

# STATE OF CALIFORNIA SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY

*Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration Fund*

**SNC ID Number:** TRFRF003

**Applicant:** Sierra Nevada Alliance

**Project Title:** Sierra Corps Pilot Program

**SNC Subregion:** Region-wide

**Funding Amount Requested:** \$550,000

**Funding Amount Recommended:** \$275,000

**Total Project Cost:** \$550,000

## **PROJECT SCOPE / DESCRIPTION**

Headquartered in Truckee, the Sierra Nevada Alliance (Alliance) will develop a pilot “Sierra Corps” program to provide additional staff support to partner organizations engaged in planning or implementing forest and watershed health projects in the Region. The Pilot Program will be available to support partner organizations throughout the entire Sierra Nevada Region.

The lack of staffing among agencies engaged in forest health work is slowing down the pace of restoration projects. Additional staffing is needed to complete resource surveys, process permits, complete contracts, and manage projects. This is particularly an issue for federal agencies that have undergone budget reductions and for local agencies (such as RCDs) that lack stable funding sources. The Sierra Nevada Alliance proposes to address this need via the creation of a “Sierra Corps,” pilot program. The Alliance will work with the SNC to identify staffing gaps in agencies which play a critical role in forest restoration project implementation, biomass business development, and disaster resilience and recovery. The Alliance will recruit individuals to engage in internships with these critical agencies, providing assistance to facilitate planning, project permitting, project management, and other essential implementation tasks. Each Corps member will receive a stipend, health insurance, housing, and transportation assistance. This program is similar to the Alliance’s existing Sierra Nevada Americorps Partnership Program; however, it will have more flexibility to engage where and when additional staffing is critically needed. The recommended SNC funding amount will allow implementation of a pilot program with six participants, and the Alliance will raise additional funding to expand the team to 15 participants within two years.

The need to significantly increase the pace and scale of forest and watershed improvements on both public and private land has been identified as a priority in many state plans and documents, including most recently the 2019 SNC Strategic Plan and

the Forest Carbon plan. The SNC Plan identifies additional funding and innovative business practices (such as Master Stewardship Agreements) as a means of accomplishing this. However, recent experience working with both public and private agencies has shown that the lack of technical staff in these agencies is an even more basic issue. Budget reductions and furloughs (on the public side), lack of stable funding (for RCDs and other local entities), and overwhelming workloads are preventing the timely processing of permits and contracts. Staff is also not available for planning, prioritization, and funding development. The proposed internships will both fill these immediate needs and will train young people for future permanent staffing positions as they become available. The long-term benefit will be an increase in the efficiency and operations of the Regional partners who play a critical role in forest management, biomass business development, and disaster recovery and resilience.

This project will support the SNC's current efforts and investments by increasing the efficiency of permitting and contracting by public agencies, including CAL FIRE CCI and SNC-funded projects. It will make it more feasible to implement landscape level treatments, including the Tahoe Central Sierra Initiative, the Southern Sierra All Lands Restoration and Recovery Program, and other Regional initiatives. It will also provide resources to engage in critical disaster recovery and resilience planning efforts. Interns may also be deployed to assist in mill site redevelopment projects developed pursuant to proposed grant #002, the Mill Site Redevelopment Initiative.

The mission of the Alliance is to protect and restore Sierra Nevada lands, water, and wildlife, and to support the health, vibrancy and resilience of the Region's rural and urban communities. In operation since 1992, the organization has helped to strengthen the organizations committed to the environmental integrity of the Sierra, and by supporting individuals in developing skills and experience to be effective in their efforts. The Alliance has 14 years' experience implementing internship programs through the Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps Partnership program which supports Sierra-wide conservation member groups. This considerable experience will be directly applicable to the scope of work for the proposed project, and their previous efforts will be leveraged with this complementary program.

The Alliance will work with the SNC and other partners to identify the most critical staffing gaps and to facilitate internships which will provide direct benefit to Regional efforts. With funding development assistance from the SNC, the Alliance will work to leverage this leadership grant to raise additional funds and increase the number of program participants. The Alliance has already discussed additional support for the program with the Tahoe Fund, CAL FIRE, American Forests, and the Department of Conservation, and is exploring additional partnership options. After implementation and evaluation of the initial two-year pilot program, it is highly likely that subsequent years can be funded through the Corporation for National Service as an expansion to the Alliance's current grant.

This project meets the criteria of the SNC's TRFRF funding by providing seed funding for a workforce development program in forest restoration which will help restore wood products industries. The proposed work also directly addresses the SNC Action Plan

Resilient Communities Strategy 3: Develop and implement collaborative approaches that enhance community resiliency and bring entities together to solve problems and overcome obstacles. Action 1: Support and participate in efforts to establish new workforce internships or service programs focused on planning and implementing forest health projects and wood products/biomass utilization.

### PROJECT SCHEDULE

PROJECT TASKS / DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
Progress Reports	Every 6 months until project completion
Contract initiated	May 2019
Announce and hire Program Director	June/July 2019
Initial round of projects evaluated and prioritized, host site selection/work plans developed	August/September 2019
4 Corps Fellows begin	September/October 2019
First cohort graduation	September 2020
First year report to SNC	Fall 2020
Second year projects evaluated and selected	June 2020
Second year cohort of 4 Corps Fellows selected and start	October 2020
Graduation of 2nd cohort	September 2021
Final report to SNC	November 2021
<b>Estimated Project Completion Date</b>	<b>November 2021</b>

### PROJECT COSTS

BUDGET CATEGORIES	SNC FUNDING
<b>Project Costs:</b>	
<b>Staff expenses</b>	
6 Sierra Corps Fellow staff (@\$25k per fellow/per 11 months, 3 Fellows per year)	\$150,000
Program Director	\$90,000
<b>Operating Costs</b> (travel, equipment, printing, etc.)	\$7,500
<b>Administrative Costs</b>	\$ 27,500
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$275,000</b>

### PROJECT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Number and Type of Jobs Created
- Number and Value of New, Improved, or Preserved Economic Activities
- Number of People Reached
- Resources Leveraged for the Sierra Nevada
- Number of Collaboratively Developed Plans and Assessments

## **CEQA Documentation**

**SNC #:** TRFRF003

**Project Title:** Sierra Corps Pilot Program

**Applicant:** Sierra Nevada Alliance

**CEQA:**

The project is Statutorily Exempt under Section 15262. Feasibility and Planning Studies.

- **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

County Clerk  
County of \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(Address)

Project Title: Sierra Corps Pilot Program (SNC #TRFRF003)

**Project Location - Specific:**

The Pilot Program will be available to support partner organizations throughout the entire Sierra Nevada Region - potentially including organizations in Modoc, Lassen, Shasta, Tehama, Butte, Plumas, Sierra, Yuba, Nevada, Placer El Dorado, Amador, Calaveras, Tholumne, Mariposa, Madera, Fresno, Tulare, Kern, Alpine, Mono, and Inyo counties.

Project Location – City: NA Project Location – County: See description above

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

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy would provide funding in the amount of \$275,000 to the Sierra Nevada Alliance to develop a pilot "Sierra Corps" internship program to provide additional staff support to partner organizations engaged in planning or implementing forest and watershed health projects in the Region.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Sierra Nevada Alliance

**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: Section 15262, "Feasibility and Planning Studies"

**Reasons why project is exempt:**

This is a planning project to design a pilot internship program. It does not involve physical alterations to the environment.

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