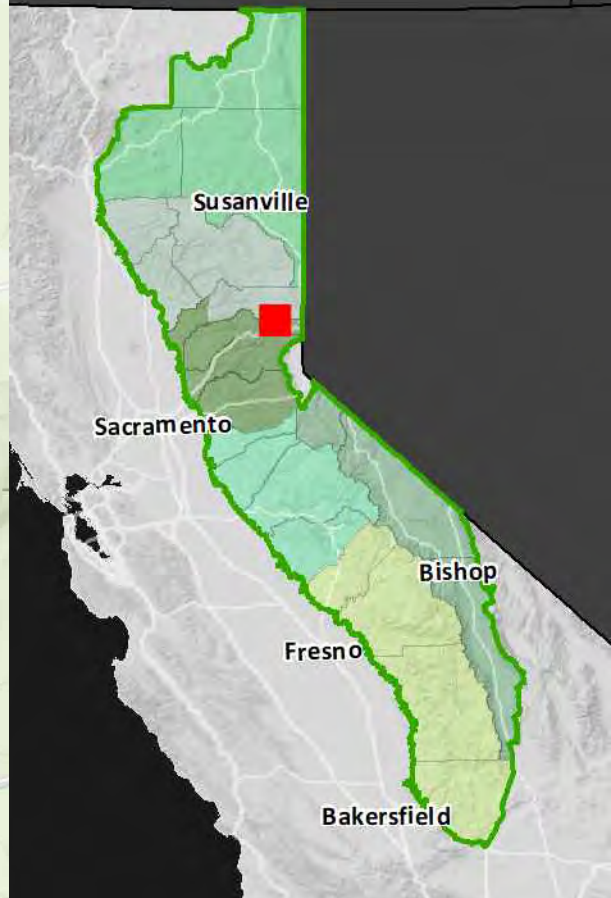
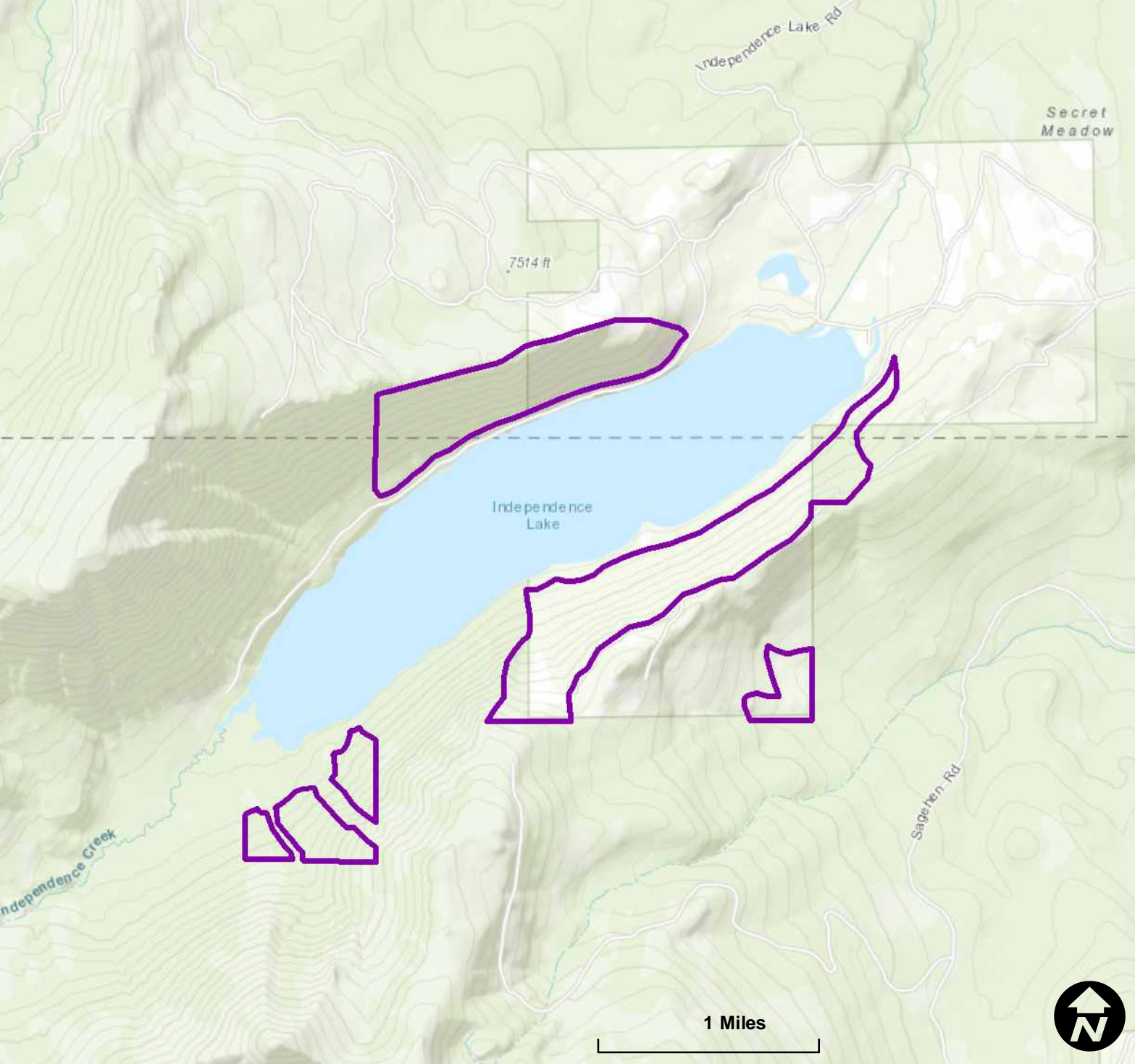
SUPPORT:

- Truckee Meadows Water Authority
- Truckee River Watershed Council
- UC Berkeley-Sagehen Creek Field Research Station
- Tahoe National Forest-Sierraville District
- CA Department of Fish and Wildlife, North Central Region

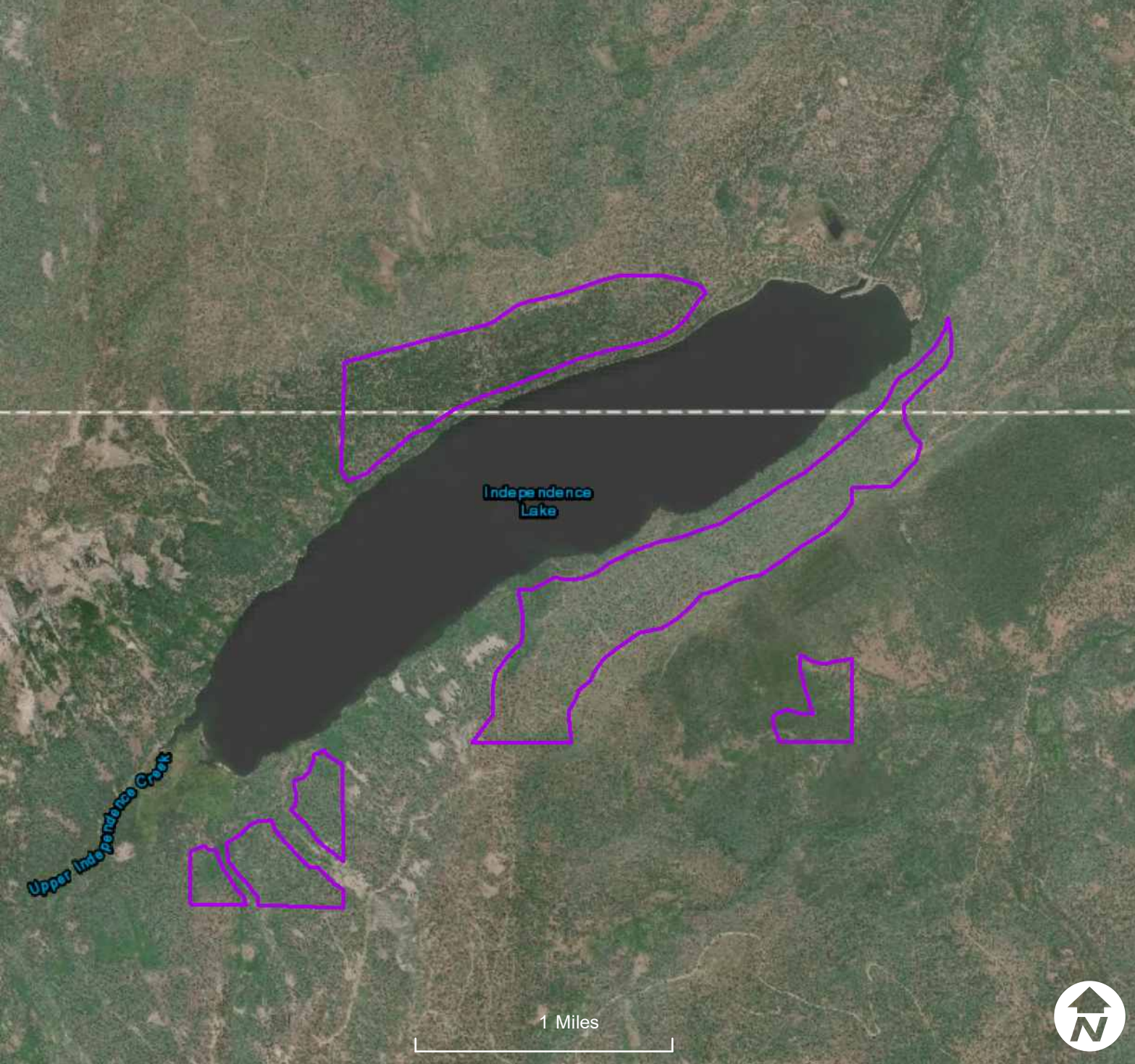
PROJECT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

There are four Performance Measures common to all grants. In addition, grantees are required to identify one to three project specific Performance Measures in their application. Please note, Performance Measures listed here represent those proposed by applicants and may be modified before the grant agreement is executed.

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



- Project Location
- Project Boundary
- North Subregion
- North Central Subregion
- Central Subregion
- East Subregion
- South Central Subregion
- South Subregion



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CEQA Documentation

SNC #: 1069

Project Title: Independence Lake Forest Health and Resiliency

Applicant: The Nature Conservancy

CEQA:

The project is Statutorily Exempt under Section 15262. Feasibility and Planning Studies and Categorically Exempt under Class 6 Section 15306. Information Collection.

- **Notice of Exemption:** See Below

Notice of Exemption

Form D

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

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

(Address)

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

Project Title: Independence Lake Forest Health & Resiliency (SNC #1069)

Project Location - Specific:

The project location is The Nature Conservancy's Independence Lake Preserve (Preserve) in Sierra and Nevada Counties. The Preserve covers 2,300 acres and is surrounded by the Tahoe National Forest. The Preserve is approximately 17 miles north of Truckee and 12 miles south of Sierraville.

Project Location – City: northeast of Truckee Project Location – County: Nevada and Sierra Counties

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy would provide funding in the amount of \$99,688 to The Nature Conservancy to continue planning for a forest restoration and fire resiliency project at its Independence Lake Preserve in Sierra County and Nevada County. The proposed project will involve completing the necessary planning for mechanical thinning and prescribed burning of approximately 1,659 acres of mixed conifer forest on the Preserve. The planning work would include preparation of a Timber Harvest Plan, Prescribed Fire Burn Plan, GIS mapping, and other supporting needs.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: The Nature Conservancy

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: Section 15306, "Information Collection"
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: Section 15262, "Feasibility and Planning Studies"

Reasons why project is exempt:

This is a planning project involving the preparation of environmental compliance documents; it does not involve physical alterations to the environment. Specific actions include preparation of a Timber Harvest Plan, Prescribed Fire Burn Plan, GIS mapping, and other supporting needs associated with planning for a forest restoration and fire resiliency project. Forest management actions have not been approved, and the completion of these environmental documents will not have a legally binding effect on future activities.

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

If filed by applicant:

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

Signature: _____ Date: _____ Title: _____

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

Revised 2005