

# STATE OF CALIFORNIA SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY

*Sierra Nevada Conservancy Watershed Improvement Grant Program*

**SNC ID Number:** 1099

**Applicant:** Yosemite Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development District

**Project Title:** Blue Rush Site Preparation and Stand Maintenance Project

**Project Category:** One

**SNC Subregion:** South

**County(ies):** Fresno

**Funding Amount Requested:** \$999,960

**Funding Amount Recommended:** \$999,960

**Total Project Cost:** \$1,370,927

**Final Score:** 80

## **PROJECT SCOPE / DESCRIPTION**

The Blue Rush Site Preparation and Stand Maintenance Project is a Category 1 project, located in the Big Creek Watershed in the High Sierra Ranger District of the Sierra National Forest in Fresno County. This landscape has been impacted by unprecedented drought- and insect-induced tree mortality, increasing the risk of high-intensity wildfire. The Blue Rush project will treat 450 acres of fuels within the WUI, downslope of several communities including Shaver Lake, Cressmans, Pineridge, and Dinkey Creek.

The Blue Rush project is located and designed to protect forest resources and public safety. The Sierra National Forest and Contractors will complete at least 450 acres of site preparation and fuels treatments associated with the development of a shaded fuel break, with an option to treat another 150-200 acres if funding allows. Specifically, all dead and dying trees will be removed and live trees will be thinned to a maximum 20-foot spacing. The Blue Rush fuel break aligns with CAL FIRE fuel breaks to provide coordinated protection to upslope and neighboring communities. This work is also a critical early step in preparing a 900-acre District Burn Unit for future (Forest-funded) prescribed burns. Finally, the grantee will conduct outreach activities to educate local stakeholders on the goals and benefits of this work.

The Blue Rush project is located inside the Dinkey Collaborative Forest and Landscape Restoration Program boundary. The Collaborative helped develop the Blue Rush project and has identified its implementation as a priority. Forest health projects associated with the Dinkey Collaborative have been ongoing for almost 10 years. Additionally, the Sierra

National Forest was awarded \$5 million in 2017 through a CAL FIRE GGRF Forest Health grant for forest health projects and hazard tree removal; the work under that grant complements SNC's investment in this watershed and approximately \$370,000 will directly fund Blue Rush Project activities. Finally, the Sierra National Forest is in the process of completing a Forest-wide NEPA analysis for prescribed fire.

The grantee, the Yosemite-Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council (YSRCDC), has a long history of managing SNC grants, often in partnership with the Sierra National Forest. The Council is composed of diverse stakeholders, including representatives of Tribal Governments, Fire Safe Councils, Resource Conservation Districts, Boards of Supervisors, and other non-profit, resource, and community groups. YSRCDC has a long working relationship with the Sierra National Forest and developed this application with the support and input of High Sierra Ranger District staff.

The Blue Rush Project will help protect the Big Creek watershed from catastrophic wildfire events, contributing to increased public safety, the retention of high-value wildlife habitat, and a higher likelihood of sustained Carbon sequestration. These activities, along with complementary work done under the CAL FIRE GGRF grant and the Sierra National Forest Prescribed Fire program, will help protect the upper watershed of the Kings River, which irrigates over 1 million acres of farmland and is used for domestic water supplies, water-based recreation, and hydropower.

### **PROJECT SCHEDULE**

<b>PROJECT TASKS / DELIVERABLES</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>
SNC Progress Reports	Every 6 months
Bond information sign installed	Before Project Completion
Site Preparation and fuels reduction: 450 acres of dead tree felling	June 2019 – October 2022
Mastication and piling of felled materials from task 3 (450 acres)	June 2019 – October 2022
Outreach: 1: Outreach presentation – developed & posted online 2: Two community meetings and/or field trips completed 3: Annual press release	Before Project Completion
Optional additional treatments (dependent on remaining funds) 1: Burning of piles within the 10S14 road area (up to 450 acres) 2: Thinning of live plantations (tree felling on up to 150 acres) 3: Mastication and/or piling of brush in plantations (up to 150 acres)	June 2020 – October 2022
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>	
USFS Project Management	\$285,000
YSR CDC Project Management	\$30,000
Site Prep, Fuels Reduction and Monitoring	\$626,000
Site Prep supplies	\$5,500
Signage	\$500
YSR CDC Outreach	\$14,500
Administration	\$38,460
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$999,960</b>

## PROJECT LETTERS OF SUPPORT / OPPOSITION

### **SUPPORT:**

- Dean Gould, Forest Supervisor
- Nathan Magsig, Fresno County Supervisor
- Mark Johnson, CAL FIRE Fresno-Kings Unit Chief
- Dinkey Collaborative Steering Committee (including Kent Duysen, Sierra Forest Products; Melinda Van Bossuyt, Resident; Chip Ashley, Resident; John Heywood, Sierra Resource Conservation District)
- Pete Lassotovitch, Sierra Resource Conservation District President
- Bobby Kamansky, Southern Sierra Regional Water Management Group Coordinator

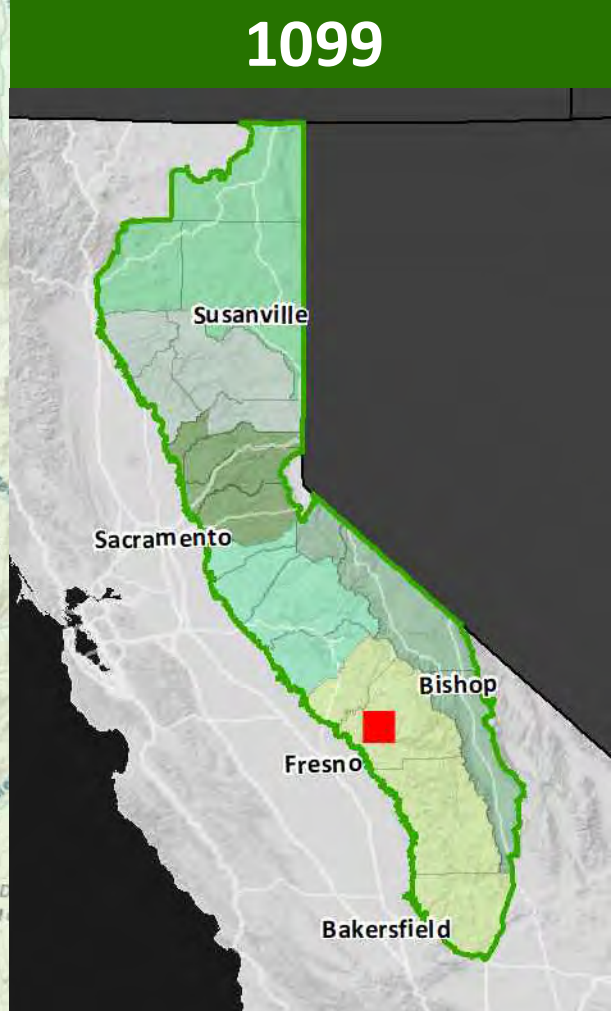
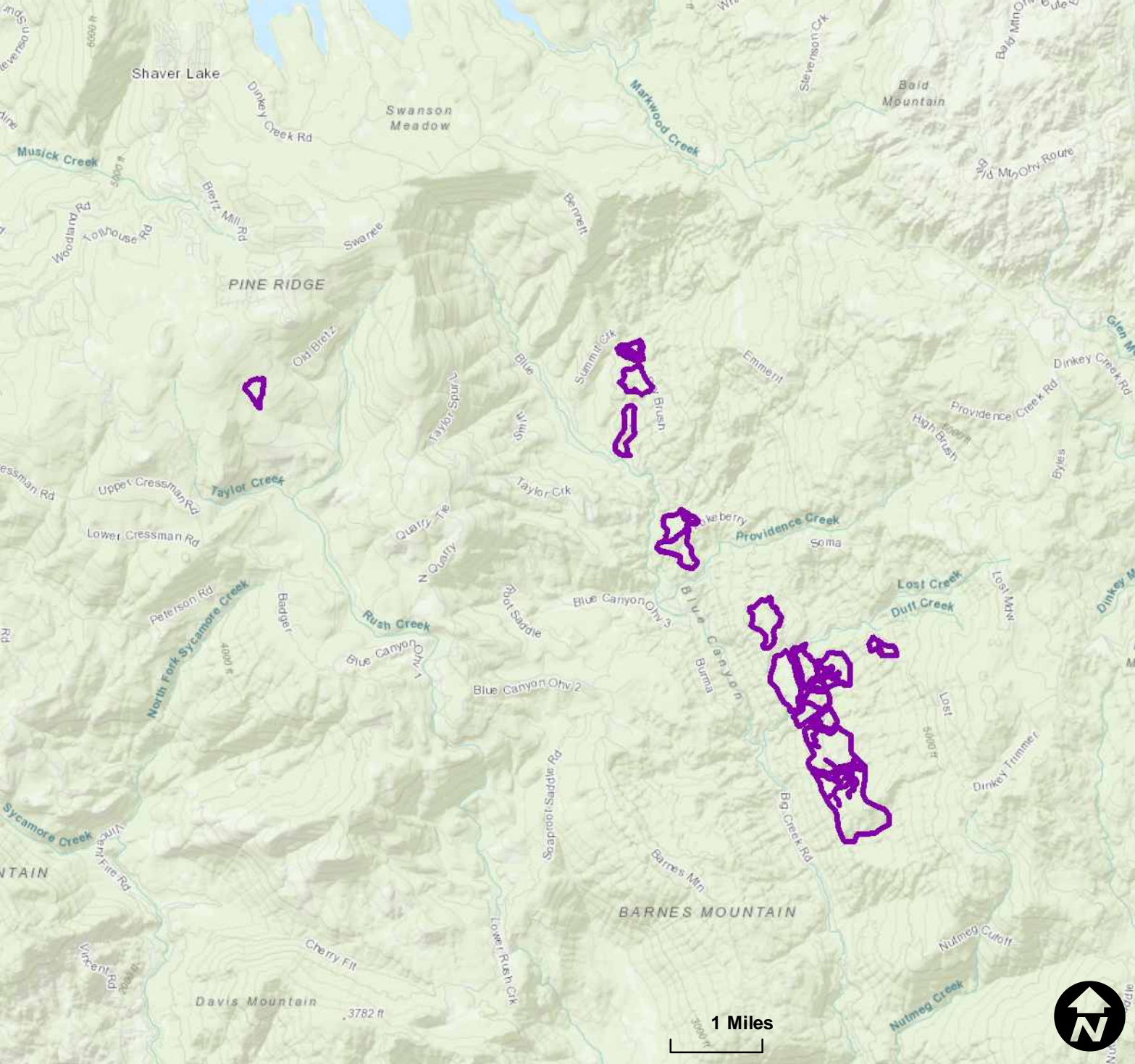
### **OPPOSITION:**









- N/A

## PROJECT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

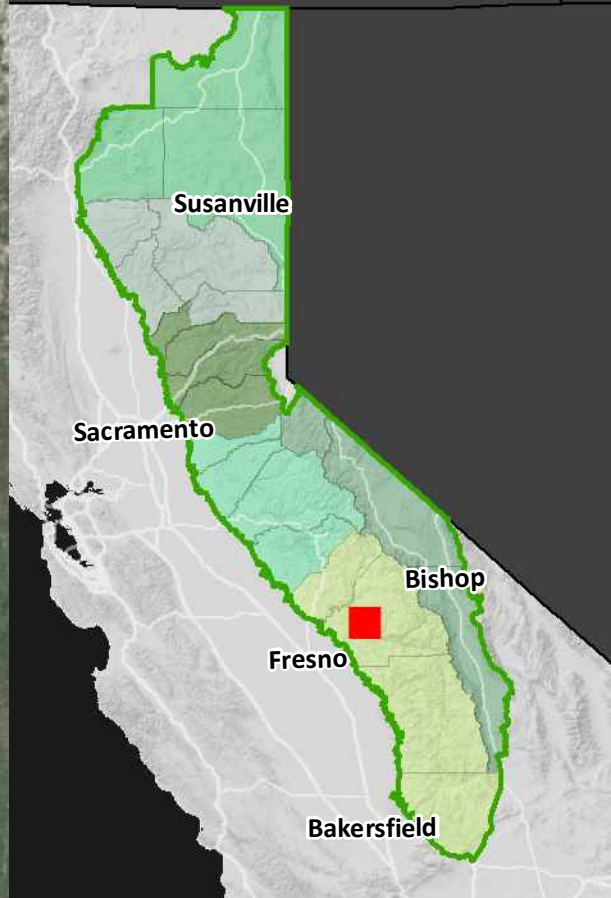
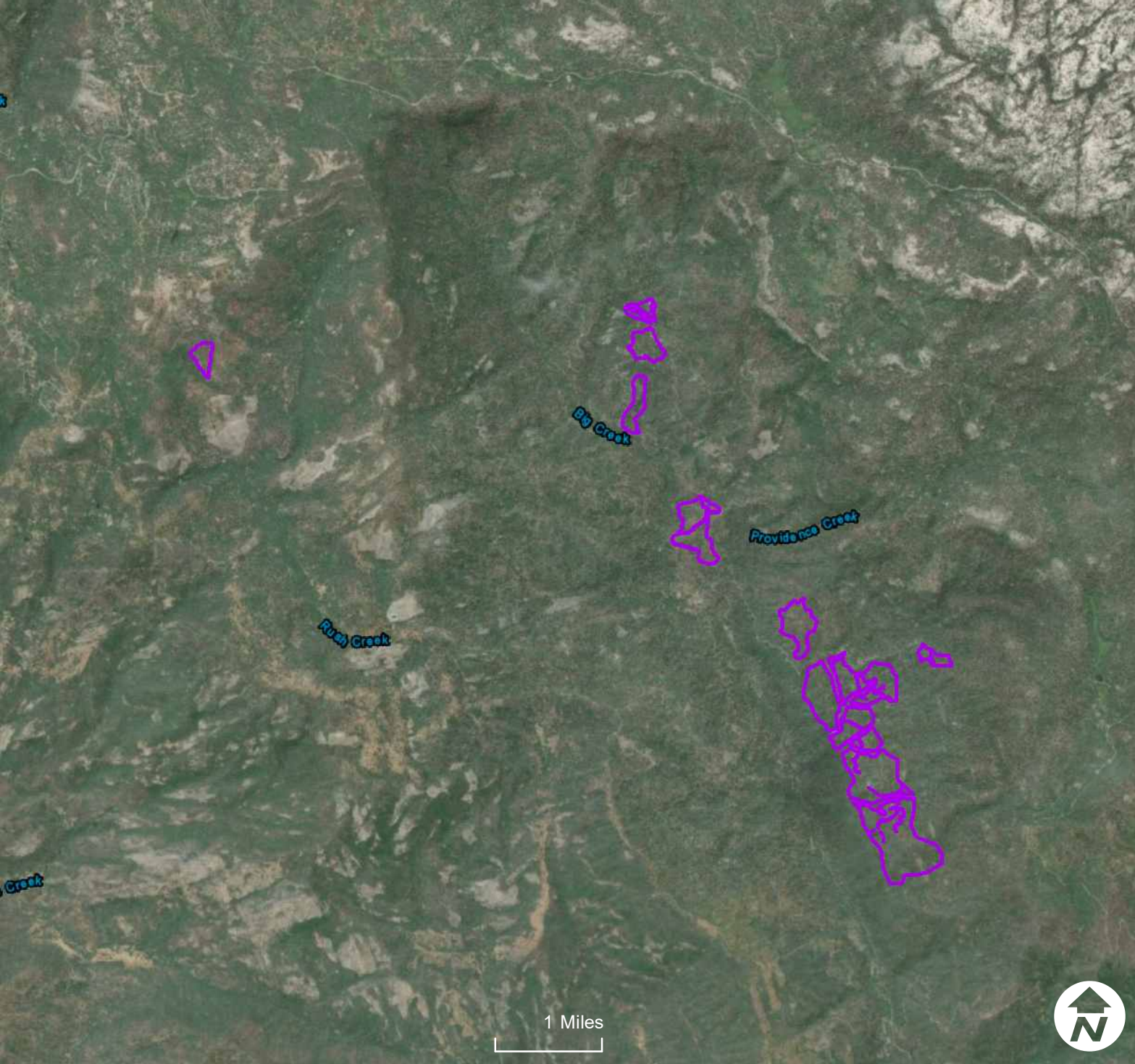
*There are four Performance Measures common to all grants. In addition, grantees are required to identify one to three project specific Performance Measures in their application. Please note, Performance Measures listed here represent those proposed by applicants and may be modified before the grant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

**Blue Rush Forest Restoration Project**  
**Yosemite/Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council**



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

## **CEQA Documentation**

**SNC #:** 1099

**Project Title:** Blue Rush Forest Restoration Project

**Applicant:** Yosemite/Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council

**CEQA:**

The project is Categorical Exempt under Class 4 Section 15304, Minor Alterations to Land.

- **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 Fresno

2220 Tulare Street, First Floor

Fresno, CA 93721

**Project Title:** Blue Rush Forest Restoration Project

**Project Location – Specific:**

The project is centered at approximately 37°01'5.09"N and 119°12'54.70"W

**Project Location - City:** Shaver Lake, CA

**Project Location - County:** Fresno

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

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy would provide \$999,960 in funding to the Yosemite/Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council for forest fuel reduction treatments on 450 acres of federal lands within the Sierra National Forest. If funding allows, the project would also include fuels treatments on an additional 200 acres, and associated revegetation, education, and outreach activities. The project would create a shaded fuel break to protect forest resources and promote public safety by reducing the intensity, severity, and risk of future wildfires. Specific activities include hand and machine felling of dead and dying trees, and piling or mastication of downed biomass. The project is located near the communities of Shaver Lake, Ockenden, Pineridge, Cressmans, and Dinkey Creek, which would be at risk in the event of a wildfire in the project area.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:**

Sierra Nevada Conservancy

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:**

Yosemite/Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council

**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 federal 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 activities on up to 650 acres of federal land within the Sierra National Forest. The actions to be undertaken were reviewed in their entirety pursuant to NEPA as documented in a Decision Memo (DM) for a Categorical Exclusion (CE). The final CE/DM was signed by the Sierra National Forest on February 15, 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:

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

Signed by Applicant