

# STATE OF CALIFORNIA SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY

*Sierra Nevada Conservancy Watershed Improvement Grant Program*

**SNC ID Number:** 1089

**Applicant:** Placer County

**Project Title:** French Meadows Forest Restoration – Biomass Project

**Project Category:** One

**SNC Subregion:** Central

**County(ies):** Placer

**Funding Amount Requested:** \$1,000,000

**Funding Amount Recommended:** \$1,000,000

**Total Project Cost:** \$1,489,225

**Final Score:** 86.75

## **PROJECT SCOPE / DESCRIPTION**

The French Meadows Forest Restoration – Biomass Project is in Placer County on the Tahoe National Forest in the upper watershed of the American River around and above French Meadows Reservoir. The project area is remote, at around 5,000' elevation, on the west slope of the Sierra due west of Lake Tahoe. Placer County will manage the Biomass Project which will focus on removal of biomass produced by forest thinning activities on 3,622 acres of the French Meadows project. In addition, 410 acres will be masticated to reduce brush competition to release trees that were planted for restoration after the 2001 Star Fire.

The French Meadows Forest Restoration Project is a major collaborative effort for large-scale restoration of the French Meadows Reservoir watershed on the Tahoe National Forest. Funding to implement the project is committed from many different sources, including a California Climate Investments (CCI) grant of \$3.5 million from CAL FIRE that was secured through the Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative (TCSI). Thinning work funded by the CCI grant and other funding sources will produce a large amount of biomass that needs to be removed from the forest. This grant will pay for removal of the thinned material from forest floor to landing sites, grinding of residual material to chips, and hauling the biomass for use in producing bioenergy. It is estimated that 8,070 Bone Dry Tons will be removed and hauled. This grant will also fund mastication of brush on 410 acres that is crowding out conifer reforestation following the Star Fire.

Adjacent and integral to the French Meadows project, the American Headwaters project is a 10,000-acre acquisition by the American River Conservancy (with funding from multiple partners) which is also being restored to a healthy-forest condition. Restoration work is currently underway through multiple funders, including a recently completed grant for \$500,000 from SNC for forest thinning.

Placer County is one of the integral partners on the French Meadows Project and serves as Lead Agency for CEQA on the project. SNC has a long, successful history of working with Placer County on numerous Proposition 84 projects, including fuels projects at Hidden Falls Regional Park and Squaw Valley.

French Meadows Project partners include Placer County, Placer County Water Agency, The Nature Conservancy, Tahoe National Forest, and SNC. This partnership has secured funding of about \$8 million: \$3.6 million through the CAL FIRE CCI grant, \$1.7 million from the Forest Service, \$352,000 from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, \$1 million from Placer County/PCWA, \$500,000 from The Nature Conservancy, plus other private and non-profit investments. SNC also provided \$100,000 of Proposition 84 funds towards completing the NEPA/CEQA.

This project strongly supports Propositions 1 and 68 by targeting restoration work to protect PCWA’s major water storage infrastructure – French Meadows Reservoir – from impacts of a potential wildfire on forest that is heavily overgrown. The restoration effort will also help protect heavily used recreation amenities and campgrounds. The French Meadows project is a model example of how to increase pace and scale of landscape-level forest restoration through collaboration.

**PROJECT SCHEDULE**

<b>PROJECT TASKS / DELIVERABLES</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>
Project Management	June 2019 – December 2021
Biomass Activities	June 2019 – Nov. 15, 2021
SNC Progress Reports	Every 6 months
SNC Final Report	December 2021
<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 Management	\$75,000
Biomass Activities (transport material to landing sites, grinding, hauling to bioenergy facility, road fees)	\$740,709
Mastication for Conifer Release	\$184,291
<b>Administrative:</b>	
Administrative Costs	\$0
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$1,000,000</b>

## PROJECT LETTERS OF SUPPORT / OPPOSITION

### **SUPPORT:**

- Placer County Fire Safe Alliance
- American River Conservancy
- Placer County Water Agency
- Greater Auburn Fire Safe Council
- Tahoe National Forest – American River Ranger District
- Placer County Air Pollution Control District
- Sierra Forest Legacy
- The Nature Conservancy

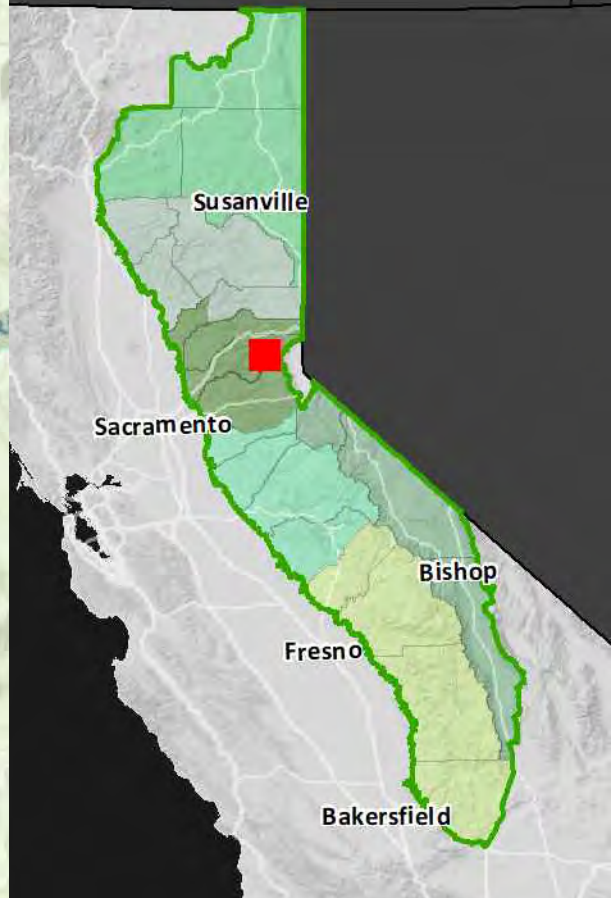
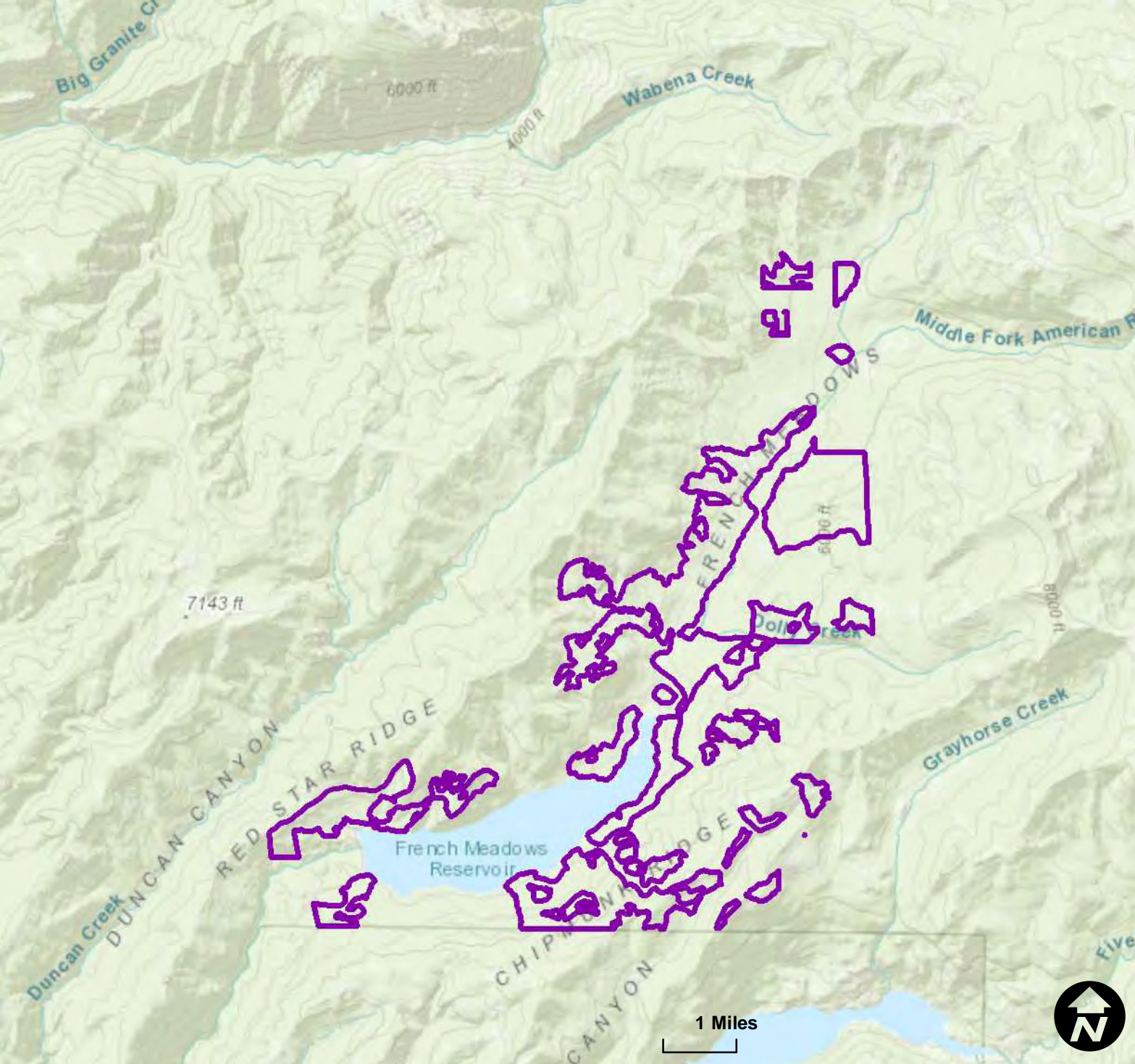
### **OPPOSITION:**









- None

## 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.*

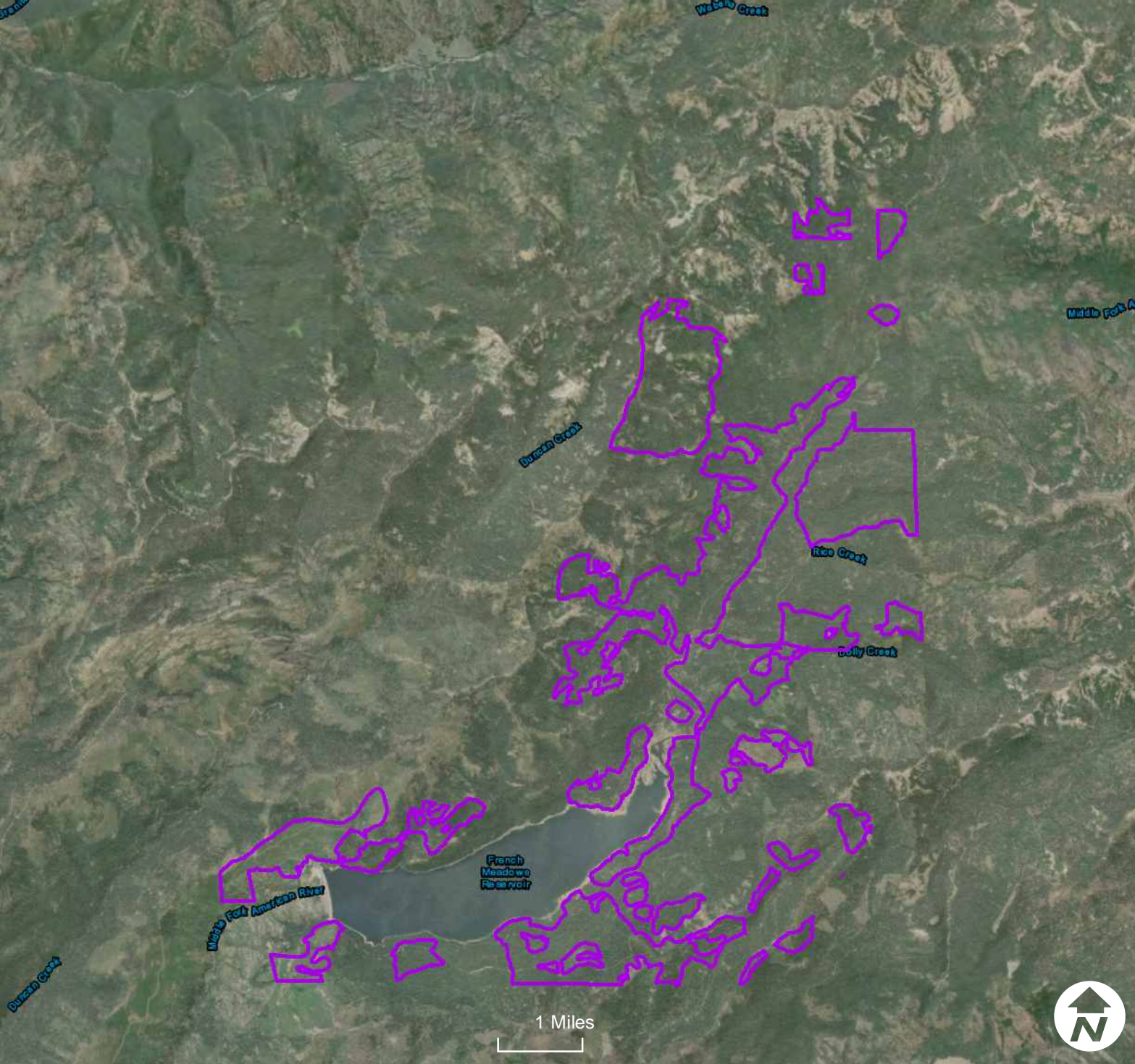
- Acres of Land Improved or Restored
- Tons of Carbon Sequestered or Emissions Avoided











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

# French Meadows Forest Restoration – Biomass Project

## Placer County



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

**French Meadows Forest Restoration – Biomass Project**  
**Placer County**

## **CEQA Documentation**

**SNC #:** 1089

**Project Title:** French Meadows Forest Restoration – Biomass Project

**Applicant:** Placer County

**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 113  
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

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

(Address)

County Clerk / County of Placer

2954 Richardson Drive

Auburn, CA 95603

**Project Title:** French Meadows Forest Restoration – Biomass Project (SNC #1089)

**Project Applicant:** Placer County

**Project Location – Specific:**

Treatments centered at approximately 39° 7'20.46"N and 120°25'1.94"W

**Project Location - City:** Iowa Hill/Forest Hill, CA      **Project Location - County:** Placer

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

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy would provide \$1,000,000 in funding to remove tree limbs and brush from 3,622 acres of land on a portion of the American River headwaters near and adjacent to the French Meadows Reservoir within the Tahoe National Forest. Specific treatments would include both mechanical and hand thinning, and onsite mastication and removal. The project area is untreated forest that has accumulated dense biomass that is susceptible to high intensity wildfire. Through the removal of biomass facilitated by the project, ecological conditions would be restored that would support a more natural fire cycle and protect the area's water supply, wildlife habitat, and soil resources.

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

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Placer County in partnership with the Tahoe 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 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 to conduct fuel reduction activities on 3,622 acres of federal lands within the Tahoe National Forest. The actions to be undertaken by this project were reviewed in their entirety pursuant to NEPA through an Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The Decision Notice and FONSI for the project was signed by the Tahoe National Forest on December 10, 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 Lead Agency

Signed by Applicant

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code.

Reference: Sections 21108, 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

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