

Background

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) was allocated \$1 million from the state Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration Fund (TRFRF) in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2018-2019 State Budget. The intent of the allocation was to implement key recommendations of the Forest Carbon Plan as well as Executive Order B-52-18 to improve the health of California's forests and strengthen their resiliency to tree mortality and wildfire. The SNC's \$1 million funding allocation was included under the category of "innovate and increase economies around the use of materials from forest health projects," and the specific purpose was "for grants to support the innovation of wood product manufacturing and increase of rural economic development around wood product manufacturing."

In December 2018, the SNC Governing Board awarded \$250,000 from the 2018-19 TRFRF funding to the Camptonville Community Partnership for bioenergy project pre-development costs. There is \$750,000 remaining for grants out of the FY2018-2019 TRFRF funding allocation.

Current Status

The SNC staff has developed several proposals in collaboration with Regional partners totaling more than \$1,000,000 in requested funding. The proposals meet needs in the areas of mill site redevelopment, workforce development, and wood product manufacturing business development. The staff is making the following funding recommendations, based on each proposal's fit with the TRFRF objectives, project readiness, and potential benefits to the Region. All of the proposed activities are exempt from CEQA. Please see each project's Exhibit A for more information.

Project #TRFRF002: Building Capacity for Rural Development Across Sierra Communities

Applicant: Sierra Institute for Community and Environment

SNC Subregion: Region-wide

Funding Amount Requested: \$400,000

The Plumas County-based Sierra Institute for the Community and the Environment (Sierra Institute) will build organizational capacity and provide direct technical assistance to rural forested communities working to promote economic development and increase utilization of low value, small-diameter wood by assisting with mill site/brownfield identification and redevelopment, business and entrepreneurial development, supply contracts, and more. Redeveloped industrial sites serving a direct local need will improve community vitality across the Sierra, including improved forest and watershed health, job creation, and economic revitalization.

Sierra Institute will perform capacity and asset assessments for at least ten communities within the SNC Region. Efforts will include identification of mill sites/brownfields for possible redevelopment, and recommendations for next steps. Once mill sites and assets are identified, Sierra Institute and partners will work directly with communities to provide technical assistance and economic development support

tailored to individual community needs and capabilities. Assistance will include supporting communities with development and regulatory processes for their respective projects, technical and legal assistance, project management assistance, and inter-agency coordination. In addition to direct assistance, Sierra Institute will design and lead a rural leadership program comprised of a series of workshops and a leadership network to build community capacity to pursue future rural development opportunities. Sierra Institute will provide skills and support to help communities get additional funding and resources for their projects. The program will include an advisory team to help with identification of issues and resources. SNC staff will work closely with the Sierra Institute to assist with program development and to coordinate with other Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program efforts.

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 Project Details and the Notice of Exemption, [click here](#).

Project #TRFRF003: Sierra Corps Pilot Program

Applicant: Sierra Nevada Alliance

SNC Subregion: Region-wide

Funding Amount Recommended: \$275,000

This project 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 Sierra Nevada Alliance (Alliance) will identify project planning or management needs of partners working to increase the pace and scale of forest restoration, biomass business development, and disaster resilience and recovery. Many Regional partners are recent recipients of CAL FIRE Climate Change Investment grants and will need to increase their project management capacities to meet urgent needs. Recent college graduates and post-graduates will be recruited to engage in internships with partner agencies, and the Alliance will provide training, oversight, and supervision as needed. Each Corps member will receive a stipend, health insurance, housing, and transportation assistance modeled on the successful AmeriCorps Program also administered by the Alliance. Host agencies will provide cash and/or in-kind resources.

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

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

Project #TRFRF004: Workforce Development Initiative Phase I – Assessment and Gap Analysis

Applicant: Sierra Business Council

SNC Subregion: Region-wide

Funding Amount Recommended: \$35,000

The Sierra Business Council (SBC) will create a comprehensive workforce development initiative to meet the needs of on-the-ground forest and watershed restoration work, including wood processing businesses. The initiative will include an assessment of relevant workforce programs, specifically those serving the SNC Region, and will identify program gaps. A working group consisting of representatives from workforce services agencies, educational entities, state and federal departments, industry organizations, and other relevant entities will assist in the assessment and will identify the funding and programs needed to recruit and train workers to assure a robust, sustainable forest restoration/wood processing Regional economy. This work will be preliminary to developing workforce training programs to fill identified gaps.

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 Project Details and the Notice of Exemption, [click here](#).

Project #TRFRF005: Forest Restoration and Prescribed Fire Crew Development

Applicant: Calaveras Healthy Impact Products Solutions (CHIPS)

SNC Subregion: All

Funding Amount Recommended: \$40,000

Through this funding, Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions (CHIPS) will replicate its successful forest restoration and prescribed fire crew training program in coordination with tribal organizations, workforce development services, and forest land managers. The program will recruit, train, certify, and deploy 20-40 Native American and at-risk youth in an environment of structured work and social services to perform fuel reduction, prescribed fire, and other restoration tasks. The target area will be either Nevada or Plumas county.

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

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

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Board;

(a) Authorize the Executive Officer to file Notices of Exemption for the *Building Capacity for Rural Development Across Sierra Communities* (TRFRF002), *Sierra Corps Pilot Program* (TRFRF003), *Workforce Development Initiative Phase I – Assessment and Gap Analysis* (TRFRF004), and *Forest Restoration and Prescribed Fire Crew Development* (TRFRF005) projects; and

(b) 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.