

# STATE OF CALIFORNIA SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY

*Sierra Nevada Conservancy Watershed Improvement Grant Program*

**SNC ID Number:** 1088

**Applicant:** USDA Forest Service, Plumas National Forest

**Project Title:** Lakes Basin

**Project Category:** One

**SNC Subregion:** North Central

**County(ies):** Plumas, Sierra

**Funding Amount Requested:** \$995,995

**Funding Amount Recommended:** \$995,995

**Total Project Cost:** \$1,473,563

**Final Score:** 93.25

## **PROJECT SCOPE / DESCRIPTION**

Located within the Sierra Buttes Recreation Area, the Lakes Basin Project completes fuel reduction and forest health treatments on 1,030 acres of sensitive riparian and upland forest habitat spanning Plumas and Sierra counties within the Frazier Creek/Middle Fork of the Feather River watershed. Nearby CA communities include Johnsville, Graeagle, Mohawk, Blairsden, and Clio. The project is located entirely on public lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service, Plumas National Forest, and has a strong wildland urban interface component with many acres directly adjacent to private property, trails, campgrounds, and recreation lodges and facilities.

Fuel reduction activities will take place in and around riparian zones and recreation infrastructure within the Lakes Basin, as well as throughout upper watershed reaches. Treatments include: hand thinning and hand piling of conifers and brush less than 11 inches DBH (diameter at breast height) on 370.6 acres; hand thinning and hand piling of conifers and brush less than 11 inches DBH with Sierra Nevada Yellow Legged Frog mitigations on 265.7 acres; hand thinning and grapple piling of conifers and brush less than 11 inches DBH on 253.9 acres; and grapple piling of brush and existing dead and downed fuels on 139.6 acres. This watershed, lying within the community at-risk boundary of Graeagle and the Mohawk Valley, is designated as a High Hazard Zone by CAL FIRE. The Lakes Basin project is consistent with the Plumas County Community Wildfire Protection Plan and the Feather River Integrated Regional Watershed Management Plan which supports the California Water Action Plan.

The Project connects to work being accomplished through stewardship timber sales and prescribed fire projects, to complete a comprehensive 5,463 acre treated area in the Lakes Basin planning unit. The Lakes Basin project provides connectivity on a larger landscape scale to include eight past, current, and future projects on National Forest System Lands. Additionally, the Graeagle Fire Protection District Firewise Community and the Plumas County Fire Safe Council have supported fuel reduction on private lands throughout the Graeagle, Blairsden, and Mohawk Valley communities. Together, these projects provide landscape level connectivity throughout multiple tributary watersheds that all feed into the headwaters of the upper Basin of the Middle Fork of the Feather River. The SNC has funded one Mohawk Valley project and several acquisition and healthy forest projects on the Sierra County side of the Lakes Basin Recreation Area.

The Plumas National Forest has one of the largest vegetation and fuels management programs in Region 5 with annual fuels accomplishments ranging between 9,000 to 12,000 acres per year. The PNF has the permanent staff to prepare and administer the necessary collection agreements, service contracts, burn plans, and air quality permits to implement the contracts. The forest has the capacity to perform burning on-time as needed, as well as to leverage outside fire staff/resources to accomplish work. The PNF is actively completing four SNC funded projects on public lands.

The Plumas National Forest has collaborated on this project with members of the Feather River Stewardship Coalition, the Plumas Fire Safe Council, local Firewise Communities, various private recreation/landowner stakeholders, and other non-governmental associations. In-kind contributions by the PNF consist of up to \$477,568.00 for project management, administration, materials and supplies; all reporting and invoicing, monitoring, and pile burning.

This high elevation watershed, ranging from about 5,000 to 6,800 feet, is responsible for capturing a large proportion of the State’s water supply. Gray Eagle Creek and Frazier Creek largely carry the water from the treatment areas to join with the Middle Fork of the Feather River. Downstream benefits of the Middle Fork include a stretch designated as Wild and Scenic River, representing one of the original six designations from 1968. Other downstream benefits include domestic and agricultural water supply to water users in the Sacramento Valley and generation of hydroelectric power at the Oroville dam.

### **PROJECT SCHEDULE**

<b>PROJECT TASKS / DELIVERABLES</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>
Forest treatments on 1,030 acres (hand thinning, grappling, and piling)	Spring 2020 – Winter 2021/22
SNC Progress Reports	Every 6 months
SNC Final Report	January 1, 2022
<b>Estimated Project Completion Date</b>	<b>January 1, 2022</b>

**PROJECT COSTS**

<b>BUDGET CATEGORIES</b>	<b>SNC FUNDING</b>
<b>Project Costs:</b>	
Project Implementation: Contracts	\$ 995,995
<b>Administrative:</b>	
Administrative Costs	\$0
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$ 995,995</b>

**PROJECT LETTERS OF SUPPORT / OPPOSITION**

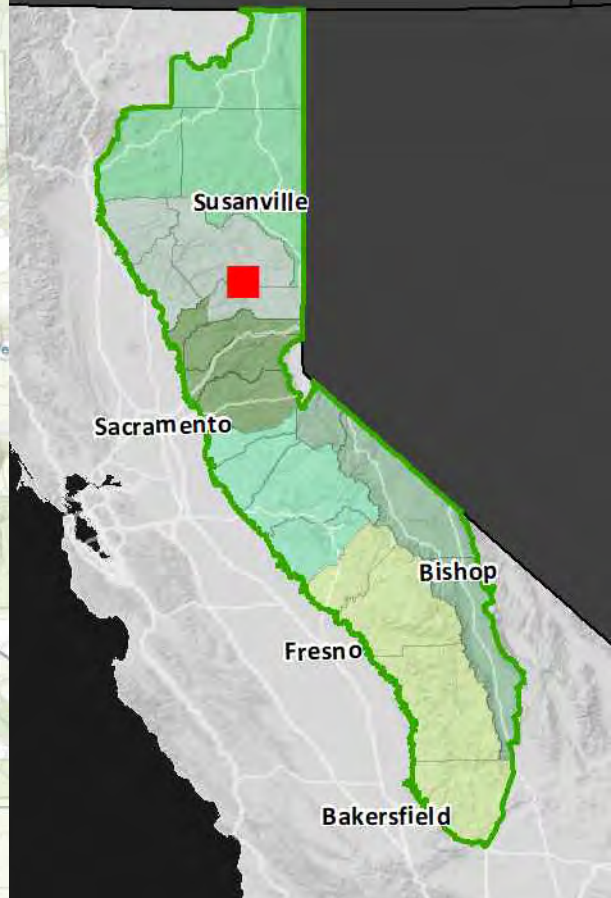
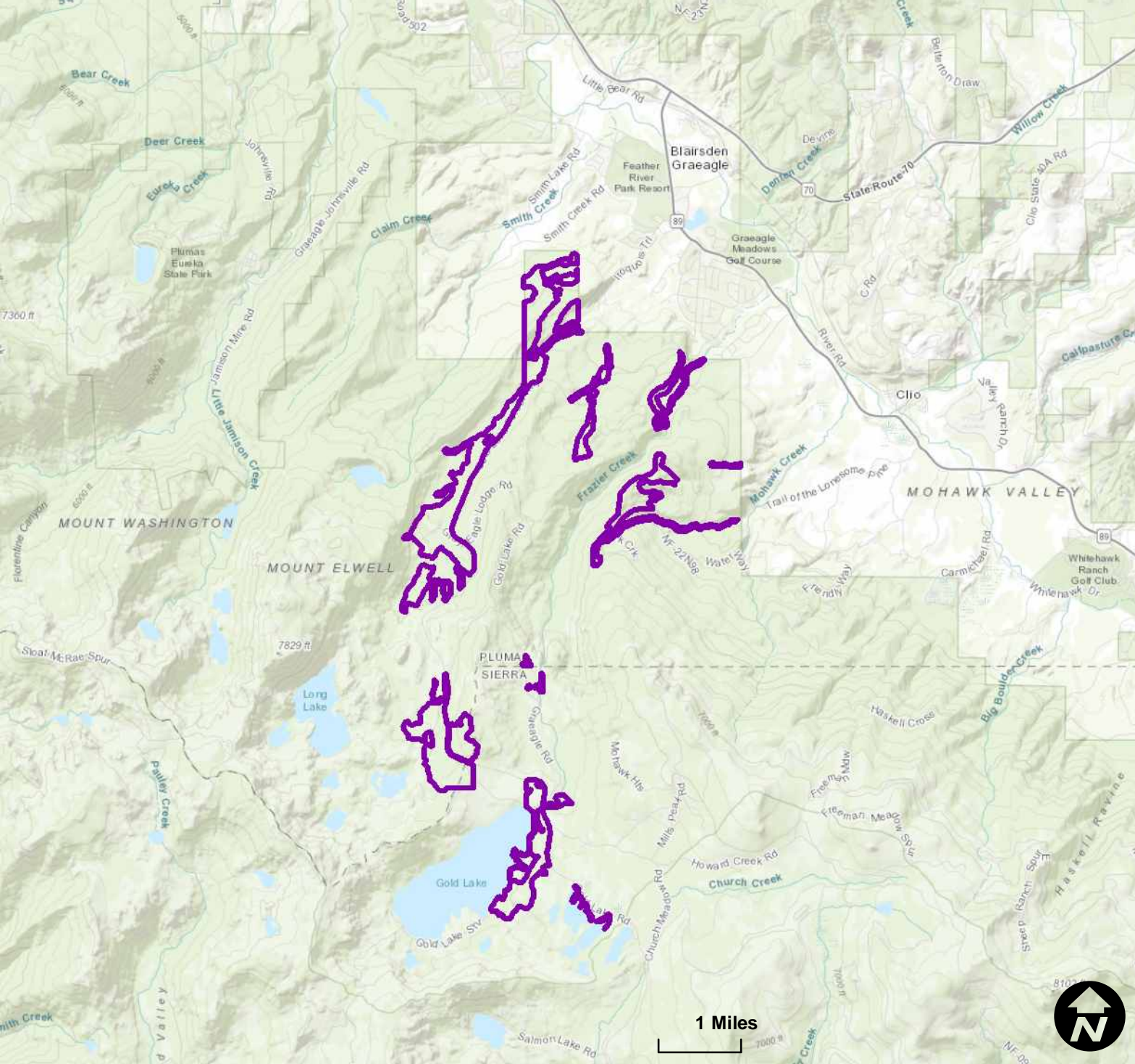
**SUPPORT:**









- Board of Supervisors, Plumas County
- Upper Feather River Integrated Management Group
- Plumas County Fire Safe Council
- Feather River Stewardship Coalition
- Graeagle Fire Protection District Firewise Community

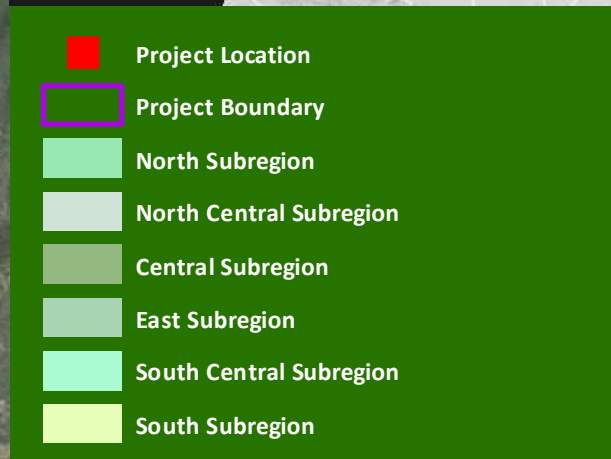
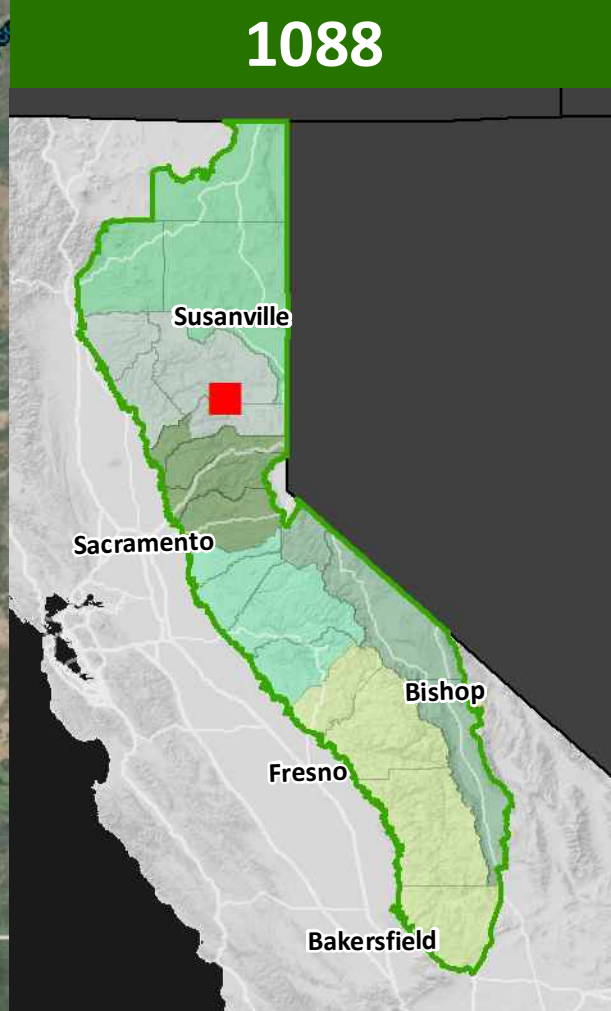
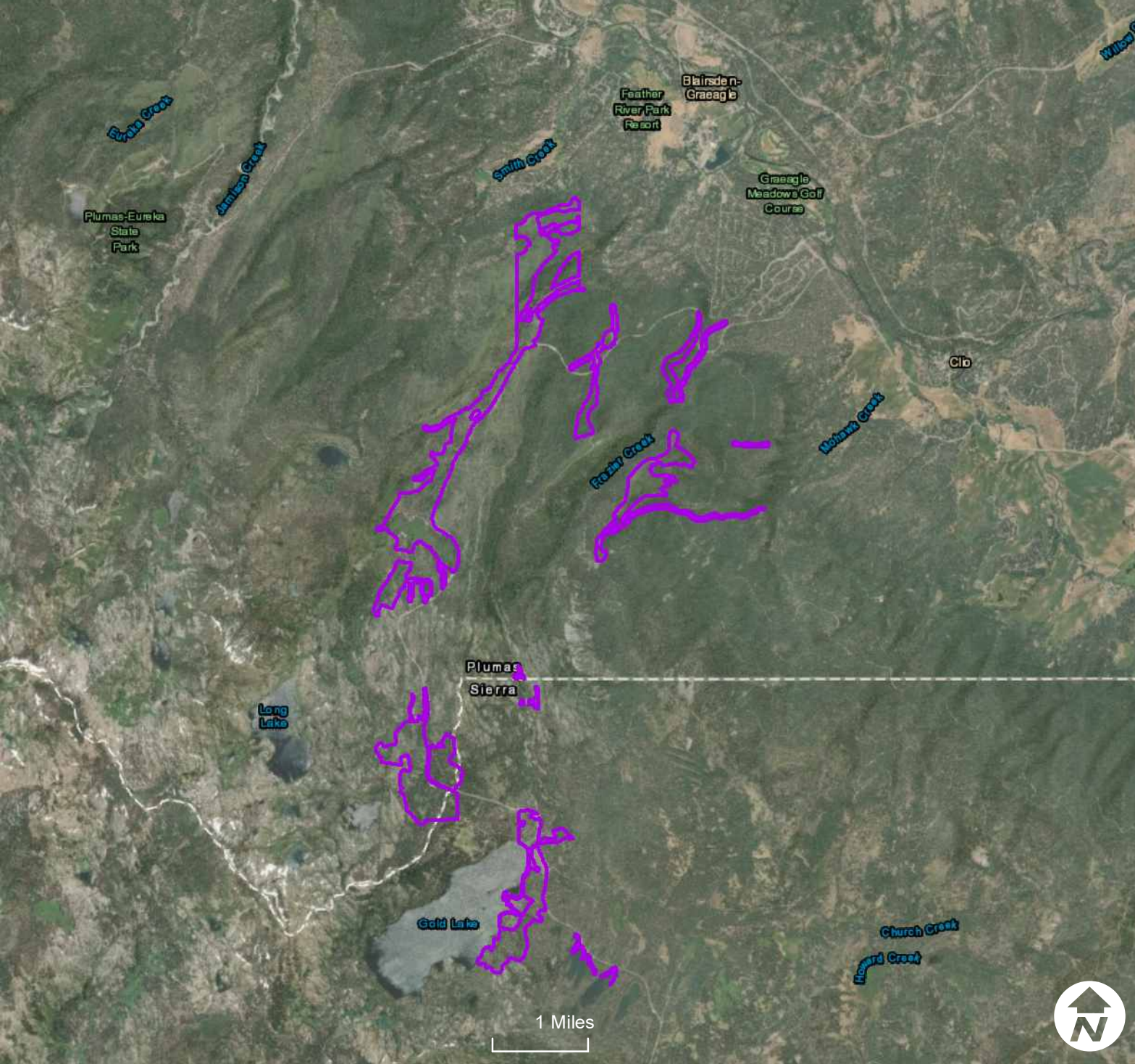
**PROJECT PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

*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.*

- Acres of Land Improved or Restored



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



## **CEQA Documentation**

**SNC #:** 1088

**Project Title:** Lakes Basin

**Applicant:** USDA Forest Service, Plumas National Forest

**CEQA:**

The project is Exempt under Public Resources Code Section 4799.05 for projects to reduce the risk of high-severity wildfire that have been reviewed under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, under specified circumstances.

- **Notice of Exemption:** See Below

# Notice of Exemption

**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 Plumas

520 Main Street, Room 102

Quincy, CA 95971

Sierra

100 Courthouse Square, Room 11

Downieville, CA 95936

**Project Title:** Lakes Basin (SNC #1088)

**Project Applicant:** Plumas National Forest

**Project Location – Specific:**

Treatments centered at approximately 39°43'11.49"N and 120°39'16.98"W

**Project Location - City:** Johnsville, CA

**Project Location - County:** Plumas and Sierra

**Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:**

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy would provide \$995,995 in funding for forest thinning and fuel reduction treatments (hand thinning and hand and/or grapple piling) on 1,030 acres of federal land within the Plumas National Forest. The treatments would enhance forest health, promote ecosystem resiliency in the event of wildfire, and improve watershed condition and provide water supply protection in the Lakes Basin Recreation Area. The project would geographically connect to a larger 5,463-acre area undergoing stewardship timber sales and prescribed fire projects to provide a comprehensive forest health strategy in the area.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** Sierra Nevada Conservancy

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Plumas National Forest

**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: Public Resources Code Section 4799.05(d)(1)

**Reasons why project is exempt:**

CEQA does not apply to prescribed fire, thinning, or fuel reduction projects undertaken on federal lands to reduce the risk of high-severity wildfire that have been reviewed under the NEPA if the primary role of a state or local agency is providing funding or staffing for those projects. The Sierra Nevada Conservancy would provide funding for fuel reduction on 1,030 acres of federal land within the Plumas National Forest. The proposed activities were reviewed in their entirety under NEPA in the Lakes Basin Project Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The final Decision Notice for the EA/FONSI was signed by the Plumas National Forest on September 27, 2018.

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 Applicant  Signed by Lead Agency:

Date received for filing at OPR: \_\_\_\_\_