

Background

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) administers the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) Grant Program. This program provides local assistance bond funds to partners to plan and implement projects consistent with SNC's mission across the Sierra Nevada Region. In recent years, the program has focused on Forest Health needs in the Region.

The SNC's local assistance grant program originated with Proposition 84, the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006. Proposition 84 provided just under \$50 million dollars for local assistance, and SNC awarded grants for a variety of activities within the SNC mission.

The grant program evolved into the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program Grant Program with the passage of Proposition 1, The Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Bond Act of 2014, passed by California voters on November 4, 2014. Proposition 1 added Section 79731 to the California Water Code, authorizing the state to issue bonds, and the legislature to appropriate the proceeds, for multi-benefit water quality, water supply, and watershed protection and restoration projects for watersheds of the state. The bond measure included an allocation of \$25 million for the SNC. SNC administered these funds through the WIP grant program with a focus on Forest Health and coordinated with other Proposition 1 funding agencies to maximize the investment of bond funds in the Region.

Between Fiscal Year (FY) 2015-18 the state budget included appropriations of \$18 million to SNC for local assistance. The SNC administered four cycles of proposal submission and review for Proposition 1 funds. Over those cycles, SNC received 101 proposals requesting \$28,242,944. The Board authorized 55 grant awards totaling \$16,837,289.

On June 5, 2018, California voters passed Proposition 68, the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access For All Act of 2018. Proposition 68 added Section 79772.5 to the California Water Code, authorizing the state to issue bonds, and the legislature to appropriate the proceeds, to finance a drought, water, parks, climate, coastal protection, and outdoor access for all program. Section 80135(c) of Proposition 68 allocated \$25 million for competitive grants towards implementation of the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) for projects related to climate resiliency. The FY2018-19 state budget appropriated \$20,625,000 for local assistance from this section.

In June 2018, the Board approved updated FY2018-19 Grant Guidelines which incorporated the new Proposition 68 WIP funds into the WIP grant program. Coupled with \$5,819,507 in Proposition 1 funding from the FY2017-18 and 2018-19 state budget appropriations, \$26,444,507 was available for current and future grant cycles.

The SNC released a request for proposals in June 2018 and received 67 Pre-Applications requesting a total of \$30,649,857. SNC staff worked closely with applicants after the submission of Pre-Applications, including making site visits to all proposed implementation projects. By the deadline for Full Applications, SNC received 41 proposals requesting a total of \$20,877,350. After the evaluation process, 26 applications totaling \$14,449,544 in requests scored above the 80-point threshold for possible funding. Staff is recommending 21 projects totaling \$11,830,183 for authorization at this meeting. SNC is completing the required due diligence and CEQA compliance on the remaining five projects that scored above the threshold, and they may be recommended to the Board at a future meeting.

In summary, since the establishment of SNC's WIP Grant Program with Proposition 1 and Proposition 68 funds, the total value of grant requests received was \$49,120,294 for the \$43,325,000 in available funding. If the Board authorizes the grants recommended at this meeting, a total of 76 grant awards for \$28,667,472 will have been authorized as follows:

- 10 in the North Subregion
- 24 in the North Central Subregion
- 19 in the Central Subregion
- 16 in the South Central Subregion
- 4 in the East Subregion
- 3 in the South Subregion
- 50 are Category One Implementation Projects, 26 are Category Two Planning Projects

Please note that when projects cross Subregion boundaries, they are attributed to the primary Subregion for the purposes of this report.

Current Status

Evaluation has concluded for all 41 applications received in the 2018 cycle that were determined to be complete and eligible. Fifteen projects scored below the 80-point threshold and will have the opportunity to consult with SNC staff regarding possible reapplication in a future grant cycle. Of the 26 projects that scored above the 80-point threshold, 21 have the necessary environmental compliance in place, while five projects are still undergoing CEQA analysis by SNC staff and consultants.

Staff currently recommends adoption of CEQA findings and authorization of 21 projects worth \$11,830,183. Brief project descriptions are included below. Please refer to the following attachments for additional information.

Attachments

- [Attachment A: Table of applications received](#)
- [Attachment B: Table of projects currently recommended with links to CEQA documents](#)
- [Attachment C: Map of recommended projects](#)

Project Descriptions

Project #1054: Scotts Flat Reservoir Fuels Treatment Phase 4

Nevada Irrigation District

Category One Site Improvement Project - \$981,000

The project is located on the north and east shores of the Scotts Flat Reservoir in the Deer Creek watershed, near Nevada City in Nevada County. This storage reservoir is integral to the water supply infrastructure that Nevada Irrigation District manages for communities in Nevada, Placer, and Yuba counties. The project will thin a minimum of 300 acres of heavily overgrown forest and will significantly reduce catastrophic fire risk and promote healthy and functional forest and watershed conditions, improve carbon sequestration, and protect an existing water storage and hydropower facility. This project sits within a larger fuels reduction program aimed at protecting residential areas around the reservoir in partnership with Cascade Shores and Banner Mountain Firewise Communities, as well as Nevada Irrigation District camping and recreational facilities around the lake. The project is scheduled for completion by January 2022.

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

- To access the complete application package, [click here](#).
- To access the Project Details and the Notice of Exemption, [click here](#).

Project #1061: Tramway Road Fuel Break Network

Resource Conservation District of Tehama County

Category One Site Improvement Project - \$235,858

The project is located on private lands along the unpaved county-maintained Tramway Road in eastern Tehama County. The 254-acre strategic fuel break lies close to many small communities including Lyman Springs, Manton, and Mineral, and is adjacent to Battle Creek, a major anadromous fish-bearing stream that delivers flows to the Sacramento River. The Tramway Road Fuel Break Network project will result in a 300-foot-wide 7-mile-long roadside shaded fuel break. The high priority need for the project was identified in the Tehama East Community Wildfire Protection Plan as prepared by the Resource Conservation District in 2017 and is aligned with the Tehama East Watershed Assessment and Management Plan. The project is scheduled for completion by January 2023.

CEQA Compliance: The Resource Conservation District of Tehama County is Lead Agency on an Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND). The SNC may file a Notice of Determination on the IS/MND as a Responsible Agency.

- To access the complete application package, [click here](#).
- To access the Project Details and the Notice of Determination, [click here](#).
- To access the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration, [click here](#).

**Project #1065: Diamond Mountain Forest & Watershed Restoration Project
Lassen County Fire Safe Council
Category One Site Improvement Project - \$882,087**

The purpose of this project is to continue landscape-scale watershed restoration treatments on Lassen National Forest within the Diamond Mountain watershed in Lassen County. The project is within the wildland urban interface, approximately six miles south of Susanville and adjacent to the unincorporated communities of Gold Run, Archery/Children's neighborhood, Baxter Creek, Elysian Valley, and Janesville. The Lassen County Fire Safe Council (LCFSC) will work with Lassen National Forest to accomplish a suite of fuels reduction and watershed health treatments on 1,056 acres. The forested areas of the Diamond Mountains are the headwaters to the Susan River which provide water for irrigating farms and ranches as well as household use dependent on groundwater. The Lassen County Community Wildfire Protection Plan identified the Diamond Mountain project as one of its highest priorities for hazardous fuels/watershed restoration. The project was developed by the Diamond Mountain Initiative (DMI), a collaborative group consisting of LCFSC, USFS, CAL FIRE, BLM, SNC, Lassen County, Honey Lake Power, Susan River Fire Protection District, Honey Lake Valley RCD, industrial timberland owners, and local residents. Recently awarded CAL FIRE grants will treat an additional 4,511 acres. The project is scheduled for completion by January 2023.

CEQA Compliance: The Honey Lake Valley Resource Conservation District is Lead Agency on an Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration. The SNC may file a Notice of Determination on the IS/MND as a Responsible Agency.

- To access the complete application package, [click here](#).
- To access the Project Details and the Notice of Determination, [click here](#).
- To access the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration, [click here](#).

**Project #1067: South Fork Mokelumne River Watershed Restoration Phase 3
Treatment**

**Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions (CHIPS)
Category One Site Improvement Project - \$865,835**

The project is on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) property within the wildland urban interface and near the town of Railroad Flat in northern Calaveras County, within the Mokelumne River Watershed. The Mokelumne River flows into Pardee and Comanche Reservoirs, owned and operated by East Bay Municipal Utility District, and provides municipal drinking water for millions of Californians living in the San Francisco Bay Area. Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions (CHIPS) will be implementing 285 acres of

forest restoration and fuels reduction on land choked with dense brush, ladder fuels and overcrowded timber stands. The purpose of this landscape fuels reduction project is to enhance watershed health by reducing the risk of fire ignition and spread, conserving water, minimizing erosion, protecting water quality, and increasing forest resilience to drought and disease while sequestering and storing greenhouse gasses. This project is part of a larger network of fuels reduction projects, aligns with multiple other projects implemented by Calaveras County Water District and CAL FIRE, and builds on previous SNC investment. The project is scheduled for completion by July 2021.

CEQA Compliance: In June 2018, SNC, as Lead Agency, adopted an Initial Study, Mitigated Negative Declaration, and Monitoring and Reporting Program for an earlier phase of this project (#1030). The SNC may file a Notice of Determination as Lead Agency for this current phase of the project.

- To access the complete application package, [click here](#).
- To access the Project Details and the Notice of Determination, [click here](#).
- To access the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration, [click here](#).
- To access the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, [click here](#).

Project #1068: South Fork Mokelumne River Watershed Restoration Phase 4 Planning

Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions (CHIPS)

Category Two Pre-Project Activities and Planning Project - \$89,125

This project is in the South Fork Mokelumne River Watershed in Calaveras County, between the communities of Wilseyville and Railroad Flat, on private lands adjacent to Bureau of Land Management (BLM) property. The Mokelumne River flows into Pardee and Comanche Reservoirs, owned and operated by East Bay Municipal Utility District, and provides municipal drinking water for millions of Californians living in the San Francisco Bay Area. The project will complete CEQA analysis for restoration and fuels reduction activities on 468 acres, expanding the footprint of forest health treatments on the BLM property previously funded by SNC. This suite of projects also connects with fuels-reduction work completed by the Calaveras County Water District (CCWD) and CAL FIRE across neighboring private lands, creating a series of strategically placed fuel reduction projects that span across much of the South Fork Mokelumne River Watershed. CHIPS is partnering with BLM, CCWD, and the Cal-Am Forestry Team to complete the Project. The project is scheduled for completion by March 2020.

CEQA Compliance: The project is Statutorily Exempt under Section 15262. Feasibility and Planning Studies and Categorical Exempt under Class 6 Section 15306. Information Collection.

- To access the complete application package, [click here](#).
- To access the Project Details and the Notice of Exemption, [click here](#).

Project #1069: Independence Lake Forest Health & Resiliency

The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

Category Two Pre-Project Activities and Planning Project - \$99,688

The project will continue a forest restoration and fire resiliency project on 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, 17 miles north of Truckee and 12 miles south of Sierraville. The project will develop a Timber Harvest Plan and Prescribed Fire Burn Plan on 1,656 acres of the preserve. This project will build upon 600 acres of thinning/fuel reduction and prescribed burning previously supported by SNC. Independence Lake is home to endemic Lahontan cutthroat trout and other native fish and is a valued recreation destination for the public. It is part of a broader effort to enhance fire resiliency and restoration of headwater forests in the Truckee River watershed and will further landscape-level fuel treatments to reduce wildfire risk throughout crowded forests surrounding the lake and chances of subsequent post-fire erosion to this important water supply for downstream users. Partners include the U.S. Forest Service (Tahoe National Forest), CAL FIRE, Truckee Meadows Water Authority, and both the Nevada and California Chapters of TNC. The project is scheduled for completion by July 2020.

CEQA Compliance: The project is Statutorily Exempt under Section 15262. Feasibility and Planning Studies and Categorical Exempt under Class 6 Section 15306. Information Collection.

- To access the complete application package, [click here](#).
- To access the Project Details and the Notice of Exemption, [click here](#).

**Project #1070: Sierra Buttes/Lakes Basin Properties Fuel Reduction
Sierra County Land Trust**

Category One Site Improvement Project - \$167,200

The Sierra County Land Trust (SCLT) holds property in the Sierra Buttes Lakes Basin area above the unincorporated town of Sierra City, surrounded by U.S. Forest Service lands. This project will implement a 69-acre fuel break in the Ladies Canyon, Pauley Creek, and Packer Creek watersheds, within the North Fork of the Yuba River watershed. It will reduce the risk of high intensity fire surrounding the headwaters of the north fork of the Yuba River-Packer Saddle and Lakes Basin area as well as surrounding public and private forest lands and nearby small communities. The project is scheduled for completion by January 2022.

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

- To access the complete application package, [click here](#).
- To access the Project Details and the Notice of Exemption, [click here](#).

**Project #1074: Webber Lake Little Truckee Headwaters Forest Management
Phase Two**

Truckee Donner Land Trust

Category One Site Improvement Project - \$419,250

The Project will improve water quality and quantity in Coppins Meadow and Creek, a primary tributary to Webber Lake, which is the headwaters of the Little Truckee River in Sierra County. The project will implement fuels reduction under a Forest Management Plan/Timber Harvest Plan on 185 acres of forest on Truckee Donner Land Trust property surrounding Webber Lake and Coppins Meadow. It will minimize tree mortality and reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire, as well as remove diseased trees and conifer encroachment into adjoining meadows. SNC previously supported the acquisition of the Webber Lake property, as well as development of the Timber Harvest Plan. The Webber Lake Little Truckee Headwaters project effectively connects forest management projects across the watershed, increasing the efficacy and restorative benefits of forest management on the landscape level. The project is scheduled for completion by December 2021.

CEQA Compliance: The Truckee Donner Land Trust holds Timber Harvest Plan 2-18-00130-SIE, approved by CAL FIRE. The SNC may file a Notice of Determination on the THP as a Responsible Agency.

- To access the complete application package, [click here](#).
- To access the Project Details and the Notice of Determination, [click here](#).
- To access the Timber Harvest Plan, [click here](#).

**Project #1075: Serene Lakes Royal Gorge Headwaters Forest Health Improvements
*Truckee Donner Land Trust***

Category One Site Improvement Project - \$364,510

The Serene Lakes Royal Gorge Headwaters Forest Health Improvements project will treat 160 acres of over-dense forest on Truckee Donner Land Trust property in Placer County in the Bogus Basin, which drains directly into Serene Lakes, which is surrounded by 600 homes in the Serene Lakes neighborhood. Serene Lakes are the drinking and domestic water source for the surrounding neighborhood and drains into the North Fork American River, Folsom and Natomas Lakes, and eventually into the California Delta. The forest fuels reduction will reduce ladder fuels, diseased trees, and areas of overstock, minimizing the risk of catastrophic wildfire and subsequent environmental damage. The project is scheduled for completion by January 2022.

CEQA Compliance: The Truckee Donner Land Trust holds Timber Harvest Plan 2-18-0054-PLA, approved by CAL FIRE. The SNC may file a Notice of Determination on the THP as a Responsible Agency.

- To access the complete application package, [click here](#).
- To access the Project Details and the Notice of Determination, [click here](#).
- To access the Timber Harvest Plan, [click here](#).

Project #1081: Quincy Watershed Improvement Project

Plumas Audubon Society

Category Two Pre-Project Activities and Planning Project - \$99,997

The project is on Plumas National Forest and American Valley Community Service District lands in the upper Feather River Watershed, Plumas County, within the wildland urban interface adjacent to the town of Quincy. The project will complete necessary surveys required for CEQA and NEPA analysis and draft documentation for environmental compliance related to a 655-acre fuels reduction project to protect Quincy and East Quincy, identified as Communities at Risk, as well as water resources and benefit forest health. Project partners include the Feather River Resource Conservation District, American Valley Community Services District, Plumas National Forest, Plumas County Fire Safe Council, Plumas County, and private landowners. The project is scheduled for completion in October 2020.

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

- To access the complete application package, [click here](#).
- To access the Project Details and the Notice of Exemption, [click here](#).

Project #1088: Lakes Basin

USDA Forest Service, Plumas National Forest

Category One Site Improvement Project - \$995,995

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. 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. Nearby communities include Johnsville, Graeagle, Mohawk, Blairsdan, 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. The Lakes Basin project is consistent with the Plumas County Community Wildfire Protection Plan and the Feather River Integrated Regional Watershed Management Plan. The project is scheduled for completion in Jan 2022.

CEQA Compliance: 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 1069, under specified circumstances.

- To access the complete application package, [click here](#).
- To access the Project Details and the Notice of Exemption, [click here](#).

Project #1089: French Meadows Forest Restoration – Biomass Project

Placer County

Category One Site Improvement Project - \$1,000,000

The Project is located in Placer County on the Tahoe National Forest in the upper watershed of the American River around and above French Meadows Reservoir. It will remove biomass produced by forest thinning activities on 3,622 acres of the French Meadows project and masticate 410 acres to reduce brush competition to release trees that were planted for restoration after the 2001 Star Fire. This project is a component of the larger French Meadows Restoration Project; a major collaborative effort for large-scale restoration and protection of the French Meadows Reservoir watershed, the major water storage infrastructure of the Placer County Water Agency. The SNC previously funded CEQA/NEPA analysis for the larger project. Other partners include Placer County, Placer County Water Agency, The Nature Conservancy, and Tahoe National Forest. The project is scheduled for completion by January 2022.

CEQA Compliance: 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.

- To access the complete application package, [click here](#).
- To access the Project Details and the Notice of Exemption, [click here](#).

Project #1091: Black Springs Restoration Project

Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority

Category One Site Improvement Project - \$1,000,000

The Black Springs Restoration Project is located on the Stanislaus National Forest in Calaveras County, between the communities of Arnold and Bear Valley, in the Mokelumne River watershed. The Mokelumne River flows into Pardee and Comanche Reservoirs, owned and operated by East Bay Municipal Utility District, and provides municipal drinking water for millions of Californians living in the San Francisco Bay Area. The purpose of this project is to improve ecological resilience, reduce severe fire risk, and protect water supplies by reducing forest fuels, and improve ecological resilience on 900 acres funded by this grant, plus an additional 925 acres supported by Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration funds. The Project is part of a larger, 14,065-acre Hemlock Landscape Restoration Project (HLRP), which in turn is a component of the even larger 390,904-acre Cornerstone Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program. The SNC previously funded the first two phases of the HLRP with the Pumpkin Hollow and Cabbage Patch Restoration Projects. This project is a partnership between the Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority (a Joint Powers Agency comprised of six water agencies and Amador, Calaveras, and Alpine counties) and Stanislaus National Forest. The project is scheduled for completion in December 2021.

CEQA Compliance: The Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority is Lead Agency on an Initial Study and Negative Declaration. The SNC may file a Notice of Determination on the IS/ND as a Responsible Agency.

- To access the complete application package, [click here](#).
- To access the Project Details and the Notice of Determination, [click here](#).
- To access the Initial Study and Negative Declaration, [click here](#).

**Project #1094: Lakes Basin Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project - Phase 1
Mammoth Lakes Fire Safe Council
Category One Site Improvement Project - \$1,000,000**

The Project is located in the Mammoth Ranger District of Inyo National Forest, immediately southwest of the Town of Mammoth Lakes, in Mono County. It lies within the headwaters of Mammoth Creek which provide municipal water to the town of Mammoth Lakes and flow into the Owens River, a significant source of water for the city of Los Angeles and communities supplied by the Owens Valley Groundwater Basin. The project will complete a minimum of 560 acres of fuels reduction on Inyo National Forest land adjacent to many valuable recreational and water resources. The Project is part of the Mono County Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The Project's primary partners are the Inyo National Forest, Mammoth Lakes Fire Protection District, the Town of Mammoth Lakes, and the Mammoth Community Water District. It is scheduled for completion in January 2021.

CEQA Compliance: The Mammoth Lakes Fire Protection District is Lead Agency on an Initial Study and Negative Declaration. The SNC may file a Notice of Determination on the IS/ND as a Responsible Agency.

- To access the complete application package, [click here](#).
- To access the Project Details and the Notice of Determination, [click here](#).
- To access the Initial Study and Negative Declaration, [click here](#).

**Project #1096: Tiger Creek Fuel Break Watershed Protection
Amador Fire Safe Council**

Category Two Pre-Project Activities and Planning Project - \$100,000

The project is located in Amador County near the community of Pioneer and along Tiger Creek Reservoir. It will conduct NEPA and CEQA analysis on 1195 acres of Bureau of Land Management property to plan a landscape-level fuels reduction project in coordination with neighboring parcels. This Project has been identified by the local Community Wildfire Protection Plan as a priority project and was developed by the Amador County Fuels Reduction Collaborative (ACFRC). It is part of a larger 3000-acre fuels reduction strategy developed by the ACFRC involving neighboring parcels owned by Sierra Pacific Industries, Pacific Gas and Electric, and the Eldorado National Forest. Once implemented, this project will provide wildfire protection to multiple communities in

eastern Amador County as well as increase forest resiliency and provide protection to municipal water supplies. The project is scheduled for completion in December 2020.

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

- To access the complete application package, [click here](#).
- To access the Project Details and the Notice of Exemption, [click here](#).

Project #1099: Blue Rush Forest Restoration Project
Yosemite/Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council
Category One Site Improvement Project - \$999,960

The project will conduct fuels reduction on 450 acres of public lands in Blue Canyon, in the Big Creek Watershed 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 is within the wildland urban interface, downslope of several communities including Shaver Lake, Cressmans, Pineridge, and Dinkey Creek. It was developed by the Dinkey Collaborative Forest and Landscape Restoration Program to 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 to protect forest resources and improve public safety. It is part of larger efforts within the Sierra National Forest to protect the upper watershed of the Kings River, which irrigates over one million acres of farmland and is used for domestic water supplies, water-based recreation, and hydropower. The project is scheduled for completion by January 2022.

CEQA Compliance: The project is Categorically Exempt under Class 4 Section 15304, Minor Alterations to Land.

- To access the complete application package, [click here](#).
- To access the Project Details and the Notice of Exemption, [click here](#).

Project #1124: Dry Creek Ecological Site-Watershed Restoration Plan
Modoc Resource Conservation District
Category Two Pre-Project Activities and Planning Project - \$97,400

The project is located in eastern Modoc County in the Upper Pit River Watershed in the Warner Mountains. Situated 12 miles east of Alturas, the project spans 6,630 acres across Modoc National Forest and private lands. It will develop an ecologically based watershed restoration plan and provide recommendations to help restore the health of the conifer forest, sagebrush upland and meadow riparian sites on Forest Service and private lands within the Dry Creek Basin analysis area. Assessments will be completed to support CEQA/NEPA analysis on four sites within the project area. The project is part of a larger restoration effort spearheaded by the Upper Pit River Integrated Regional

Water Management Plan. The Pit river provides 30 percent of the annual flow into Shasta Lake. Partners include the National Resource Conservation Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Deer Association, and private landowners. The project is scheduled for completion by January 2022.

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

- To access the complete application package, [click here](#).
- To access the Project Details and the Notice of Exemption, [click here](#).

**Project #1126: Big Chico Creek Forest Health Management Plan
Butte County Fire Safe Council**

Category Two Pre-Project Activities and Planning Project - \$100,000

The Big Chico Creek Forest Health Management Plan is a 7,939-acre project in Butte County, upstream from the town of Chico and adjacent to the community of Forest Ranch. The project area encompasses CSU Chico's Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve and is in the Big Chico Creek watershed which provides drinking water for the City of Chico, is important habitat for anadromous Chinook salmon and steelhead, and feeds the Sacramento River. The watershed is vegetated with dense, fire-prone forest. The project area also includes private properties and is bordered by BLM parcels. The project will develop a Forest Health Management Plan on 7,939 acres of mixed conifer forests within the Big Chico Creek Watershed and draft CEQA documentation for future thinning of overgrown fuels and 1,500 acres of prescribed burning. It is part of the larger CAL FIRE Butte Unit Plan/Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Projects developed under Big Chico Creek Forest Health Management Plan will protect water quality and improve water quantity in Big Chico Creek and to downstream users, prevent catastrophic wildfire, restore forest ecosystems from overstocked conditions with forest thinning and prescribed fire, improve air quality and carbon storage, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The project is scheduled for completion in July 2020.

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

- To access the complete application package, [click here](#).
- To access the Project Details and the Notice of Exemption, [click here](#).

**Project #1130: French Meadows Prescribed Fire Project
The Nature Conservancy (TNC)**

Category One Site Improvement Project - \$1,000,000

The French Meadows Prescribed Fire Project is located in Placer County on the Tahoe National Forest in the upper watershed of the American River around and above French

Meadows Reservoir. The project will reintroduce fire on 654 acres to improve forest health and reduce the future risk of high severity, uncontrolled wildfire. This project is a component of the larger 28,000-acre French Meadows Restoration Project, a major collaborative effort for large-scale restoration and protection of the French Meadows Reservoir watershed, the major water storage infrastructure of the Placer County Water Agency. The SNC previously funded CEQA/NEPA analysis for the larger project. Other partners include Placer County, Placer County Water Agency, The Nature Conservancy, and Tahoe National Forest. The project is scheduled for completion by January 2022.

CEQA Compliance: 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 1069, under specified circumstances.

- To access the complete application package, [click here](#).
- To access the Project Details and the Notice of Exemption, [click here](#).

Project #1131: Rim Fire Invasive Plant Control and Eradication
USDA Forest Service, Stanislaus National Forest
Category One Site Improvement Project - \$332,400

The project covers 1,823 acres within the Rim Fire footprint on Stanislaus National Forest land in the Tuolumne River watershed within Tuolumne County and near the community of Buck Meadows. It is part of a comprehensive large-scale restoration plan for the Rim Fire burn area within the Tuolumne River watershed and will improve forest health and lower the threat of wildfire risk. The project will remove known invasive weed populations and survey adjacent acres for invasive plant spreading and work to eradicate these known populations before they can spread and cause further damage to the local ecosystem. It was developed collaboratively with the Stanislaus National Forest and the Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions forest collaborative. Project partners include the Tuolumne County Department of Agriculture, the Greater Valley Conservation Corps, and the California Invasive Plants Council. The project is scheduled for completion by January 2022.

CEQA Compliance: The project is Exempt under Executive Order B-23-13 for Rim Fire Recovery.

- To access the complete application package, [click here](#).
- To access the Project Details and the Notice of Exemption, [click here](#).

Project #1146: Valley Creek Botanical Special Interest Area and Watershed Protection
USDA Forest Service, Plumas National Forest
Category One Site Improvement Project - \$999,878

The project is located in Plumas County, on the Plumas National Forest in the Lost Creek watershed, near the remote communities of La Porte and American House and

the Little Grass Valley and Sly Creek Reservoirs. The Special Interest Area within the project footprint represents one of the few remaining examples of Sierra Nevada mixed conifer old growth forest in the northern Sierra Nevada. The project will reduce excess fuel loads on 634 acres to protect waters draining into Lake Oroville, a source of drinking water for 60 million Californians, by improving forest resiliency to insect and disease infestation, drought induced mortality, and high-severity wildfire as well as threats to life and property. Partners in project development and implementation include Feather River Ranger District Collaborative, Maidu partners, Butte County Forest Advisory Committee, Paradise Ridge Fire Safe Council, Forbestown Ridge Fire Safe Council, Sierra Forest Legacy, and community members of Plumas, Yuba, and Butte counties located in the wildland urban interface. The project is scheduled for completion in December 2021.

CEQA Compliance: 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.

- To access the complete application package, [click here](#).
- To access the Project Details and the Notice of Exemption, [click here](#).

Next Steps

Upon approval by the Board, staff will file all necessary adopted CEQA documentation and prepare agreements for each authorized grant.

Staff will continue to work with project proponents to complete compliance requirements for the additional five projects that scored above the threshold and, depending on successful completion of all requirements, may bring these projects to the Board for authorization at a future meeting.

Staff will consult with proponents of projects that did not meet the scoring threshold regarding reasons for the score received and the potential for reapplication in a future grant cycle.

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Board:

(a) Authorize the Executive Officer to file Notices of Exemption for the *Scotts Flat Reservoir Fuels Treatment Phase 4 (1054), South Fork Mokelumne River Watershed Restoration Phase 4 Planning (1068), Independence Lake Forest Health & Resiliency (1069), Sierra Buttes/Lakes Basin Properties Fuel Reduction (1070), Quincy Watershed Improvement Project (1081), Lakes Basin (1088), French Meadows Forest Restoration – Biomass Project (1089), Tiger Creek Fuel Break Watershed Protection (1096), Blue Rush Forest Restoration Project (1099), Dry Creek Ecological Site-Watershed Restoration Plan (1124), Big Chico Creek Forest Health Management Plan (1126), French Meadows Prescribed Fire Project*

(1130), *Rim Fire Invasive Plant Control and Eradication* (1131), and *Valley Creek Botanical Special Interest Area and Watershed Protection* (1146) projects; and

(b) approve findings concurring with the Mitigated Negative Declarations and Timber Harvest Plans and authorize the Executive Officer to file Notices of Determination as a Responsible Agency for the *Tramway Road Fuel Break Network* (1061), *Diamond Mountain Forest & Watershed Restoration Project* (1065), *Webber Lake Little Truckee Headwaters Forest Management Phase Two* (1074), *Serene Lakes Royal Gorge Headwaters Forest Health* (1075), *Black Springs Restoration Project* (1091), and *Lakes Basin Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project - Phase 1* (1094) projects; and

(c) make findings that there is no substantial evidence that the *South Fork Mokelumne River Watershed Restoration Phase 3 Treatment* (1067) project, with mitigation measures, may have a significant effect on the environment and authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Determination as a Lead Agency on the previously adopted Initial Study / Mitigated Negative Declaration and related Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program; and

(d) authorize a grant award to each of the projects listed above for the amounts recommended by staff, and further authorize the staff to enter into the necessary agreements to move forward with these projects.